AN AFRICAN VIEW OF THE PRESENT URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL SITUATION
IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. African attitudes towards present realities:

The accelerated pace that industrialization has taken in South Africa
has affected all population groups. The group affected mostly is the
African group. This is owing to the fact that the demands against
labour shortages has drawn in more and more Africans into the urban
and industrial situation, on a vast and unprecedented scale. Never
before in the history of South Africa have so many Africans, men and
women, been forced to rely on themselves as a labour force - as is the
trend today.

In the urban situation, African workers have increased so tremendously
in numbers that there is not enough accommodation for them. Despite
the increase in townships built by the municipalities and the Bantu
Administration Department. A negative sociological factor.

Notwithstanding restrictions, Africans have increased very greatly in
the manufacturing, construction, transport and trading sectors.
Africans have also moved into jobs previously reserved for whites or
the other race groups. Even the Railways Department, perhaps the
most conservative sector that still commands a large force of white
workers, has had to concede to the present industrial demands, allowing
Africans to drive Railway buses running into African areas. Africans
are also being allowed to become shunters, a job classified "white"
all along.

However white restrictions on black workers have not stopped. The Bantu
Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act has been modernized and improved to
function more efficiently. The Wage Boards have become powerful and
rather too strong even for the government itself. So much that even the
Prime Minister had to publicly condemn the uncompromising stand on some
firms (factory employers) when the Africans' demands for higher wages
were being resisted.

All this in a country where strike action is still illegal.

The illegality of strike action is cemented, further, by the Border Industries Act through which the white power sector encourages development of industries in areas bordering on "Bantu" areas. Where a vast labour pool is made available to industrialists. There Africans are taken on as factory workers minus the different labour conditions that their employers would have to comply with in city areas. For an example, at Pinetown, New Germany and Hammarsdale textile factories can employ women in some yarn processing departments. These women do jobs that demand shift work. Jobs that, besides, would be more suitable for men in a society that still clings to traditional beliefs. And more so when considering the male labour surplus existing in South Africa. But because it is cheaper to employ female workers as machine operators many factories give them preference to male workers.

Again the problem of female labour has long been a bone in the throat for the rather conservative African community. At Clermont Township an African residential area near Pinetown there are hundreds of women from the reserves (especially the Transkei) who rent rooms as lodgers. They work at nearby Pinetown and New Germany. These women are engaged at low basic wages. They also easily comply with shift work. Since they are left with no alternatives considering the harsh labour and influx control regulations operating in this country. And often they have to crowd themselves into small stuffy rooms in groups of up to ten.

This is not without economic and social consequence.

These women, forced to leave their rural areas and seek work in these factories, readily accept the low wage rates that recently caused strikes in the whole country. It also means that the urbanized young people from areas surrounding the towns or within them cannot easily bargain for better pay. Often they come to find they cannot get employment easily at these factories since the employers regard them as being too demanding. This keeps the bargaining position for better pay largely in the hands of the white employers.

In the social plane the single status of so many women from the
urban and rural areas means they easily fall prey to men who will
only use them and later abandon them to the ghetto situation. Lack
of accommodation has also led unsuspecting women to unscrupulous acts.

The situation in central areas is just as precarious. With the
implementation of the Bantustan policies on a faster pace the urban
African has suddenly found himself insecure and his situation eroding
instead of improving. The urban population has become too big for the
"African jobs" available. Though there has been a slight break in job
reservation practices, the young people who reach high school or go to
university find that there are not enough jobs for them to get into.
Loss of a job then means the chances of obtaining another place of
employment are quite slim .

In the municipal townships residential rights are hard to acquire;
and pretty intricate. Unless one has a permit one cannot spend the
night in the municipal townships. All visitors ought to be reported at
the superintendents office. And furthering on this point is the common
practice of keeping a watchful eye on unemployed residents.

Employment is today mainly through the labour bureaux. In the morning
crowds of workseekers will crowd at the local Labour Bureau, hoping to
strike some job. Many return home hungry; and dejected. Moreso since
most urbanized Africans have, through experience, become choosy on the
type of jobs they are ready to take on.

Further pressure is added on by the sharply rising cost of living.
Food prices, transport, entertainment fees, medical fees, have spiralled
increasingly within the last three years. Which makes the urban African
expect more for his labour. The supermarkets in the city shopping
centres do offer cut prices in commodities. But it is not easy for the
lowly paid African to produce cash for everything he needs on the consumer
market.

Indeed/........

Indeed the shops that are mostly patronized by blacks are those that
offer low deposits for higher purchase and those that offer small
instalment plans. The majority of young urban Africans have to
purchase their clothes on the lay-bye system - because of a lack of
social security and financial trust.

The urban townships are a separate world within a world of common
situation, the urban situation. Yet the African does not always
identify or, rather, is not allowed to identify with the urban situation.

Too many African are frustrated with the industrial situation:

"I have been going to that labour office for almost two weeks now.
Spending money. And I'm from all that way - Hammarsdale. This
Pinetown is far. Still no job. And I wouldn't want to go to that
labour office they have there at Hammarsdale. The factories they:
don't pay as much. You are sent to a lousy low-paying job. There
it's far. You pay more for transport". The discrepancy in pay may
be unfounded. But this shows the level of mistrust that has built
itself up through years of bitter experiencing.

And in the factories the work conditions also give one the knocks:-

"You know, since you left there's been so many changes that one doesn't
know what to do or what is what. They changed the manager, brought in
a new "mabhalane",[1] fired so many chaps, changed our   shifts
and gave more say to that bastard of "induna" [2]. I don't know what
is what".

