

Feudalism in the age of computers

— an analysis of recruitment strategies to reserve and allocate labour

Marian Lacey



There are no jobs here. What must we do? Our children are starving... before we could look for work for ourselves and then come back and join. We can't do this anymore since this independence thing. Some of us have been waiting now for over a year... Things are getting worse and worse... the only hope is for work on the farms, not even the mines want us now.

(Interview: workseeker, Herschel district, October 1981)

In October 1981, when this interview was conducted, South Africa was experiencing an unprecedented but short-lived boom, a boom which barely affected recruitment in the bantustans. If anything the position had worsened. In the space of five years recruitment had dropped by well over 850 000 registrations.

By mid 1982 a recession had set in leading to the retrenchment of tens of thousands of workers. An inestimable number found that when their contracts ended these were not renewed. Retrenchments and dismissals became the order of the day across the country and in almost all sectors.

Particular sectors hit were those employing large numbers of contract workers. A brief survey of selected headlines in 1982 gives a stark picture: Slump hits metal workers; Sats (South African Travel Services) cuts no of workers by 7 000 — thousands will lose jobs as recession takes its toll; Sats cutback on 20 000 jobs; East Rand foundry to retrench 200; Benoni plant retrenches 600 workers; Lay offs sweep East Rand industry; 2 000 affected in Anglo American coal mines; Iscor's cream souring — 10 000 workers to be slashed; 5 000 reduction in Metal industry — unions fighting lay-offs; 1 000 workers at Highveld steel; Union lashes motor plant over retrenchments — 800 Sigma men sacked; 39 workers retrenched Good-Year, Ford 507 workers in June, 1982; Volkswagen retrench 315 workers — April 1982; 250 Leyland workers laid-off; Giant Chemical Group to retrench 500; 10 500 textile workers soon jobless; Garment workers unite; Employees sacrifice jobs to save colleagues.

Add to this, the massive crackdown on 'illegals', the continued and rising number of pass law arrests since the moratorium in 1979; and the ruthless brutality used against people said to be squatting illegally in urban areas and a picture very different from the much heralded 'liberal reform era' can be painted.

Essentially, what I hope to show in this paper, is that Riekert's proposed reforms with regard to urban blacks, which occur alongside the continued mass relocation scheme and the present tightening-up of labour recruitment and control of bantustan residents, are not contradictory, but part of a process of adapting the system of labour control to meet specific interests and changing economic, political and ideological circumstances.

Furthermore, I hope to show that the large reservoir or reserve army of labour, which has been built up in the bantustans, is and must be seen as an integral part of the workforce and not a marginal category of unemployable people beyond it. The streamlining and tightening-up of the labour allocation and recruitment system, as described in this paper, must therefore be seen as part of the State's present concern to incorporate *all* workers into a single integrated system of control.

The Riekert commission was appointed to carry out this task. As Riekert in his Report has shown in great detail and as subsequent steps taken have proved, what is required is a far more complex and coercive system of allocating and *reserving* a supply of labour to different categories of employer — defined variously by sector, industry and location.

THE CONTRACTION AND RELOCATION OF TRADITIONAL LABOUR POOLS

In the past decade an urgent need to devise new labour strategies arose in response to increasing labour militancy and changed conditions for capital expansion in South Africa. This, along with both a massive cutback in recruitment from South Africa's neighbouring states and the uprootal and removal of some 3½ million Africans (SPP estimate) from so-called 'white' rural areas and towns, served to disorganise capital's traditional reserve army of labour. All sectors were equally affected by the contraction and relocation of their traditional labour pools as the following discussion makes clear.

a) Revised recruitment strategies in the mining sector

The mines, in the wake of the withdrawal of 100 000 mineworkers by the Malawian government after the air-crash in 1974 and the establishment of an avowedly Marxist government in Mozambique the following year, saw

a massive reduction in their recruitment of foreign indentured workers. Recruitment of foreign workers for all sectors in 1974 dropped from a total of 763 674, of whom 231 666 and 227 619 were from Malawi and Mozambique respectively, to 301 758 in 1981, of whom only 30 602 were Malawians and 59 391 Mozambicans. The Chamber of Mines recruitment statistics for the period 1973-1979 illustrate the cutback in recruitment of foreign indentured mineworkers, and the urgent need, particularly between 1974 and 77, to replace those lost, with local workers. The number of foreign workers on the mines fell from just over 80% of the workforce in 1973 to barely 40% in 1979.

