

Bending the Colour Bar

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EVER SINCE THE discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa and the development of the country as an industrial nation, the pattern which has developed amongst the labour force has been one of White Supremacy. The most highly skilled and best paid jobs have been reserved, partly by tradition and partly by legislation, for the Whites, while the Non-White workers have been relegated to the sphere of unskilled and semi-skilled labour.

In 1951 the Industrial Legislation Commission of Inquiry reported the position as follows, based on the number of employees in industries, trades or undertakings in respect of which wage determinations were made during the period 1937-1948:

Percentage Each Race Constitutes of Class of Skill

	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Total
Europeans	83.8	33.8	1.5	35.4
'Natives'	5.8	34.2	80.8	47.0
Asians	5.6	11.2	4.5	6.0
Coloureds	4.8	20.8	13.2	11.6

Baldly, this table shows that 83.8 per cent of all skilled workers were Europeans, while 80.8 per cent of all unskilled workers were Africans. The layman might be excused for thinking this table demonstrated that the White worker was effectively in the saddle, but the Industrial Legislation Commission was not so much concerned with the actual position as with trends. In paragraph 134 of its report the Commission noted:

The foregoing analysis now permits of a clear conclusion being arrived at as to the extent to which Non-European labour has already become an integral part of the national economy. . . . In 1946 Non-Europeans constituted the bulk of the labour force in farming, forestry and fishing, mining, manufacturing, and personal services . . . and a further analysis of statistical data relating to the manufacturing industry revealed that, since the early thirties, the rate of employment of Non-Europeans exceeded that of Europeans. In this industry the proportion of Non-Europeans to the total number of employees advanced from 60.5 per cent in 1932/33 to 71.2 per cent in 1947/48. In the S.A. Railways and Harbours a similar

trend can be detected, as the proportion increased from 39.9 per cent in 1933 to 50.8 per cent in 1950. . . . In addition to these tendencies, it has now been indicated that the unskilled labour market is virtually the exclusive preserve of Non-Europeans, particularly Natives, and that Non-Europeans largely dominate the semi-skilled market and have already penetrated the sphere of skilled labour to a not inconsiderable extent.

Graph 3 in the Commission's report gave the following comparison between work force and share of income:

Europeans constituted 14 per cent of the working population in all industries in 1936 and obtained 74.5 per cent of the national income. Africans constituted 79.5 per cent of the working force and obtained 19.6 per cent of the national income. Asians constituted 1.3 per cent of the working force and obtained 1.7 per cent of the national income. Coloureds constituted 5.3 per cent of the working force and obtained 4.1 per cent of the national income.

Table 29 reports that the average annual income of the working population in all industries, including farming, fishing, mining and manufacturing in 1936 was:

Europeans	..	..	£350 3s.				
Africans	..	..	£ 16 2s.	4.6	per cent	of European	income
Asians	..	..	£ 91 5s.	26.1	„	„	„
Coloureds	..	..	£ 51 4s.	14.7	„	„	„

Despite the fact that the figures produced by the Commission revealed an enormous disparity between White and Non-White wages, and effective White domination of the lucrative skilled labour field, both the Commission and the Government felt that employment trends over the previous two decades indicated a measure of increasing Non-White penetration of traditionally White spheres of employment enough to warrant steps being taken to control future development.

Some measures were already on the statute book giving the Government the powers it wanted, but only in certain spheres of employment. The first Nationalist government, brought to power in 1924 in coalition with the Labour Party (largely as a reaction to the 1922 miners' strike), adopted a so-called 'civilised' labour policy which had the intention and to some extent the effect of promoting the employment of White labour at the expense of Non-White interests. The industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 set up collective bargaining machinery from which male Africans were excluded. The Wage Act of 1925 provided for investigations of industries where workers were insufficiently organised to participate in or benefit from collective bargaining, and for the establishment of minimum wage scales. Though the Wage Act contains no colour bar clauses, the Wage Board determinations have on the whole fixed minimum rates for traditionally White occupations so high that the employment of Africans in these jobs was

rendered practically impossible. On the other hand, fixed minimum wages in traditionally Non-White jobs are so low that no White would ever consider taking on such employment. The Mines and Works Amendment Act of 1926, the so-called 'Colour Bar Act', was the first legal enactment to embody the principle of job reservation. Skilled work on the mines was reserved for Whites and 'Cape Coloureds'. In practice, less than a dozen Coloureds have ever been granted the right to perform skilled work on the mines, and the monopoly of skilled work has been firmly in the hands of the White workers. Already on the statute book was the Apprenticeship Act of 1922 which again, while containing no overt colour bar clauses, laid down conditions of apprenticeship which effectively prevented most Non-Whites, and practically all Africans, from obtaining the opportunity of apprenticeship in skilled trades.