Matthews is about 24 years old. We had been at the same factory.
Already he feels insecure, and lost. Like the young man seeking a job
some fifteen to eighteen miles from his home (above).

Also this young woman who did shifts at one of the Pinetown factories:-

"I'm lucky/........

1. "mabhalane" - African clerk   2. "induna" - boss boy

"I'm lucky I'm at the factory clinic. Yet how can one enjoy shift
work of this nature, just having to sit and do almost nothing most
the time?"

Again meeting one of the former factory mates who had shown reluctance
to strike action, I was able to get this reaction out of him:-

Question: "What did you make of the strikes, now that you say you
are getting the R2,00 extra like everybody else?"

Answer: "Actually there is fuck-all gained. As everything has
gone up at the shops".

Question: "You mean it is still not enough, what you're getting?"

Answer: "And worse than that too. You now have to stand more shit
at work. Just because of that little increase".

Question: "You mean more work?"

Answer: "More work. And not only that. You are now expected to
be able to run more machines. If you prove to be slow, you
are fired. Refuse overtime, you're fired".

So with the Blacks job security becomes of more vital importance than
the pay. The underline industrial situation is a situation of uncertainty.

In the urban situation too there is this anxiety. For an example there is
this Durban talk of Kwa Mashu Township having to fall under the Kwa Zulu
consolidation plan. People long used to striving for urban rights as
"Durban Natives" cannot but feel worried over their future in the city
of Durban. All those battles fought, for Durban residential rights.
Again there has been talk of Chesterville location having to move into
Ntuzuma Township to the north of Kwa Mashu. Both Kwa Mashu and Ntuzuma
are in the Inanda District. Yet people get excited on the subject.
They sort of feel edgy, not knowing what to do. At Ntuzuma there were
as yet no electrical facilities.

And all thos e gadgets working on mains, owned by Chesterville's residents.
All those gadgets that made the homes a little cosy and a bit attractive.
The spirit of belonging.

The anxiety is the same all over. At Johannesburg's Alexandra Township there is Sandton, that vast and sprawling white expansion scheme that is threatening to smother Alexandra. The people of Alex are being referred to either Thembisa or Meadowlands. Thembisa is miles out to the north of Germiston. And Meadowlands is at far out Soweto. At Pietermaritzburg there is, now and then, a rumour of a possible move of Sobantu Village. Meanwhile the city grows. Towards them.

Anxiety breeds alienation. The style of life in an African township may be identical. But only on the surface. Because the identity elements are not drawn in harmonious fashion, socialwise. There is, always, the lack of the communal element. People go all out, to the point of alienation, trying to seek commonness with their neighbour. This can be seen from the almost too common design, make and quality of articles such as hi-fi's, stoves, clothing, colour schemes, etc., that are found in any African township. This commonness violates the variation principle of individual freedom in creation and in taste. For people are not mass produced. No matter how tight the human condition. Alienation brings in frustration and cynicism - breeders of social violence in a ghetto situation.

The sixties and the early seventies saw a marked increase in train disasters in African areas. Trains carrying mainly African commuters and general passengers crashed and killed large numbers of Africans. The most recent rail crash near Durban occurred not many miles from Durban near Mariannhill. It was, as the case usually is, a train with mostly Black people. This tendency is being seen as an expression of violence against Black people. When one has to bear in mind that the social neuroses in the whites who operate the rail system can ooze out in their various jobs where they have black lives in their hands.

Strikes also showed a marked increase. There was an apparent relaxation of job reservation. Africans began to move into jobs previously open to whites and coloureds only. Especially in the building trade.

This apparent relaxation was not a reversal of policy on the part of the white rulers. Just a condition imposed by the shortage of white skilled artisans. Though the Department of Bantu Administration had promised that freedom of movement for Africans was going to be more relaxed 1972 saw the processing of more than 11,000 pass offence cases according to a newspaper report (Natal Mercury 11/7/73).

A growing worker consciousness, prompted by a chain of strike actions that first raised head amongst Durban's dock workers as early back as 1969, has led to a change of approach from the white trade union movement; and white leadership in general. A workers benefit society was launched by the liberal sector of Natal's white labour and academic leadership groups. Following a campaign for more wages to be paid to Africans. A wages commission was formed, leading to the launching of the Benefit Society. Recently there has developed an Institute of Industrial Education, aimed at enhancing African aspirations in the trade union movement. Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, the Anglo-American Corporation's chairman also expressed concern at the African's involvement in South Africa's industry and economy. But, as he put it, "this cannot be accomplished in a single generation and it requires massive investment, not only in capital goods but in education and training of all kinds". (Daily News 18/7/73).

Meanwhile a growing concern was being shown by Africans of different walks of life over the white initiated family planning campaign. This led to a reaction from the Transkeian Chief Minister, Chief Kaizer Matanzima, who called for a halt to family planning campaigning in the homeland.

The power of the Bantustans was tested when the Kwa-Zulu leader Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was forced into making a vile attack on the government of South Africa for refusing him the services of a white secretary from Switzerland (Natal Mercury 6/7/73). But the Chief's main worry appeared to be that of having "let down" the Swiss industrialists who had been effective in the offering of the secretary's services.

2. <u>Assuming there is no immediate abdication of white power:</u>

Any white success against the restiveness of the Blacks can only
come on two basic assumptions: the short assumption and the long
assumption.