The urgency of the mines' position was realised in 1976, when, despite the substantial wage increases after 1973 and accelerated unemployment in the wake of the world-wide recession in 1974/75, the mines found they were unable to attract local workers. Only 4 000 novices presented themselves in 1974 to replace the 100 000 Malawians ordered to leave by Banda in that year, while overall recruitment suffered a shortfall of over 58 000 workers.

To break down traditional resistance of local workers to minework, state intervention was essential. This took various forms, the principal ones being: manipulation of nationality, citizenship and immigration laws so as to create an internal reserve of legally designated 'foreign' workers. As 'foreigners' they could be denied free access to certain categories of work and so be channelled into mining. In addition to this the state could also zone labour supply areas from mine recruitment only, and in

so doing, build-up a reservoir of labour for the mines to draw on. Once a district was unofficially zoned in this way, categorization of workers in zoned districts became possible and overtime, wastage, associated with the training of novices, would be greatly reduced.

A variation on this method in use was through the selective distribution of requisitions. Areas where the mines recruited heavily were by-passed in the distribution of requisitions on the grounds, as one labour officer in the Transkei put it, that, 'we have to give all districts a fair chance, so as requisitions are short we leave out mining areas'. (Interview: labour officer Butterworth October 1981).

Over and above these measures, the Chamber of Mines has also tightened-up on its own recruitment practices. In a bid to stabilize the local workforce, 'bonus cards', pioneered by the Anglo American Group in the 60s, have been extended throughout the industry; all mineworkers have been brought under a highly centralized system of computerized control enabling the mines to determine the level of skill, experience and work record of every worker in its employ.

With the steady implementation of these revised strategies, Theba officials report that today they have more than a 101% compliment and more in reserve. 'Fences are being flattened' and 'gates are kept locked' to keep out the hundreds of workers clamouring for minework. (Giliomee 1982). As one senior Theba official described the position:

Gone are the days of hectic active recruitment still seen in '76. We are building up our local reservoir

Processing of migrant labourer at Mabopane

photo: Paul Alberts



of workers. They are accepting longer contracts, with shorter rest periods between... In fact to be a mine worker in the Transkei today, you are considered a privileged person.

(Interview: Theba official Butterworth October 1981)

There is little doubt that the destitute conditions in the bantustans, accelerated unemployment and better wages on the mines, have helped to break down earlier resistance to minework. But above all, it is argued, it is the real absence of any choice, even in boom times, which acts to secure an inexhaustible supply of labour for the mines.

b) Revised recruitment strategies in the farming sector

Not only the mines' foreign reserve army was disorganised by these events. In 1970, farmers were still recruiting 45 000 workers from outside South Africa. By 1977 this number had dropped to 16 000 and with stepped-up security in the wake of increased ANC activity, at the end of 1982 only 9 000 Mozambicans were given permission to return to work on the farms.

Within South Africa itself, the mass resettlement scheme executed over the past two decades, has resulted in the removal of an estimated 660 000 Africans from white farms, while steady expropriation of 'black-spot' and 'badly situated areas', has resulted in the relocation of a further 450 000 people from the 'white' areas. With this mass relocation of former labour and cash tenants and their families, farmers have had to shift from maintaining the largest possible labour supply on the farm to meet their variable labour requirements, to one of relying on a smaller core of permanently settled skilled workers, supplemented by extensive recruitment of casual/seasonal labour from the bantustans.

With the present oversupply of unskilled workers in the bantustans, the farmers too have an inexhaustible supply from which to draw on. If given the choice however, workseekers from the bantustans continue to resist farm work. Resistance to low wages still paid by many farmers and the fear of permanent classification in the farm worker category were suggested as reasons why some farmers still experience difficulty in securing a steady supply of seasonal workers.

But many thousands more are gradually being denied this choice. Evidence collected during extensive research in the eastern Cape and Transvaal bantustans revealed that a high correlation exists between the level of destitution in a particular area and the type, and often the absence of requisitions sent to those areas. In some instances areas remote from either the labour bureau or town were declared unofficially 'closed' to all recruitment bar farming. The farmers have a field day in such areas. They, or their private recruiting agents, are able to move into such areas to pick up men, women and children, and are assured of their supply. A worker whose reference book was still endorsed 'farm labour only', despite the fact that he had been relocated 10 years earlier to Sada, described his position thus:

Before some of us here always worked on farms in this area (Queenstown-Whittlesea)... then we were moved here over ten years ago. We were forced to sell our cattle and land to plough... In the first few years

after the farmers were finished with us, many of us would get work for cash on the roads or the government... now not even those jobs are for us... we must just starve for the six months after they throw us back here.