NATIONALIST LEGISLATION

After the Nationalist government came to power in 1948, other Acts were placed on the statute book to bolster the position of the White worker. The Native Building Workers' Act of 1951 permitted the training and registration of Africans as skilled building workers, but for work in African areas only. Under this law, Africans are prohibited from working as odd-jobbers, in urban areas, while whites are prohibited from placing any contract with an African builder. In terms of the Native Building Workers' Act, Government Notices 2137 of 1956 and 1176 of 1956 prescribed a minimum wage of 7s. 8½d. per hour for White artisans and 2s. 8½d. an hour for African artisans. Although training and apprenticeship periods for African and White builders are not identical, African building artisans do the same sort of work as White artisans. A feature article on the building trade in the *Rand Daily Mail* of March 20th, 1965, reported: 'Once given the training, the standard of work of Africans is impressive and there is general agreement that they do their jobs as capably as anyone'. But they cannot get the same rate of pay.

In 1953 the Government passed the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, completely outlawing strikes by Africans and establishing a cumbersome machinery for the settlement of disputes involving African workers. The Minister of Labour at the time, Mr. Schoeman, rejected the recommendation of his own Industrial Legislation Commission that African unions should be recognized subject to certain safeguards; Schoeman argued that if Africans were allowed to have trade unions, 'they can use their trade unions as a political weapon and they can create chaos in South Africa at any given time. I think

that we would probably be committing race suicide if we gave them that incentive'.

African trade unions were not outlawed by the Act, but they were not recognized and were therefore unable to use the machinery for collective bargaining provided by the Industrial Conciliation Act. In fact, Schoeman said he hoped that as a result of his Act all African unions would 'die a natural death'.

The Nationalist government's main instrument for entrenching White Supremacy in industry was the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956, which provided for the creation of separate trade unions, or separate branches of existing trade unions, for White and Non-White workers. Where a 'mixed union' was divided into separate racial branches, the executive committee had to consist of Whites only. Section 77 of the Act introduced the principle of job reservation, and for this purpose the term 'employee' was deemed to include Africans, otherwise excluded from the provisions of the Act. The section gave the Minister of Labour the power to allocate jobs to workers of different racial groups—in other words to establish a racial quota system in industry. The Minister of Labour in 1955, Senator Jan de Klerk, said: 'In practice the Bill meant that the European's economic position in the industrial world could never be lowered by the Non-European. It was also a guarantee that he would never be ousted and that intrusion into his field of work could be prevented'.

Less use has been made of section 77 than might have been expected. Only seventeen determinations were issued up to the end of 1965, and according to a statement by the Minister of Labour on February 23rd, 1965, only two per cent of the economically active population has been affected by job reservation determinations. On another occasion he mentioned a total of 5,000 workers. Most of the determinations reserved categories of work for Whites, but some also reserved jobs for Asians and Coloureds, or fixed quotas as between Whites and Non-Whites. But to date not a single determination has been issued to protect the right of an African to perform any type of job, and the intention of job reservation is clearly in the first place to protect Whites against Non-White competition, and secondly to protect Asians and Coloureds from African competition. In Springs, one of the first determinations reserved for Whites was the driving of refuse and night soil removal vehicles, which, however sympathetic one might feel towards the White workers engaged in this task, one would normally not be inclined to regard as a traditional sphere of employment for Whites.

Nevertheless, the general effect of Nationalist legislation and administrative restrictions has been to reinforce White Supremacy in the

economic sphere. The economist F. P. Spooner calculated that between 1949 and 1954, the real income of Africans declined by 6.5 per cent while that of whites rose by 46 per cent. Official figures quoted in a memorandum submitted by the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions to the Wage Board in May 1959 showed that African wages, which had risen from 19.9 per cent of the European wage in 1935/36 to 25 per cent of the European wage in 1947/48, largely as a result of the greater absorption of Africans in industry during the war period, had declined to 19 per cent again by 1956/57. A similar rise and fall in the wages of Asians and Coloureds in relation to those of Whites was also registered during this period. (The difference between the 1936 ratios given by S.A.C.T.U. and those given by the Industrial Legislation Commission and quoted earlier in this article is probably due to the fact that the S.A.C.T.U. figures are based on Wage Board determinations, whereas the Industrial Legislation Commission's figures are based on an independent inquiry conducted by the University of Natal using other criteria. In any case, the Commission's figures show an even greater disparity between White and Black incomes than those of S.A.C.T.U.) According to Department of Labour figures, covering industries governed by wage determinations, throughout the period 1937-56, 82.6 per cent of skilled jobs were occupied by Whites. An article in *The Star* of February 3rd, 1966, quoted the Deputy Minister of Labour, as saying that 39 per cent of the economically active Africans in South Africa are employed as operatives or semi-skilled workers.

The Minister of Finance in February 1961 estimated that the average per capita income of Whites was £410 a year, of Asians £80 a year, of Coloureds £58 a year and of Africans £46 a year. Estimates of the proportion of the national income accruing to Africans are necessarily somewhat arbitrary, and vary from expert to expert, but the average figure quoted is 20 per cent. It can be seen then that the overall position has not changed much since 1936. In fact, the ability of the Africans to restore their position after the deterioration in the immediate post-war period can be directly ascribed to the tremendous £1-a-day campaign launched by the Congress movement in the late fifties.

