SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

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Comment

The SALB began publication in Durban in May 1974 as a project of the Institute for Industrial Education, the educational unit providing support to the open, unregistered trade unions of the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council. Recently the bulletin has been re-constituted as a separate organisation from the Institute, while its Editorial Board has been expanded to enable it to reflect a more national perspective on developments in labour. With this issue three new members join the editorial board, two from Cape Town and one from Johannesburg (one of the Bulletins founder members has also recently moved to Johannesburg).

We remain committed to articulating an independent labour perspective on all factors affecting industrial relations. In our first issue (Vol.1 No. 1) we outlined in detail why we felt independent and democratic trade unions were necessary. We made certain recommendations on how this could be achieved and we continue to influence policy in that direction.

We have now produced 18 issues. At times the SALB has developed an academic bias to the exclusion of coverage of concrete developments in industrial relations. This is a reflection of the under-development of the debate on industrial relations in South Africa.

The requirements of the present remain the need for a clear grasp of the Southern African context in which independent workers organisations operate. The Bulletin has and will continue to provide a forum for the articulation of the crucial issues facing labour. We hope that our decision to go national will help us in this task. However our survival will continue to depend on the degree to which those who are concerned with industrial relations are willing to support the Bulletin by subscribing to it and writing for it.

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LABOUR POLICY IN A STATE CORPORATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN IRON AND STEEL CORPORATION (ARTICLE 2)

by Mike Morris and Dave Kaplan

INTRODUCTION

This article, the second* on labour policy in the South African Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR) has, as its central focus, 'the labour process'. Our concern is both with the current situation and the historical position of Black and White labour. Our emphasis is primarily on the reorganisation of the process of production as it affected the racial stratification of labour.

The various sections under which we discuss this are the following, (1) the position of Black and White workers in the current labour process and the trends in the reorganisation of this process (2) wages and hours of work, and (3) Black and White worker organisations. In the final section we draw some conclusions from our analysis.

The information was collected at the end of 1974, and, of course, the position particularly with respect to Trade Unions may have changed somewhat since that date. As we stressed in our first article, we have extensively utilised interviews with management personnel but supplemented this with other material, newspaper reports, company reports and published material etc. Finally, although the example of Iscor is instructive of trends in this regard, what has happened and is happening with respect to the labour process in Iscor cannot simply be generalised to South African firms in the manufacturing industry as a whole. Its position as a State Corporation, in particular, as we stress in the conclusion, has its effect on labour policy within Iscor.

**Article 1 appeared in SALB Vol 2 No. 6, Jan. 1976 (Pgs. 21-33)*

BLACK WORKERS IN THE LABOUR FORCE

(A) PRESENT PLACE IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

It is extremely difficult to establish what proportion of black workers fall into the different occupational categories. The answers given to questions show much variation, while the systems of classification themselves alter greatly with changes in the production process.

There are approximately 2 000 Black machine operators in the Pretoria plant. If the categories of skilled, semi skilled and unskilled are used, then the official classifications reveal that 5 082 Blacks are classified as unskilled, 2 170 as semi skilled and 250 as skilled. However, the high unskilled figure has to be viewed in terms of the ambiguity of these terms. It was repeatedly stated that there are very few totally unskilled workers ("raw labourers" as the White bosses called them) in the ordinary sense of the term. Most work has some skill content, especially in the production process. Work with the least skill content has nothing to do with actual production and forms part of the functions of "fetching, carrying and placing machinery". Apparently a fair amount of this takes place.

At the Semis plant in Saldanha, Iscor expects production to be highly dependent on coloured labour. Out of an expected total of 2 300 coloured workers 1 944 are to be employed as operators with the rest being assigned to primarily clerical positions (145). In the future it is intended to fill all artisinal positions with coloureds, while Africans will only be used for hard labour.

The Newcastle plant is the most heavily dependent on Africans in semi-skilled jobs. Almost all the machine operators are, or will be, local Zulu workers. Many jobs done by Whites at Pretoria are done by Blacks at Newcastle - e.g. crane drivers. There seems to be a tendency to try and use Indian workers as supervisors. This is apparently the case at Durnacol. There are virtually no Black women employed in any of the plants except in

purely service functions, e.g. in the canteens.

Although the classifications do not directly coincide, semi-skilled Black workers are usually operators and are defined as "someone in charge of an important piece of machinery". When Black workers are classified as skilled this does not however mean that they are craftsmen or artisans. Skilled Black workers are usually ancillary workers, e.g. personnel assistants, hospital workers, etc. They are not usually directly involved in the production process. It was not possible to discover what percentage of Black workers were employed in supervisory positions. There were Black "bossboys" with a team of Black operators working under them. These Black "supervisors" seemed to have a dual role of controlling the Black operators and liaising with the White supervisor in charge of the whole team.

(B) THE REORGANISATION OF THE LABOUR PROCESS

The advancement of Black workers into employment categories previously regarded as 'the White man's preserve' has been occurring since the beginnings of Iscor's operations (see Introduction to Article 1). The boom conditions of the mid 1960's and Iscor's expansion programmes resulted in Iscor management attempting to speed up the process. In July 1965, they attempted to make White pay increases conditional upon a relaxation of the job colour bar (Rand Daily Mail - 6/7/65). Originally the SA Iron and Steel Trades Association strongly opposed any adjustment in the job colour bar - formal or informal. However, they soon modified their stand to acceptance of this 'as a temporary measure' (Pretoria News - 6/8/65). Throughout the 60s the question of Black advancement was the critical bone of contention between management and White unions. Although some top job categories were officially reserved for Whites only in 1967, this was made dependent on a series of 'telescoping agreements' whereby extensive job fragmentation occurred particularly in respect of artisanal

occupations, and Blacks were allowed to perform these fragmented functions. Moreover, applications for specific exemptions, allowing Blacks to perform even the officially reserved White only jobs, could be made to the Industrial Council in the normal way (Rand Daily Mail - 27/9/67). As a result of the extensive fragmentation, some artisanal unions, notably the Boilermakers, which had previously supported the 'rate for the job' policy, began to demand the introduction of job reservation and the phasing out of Africans performing artisanal functions (Rand Daily Mail - 19/9/68.)