(Interview: Hewu labour office, February 1980)

Even workers relocated from the farms find themselves still tied to farm work, but immeasurably worse off. Dispossessed of land, stock and wage contributions from more than one member of the household under the former labour tenancy system, once relocated, they return to the farms as 'single' workers and become separated from their families, trapped as they are in the migrant labour system. Seasonal work lasts only from a three to six month period, so casual farm employees remain severely under-employed. Those who commute daily to farms, as an ever increasing number do, are no better off. Competition for jobs is intense in many areas so wages are low, some are even being forced to accept payment in kind for their services. As one woman who commutes daily to a tomato farm bordering the Lebowa bantustan explained:

We women here and even our children are forced to go and pick tomatoes on the farms nearby. What can we do, there is no other work for our men and even the farmer doesn't want them. If we work on the farms we will maybe get some food and then we can sell the tomatoes that the farmer uses to pay us.

Without this little bit our children will starve.

(Interview Moketsi district, Lomondokop resettlement area April 1982)

The Farm Labour Project in their submission to the Manpower Commission reported conditions similar to this in other commuter farm areas. As found elsewhere casual workers were being paid a derisory wage of anything from 50c to R1 a day. Men on the whole continue to resist being forced into farm work, but for women, trapped in the bantustans, who in the majority of instances have no other source of income, there is no other option but farm work.

Clearly farmers have benefitted from the creation of resettlement areas remote from towns or border industrial growth points. This, alongside the trend to zone labour supply areas for farm recruitment only, and the more recent practice of setting up assembly points run by administration board officials in mobile vans, rather than widely dispersed tribal labour bureaux, has meant that even fewer requisitions than in the past will ever reach remote bantustan districts. In time, the farmers too will be assured a steady stream of seasonal workers.

Attempts however, to secure a permanent core of fulltime wage labourers on the farms has proved far more difficult. Although desertion to the towns has all but stopped as a result of strict influx controls which prevent farm workers from moving from non-prescribed (ie rural) to prescribed urban areas, farmers complain that *many thousands more eventually get to the towns by first relocating themselves to the bantustans*. As early as 1964 attempts were made to solve this problem by creating a separate rural and industrial stream along a non-prescribed/prescribed divide. But as the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development made clear in 1968, it was not the solution that was at fault, but the farmers' failure to register all their employees. Opening the

Agricultural show at Middleburg he stated:

It is not only government policy that Bantu labourers may not move from the farms to the urban areas to work there, it is also clearly laid down in the relevant regulations. The greatest difficulty, however, lies in the execution of these regulations and here I fear large sections of the farming community are making their own labour positions more difficult as well as complicating our task to prevent illegal infiltration into the cities.

He then went on to detail how the system operates in practice:

A record of every registered Bantu farm labourer in your service is kept in a central register in Pretoria, and the position is that the labourer cannot be employed in the urban areas, because as soon as his service contract must be registered, it will be established that he is a farm labourer, and then he cannot legally be taken into service. The whole control machinery with reference to Bantu farm labourers revolves therefore around the single cog of the registration of each labourer in your service at your local Bantu Affairs Commissioners' office.

This exact system is still in operation today, but far more efficiently run. Not only have farmers been compelled to expel all surplus workers, labour tenant and squatters thus simplifying the registration procedure, but all workers have now been brought under computerized control. So even farm workers who try to get to the towns via the bantustan escape route could find in the future that their former 'farm labour only' classification is a bar to other work. Far more research in this area will have to be done to establish this trend with any certainty, but as far as fulltime farm workers are concerned, it is suggested that with their numbers rapidly shrinking attempts will be made to 'Riekertize' their position in a bid to stabilize a permanently settled core of more skilled farm workers needed on highly mechanized and agribusiness farms.

c) Revised recruitment strategies in the manufacturing sector

Revisions in the labour system have also been demanded by the manufacturing sector — especially its most capital intensive multi-national component with its growing demand for a skilled and stabilized workforce.

This, combined with growing worker militancy and popular struggles against the degraded living and working conditions of urban workers, necessitated a revised strategy towards Africans who qualify for permanent residence rights.