NEW TRENDS

It must be emphasized at this stage that statistics issued by the South African government are so meagre that it is impossible to assess accurately developments which have been taking place in the country's economy. No study similar to that of the Industrial Legislation Commission of 1951 has ever been undertaken, and in most cases it is impossible to make direct comparisons between the position in 1936

and that in 1966. However, in recent years certain trends have manifested themselves which indicate that under the surface, and hidden by the statistics, changes in labour relationships are taking place which in time may force significant modifications in official government policy, or at any rate in its application.

The first point of note is that, despite all government attempts to halt the drift of Africans to the towns, the number of urban Africans increased from about 2,900,000 in 1948 to 4,400,000 in the first ten years of Nationalist rule, and is now in the region of 5,500,000. Not all these Africans can be regarded as permanently urbanized—many are still migratory labourers. Nevertheless, the trend is for the towns to continue to attract African labour from the reserves and the White farming areas, and for the proportion of permanently urbanized Africans to increase.

Figures issued in February 1966 by the Bureau of Statistics show that the economic interdependence of all races in South Africa becomes more marked year by year. In the three years up to October 1965 the number of Non-Whites—mostly Africans—employed in mining, manufacturing, construction, transport, communications and public authorities, increased by more than 200,000 to 1,546,000. In the same period the number of Whites increased by only 36,000 to 483,000, making a total of 2,029,000 people employed in the six categories. The manufacturing industry employed 933,000 people, 699,000 of them Non-Whites. The figures for mining were 575,000 Non-Whites out of a total of 641,000; for construction 149,000 Non-Whites out of a total of 186,000; and for the railways 110,000 Non-Whites out of a total of 225,000.

In a policy statement in the House of Assembly on February 5th, 1965, Dr. Verwoerd maintained that there was no danger to the White man's position if the number of Africans in White areas increased for the time being. And subsequently on April 7th, he added: 'We have an economic and social structure here which we cannot remedy in a few years. . . .' As the 'homelands' and border areas were developed and mechanization and automation introduced in the White areas, the flow of Africans to the White areas would gradually be reversed. 'The turning point would come in 1978' (a figure that had been worked out by demography) . . . 'By the year 2,000 we would probably again reach the stage when the number of Bantu in the White area of the country would be equal to the figures for 1950'. In the ensuing debate, the Nationalist M.P., Froneman, said that the Africans 'are only supplying a commodity, the commodity of labour. . . . It is labour we are importing, and not labourers as individuals. . . . Numbers make no difference'. The Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration added that

in the White areas Africans would not be able to develop economically above a certain level. The bar was elastic, but would not be moved all the way up to the top.

The theories of the government Ministers ignore two factors. First, the gap between the White and Non-White populations in South Africa is widening at an increasing rate. According to figures issued by the Bureau of Statistics in September 1965, in the previous five years the African population increased by 1,235,000—six times the increase in the number of Whites. The total all-race population of South Africa had increased by 1,830,000 to 17,832,000 since the 1960 census—the Whites increasing by 6 per cent, the Africans by 11 per cent, the Asians by 9 per cent and the Coloureds by 17 per cent. As the African population increases, the pressure on traditional spheres of employment is likely to increase.

'BORDER INDUSTRIES'

The Nationalist government expresses the conviction that the development of border industries will enable the growing African population to be absorbed. But the figures are not encouraging. The managing director of the Industrial Development Corporation, Mr. G. S. J. Kuschke, told an audience in England in February 1966 that in the last five years ninety-one new factories had been established in border areas and fifty-two old ones had moved there. A total of £90 million had been invested in border development and the new factories alone provided permanent employment for 41,000 non-Whites.

These figures show that the number of jobs created is not keeping pace with the natural increase of the African and Non-White population, so that pressure on the White urban areas must continue. Secondly, the description of 'border areas' is misleading. Many of the border areas are on the fringes of White towns like Pretoria and Durban, and the industries created there are not really 'homeland' industries at all, but industries employing Africans formerly from 'White' urban areas at rates of pay lower than those laid down by industrial agreements operating in the 'White' urban areas.

Secondly, the Nationalist 'border industry' theory ignores the existing demands of established industry, where the bulk of available capital is invested and the majority of the labour force is employed. According to an address in March 1965, by Dr. P. J. Riekert, Deputy Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister and Deputy Secretary of Planning, it was estimated that during each year in the period 1961 to 1963 inclusive an average of 182,000 new posts were created and filled throughout the economy. That was 54,000 persons per year in

excess of the 128,000 annual new entrants of all races to the labour market during these years (including immigrants). By far the greater proportion of the new posts had been manned by Non-Whites.

Dr. Riekert said Non-White workers were not only required in greater numbers, but the demand was becoming more sophisticated. Unskilled and semi-skilled qualifications were no longer sufficient to satisfy the labour market. Dr. Riekert discussed the ways in which Non-Whites could be enabled 'within the framework of Government policy to reach the executive level and even the entrepreneurial class'.