A. In the <u>short assumption</u> we may postulate on a possible <u>confrontation</u>
between the Blacks (mostly) and the white power sector on one side.
Such confrontation can by no means be clear cut, in view of the
class interests of some sections of the Black community - (and by
Black I mean African, Coloured and Indian).

If the Blacks are weak and unorganised it may not be very difficult
for the white power structure to stamp down any resistance by the
Blacks. And unless the level of resistance comes to crystallize it
is very possible for the white power structure to succeed against
any Black confrontation. The Black confrontation can come from
different angles. <u>The students, if united and radical enough could
muster enough energy</u> to enable them to stimulate the consciousness
of the Black population. The unrest presently prevailing at African
schools and universities and as also demonstrated by the Coloured
students at the University of the Western Cape could lead to further
political assessment on the future position of the Blacks in this
country.

And within this context of student politics it is no more possible
to talk only of African education or African studenthood. The
situation of the Black student is fast becoming more and more
common, - as the case was, more or less before the Bantu Administration
Act and the University Extension Bill.

Further, <u>the confrontation can also come from the workers.</u> The
workers have recently shown that they are within the capabilities
of holding their own as workers. And demanding their rights.
Migrant workers are a more viable potential in such a possibility.
Lastly, there is the confrontation from <u>political organisations</u>.

Political/........

Political organisations could only survive if working on an under-
ground basis of strategy, until enough support of the populace is
~~being~~ won. Whether based within or outside the country political
organisations are still in a position to gain ~~the~~ wide support of
the people. Against the white power structure. I am not hereby
dismissing the pressures being made to bear on the white power sector
by Christian religious organisations. The fact that some religious
sectors are making honest effort to improve the situation for the
Blacks of this country cannot be disregarded. However, the effort
is so "weak-kneed" and in the control of business enterprise that
these religious organisations have developed into elitist structures
and champions of containment policies against Black militancy.
Black Theology, once a weapon of struggle for the underprivileged
Black, is slowly and articulately being moulded into a safe doctrine
that the Black middle class should effectively use against the mass
of the Black populace - a toning down of more militant aspirations.

On the campus front the African student will have to reassume the
unabashed militancy of the late fifties and early sixties. In order
that he can place his struggle on a sound footing.

The mistake of the Black student today is his failure to bring into
focus the continuity of struggle in student politics since the first
University college was opened at Fort Hare. And also to view the
present political situation as part of a greater whole with historical
background. Unless the present generation of students bind the
concepts of studenthood, Black Consciousness (which the Black students
themselves promoted) Black politics and national consciousness -
then this generation may go down in history as the most patronizing
and opportunistic generation of intellectuals in the Black man's
struggle. A historic irresponsibility of this nature, thanks to
resolute effort on the Black campuses, is being avoided however.

For in the whole history of the Black man's political struggle never
have the Black intellectuals been so affluent and so aloof from the
problems of the common Black man. I here exclude the Blacks of South
West Africa as I intend to do throughout this paper.

Sharpeville marked the end of political dominance for the intellectuals
and the clergy. Yet not many young Blacks have been ready to accept
this bare factor.

Came Black Consciousness. The Black intelligentsia went scrounging
for it. Black consciousness began silently to enter the minds of all
the Black people of South Africa. There suddenly was no differentiation
in attire between the educated and the uneducated. Tribal attire was
fast being adopted by the middle class Black. The worker and the rural
Black were watching. Their pride gained.

Black Consciousness could not have come at a better time in South Africa.
When the economy of the country was beginning to affect every individual
on a more vivid and wider dimension. The rising cost of living and
other bread and butter issues were getting clearer understanidng
even with the illiterate Blacks.

Came the strikes initiated by the mostly illiterate Black workers.
The Black intelligentsia was not there. Not here beside their
fellow Blacks. As if some wait and see attitude was being understood
to be the better part of valour. Meanwhile the illiterate and semi-
literate Blacks were getting their first taste of power within the
South African economy. They saw their demands and strike actions
suddenly put the whole country off rhythm. These workers saw themselves
gain world wide attention. This time without any intellectual
leadership. A worthy victory.

On the other hand Black students were busy articulating Black
Consciousness. The whole concept of white superiority in its
various aspects was being brought into question and torn to shreds
bit by bit. Until it became self evident to almost every Black
student that what was regarded as white and superior was nothing but
a result of "swaart gevaar" complexes that the whites had nurtured
since·conquest.

Some brilliant student leadership had developed out of this active
period. Student leaders like Steve Biko and Barney Pityana (both
banned under the Suppression of Communism Act) came into prominence.
But what was disheartening is that these gifted leaders seemed to have
come either a few years too late after Sharpeville's aftermath, or a
year or two earlier. The lethargy of most Black students and the
indifferences of the Black intelligentsia was not affected. Only a
ripple of reaction. Instead Black Consciousness was merely turned
into a fashion. There to soothe the curiosities and pride of an
affluent and totalitarian orientated Black middle class.

In the midst of all this, the Black workers were growing in the
awareness of their socio-economic problems. But without the help of
the Black intellectuals from whom some theoretical foundation could
develop. The Black worker has been made a prey: open to the wileful
attacks of white liberal trade unions. The fault of this has rested
squarely on the irresponsibility of the Black intelligentsia.

This means that the white power structure, with its wide propaganda
machinery and a big defence budget may be able to manage a lull over
the Black workers. Perhaps also manage to satisfy even if temporarily
the immediate needs of the rural populace. Then it would not be easy
for the liberation movements to master support enough to carry a
confrontation through, against the white power structure.

