

# Mineworkers defy racism

**Mineowners claim 'non-racial policy' but cages, change rooms and canteens are segregated by race**

**WORKERS** are continuing to oppose racism on the mines, despite several dismissals.

Once again the minebosses showed their true colours by using mine security and the SAP against workers protesting segregated facilities as part of the Mines Defiance Campaign.

Every black mineworker faces racism - not only from the apartheid government - but also at work. The racism does not only come from individual white miners, but is rooted in mine life and company policy.

Black mineworkers are discriminated against by the mineowners when it comes to:

- wages;
- job reservation;
- conditions of employment;

- trade union rights;
- housing;
- training;
- leave;
- pension schemes;
- promotion and advancement;
- medical treatment and facilities;
- and recreational and sports facilities.

Other areas where racism exists include:

- searching of black workers and not white workers;
- separate lifts and cages;
- segregated canteens and dining halls;
- segregated toilets, showers and change rooms;
- and separate sports facilities.

All the mineowners claim that they have a "non-racial policy"

and say they believe in a society free from racial barriers.

## Cheap labour policy

But these claims are totally false. Racial discrimination, migrant labour and a cheap labour policy is what the mines have been based on for more than 100 years.

The only way the mine bosses will change is through the organised unity and pressure of the workers.

All branches of NUM and workers should identify every form of racial discrimination practised in the workplace.

The lack of political and trade union rights of black workers has always worked to the advantage of the mine bosses. Mineworkers are tightly controlled so they do not rise up and fight for better

wages and working conditions, never mind the vote.

## Skilled jobs

White workers have easy access to skilled jobs while black workers occupy all the unskilled jobs.

The Chamber of Mines claims that it has done away with job reservation, but its ways and practice remain unchanged. There are very few black workers above the level of artisan or team leader.

Although the Mines and Works Act did away with the definition of "scheduled person" so potentially allowing black workers to be come onsetters or loco-drivers, new schooling qualifications were introduced.

The standards now demanded - which were never demanded for white workers - are difficult for workers to achieve because of the unequal apartheid education system.

## Training

The NUM believes that training and experience should be what counts for these jobs, not formal schooling.

When it comes to separate facilities like dining halls and toilets, the mineowners say that these are based on "status" or "seniority".

Such words are little more than a cover-up for outright baasskap. The NUM has said that if the Chamber of Mines is really committed to its claimed policy of non-racialism, it will immediately remove all "whites-only" distinctions.

Instead the Chamber has allowed white workers to carry guns at work leading to the death of Jeffrey Njuza.

It has dismissed workers who ignore racism and share facilities. At Kinross Mine on Friday 8 September, three workers were killed by mine security.

The Chamber of Mines also discriminates against workers when it comes to trade union rights. The NUM is not allowed to organise freely in the mines, like the white unions.

The NUM has always taken a very strong stand against racism.

One of the first campaigns taken up by the newly formed union was the stopping of the "piccanin" system, where mineworkers had to carry food and water for white workers.

## Mines diary of action against racism

**SOME of the many protest actions by mineworkers in the past few months have included:**

- Workers at President Steyn used change rooms reserved for whites.
- Workers at Lyttleton Dolomite Mines, Pretoria, made tea in the facilities reserved for whites. A few days later a worker was assaulted by a white miner for refusing to call him baas.
- In Springfield near Secunda, workers attempted to board busses reserved for whites and were attacked by white workers. Workers also discovered that alcohol was cheaper in the whites recreation club!
- At Rand Leases workers used change houses and forced white miners to use the queue underground.
- At Ergo workers used change rooms. Management said segregation was based on "seniority" of position. Workers then said seniority should be based on age.
- At Impala Refinery, workers used canteen and toilet facilities. One worker was assaulted by security, and two by white workers who carried pick-handles when going to the toilet.
- At Mintek workers were stopped by mine security from using the canteen.
- At Grootvlei workers started sharing the cage used by white workers.
- At Vaal Reefs East No 3 shaft on 7 August workers washed in white change rooms.
- At Vaal Reefs West No 7 shaft a worker, Alfred Khetollo, who washed in the whites only change room was assaulted by mine security.
- At Vaal Reefs South workers made team leaders and white miners all stand in one queue with all the other workers. The senior canteen was used by workers.
- In Cape Town, the branch committee of the Salt River Power Station held discussions with management around the question of racially segregated facilities.



**White racists are allowed to carry guns on mines, and are used as extra 'security' if there is a strike**