SKILLED LABOUR BOTTLENECK

The shortage of skilled workers is already hamstringing the economy. In his summary of the Government's development programme for the 1965-1970 period released in January 1966, the Minister of Planning, Mr. Haak, stressed that White labour will be even scarcer in 1970 than it was in 1964. The target growth rate of the economy had had to be scaled down from 5.9 per cent per annum to 5.4 per cent per annum because of (a) the shortage of capital, and (b) the skilled labour bottleneck. Unemployed and unclassified persons, whether or not officially registered, would decrease from an estimated 285,000 (of a total economically active population of 6,210,500) in 1964 to 175,100 (of a total economically active population of 7,077,000) in 1970.

Just how serious the shortage of skilled labour is was revealed by the S.A. Reserve Bank in its annual economic report for the year ended June 30th, 1964. It drew attention to the 'insufficient supply of certain classes of skilled manpower' and added:

Such shortages were evident, for example, in the building, iron and steel, general engineering, and motor industries, and these bottle-necks not only prevented total production and income from increasing even more rapidly than they actually did, but, as the year progressed, also give rise to a certain amount of inflationary pressure in the branches of industry concerned.

The Deputy Minister of Labour, addressing the Institute of Personnel Managers in October 1964, revealed that a survey conducted in April 1963 had shown a shortage of 28,662 White workers in all sectors of the economy, which meant 2.6 per cent of available jobs were unfilled. Recent surveys, he said, had shown that the shortages had become more severe. A poll conducted by the Transvaal Chamber of Industries throughout South Africa showed an expected shortfall of 50,000 workers, mostly skilled and semi-skilled, in the manufacturing, engineering and building industries early in 1965.

In April 1964 the Government, because of the shortage of skilled workers, had to ask local authorities to curtail their capital works

programme. Other industries were similarly affected. Mr. H. F. Oppenheimer, chairman of African Explosives and Chemical Industries, said in the same month that his company had been considering expansion projects costing £45 million. 'Some of these projects will quite certainly have to be dropped or postponed because there will not be the men available to carry them out'. Some collieries in Natal had to close down sections because of a shortage of fitters and turners. Similar reports were received from all over the country. The shortage of labour led to demand for increased wages from the skilled workers, thus increasing production costs and adding to the growing inflationary spiral. In the building industry production costs rose by more than 25 per cent between 1963 and 1965.

Ultimately the economy of the country reached a crisis. Between 1961 and 1964 gross domestic expenditure increased at the rate of 11.5 per cent a year, while the gross domestic product increased by only 9.7 per cent a year in monetary terms. A deterioration in the balance of payments resulted. A surplus of R.200 million in 1961 turned into a deficit of R.56 million in 1964 and an estimated deficit of R.360 million in 1965. This deficit could not be offset by a net import of capital, and gold and foreign exchange reserves declined from a peak of R.583 million in January 1964 to R.344 million in June 1965. This led to the Government introduction of credit squeeze and the slowing down of consumption and development, aggravated by the most severe drought of the century and uncertainty of exports to South Africa's biggest market—Rhodesia.

PRESSURE AGAINST COLOUR BAR

Clearly in this context the pressure for a revision of the Government's job reservation policy tended to grow. The employers had always been opposed to it, from the time of the 1922 strike onwards. Free mobility of labour and the abolition of the colour bar meant for them the opportunity to employ Africans at wages lower than those paid to the Whites. The more enlightened employers also appreciated that it was only through the absorption of Africans in industry and the raising of the general standard of living that an internal market could be created capable of providing an outlet for the major portion of South African production. The employers' associations had presented evidence to the Industrial Legislation Commission opposing race separation and job reservation, and they continued to press for a revision of the law in this respect in the ensuing years. As recently as October 29th, 1965, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that an eight-point programme for easing labour shortages had been sent to the Minister

of Labour by the Federated Chamber of Industries. Main stress of the programme was on the removal of legal restrictions on the training of Non-Whites for more skilled work. The minority European racial group, the memorandum said, was no longer of sufficient numerical strength to provide the manpower to fill all the avenues of employment which up to the present had been regarded as the domain of Europeans only.

On June 5th, 1965, Mr. S. G. Unite, President of the Transvaal Chamber of Industries, said the Government should allow Non-Whites to be trained for skilled work in industry if it wanted the country's economy to grow at the rate planned.

On October 19th, 1965, the Association of Chambers of Commerce at its annual congress in Margate adopted a document calling, amongst other things, for greater Non-White participation in South Africa's skilled and semi-skilled labour forces. The document said the natural increase in the White labour force, even if reinforced by a high rate of immigration, was not likely to supply the necessary labour resources. A similar view has even been expressed by the Afrikaanse Sakekamer.