The Blacks, especially the Africans, can still rally and strengthen their ranks on a united basis. Mass reaction against white domination can still develop; as the recent strikes have demonstrated. But again we cannot dismiss for the time being the grip that a consumption orientated black labour can be subjected to in case of continued economic boom in South Africa. One can also not dismiss easily the divisions in religion and tribe that can erupt within the Bantustan reality. Only national consciousness could bind the various Black groups together.

"Bind" (above) is not the right word. Only suitably so. The whole concept of separate development a euphemistic way of naming apartheid goes the whole length to separate and divide their common problems and aspirations. Such is the Bantustan reality.

Already there is power struggle that threatens Black unity amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians. This is the struggle between supporters of the Bantustan scheme and those who oppose it. While it has been said that Africans have come to accept the Bantustan leadership, such contention does not hold true. In this sense: that all involvement within this scheme rests in the hands of the African "middle class". The "middle class" finds itself with some influence in sport, in the church, in business, in urban and rural politics, in culture. The workers are left out.

The Bantustans are also making the African middle class a little more prosperous. The business leadership may go along with the scheme." As long as they do make gain of it . The civil servant will feel they are more relaxed and very much a part of the set up. It should be noted in passing that African civil servants - at least the larger part of them, have always been behind the official line in its various manifestations. Perhaps because of the scramble for job positions. Accountably they will find the Bantustan reality offering better chances for promotion and self betterment, free from race competition and tribal rivalry. Until the South African economy and political stability can reach crisis point.

The educational administration may hope for non-interference in
educational matters. Or even for an African improved system for
the Bantustan education. Whereas the workers may either be doped
by higher pay or immediate workers' benefit schemes, the latter being
the most unlikely in terms of industrial possibility.

The border industrial situation may for the meantime appear still.
If the national output of the South African economy increases through
rise in exports then it is possible to have a quiet time in the border
industries. A small improvement in wages and more overtime pay may
temporarily lull the workers.

The consumer market in border areas is growing at a fast pace. It is
therefore possible to see the possible ascendence of a quick growing
consumer market spurred on by more spending by the border industrial
workers. The accumulation of possessions (cars, radio sets, furniture,
clothing) and gadgetry may almost convince some Africans that we are
living in good times. But whom does the cash go to? No to the
African middle class closetted in their African area. The cash goes
back to the white power sector on the white side of the demarcation
line. The belief by some Africans that their social and economic status
is secure may be lent further credibility by a growing investment in
border industrial expansion by government subsidized companies and
foreign companies; encouraging steady employment for African workers.

The withering of job reservation and the promotion of Africans into
better jobs (by African standards) may urge some Africans into believing
that separation is not a bad ideal after all. Such may be the short
assumption.

3. In the long assumption one could envisage a break down of the
Separate Development Scheme as it was originally blueprinted. This
should spell the exposure of fascist undertones inherent in the scheme.
Such situation could come about with the failure on the part of the
white power structure to convince Blacks that this scheme is to their
interests. Objective reality determined by the prevailing subjective
economic tendencies in social and political development would bring
about an absolute contradiction whose stalemate could only be resolved
through armed conflict.

South Africa's militarist structure would be the only lever of
power to keep the white power sector in control: the absolute
manifestations of a fascist reality. The chief characteristic of
a fascist reality is social tension and totalitarian norms of re-
solving problems that threaten to disrupt the society. This tension is
of fundamental priority in the questioning of the nature of a fascist
reality.

The social, economic and political tendencies in this country have
steadily been moving it towards tighter control by the state. Where
control is not yet completely in the hands of the state there is a
wide level of interference by the state.

The long assumption presupposes growing external and internal
pressure on South Africa and a growing non-collaboration from the
Black populace. The natural response to this is sterner measures
and high handedness from the white power structure. Already, the
rebuff suffered by the South African government during the recent
elections in Ovamboland (South West Africa) has been a clear hint
that Africans are not in earnest favour of the Bantustan political
philosophy. That it is being superimposed on them. On us all.

The basic problem here in South Africa is the land. It is very
common to hear people talk of the 13% of the land which is the sum
total of land allocated to more than 87% of the whole of South African
population, the Africans. What many people ignore to question is
that even that 13% is not yet thirteen percent. There are still vast
tracks of land in the hands of the whites, especially the white
farmers and the conservation departments and Parks Boards. With the
present consolidation plans for Kwa Zulu not getting off the ground,
the whole land question can now be viewed not purely in its historic
context but also within the present day realities of totalitarian
planning on the part of the white power sector.

As soon as talk of a Zulustan got into the air the white population
of Natal began to make efforts to frustrate the coming demands by
Blacks; for more land. Under pretence of nature and wild life
conservation many attempts have been made, with the consent of the
white farmers who see the consolidation as a threat against their
farms, to keep the rich spots and strategically viable areas in
white control.

Such actions definitely affect the urban and industrial situation.
Not only in Natal but in the whole of South Africa. Urban Africans
are treated badly and told to go back to their Bantustan homelands
if white control in the urban centres is intolerable. The irony of
this is that there can be found ample historical evidence that in
all the town centres in Natal there were Africans already living there
long before these centres could even be "dorpies" (villages). The
worse part of this is that in the major urban centres Africans have
been driven out of the areas by efflux laws only to re-enter as
contract workers. As contract labour they are subjected to all
kinds of inhuman conditions. Their sleeping quarters, work conditions,
pay and general standard of living is such that crime and disease are
a natural consequence. The aim of the present government of having
every African in the towns as a temporary sojourner is already in
practice. The insistence by the government on works committees for
African workers, instead of trade unions, is in keeping with this
principle.

