



APDUSA VIEWS

Issue No. 13

May 1986

PASSES ABOLISHED? BUT INFLUX CONTROL STAYS!

INTRODUCTION

The decade of the 1980's is a decade of great events in our history. One such event is the ruling class strategy of reform by instalments. What the ruling class wants desperately, is to buy time - time to work out its survival. This reform strategy has two major aims:

- (a) To convince its western masters that the P.W. 80th government is really trying to prevent a revolution here;
- (b) To bribe the middle class amongst the African, Coloured and Indian people and a section of the better paid workers.

To date, all the reform instalments have turned out to be a series of dud cheques which the oppressed people have returned with the stamp marked "R/D".

The people demand for democracy and all they got in return was the circus of the Tricameral Parliament with a bunch of grossly overpaid clowns. The people demand for the rule of law and civil liberties and in response they were given the notorious Internal Security Act. The people demand protection from Police brutality and to their horror they found the Army stepping in to help the Police to terrorise the population.

The whole reform strategy is like a pair of squint eyes. Sweet words and promises looking in the one direction and the actual action and deeds looking the other way.

The latest instalment is called the "Abolition of Influx Control". According to P.W. Botha: "No South African will ever suffer the indignity of arrest for a pass offence again."

We must be excused for not greeting the announcement with a loud "LONG LIVE P.W. BOTHA". This instalment, like all the others, has been paid with a dud cheque.

PASSES ARE NOT INFLUX CONTROL

While the Botha announcement confines itself to passes, the entire ruling class, including the English newspapers, claim that INFLUX CONTROL has been abolished.

But we are of the view that influx control and passes are NOT ONE AND THE SAME THING.

Influx control means the control of INFLUX, i.e., the movement or flow of people from one area to another which is a town or a city. The pass system is just one method of controlling that influx. But it is not the only one. As we shall see further on, there are a number of other methods which place severe restrictions on the freedom of movement, work and residence.

ORIGIN OF PASS LAWS

The origin of pass laws goes back to before the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa. Passes applied to the slaves in the liberal Cape and to the Khoi Khon (insultingly called "Hottentots" by the whites). Later, pass laws were applied to the other sections of the African people throughout the country. In 1923 all those pass laws were modernised and consolidated in the hated Urban Areas Act of 1923. This law was modelled on restrictions which were designed to serve the interests of the mining industry on the Witwatersrand. The Urban Areas Act was amended on many occasions, with each amendment further tightening control and closing loopholes.

PURPOSE OF PASS LAWS

The pass laws cannot and must not be looked at in isolation. They were part and parcel of a deliberate and a diabolical scheme to force the African people into a position where they would become a CHEAP AND ABUNDANT LABOUR FORCE to cater for the farms, the mines and later for factories and other industries.

The wars of Land and Cattle Robbery deprived the African people of an independent and prosperous livelihood. The numerous taxes payable in cash compelled the African people to leave their homes and seek employment to earn cash wages. Both these measures sought to smoke out the African people and to drive them on to the labour market. The pass laws were designed to direct and despatch the flow of human flood from the Reserves to areas where labour was needed. The purpose was to convert a human work-seeker into the same category as goods or animals. Just as goods or animals DO NOT decide where they are to be sent and sold, so with the African work-seeker. He was denied the right to choose where to work, what work to do and with whom he wanted employment.

The driving out of millions of people from their homes on to the labour market, the lack of freedom to choose the type of work, the place of work, etc., the payment of starvation wages were all made possible because the ruling class denied the African people a full say in Parliament which made all these inhuman laws.

A direct result of the policy of influx control was the MIGRATORY LABOUR SYSTEM. This system was adopted to prevent a large African working class from settling in the towns and cities. The mine owners feared that a settled African working class could be effectively organised to fight the super exploitation in the mines (in 1971 the African miners earned R209 a year while the White miners earned R4 633 a year). The African worker was regarded as a temporary sojourner, i.e., he - comes to the urban area only to work for a "limited period" - which

could be up to two years. While he is working he cannot, by law, have his family with him.