The attitude of the Government towards the problem of training Non-Whites for skilled and semi-skilled jobs has been ambivalent, to say the least. On the one hand, Government spokesmen have insisted that the traditional policy of job reservation would have to be maintained in order to guarantee the supremacy of the White worker. Job reservation, said the Deputy Minister of Labour, Mr. Viljoen, in Johannesburg on October 6th, 1965, had become a cornerstone of industrial life and had resulted in the unparalleled industrial peace enjoyed by South Africa for the past seventeen years (!).

To suggest that the present White manpower shortage can be overcome by training more Blacks to enter the up to now White employment spheres may be theoretically correct, but that is definitely all there is to be said for it. Knowing my people as I do, I can state quite categorically that such a development will destroy all goodwill which has been built up with care so far towards the Non-Whites in this country.

In November 1965, the Minister of Bantu Education, Mr. Maree, said the Government would resist the pressure of the private sector for promotion of Non-White labour. The Government was not prepared to deviate from its policy of job reservation as a permanent measure. It would rather put a brake by means of credit checks on the rapid development of the country. (*Star*, November 5th, 1965.)

Some of the wilder Nationalists have seen the 'threat' of Non-White labour so clearly that they have been frightened out of their wits. Dr. Piet Koornhof, M.P., former secretary of the Broederbond, told members of the Transvaal Jeugbond at Loskop last September that

the Afrikaaner nation had exchanged one foreign enslavement, that of Britain, for another much more dangerous, that of Black labour. The choice before the present generation was clear, said Dr. Koornhof: the abandoning of a comfortable life based on the foreign labour of the Black man or perishing as a White nation. 'The present order of a White aristocracy on top and a Black proletariat below cannot be maintained in the modern world'. But instead of drawing the rational conclusion from his analysis, Dr. Koornhof takes refuge in panic action. ' "Work yourself" must be the motto in every house. Industries in White areas must be founded on mechanization and not on Black labour'. Of the same order of panic is the now famous appeal of the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. Botha, to each 'capable' White couple in South Africa to celebrate the Republic Festival in 1966 by having a baby.

FACING THE FACTS

On the other hand, while continuing bravely to proclaim the need for job reservation, the Government has been compelled to face the facts of the South African situation. Despite everything the Government could do, the proportion of Non-Whites to Whites was increasing in every branch of industry, including mining and the Government service. There simply were not sufficient Whites available for all the skilled jobs vacant. The Minister of Labour had issued seventeen job reservation determinations up to the end of 1965, but had been compelled to grant hundreds of exemptions to enable employers to keep in business. In the Transvaal clothing industry, employing 25,000 workers, Government regulations laid down that 25 per cent of the labour force should be White, but the figures showed that the proportion of White skilled labour in the industry had dropped from 20 per cent in 1960 to 12 per cent at the end of 1965, while the African labour force had increased in the same period from 43 per cent to more than 50 per cent. This latter case had so alarmed the Government that it warned the trade union that the entire industry would be declared a border industry and forced out of the White urban areas unless the situation improved.

On January 4th, 1966, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that industrialists had been compelled to pay out thousands of rands over the past few months for allowing their workers—mainly Africans—to do work normally reserved for Whites. In some cases Africans had been doing 'more advanced' work for several years. Employers in such cases have been 'assessed' by Industrial Council inspectors and 'fined'. One Reef firm had been assessed for R.15,000 alone. An Industrial Council spokesman described the situation as 'explosive'.

The Government went even further than this. It sanctioned the ill-fated experiment conducted in 1965 on twelve mines in the Transvaal and Free State where, by agreement between the management and the union executive, Africans were promoted to more highly skilled jobs while the Whites were 'compensated' by being upgraded to the status of salaried members of staff, instead of daily paid workers, getting increased pay, better pensions and leave privileges.

Under the scheme a newly appointed White worker would earn R.220 instead of R.144.56 a month in basic pay, and a White general miner with twenty years' service would earn R.241.40 instead of R.162.76. An African 'competent non-scheduled person' would earn an extra 50 cents a shift on average.

The experiment had been started because the Chamber of Mines reported a shortage of 2,000 White workers on the Transvaal and Free State mines and had found it impossible to recruit adequate numbers of suitable men either in South Africa or overseas. As a result of the experiment, the Chamber reported a noteworthy decrease in accidents, a saving of manpower and an increase in productivity. The Minister declared that the outcome of the experiment was 'encouraging'. Both African and White workers on the mines participating in the experiment were satisfied.

WHITE MINERS REBEL

But the White miners as a whole regarded the experiment as a threat. The Nationalist front-bencher (and former Labourite) M. J. van den Berg denounced it as a violation of job reservation and said it would permanently upset the Black-White ratio on the mines. An action committee of rebel miners was set up under the leadership of Pretoria advocate Dr. Ras Beyers who told his White audiences: 'The kaffirs are pushing you out. How would the cabinet feel if you appointed a fat, black semi-savage as deputy prime minister just because it would cost the state less?' (*The Economist*, August, 14th 1965.) It was the old, old story all over again.