The Africans in the urban centres have lost virtually all faith in
the white power sector. It is a small aspiring group within the
middle class Africans that keeps the links. Nonetheless whites
still approach Africans in the townships through charity, organisations,
children's feeding schemes, bursary schemes, sports coachings and
welfare. Without welfare and the old, conservative, social clubs such
as the YWCA it would be very hard for whites to get to the Africans.
For the African's mistrust for the white persists in spite of efforts
by liberal whites to befriend the Bantustan leadership.

Liberals, even the most consistent of them have been found to be
diverting and distracting the attention of Blacks from the basic
demand: full democratic rights for all Blacks. Time and again
liberals have proved to be mainly concerned with their aspirations
as an alternative ruling sub-sector within the white power structure.
In several crucial issues they have been discovered to be deliberately
obstructing the development of a national consciousness amongst the
various Black groups. To the point of making frantic endeavour
to split the ranks of Black organisations. The terms "practical",
"moderate", have repeatedly been played against words like
"unrealistic", "radical", or the most extreme "communist inspired".
Further demonstration of this practice is the approach adopted by
many newspapers of the English press of using the term Black to mean
African, and exclude Coloured and Indian. The African team at the
South African Games this year was widely referred to as the "Black XI"
against the Coloured XI and the Indian XI. Way back last year at
the SASO G.S.C. Conference at Hammanskraal the "Rand Daily Mail"
reporters had to be sent out of conference because of that newspaper's
insistence on using the term "African" instead of "Black".

If at one time there could be some form of defence against these
accusations, the late sixties and the early seventies have proved
the suspicions of the Africans correct. It has become self evident
that the liberal whites cannot presently afford to lose the support
of the Black middle class groups. They do not mind selling over all
they have said in the past or buying one group against the other for
a federated South Africa consisting of a white ruled 87% of the land
and a fragmented 13% with the various "Stan" mini states.

Since the liberals cannot support their credibility and image overseas
without their control and manipulation of the middle class Blacks,
they have been forced to accept the concept of separate development.
That is why a prominent Liberal Party leader has openly supported the
idea of Federation. With its white electorate's support at stake
the Progressive Party went all out to say the moment for Federation
had come.

And the Natal Progressive Party leader Mr. Harry Pitman was bold enough to come out "in favour of Natal and Kwa Zulu being joined together in one independent state with 'full democratic rights' for Whites and Blacks". (Sunday Times - 10/6/73).

In view of the existent fascist reality in which movement, speech, protest, publication, race mixing, have been so restricted - to the point of total control by the state machinery, the role of the liberal white is not without far-reaching significance.

On the economic plane the recent strikes came as a shock to most whites. Whereas in the past Africans were too busy worrying about their right to be in the towns and battled to keep their jobs, the expansion in industry has changed all that. So that in the long assumption it may be said that the economic tendencies are going to be towards more positive action in the workers' demand for better work conditions and a stake in the fruits of their labour. Naturally, there will be a reaction from the employers.

Notwithstanding the negative response of white employers there may be a growing sense of economic power amongst the African workers. This would lead to solidarity between the urbanized African workers and those whose roots are still in the rural areas.

On the other hand the political tendencies would be bowing to growing economic expansion and involvement in the international monetary system for South Africa. With economic growth moving faster than political tendencies it would be harder for the white power sector to implement its Bantustan programme. A salient turnabout would then not be impossible. Marking an overt militarist social and political system in the country. With tacit assurances of active support from the United States, most probably. This is however, more possible in case of a growing onslaught from liberation movements.

It is/ ....

It is at this stage that the Nationalist regime could with self justification on its electorate take on to the idea of federation. And banking on its growing military power.

The social tendencies may spell a higher level of Black Power consciousness amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians. With the working class Africans in the forefront of militancy; and the African middle class somewhere in the background. Seeing that the realities of economic and political conflict revolve round the concepts of Power, it is highly possible to reach a stage of impasse in which the African workers, with the help of some sectors amongst the intellectuals, will strive to resolve the prevailing conflicts of Power in the relations between white and black. It is therefore the reality of a power conflict that will decide how the Africans work towards their economic and socio-political liberation.

3. Priorities for improvement of African workers' conditions:-

A. External Contradictions:-

South Africa is a rich country. She is one of the few countries of her size that can boast of having been blessed with almost every vital mineral resource. She also has vast quantities of food resources. For her size and her relatively small population she is spacious and economically stable. It is the economic stability the country enjoys which has led her to draw in foreign investments that boost her national productivity.

Which is where the contradictions set in. Firstly, South Africa still operates within a feudal context in almost all her industrial practices. Cheap labour provided by the Blacks is due to the denial of rights to Africans, Coloureds and Indians respectively. The bulk of this cheap labour comes from confined drought stricken areas where Africans are "allowed to starve" because of the critical condition of the land allotted to Africans on the whole.

The denial/........

The denial of rights to industrial workers in the factories makes boss-worker relations to be too strained. Job reservation is common practice in South African industry. Though Africans are gradually being allowed into "better" jobs, there are still other jobs in the exclusive hands of the other race groups. In Natal, especially, most of the strategic jobs that whites do no more need to hold are given to members of the Indian community. Even in African border areas.

South Africa still maintains a primitive and exploitative system of labour control in her use of external and internal contact labour, the migratory labour system. It means that in a large sector of the South African economy feudal norms of labour contract are still in practice. Thus keeping the secondary and tertiary industries in uneven balance, as far as improvement of worker situation is concerned.