The revised strategy, embodied in Riekert's proposals, aimed firstly to reduce rigidities in the labour supply by allowing section 10 rights to be exercised throughout urban areas *as long as* employment and housing are available and secondly to move away from a system based on race and control via the police, blackjacks and prosecution of pass offenders, to one based on citizenship and control by employers and registered house owners/tenants. An extension of these controls will be the continued deprivation of citizenship via 'independence' of the bantustans; and critical to these moves is the need to bring *all* workers under computerized control. Hence the crackdown on 'illegals' through the 1979 moratorium



Newly recruited migrant labourer with his family, Ga-Rankuwa district 1979
photo: Paul Alberts

which put the onus on employers to 'register' workers as section 10d workers on contract under threat of a R500 fine.

Similarly the Crossroads 'concessions' brought people under control since they had to register to claim entitlement to jobs and housing. Nyanga shows the other side of the coin, as immigration laws were invoked to expel those who were said to be 'foreigners' from the 'independent' bantustan in the Transkei.

Further, the use of housing as an instrument of control has been refined by the decision to make house-ownership under 99-year leasehold a condition of urban security. Proof of approved accommodation is thus being *selectively* used in various ways: first to shunt the poor and the economically inactive (in state parlance the 'superfluous appendages') out of the urban areas; second as a means to further reduce social costs by shifting the cost of reproducing labour-power away from the wage packet to workers and their families living in the bantustans. Third, to further reduce the number qualifying for section 10 rights by transforming as many people as possible into 'frontier commuters'; and last, by encouraging house-ownership. Not only is the state trying to foster the growth of a stable 'middle class', but a docile working class as well. In the case of the latter, once in occupation of houses built, subsidized or financed by loans by their employers, their dismissal could mean eviction and then endorsement out of town. The government's current programme to sell off 500 000 housing units, will win



photo: Paul Alberts

much sought-after security for the more affluent urban resident, but for the homeless and poor the consequences will be disastrous.

These proposed reforms are to be extended to a mere 5 300 000 urban Africans who qualify for section 10 rights and who can afford to maintain them. Equally important, they must be seen as being inextricably linked to measures geared to ensure the efficient exploitation and control of bantustan dwellers who have been denied even these few concessions. Urban gains are thus at the expense of the majority of Africans condemned to live in destitute bantustans.

The manipulation of citizenship and immigration laws as an instrument for allocating and reserving labour

By December 1981, with the granting of 'independence' to the Ciskei bantustan, all Xhosa-Tswana and Venda-speaking people had been deprived of their South African citizenship. In the space of five years, eight million South Africans were declared legal 'foreigners' — aliens in the country of their birth.

The numbers game has undoubted political and ideological advantages for the white minority in South Africa, whose fear of black majority rule is legion. This deprivation of millions of South Africans of their citizenship must also be seen as a 'non-negotiable' aspect of South Africa's present policy which aims to create an ethnically based political partition of South Africa along either federal or confederal lines. (H Zille, Sars, 1982). Connie Mulders' classic formulation in 1978 spells out the ultimate fate of all Africans in South Africa. In this he stated: 'If our policy is taken to its logical conclusion as far as black people are concerned there will be not one black man with South African citizenship... Every black man in South Africa will eventually be accommodated in some independent new state in this honourable way and there will no longer be a moral obligation in this Parliament to accommodate these people politically.' (quoted in Zille *ibid.*)

But what of the State's economic and social obliga-

tions? How does the loss of citizenship and the manipulation of immigration laws have any bearing on the revised system of labour reservation and allocation?

Winterveld may be characterised as a squatter/commuter camp housing more than half a million 'internal refugees' of the apartheid system. Sited within the 'independent' Bophuthatswana border these refugees have been deprived of their South African citizenship. But the majority living there are non-Tswanas who have rejected that bantustan's 'citizenship'. This renders them 'stateless' in the legal non-sense.

Their removal to their putative ethnically appropriate bantustan has been stalled, as most families living there have one person or more in their household working and commuting daily to the PWV and surrounding areas. Between the South African state and the Bophuthatswana bantustan administration a conflictual, but still happy marriage of convenience has been consummated. In this, neither partner will take responsibility for the health, welfare, education or housing of the Winterveld refugees spawned by the system. While both sides drag their feet millions of rand are being saved the taxpayer. But the real and immediate beneficiaries of this partnership are the profit-minded capitalists who at present reap enormous benefits from having a highly vulnerable and docile reservoir of commuter labour to draw from — without the social costs involved in reproducing labour power.

The mushrooming of similar squatter camps on the borders of all bantustans within commuting distance of towns and growth points is significant in another way: it proves the success of influx control via the bantustan 'independence' policy. In the long term, these vast squatter slums could become potential hotbeds for political violence. But segregated far out of sight and mind of whites in South Africa, they can be effectively and easily policed and controlled. Ironically, even apartheid's most virulent critics ignore the plight of these 'internal refugees' — because they happen to be living in an 'independent' bantustan which the international community refuses to recognise.