Soon the unbridled racist agitation had swept the whole White mining force into an uproar and the Government was forced to back down. The experiment was abandoned, the Chamber of Mines declaring that some of the less productive mines would have to close down as a direct consequence.

However, this was not the end of the story. On the one hand, the rebel miners have been trying ever since to remove the union leadership, whom they regard as betrayers of White supremacy. Up to the time of writing, the rebels' call for new elections to enable a new

leadership of the union to be elected has been successfully sidetracked; but the agitation continues.

On the other hand, attempts on the part of the Government and the Chamber of Mines to bring about a change have not ceased. On February 7th, 1966, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported: 'The Government is negotiating with the Mineworkers' Union to relax regulations and so enable Non-Whites to take over some lower-paid White jobs in gold mines'. Whether there is a factual basis for this report, or whether it is a kite flown by the mining bosses to see whether the time is suitable for a renewal of their offensive is not clear. The Minister of Mines, Mr. Haak, was 'not available for comment'. But that something is still brewing on the mines was confirmed by another report in the *Rand Daily Mail* on February 24th, 1966: 'The Free State rebel miners last night rejected a scheme put forward by their former leader, Mr. Abraham "At" van Wijk, aimed at saving thousands of man hours a day. The scheme was an alternative to the experiment tried in some gold mines last year which caused the breakaway of the rebels from the Mineworkers' Union'.

That the powers that be (whoever they are) had in a few months converted one of the rebel leaders to their own way of thinking demonstrates the persistence with which they are pushing for a revision of the pattern of labour relations on the mines.

Nor is this pressure confined to the mines. At the very time that the mine dispute was flaring into the open, the South African Iron and Steel Corporation (I.S.C.O.R.) was telling its workers that it would agree to their demands for a wage increase provided that job reservation be suspended in certain spheres and certain jobs at the bottom of the White labour scale be done by Non-Whites. On July 6th, 1965, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that the seven engineering unions involved in the negotiations 'did not reject completely the possibility that a labour shortage might justify the advancement of Non-Whites to more skilled work. But it was also made clear that this must not be imposed as a condition for the settlement of the new agreement'. The unions put forward a compromise proposal and negotiations continued.

On October 28th, 1965, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported: 'Reliable sources in the Durban Municipal Employees' Society revealed yesterday that the training and employment of Non-White electrical artisans had been accepted in principle by the society—with certain restrictions . . . that Non-White electrical workers be restricted to fitting and wiring'.

EVEN IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

The Government was also compelled to upgrade Non-Whites in its own service. Figures issued by the Bureau of Statistics show that in

1950 there were four Whites to one Non-White in the Post Office. By 1965 the proportion had dropped to three to one, and Africans had been advanced to the point where they were delivering mail. Reason—staff shortages were so severe that in some areas mail was being delivered only once a week.

In the past few years an estimated 10,000 Non-Whites have taken over White jobs on the state-owned railways. Non-Whites have been appointed as rivet heaters, coach washers, firemen, flagmen, ticket examiners and chefs on dining cars. In the House of Assembly on March 10th, 1965, the Minister of Railways, Mr. Schoeman, said he was even prepared to allow the use of Africans as shunters if the railway personnel associations agreed—at which there was ‘laughter in the House’.

The House laughed too soon. At the congress of the Spoorbond* in September 1965, the acting general manager of Railways, Mr. J. A. Kruger, said: ‘Some kinds of railway work are no longer acceptable to our people, and people even speak of kaffir work’. This was work formerly done by Whites under the Government’s ‘civilized labour policy’. Now this work is done by Non-Whites—but at ‘uncivilized’ rates of pay.

The White railway artisans’ association have reached agreement with the Minister of Transport to ‘stretch’ the rules governing the use of Non-Whites in White jobs. The president of the Railway Artisans’ Staff Association, Mr. J. H. Leibenberg, was quoted in October 1965, as saying the agreement came after a realistic assessment of the acute shortage of White labour. ‘We, as artisans, recognize that the use of a certain proportion of Non-Whites in graded jobs under existing conditions is unavoidable’.

Even the secretary of the Spoorbond told a *Daily Mail* reporter in March 1965:

The reservoir of White labour is hopeless because the cream has been skimmed off. . . . We accept that the reservoir can no longer serve the future needs of the Railways. We accept also that Non-White labour is the answer. We are quite prepared to have the railworker jobs go to Non-Whites, with Whites moving into higher categories.

In January 1966 it was announced that the Minister of Transport and the Artisan Staff Association had worked out an ‘equitable basis’ for remunerating the Non-Whites employed in White jobs. The Non-Whites are to be paid not less than 40 per cent of the minimum paid to White workers for similar work. The Johannesburg *Star*, reporting

* Railway Workers’ Union.

the agreement on January 4th, said that in some cases Non-Whites were already receiving up to 52 per cent of White wages.