Migrant workers are brought in from Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, the Bantustan rural areas, etc. These men are expected to spend their contract periods without any expression of dissatisfaction with their work conditions. Being away from their families and social environment they are confined to the mines where they are crowded, paternalized and at times openly bullied. They cannot freely practice their rights as workers or responsible people at their homes. Some are easily cowed Others rebel and run into conflict with the laws of the country.

The conflict is further increased or contained by another stumbling block in the improvement of workers' conditions: illiteracy. Most African workers, especially those in the primary industry are illiterate. Their meeting with modern ways of work operation and of raising productivity is not without alienation. Worse still when the workers getting accustomed to these modern ways is going to involve his human integrity. The worker finds himself being expected to bend to the conditions set by the machine.

Which is where consciousness comes in. Now and then a consciousness
of self improvement arises. But since the stay at the working place
is regimented, the worker finds it difficult to hold on to some line
of thought or action. All his assessments and moves are rendered
unstable. The factory workers are also subject to this instability
suffered by migrant workers confined to compounds. Though with
slight differences.

The workers lack of workers' rights, the disencouragement of
trade unionism and harsh labour rules are a source of insecurity
to the worker. Worse still is the continuation of foreign investments
and the complacent attitudes of overseas investors. For no African
worker believes in the often repeated and well moulded lie that the
withdrawal of foreign investment would harm the African worker more
than anyone else. What more has the African worker to lose?

At the 2nd General Students' Council of SASO in 1971, the whole
question of foreign investment was brought before the attention of
Black students. The students having noted, that "nearly every useful
mineral is found within South Africa" and, that the Western economies
allowed South Africa some respectability whilst she based her whole
economic and social system on apartheid, concluded that "all those
countries which trade with South Africa are supporting apartheid and
will always want to protect their investments (and subjects) in South
Africa". The appeasers are seen, therefore, as collaborationists
who cannot be expected to be really concerned about the conditions
of the Blacks.

Within the external contradictions the priorities for the improvement
of African workers' conditions would be the breaking down of migratory
labour, the halting of foreign investments, the heightening of workers'
consciousness and the raising of wages.

B. Internal Contradictions:

Firstly, South Africa's trade unionism will only mature with the destruction of the power of the white workers' unions. White workers enjoy a power that should not by right be theirs. The white worker in South Africa is almost as privileged as his boss. White unions help in the shaping of official policy on African labour. They enjoy an overrated power. This was recently demonstrated when the Minister of Labour "agreed in principle to sweeping revisions of the labour laws, but only if trade unions accept employers' proposals". He (the Minister) was referring to proposed inclusion of Coloured, Indian and African artisans in the building industry. (Daily News 22/7/73).

This "power" of the white trade unions has led most whites into believing that the African worker is really helpless and cannot do things on his own. What these whites forget are the laws enacted by the white power parliament that they help vote into making legislation. Recently there has just emerged an Institute of Industrial Education which claims intention of: - giving formal trade union education to the African; creating a trade union orientation in the African's industrial environment; boosting African initiative by granting a Diploma course in Trade Unionism and giving diplomas to successful candidates; working on Wages Commissions for the assessment of Black pay conditions and helping to teach the African of his role in the union and of his role in society.

Question now is does the African have to be channelized through formal education to improve his worker's conditions? What does "formal education" mean in terms of white-black relations and the existent conflicts of Power? The trade union type organisation proposed by the Institute is sure to become ineffectual and misleading. Since it pretends as if the capitalist patterns of economic exploitation have not been changed and remoulded. When in effect capitalist norms have extended themselves to contain the social democratic struggle of the workers in almost all structures of labour. More, the resurgence of worker consciousness amongst Blacks has shown that the Black workers, especially the Africans (with the stress shifting to border industries), now know that the factories are not there to help them but to exploit them as labour resources.

Which is why African, or rather Black, trade unions have been tinged with Black Power connotations. Because Black Power is expressive of an overtly political approach by the Black towards his Black being and his human rights.

The proposal by the Institute of Industrial Education that there would be regular papers from African students studying for the diploma can be seen as an implication that, in most respects, the student unionists would be feeding white research and academicia with the facts that whites have had to assess upon within the Black community. This suspicion is further cemented by the inclusion of an Academic Panel in the structure of the Institute. One can hereby conclude that the institute is already working on an elitist plane.

C. The Absolute Contradiction: Within the perspectives towards the realization of priorities for the improvement of workers' conditions it is now safe to say that, basing on the existent contradictions and the orientation of the socio-economic system, towards a fascist type development – there shall be absolutes in the tendencies of the priorities.

Whites talk of the need for African trade unions in terms of African workers being a potential threat against the economy; unless they organised and trained. This was markedly expressed by the managing director of a big company when he said that it was to the interests of the economy to have African worker leaders working openly for "worthwhile, feasible" changes than having "agitators" operating underground (Daily News 3/8/73).

Changes according to white employers are worthwhile and feasible if you strive to get them on the terms dictated to you by your boss. And you being a "temporary sojourner" within the industrial situation.

But the "temporary sojourner" is becoming slippery and self sufficient in ideas. That is the chief cause for anxiety. Before the Bantustan reality was ushered into the South African scene it was both appropriate and beneficial for workers to strive for purely economic victories.

The workers/........

The workers do need the money; as the recent strikes have demonstrated. At the same time better working conditions were slowly becoming another major demand; even during the wage strikes.