As declared 'foreigners' they are subject to new controls. Entry into 'white' South Africa of 'foreigners' will be more strictly policed. Freedom of 'foreign' workers to choose jobs or mines on which they wish to work can be severely restricted. As 'foreign' workers they can be forced to accept jobs shunned by local workers — these are usually the lowest paid menial tasks for which safety and health conditions are poor and often dangerous; where hours, especially in the case of shift work, are not congenial for men settled with their families in the towns. Similarly, industries such as agriculture, clothing, textiles, building etc, highly vulnerable to cyclical and seasonal demands, will benefit from this system. They will be able to recruit workers as 'foreigners', then hire and fire them at will.

A policy of assimilation or integration would destroy this mobility — ie the workers' re-exportability and dispensability. To sum up then, the ruthlessness with which workers from the Transkei were deported from the Nyanga bush site in Cape Town; the abrogation of financial responsibility towards squatters living within bantustan borders; the massive reductions of the migratory labour force during the present economic down-swing and the crackdown and expulsion of 'illegals', is proof

that the influx control system, refined via the logic of bantustan 'independence', functions as it is meant to.

As the remaining 'self-governing' bantustans are forced to take 'independence', so the state's capacity to control and police the entry and repatriation of migrants will become easier. In the meantime, the state has resorted to other mechanisms of controlling and allocating labour to which we now turn.

Job categorization and the zoning of labour supply areas

In the pre-Riekert era, it was the workseeker from the bantustan who had a far wider choice of jobs than the urban dweller. The latter was tied to jobs within the administration board area in which he resided. Employers moreover were encouraged to recruit widely for their additional labour needs.

This position is now being reversed. Today, with the greater mobility of urban workers, combined with the enforced local labour preference policy and the zoning of labour supply areas, the numbers of workers recruited from the bantustans is being massively reduced. In addition the category of jobs open to bantustan workers is being steadily narrowed.

As a direct consequence of these strategies, the urban unemployed countryside have become the principal source of industries reserve army. Hence the massive cutback in bantustan recruitment. Once the computers in the 14 Administration Board areas are aligned to one another, greater mobility of this urban reservoir will be effected. The local labour preference option will operate more efficiently, and the number of bantustan requisitions for urban employment can be expected to drop even more dramatically.

To enforce the local labour preference policy, the power of ABs to decide who, and for whom a workseeker may or may not work has been greatly enhanced. This, together with the high unemployment and deepening recession have made it easier for ABs to push through their plans to restructure the workforce along an urban/bantustan divide.

Their first step in this process, was to crackdown on 'illegals' through the moratorium in 1979. This brought all unregistered workers under computerized control.

Once this was achieved, the ABs moved to close certain jobs to contract workers. Local workers in turn were coerced into taking jobs normally shunned by them, by the soaring costs of basic necessities, transport and services — just as Riekert in his report predicted would happen.

On top of this, the housing shortage is being used as one of the chief instruments of control to enforce the local labour preference policy. ABs, on the grounds that no 'suitable' accommodation is available, have instructed employers to recruit locally. As a result, some workers recruited annually under the automatically renewable call-in-card system have reported that their contracts have been cancelled. This accounts for some of the cutbacks in bantustan recruitment.

The key to efficient computerized control of all workers is their registration. The R500 imposed on employers of 'illegals' has undoubtedly curbed the practice of engaging unregistered workers. As a consequence more and more workers are being forced back to the bantustans where they have to wait to be officially recruited, attested and computerized.

This crackdown on 'illegals' and the containment of workseekers within the bantustan boundaries has, moreover, opened the way for a far more efficient system of zoning labour supply areas. Workers in the remote bantustan areas are being shored-up to be channelled into the mining and farming sectors.

A more recent and sophisticated trend in zoning labour supply areas is emerging however. This appears to be based on the strategy that ethnicity will eventually become a fundamental organising principle in the canalisation of labour. Such a trend is well illustrated in the emerging pattern of recruitment by the Drakensburg and Port Natal ABs over a three-year period.

As the table below shows, there has been a steady cutback of workers from beyond Natal.