In the House of Assembly on February 1st, 1966, the Minister of Transport, Mr. Schoeman, giving details of the agreement between the Administration and the Railway Staff Association, said two Coloured, fifty Indian and 634 African employees were performing work formerly reserved for Whites. The duties appertained to the following grades: stoker and deckhand on tugs and dredgers, flagman, lampman, carriage and wagon repairer, class 3; trade hand (unclassified); striker, shed attendant, crossing attendant and messenger. If the number of jobs taken over by Non-Whites in terms of the Minister's reply seems small compared with the press estimates, this may merely be due to the fact that the majority of other jobs taken over were never formally reserved for Whites although traditionally performed by them.

Die-hard trade unionists were alarmed by this agreement. The S.A. Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and the S.A. Reduction Workers' Association voiced fears that White workers would be undercut. The joint official journal of the unions said: 'Bitter experience has taught us that a work category ceded can never be ceded to a Non-White only temporarily'. They accused the employers of spreading the notion that there was a shortage of skilled workers purely in order to get labour as cheaply as possible by using Non-Whites.

Questioned about Government policy in this regard, a Department of Labour official said the Department's policy of equal pay for equal work had not changed. The Department was bound by wage-fixing legislation which did not discriminate on race lines and it would never agree to an arrangement of the sort which had been reached on the Railways. 'The Department of Labour has nothing to do with the Railways Administration whatsoever. They have their own rules'. (*Star*, January 10th, 1966.)

Only a few weeks later, however, the Minister of Labour, Mr. Trollip, sanctioned the publication of a new agreement for the Transvaal building industry in terms of which job reservation was once again relaxed and Africans were to be allowed to do all categories of work except those specifically reserved in the agreement for artisans. A whole range of new jobs in the industry is now open to Africans, who will be known as 'operators' and paid up to 60 per cent of an artisan's salary. Weekly wages for these workers are expected to range between R.20 and R.30—or about R.100 a month. (*Rand Daily Mail*, February 3rd, 1966.)

Commenting on the agreement, the outgoing president of the Witwatersrand Master Builders' Association, Mr. W. M. Parkinson, said

it was all very well for the government to sanction the use of African labour in more skilled work, but the industry was faced with a critical shortage of both skilled and unskilled workers, and the government's migratory labour policy made it difficult to see where the additional labour was to come from. The government was justifying its new policy to its followers by claiming it would not mean more Africans in towns but only more productive use of those already there. Mr. Parkinson stressed the industry had to have more African workers to ease the strain on the White workers, and this would inevitably mean more Africans in the towns.

CRISIS IN WHITE UNIONS

If, on the one hand, the Nationalist government is having difficulty reconciling its apartheid policies with the economic needs of the country, on the other hand, the trade union movement is also going through a crisis. The skilled aristocracy among the White workers still stand for no concessions to the Africans and the total maintenance of job reservation. The more hypocritical and opportunist, such as the leadership of the Trade Union Council of South Africa, on the one hand attack job reservation as 'harmful to both White and Black workers' (T.U.C. President Murray at T.U.C.S.A.'s annual conference in March 1965) and on the other, demand the maintenance of the policy of 'the rate for the job', which over the years has successfully prevented the African worker from advancing in industry.

'There should be equal pay for equal work', said Mr. Murray. 'This was not only morally justifiable for the Non-White worker but was also the only effective means of protecting the White workers' standard of living against employers willing to give work to Non-Whites at lower rates of pay'.

Mr. Murray wanted recognition of African unions and effective representation of African workers in wage negotiations if the registered trade union movement 'is not to be bled to death'.

During the last two years the T.U.C. has returned again and again to this theme. On December 29th, 1965, T.U.C.S.A. issued a strong call to 'unity' in the White trade union movement. Unless the workers stood together, said T.U.C.S.A., many were going to be priced out of the labour market. South African industries were converting to advanced mechanisation. The consequent fragmentation of skilled jobs had reached the point where untrained operators were taking over at rates much lower than those acceptable to skilled men. The call was seen as a direct appeal to the right-wing Confederation of Labour and its 90,000 members to drop past differences and allow the country's White

workers to speak with one voice. 'The workers can no longer afford the luxury of ideological dissension', said the T.U.C.

It is as well to remember that the issue on which the unions of the Confederation broke from the T.U.C. in the 1950s was the Nationalist Government's policy of trade union apartheid and no recognition of African unions. This the T.U.C. now calls 'ideological dissension' as though it were of no real significance. But once again the opportunism of the T.U.C. leadership and its abandonment of the principle of true workers' unity is failing to achieve its purpose.

On the one hand, the failure of the T.U.C. to tackle the problems of the African workers is leading in turn to inability to win their support—a failure emphasized by the dissolution of the T.U.C.-affiliated Federation of African Trade Unions of South Africa (FOFATUSA) in January 1966.

On the other hand, the lip-service paid by the T.U.C. to the concept of multi-racialism is antagonizing the right-wing White workers. In April 1966 the largest single member union of the T.U.C. with 20,000 members, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, decided to disaffiliate because it disagreed with the T.U.C.'s colour policy. Earlier, one of the A.E.U. members who had taken a leading part in the disaffiliation campaign was reported as saying the A.E.U. should be a non-aligned union, without political bias for or against the government. (*Sunday Times*, February 27th, 1966.)