Pure economic demands are going to retard economic growth, as the spiralling of prices has shown. Already, most factories today want to talk of increased productivity as counterbalance to increased wages. Taking increased productivity as counterpart to increased consumption. In such a case workers will be making demands basically on the white controlled economy. Despite any political autonomy of the Bantustans.

A boomerang effect is bound to appear; following the laws of "instant relief, instant side-effect". Wage demands cannot succeed without them affecting the development schemes of the Bantustans. These schemes would also be functioning with the grace of Pretoria's economic sanction. The logical consequence of this tendentious development would be inflation,-actually is bound to be. Out of inflation there comes a higher cost of living and possible recession of the economy as climax.

4. Action likely to be taken by African workers:-

A. Basic self reliance:

The African workers have shown the ability to organize independently. Given the chance of non-interference from either the official or liberal circles they are able to work on their own initiative. An example of self-help is the new interest for savings clubs, whereby the workers come together and save money under one savings account. This money is divided at the end of the year. Also there is the "lottery" practice known as "isitokofela". Workers circulate contributions round individuals. Until a whole cycle has been completed. This is done either on a weekly or monthly basis.

There has also been tremendous interest in the foundings of burial societies. So that affiliate members are able to get their next of kin buried "free", with donation fees. It is therefore highly feasible for workers to launch self-help programmes in literacy, trade union education, bursary schemes for their children. Response to the raising of funds has often proved Blacks to be very keen on contributing cash wherever needed.

Workers/........

Workers could also initiate holiday benefit-schemes for the more interesting holidays by groups of workers over the shutdown periods or during long weekends. There is no reason why Africans owning farms in rural areas - especially at attractive spots such as areas towards the berg in the Transkei or areas along the Pondoland coast or interior Zululand, should not create holiday inns or recreational farms and camping sites for the benefit of the urban youth and urban workers' families.

For the rural worker there is the communalist avenue already opened by the social organisation of rural villages. Which could only lead them (within the priorities) to working on wattle plantations for firewood and timber; spanning "dongas" (ravines) with log bridges; planting collective gardens; encouraging the use of lavatories and improving the breeds of their pigs and poultry. Rural womenfolk could also be taught homecraft, housekeeping and better shopping habits. All this can be made possible with funds raised by the rural workers.

Since the formation of the first African trade union the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) by Clemens Kadalie in 1919, the African worker has battled desperately to define his role with the white dominated economy of South Africa. The 1922 strikes were to prove the utter conservatism of the white workers and their reactionary attitude towards African, Coloured and Indian labour interests. From henceforth the union rights of Blacks were to be fought against and discouraged by white workers themselves.

If Africans were to struggle to redefine their role within the entire South African economy they would have to do so on the basis of national consciousness. Black labour carries the economy of this country on its shoulders. Therefore Black labour ought to have a say in the making of decisions that affect the economy of this country, even if such decisions are on factory or local levels.

The migrant worker may gradually find that he has done more than he can share for South Africa's vital industries such as mining, shipping, agriculture, public transport, public health cleaning. This gradual realization by Blacks of the role played by them in the economy and how their undistributed share goes to the erection of expensive white buildings and super highways presupposes trade union awareness amongst Blacks. There are already marked signs of a resurgence of worker consciousness throughout the country. What the African is also aware of is that his worker consciousness cannot work outside the context of national consciousness or political resistance against white dominance. Then national consciousness could only be achieved if the African redefined his concepts on what contrives a national economy and on how much a share he has in that national economy. Moreso when the president of the "Handels instituut" was still in a position to say - (as late as 1973) that the "Bantu" still had no industrial maturity to be capable of forming trade unions.

Yet facts do contradict such trite statements made by whites. By 1971 Black students at a Wilgespruit formation school had gone into the disparity existing between the theoretical and the practical aspects of separate development. The Black students of the South African Students Organisation had taken the initiative of criticism against the policy pursued by the white ruling sector. The Bantustan leadership was later to trail behind, as if cementing cracks.

For at the SASO Conference that July of 1971, a motion was passed noting the rights of every worker to enjoy the fruits of his labour. Noting that the wealth and prosperity of South Africa was built on black labour; and noting that black workers were denied rights of enjoying the fruits of their labour. A resolution was passed: to make the black workers aware of their rights; to encourage them to strive for these rights.

The latent power of the black workers and the potentials of a black workers' bloc were already being envisaged. Though a Black Workers' Project formed by SASO in 1972 has not achieved much towards the realization of the aims born out of Black students concern over the Black workers' rights, the reasons leading to the formation of the project carry with them a weighty signification. The short-comings of the project may be attributed to the general aloofness of

Black students and intellectuals from the workers which many
educated Blacks fail to go over. Another reason is the lack of a
working class consciousness within the ranks of Black labour, where
tribal affiliation still exists.

However, a Black Allied Workers' Union was formed in August, 1972,
amongst several other small unions. This has led to the white dominated
Trade Union Council of South Africa to go all out courting the
affiliation and support of black workers' unions. To such an extent
that white unionists have launched a campaign to organise black labour.
This can only be seen as a move to contain the growing worker
consciousness amongst Africans. And by some iron twist of historic
background the white ruling sector cannot now undo all those rulings
that were made to bar Black workers from gaining trade union rights.