Seen in a political context, this rezoning of labour supply areas along ethnic lines fits in well with Prof Lombard's belief, that the successful launching of a federal scheme will depend on the state's ability to regulate the demographic distribution of its workers. He argues, that

Drakensburg				Port Natal		
	1979	1980	1981	1979	1980	1981
Lebowa				712	766	18
Gazankulu				642	625	41
Qwa Qwa	1 168	283	503	2 518	2 904	113
Ka Ngwane	703	366	302	1 020	1 144	96
Kwa Zulu	172 154	225 372	255 120	282 220	303 297	348 285
Kwa Ndebele	419	114	165	68	47	16
Venda	34	18	79	24	20	8
Bophuthatswana	24	388	501	84	59	12
Ciskei	379	1 752	1 526	573	460	16
Transkei	14 310	20 026	25 807	47 980	34 358	21 731
	189 191	248 319	284 003	335 841	348 680	368 336

labour must be allocated in a way that would 'keep the descendants of the different major African chiefdoms living in and around their original areas of settlement.' (Zille, Sars, 1982)

Moreover, as the regional decentralization programme, foreshadowed in both the Carlton and Cape of Good Hope Conferences, is elaborated to coincide with the political decentralization of metropolitan areas, so the trend to channel labour within zoned AB areas could be extended further.

The zoning of labour supply areas was however first used to stabilise the labour supply in border areas. The relocation of entire urban communities to dormitory towns within bantustan borders was one of the main mechanisms used to reduce the number of people qualifying for section 10 rights. The scale of such relocation can be seen from the rapid growth of bantustan towns and the concomitant increase in the number of 'frontier commuters'. According to Smit and Booysen, there were only three towns within the bantustan borders in 1960. These had a total population of 33 468. By 1970 this number had grown to 594 420. Eight years later in 1978, the population had more than doubled reaching an estimated 1,5 million people.

Alongside the growth of these towns the number of people commuting daily to work also grew phenomenally. Mastouroudes, in his report commissioned for Unit for Futures Research, estimated that in 1981 almost 740 000 people commuted daily to work. Assuming all these commuters were in registered employment it would mean that out of a total of 1 161 494 jobs registered in 1981, less than half, viz 420 794 were for non-commuter labour. In both the Ciskei and KaNgwane there were proportionately a far higher number of commuters than migrant workers — 37 100 commuters and only 9 288 registrations for Ciskeians countrywide. In KaNgwane more than half the number of registered workers were commuters, while KwaZulu was able to boast a commuter population of 400 600 out of a total of 492 131 recruited (from an analysis of figures supplied by Sheena Duncan: HAD May 1983).

When dormitory towns were first created to serve bor-

der industrial growth points, workers relocated were guaranteed a preferential access to jobs in the towns from which they were removed. This guarantee has back-fired. Today, with the more sophisticated and systematic zoning system, these same workers are immobilized as trapped pools of labour to serve the needs of employers zoned in their area. The example of Itsoseng illustrates the fate of these workers.

Itsoseng was established as a commuter area for towns in the western Transvaal. It lies 40km west of Lichtenburg on the main Mafikeng road. Population estimates vary between 30 and 50 thousand and unemployment stands at over 50 per cent. Competition for jobs is intense, and wages, traditionally low in platteland towns, are depressed even further. As Itsoseng is zoned to supply labour to towns and farms which fall within the western Transvaal ABs area only, workseekers are tied to jobs in these towns. There is no escape as requisitions for other areas are not distributed in Itsoseng. Employers in turn stand to reap enormous benefits, to say nothing of profits, from having an inexhaustible, but stabilized reservoir of labour to draw from. The creation of these zoned pools is being duplicated throughout the country.

To sum up then. In the post-Riekert era, a far more complex and coercive system of allocating and reserving a supply of labour has been devised. This has ensured a steady supply of low-cost labour to different categories of employer — defined variously by sector, industry and location. In devising various strategies, the state's priority has been to incorporate all workers into a single computerized system of labour allocation and control.

What the above analysis has shown is, that, despite the declarations made by apartheid apologists that South Africa has entered into a new era of 'liberal reforms', there is little doubt that workers from the bantustans and the associated reserve army, are being far more effectively manipulated and controlled. So much so, that it can be argued instead, that South African racial capitalism can still be characterized as a forced labour system — a new 'feudalism' in the age of the computer.

Black Sash National Conference March 1983



A graveside service on the second anniversary of Neil Aggett's death, Feb 5 1984. Standing round the desecrated tombstone (spray-painted with hammer-and-sickle, 'commie', and 'hanged himself') former detainees, trade unionists, Black Sash members and members of the DPSC pay silent tribute to all who died in detention.

photo: R Tshabalala