Despite this blow, the T.U.C. at its annual conference in Durban in May 1966 reaffirmed its traditional policy and a motion that Africans be considered as 'employees' under the Industrial Conciliation Act and be allowed to join registered trade unions was adopted unanimously. As far as the right-wing White workers are concerned, however, the unanimity must be regarded as existing on paper only. Delegates of the Typographical Workers' Union, with 16,000 members, initiated a debate, which was held in secret, that the T.U.C. constitution be amended so as to put an end to its multi-racial character. One or two other unions—notably the Iron Moulders—supported them, but the conference took no vote on the matter, which was referred to the incoming executive for consideration.

And the representatives of the Electrical Workers' Union showed that it was quite possible to vote for 'the rate for the job' while at the same time being bitterly opposed to African advancement. They expressed their determination to fight 'tooth and nail' against the 'racial fragmentation' of their industry, and told the conference that they had declared a dispute in their industry rather than agree to employer demands that because of the shortage of labour Africans

be allowed to take on more skilled work previously restricted to White artisans.

The Electrical Workers said the policy of advancing Africans was threatening White workers in other industries as well, and moved a resolution deploring the fact that the Government was increasingly granting exemptions from its job reservation proclamations in order to allow Non-Whites to do skilled work at lower rates of pay.

The resolution was referred to the incoming executive for consideration, but it seems clear that there will be further resignations if T.U.C.S.A. does nothing to oppose further encroachment of Non-Whites into the sphere of skilled work. On the other hand, once it abandons its multi-racialism, the main reason for its existence will have disappeared.

GREATER EXPLOITATION

Meanwhile, what of the Non-White workers? It is clear that the break-down of old labour patterns is enabling a section of them to advance up the economic ladder. How many and how far they have been able to rise is by no means clear, since no adequate survey has been made and no comprehensive statistics are available. Mr. Harry Goldberg, chairman of the Bantu Wages and Productivity Association, told the *Sunday Times* (March 28th, 1965):

From April to November last year the average wage (of Africans in urban industry) rose from R.37.9 to R.39.4 per month, at a rate of about 6½ per cent a year. The retail price index was rising at about 4 per cent a year, so real wages were advancing at the rate of 2½ per cent a year. The comparable figures for the five years from 1959 to 1963 showed an average increase of 6 per cent a year in money wages and 4 per cent in real wages.

A calculation by the Standard Bank, reported in the 1964 *Survey of Race Relations* gives the Non-White per capita income in various years at constant prices adjusted to 1953 values as:

				Rand	Percentage increase over previous year
1950	..	..	..	56.35	
1960	..	..	..	54.06	
1961	..	..	..	55.26	2.2
1962	..	..	..	56.72	2.6
1963	..	..	..	59.91	5.6

These two sets of figures are not strictly comparable. The first is for the wages of urban African workers only; the second is the per capita income for all Non-Whites in all occupations. But both sets of figures indicate an extremely low standard of living, with advancement so far having brought only minimal benefits to a handful. Both sets of figures also indicate that Non-White living standards are far lower

than indicated by the Minister of Finance in his 1961 assessment, quoted in the earlier portion of this article.

Far too many workers—thought to be more than 45 per cent—are being paid below a poverty datum line of R.48 per month, said Mr. Goldberg in the interview already quoted. Many are living below the ‘dire poverty line’ of R.30 per month.

On the other hand, the advancement of the African worker in urban industry has been of definite benefit to the bosses. Mr. Goldberg said: ‘The wage increases paid to Bantu industrial workers since 1938 have been accompanied by a greater than equivalent increase in productivity. And a director of the Bantu Wages and Productivity Association, Mr. Raymond Silberbauer, added: ‘The very partial use of our Bantu labour force offers the most startling possibility for productivity increase. Some firms recorded a 100 per cent increase in productivity, and even beyond this to amounts as high as 200 and even 300 per cent.’

Official statistics on productivity in secondary industry in the same *Sunday Times* article show that, taking the 1957 index as 100, productivity per head rose to 110 in 1959, 125½ in 1961 and 140 in 1962. ‘Later figures are not available, but industrialists believe they will have soared further’.

More Africans are producing more goods and more profits for the bosses, but getting less pay in proportion—this is the brutal truth of the so-called ‘relaxation of job reservation’ which has been taking place in South Africa. Latest Bureau of Statistics figures for employment in industry for the period 1962-63 show that total White pay increased by 10.6 per cent and total African pay by 11.7 per cent over the previous year, to R.468 million and R.195 million respectively. *But in the same period the profit rate almost doubled to R.353 million.*

Job reservation or no job reservation, under the Nationalist Government the exploitation of Non-White labour is being steadily intensified. This is one of the gravest problems confronting the trade union and national liberation movements, and demands a speedy answer.