Black workers on the other hand cannot and shall not in the foreseeable
future move any closer to the realization of workers' solidarity and
trade union consciousness outside the context of national consciousness.
Black workers will sooner or later come to a stage where they will have
to use their power. That power can only be wielded in solidarity.
In June last year drivers of the Public Utility Corporation demanded
more pay and better working conditions. That was in Johannesburg
(Star 12/9/72). The Durban dock workers and their Cape Town colleagues
demonstrated their power in October last year. So did Durban's
City Transport workers in December. And the miners on the diamond
fields and on the gold mines also went on strike during the year.

The consciousness of Power grows. With it grows articulation.
At Hammarsdale about 14 factories of the border area managed to hold
a general strike for a day in a wee of unrest. This is perhaps the
only area where all factories were closed for at least a day as
expression of solidarity by the workers. A new strategy, the strategy
of general strike was first put into operation.

The intellectuals have also realized that as blacks and as an
exploited sub-group too they also do fall under the definition of
worker.

The South African Black Theatre Union (SABTU) was formed as a
development of this new thinking amongst intellectuals and artists.
On the same manner that some students are now beginning to think
that SASO's militancy and SASO's conscientization of students and
workers can only come out of an overtly political involvement.

Black workers may soon want to do away with the tendency in South
African factories of stressing wage gains on the basis of overtime
work and incentive bonuses. They may soon see that increased
productivity based on a very low wage scale is not an objective
condition for incentive. And they may also come to the awareness
that the position of the white intelligentsia (presently champions
of black workers' wage increases) towards them as black workers
and towards their living conditions is that of a master-servant
relationship. It is important for them to see that liberal
sympathies for the African worker are not going to solve the
problem, which is a white-created problem.

The basic self-reliance of African workers is therefore an overall
priority.

B. In terms of long drawn assumption (2B):-

In terms of the long drawn assumption of a continued fascist reality
it is possible to see Blacks resort to national resistance, open and
underground. Not only against the white power sector but also
against the Black middle class which would by then have proved its
dilly dallying and lack of initiative. The breakdown of dialogue
between workers and the white power sector, the inflation of the economy
and external political pressure are all likely to force the Black
middle class into an unambiguous stand: either as collaborationists
on the side of the white power sector or on the side of national
resistance against the white power sector.

The policy/.........

The policy of separate development and its failures may be decisive in fostering working class consciousness not only amongst African workers but also amongst the Coloured and Indian workers. Leading to the solidarity of the three Black workers groups.

Within solidarity the Black workers may find themselves in open resistance against a growing fascist repression. This would lead to the forging of links with liberation movements, And a solid link with Black students who by then ought to have become highly radical in the face of objective reality. For education is impossible within a repressive situation. The dangerous economic policies of the white power sector can now only lead to fascist tendencies. It is now clear that only the sharing of power, economic and social power can save the country from complete totalitarianism and possible chaos. This point of national crisis is evident in the sudden interest South Africa is showing towards outside loans and foreign investments. It is further demonstrated by her seeking favours from American business so as to involve American economic, political and military interests that no change of party rule, Democratic or Republican can perhaps undo. This would mean possible American involvement in case of a showdown between the white power sector and the Blacks. With the withdrawal from South East Asia there are fears from urban Africans of the United States switching its interests into Africa. The chain of invitations that take African middle class leaders and scholars to New York instead of the known London has drawn fears of a change of orientation that may draw America into South Africa. The increase of American influence in dress, university literature, sports goods etc. is becoming great in the city centres.

And could any struggle between the white power structure and the dissatisfied Blacks be a short term confrontation? Very unlikely. On the other hand the consciousness of contestation that is developing amongst the Blacks may come to mean that the African worker has for the first time come to see himself in terms of bread and butter issues and self confidence in his power potentials. No Black leadership had to tell him what he needed as used to be largely the case before Sharpeville. The recent strikes were spontaneous moves from the workers themselves.

Meanwhile the Black leadership was busy scraping an extra rand
here and there. The Black student shared the dissatisfaction of
the worker. Only, they had not yet reached common purpose. That
gap is fast being filled however. Which is why the white power
structure has resorted to the banning of so many student leaders
in the last eight months. Those students were perhaps not aware of
how they might stimulate a student-worker alliance within South
Africa's third world context of Black Consciousness. It has happened
before in history that a political slogan or directive got out of hand
and became too big for its initiators. This is what has been
happening with Black Consciousness. The Black student has suddenly
discovered that he cannot develop further the concept of black
awareness outside the focus of national consciousness and Power.
If we are to view Black Power as an expression of solidarity between
the Black race groups and as an expression of self-determination.
As opposed to the superimposed, "divide and rule" concepts of
separate development. Black Power is therefore a natural development.

It would not be wrong then to assume that the power struggle between
the white power structure and the Blacks would be a protracted one.

The preparation for this protracted struggle may also take a bit of
time. There would first be a redefinition of the position of the
Black middle class; and their role within the economy. Their role
is a parasitic one. Steadily there would develop possible socialist
awareness amongst the urban workers and black communalism amongst the
rural workers.

To envisage a future non-racial South Africa without some forms of
participatory democracy within a planned economy is far removed from
human and social reality. In the same manner that solidarity between
the Black groups can only be found in and be strengthened by class
awareness. Only an equal sharing of the wealth and fruits of labour
from the national economy can now save the explosive situation. Or
South Africa may yet be another Vietnam and the Middle East in one.

The policy of Separate Development is fast proving to be a disastrous one. More so because Separate Development can no more be taken as a non-differentiated political norm that should first be allowed to exhaust itself before its contradictions render themselves absolute. Far from it, Separate Development should be defined within the context of self determination and the negativity of totalitarianism.