EFFECT OF PASS LAWS

1. According to Government figures, some 12 million Africans were arrested under the pass laws and influx control measures between the years 1916-1981. This means that an average of over 200 000 innocent people every year were made into CRIMINALS under laws which are not to be found anywhere in the democratic world. We cannot even begin to understand the shock, suffering and terror these innocent people were subjected to.

2. By believing in the myth that the Africans in the urban areas were there just temporarily, housing for the African people was shamelessly neglected. That is why today there is a backlog of over 500 000 houses and for the period 1982-1990 the housing requirement is 1 792 000 houses.

3. Although the ruling class never misses an opportunity to state its belief in Christianity and, therefore, in the sanctity of the family, the system of migratory labour has created havoc on family life with husband and father away from home for many long months.

4. Because of the pass laws, the system of migratory labour and the deliberate policy of reserving the skilled and best paid jobs for the Whites only, South Africa is presently suffering from a very serious lack of skilled labour. The entire economy is paying dearly for this.

5. The continued application of the pass laws made sure that the hatred of the African people for the system which produced and enforced the pass laws, was never allowed to diminish.

WHY ARE PASSES BEING ABOLISHED?

For many years well-wishers of the ruling class have been urging it to do away with the passes. They have been assuring the government that if the pass laws were abolished it would not mean the end of white rule. On the contrary, the abolition of pass laws would buy that much needed goodwill and would help to prolong the life-span of the essentials of the present system.

Two of these well-wishers, Professors Lawrence Schlemmer and Hermann Giliomee arranged for a whole book to be written on this subject. The book entitled: "UP AGAINST THE FENCES" sums up the important reasons why passes should be abolished. These are:

1. The application of the pass laws is EXPENSIVE. It costs about R89-million every year.

2. The pass laws have FAILED to keep Africans away from the cities. Massive squatter communities have grown around every city.

Minister Piet Koornhof admitted in April 1982 that 42% of the African population of Cape Town was "illegal".

Before that, the Urban Foundation in 1980 estimated that at least thirty-three and one third percent of the population of Soweto was "illegal." In 1984 the Western Cape Administration Board confessed: "It is clearly impossible to stop the urbanisation process here."

3. The migrant labourers would NOT STAY PERMANENTLY in the urban areas.

A study of their attitudes showed that 75% of them want to return to their homes in the countryside.

4. The towns and cities would NOT BE "SWAMPED" with Africans if there were no passes. Population experts have estimated that in the year 2 000 the urban African population would be:-

(a) 7,76 million if pass laws were applied

(b) 9,52 million if pass laws were NOT applied.

The additional 2 million people could easily be absorbed in the towns and cities.

5. It would BENEFIT THE FACTORY OWNERS and other employers if passes were abolished because there would be "surplus labour" available. That would mean competition among workers for jobs and, therefore, a reduction in wages. It would also mean that the position of trade unions would be weakened. In the event of dismissals, the "surplus labour" could be used.

6. The pass laws are the MOST HATED laws and their removal would eliminate one very important source of discontent and opposition to the ruling class.

The above are the real reasons why passes have been abolished.

It has nothing to do with any sudden change of heart on the part of the government.

INFLUX CONTROL REMAINS

The English newspapers and the Progressive Federal Party have hailed the abolition of passes. They claim that what remains of influx control has been "de-racialised" i.e. it will apply to all population groups and not just to the African people. Therefore Nic Olivier, the P.F.P. expert on constitutional matters, welcomed what he calls the "non racial provisions for control of illegal squatting."

We say that this is all a PACK OF LIES. There will be no real change. The present position will remain and the new form of influx control will fall most heavily on the African people. .

NEW FORMS OF INFLUX CONTROL

The new forms of influx control will do all the work or" the passes without the pass laws. A host of innocent sounding laws will be applied to enforce an even stricter influx control.

While under the new system, Africans will not be asked to produce a pass to show that they are entitled to be in an urban area, nevertheless, they cannot be in an urban area as a matter of RIGHT. An African wishing to live and work in an urban area will now be asked to produce proof that he or she has APPROVED ACCOMODATION in the area.

Where will the African people find "approved accomodation"? Accomodation will not be "approved" if it is in a Group Area for Coloured, Indian or White people, or in an area hit by the Slums Act, or in an area which, according to the City Council or Town Board, offends the health regulations, or in an area which