Black advancement into White jobs continued unabated but was always accompanied by the simultaneous advancement of White labour, and as long as this occurred, opposition from the White unions was muted and they generally accepted Black advancement programmes on this basis (Rand Daily Mail 19/10/72). However, according to J.P. Coetzee, Iscor's Managing Director, Iscor continued to lag behind industries in the private sector in utilising Blacks in semi-skilled positions "because of the political dynamite involved". The Corporation was said to be attempting to approach the problem "without treading on the toes of the Trade Unions and Government policy" (The Star 2/12/69).

Although "advancement" is the common description of this process, the word should be seen more in its ideological context when used in this manner than as an explanation of the dynamics of the process. What is actually taking place is not the benevolent advancement of Black workers, with them being the major beneficiaries, but a reorganisation of the whole labour process in order to increase the productive capacity of the plant.

As a result of increasing mechanisation and the overall shortage of skilled labour, skilled and artisanal jobs have continuously been broken down into a number of simpler tasks to be performed by Black operators. Simultaneously with this process of fragmenting a job, there has been a similar process of simply regarding a "White" job as "Black", or calling it another name and then

employing Black workers in it. It was clear, though, that a Black worker seldom took over the same job. In most cases Iscor used the occasion to restructure the labour process in order to increase productivity.

One of the most favoured ways of reorganising the labour process has been to appoint a skilled White artisan or operator in a supervisory capacity accompanied by several Black "assistants" who in fact do most of the productive work. In Pretoria, at least 400 Africans have been "advanced" as a result of a reorganisation of the labour process during the last few years. The categories where this has been most clearly prevalent have been greasers, fork lift drivers and winch operators. This movement has been even more pronounced at VanderBijl Park, whilst at Newcastle Blacks are allowed into more skilled positions than anywhere else. For example in VanderBijl Park all fork lift drivers and slingers are now Black, whilst in Newcastle they are being used as control operators in the steel smelting plant and the billet mill. The process of replacing Whites by Blacks is progressing much more rapidly in the newer works and many "White" jobs at Pretoria are done by Blacks at Newcastle.

It was universally acknowledged that this process of reorganisation has increased productivity. There did not appear to be any studies comparing White/Black efficiency but it was generally agreed that Black workers "were as efficient, if not more so". The view seemed to be that since many of these "upgraded" jobs were prize jobs for Black workers, Iscor therefore tended to "get the cream of the Black people", in marked contrast to many of the White workers recruited.

Although this process of reorganisation began well over 10 years ago, the pressure has been increasing over the last few years. Most operative jobs are either being regraded or fragmented, to be occupied by Black workers as quickly as is orderly possible. The White trade unions are always con-

sulted when an increased usage of Black workers is contemplated. They however have no say in the number of Black workers that can be upgraded. The White trade unions seem resigned to this process although they still resist when they think the benefits accruing to them are "unfair". In every wage agreement negotiated with White trade unions Iscor tries to build in 100-150 posts for Black operators in exchange for wage increases. Insofar as there is a struggle over the reorganisation of the labour process it takes place over the pace rather than the process itself. The contentious issue here is more at the level of the artisan with the white trade unions attempting to defend the deskilling or replacement by Blacks of this category. Iscor's present shortage of White workers reveals their clear need to cope with this problem by some fairly drastic action in the near future. The shortage of operators calculated on the absolute minimum for necessary tasks in Iscor is 17% at VanderBijl Park and 11% at Newcastle whilst for artisans it is 30% and 27% respectively. There are no serious shortages at Pretoria at present. The Kwazulu "government" apparently wants Iscor to train Blacks as journeymen (an artisanal category) in Newcastle. This is however meeting with some resistance from the White trade unions. Since Iscor claims to be unable to recruit Whites for these posts there is likely to be increasing friction over the issue of artisans in the future.

White trade union opposition to the replacement of "White" jobs has apparently lead to some discussion on the possibility of instituting a vertical racial division of labour in Iscor. Although most people seemed confused about the exact implications of such a scheme, there seem to be two possibilities under discussion. The one is some form of a vertical racial division of labour within a plant, i.e. separate racial *teams*. Exactly what this would entail is extremely unclear, and mostly we suspect guesswork on the part of some members of management. A second, more plausible idea was to have separate racial *plants*. For example, allow most of the work at Newcastle (as a border industrial area) to be done by Blacks, while in exchange protecting

some of the White jobs at the Pretoria plant. It is doubtful that this would entail a wholly White Pretoria works (or for that matter a wholly Black Newcastle plant), although this may be the ideological manner in which these ideas are being formulated and presented. We would stress, however, that to the best of our knowledge, no company decisions have been taken on this issue.

WHITE WORKERS IN THE LABOUR PROCESS

(A) PRESENT PLACE IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

The White/Black employment ratio at Pretoria works is about 1:1, and about 1:1,5 at VanderBijl Park. At Saldanha Bay the projected ratio will be about 1:1,7, and at Newcastle the ratio will be substantially lower - with Blacks performing a number of functions performed by Whites in the older work centres.

The high ratio of White to Black is, according to the personnel officer in charge of White labour, due to reasons grounded in historical and organisational factors. He stressed that Iscor management was of the firm opinion that "more reliance could be placed on White workers". The chances of vital production processes being disrupted were said to be substantially less where White workers were employed. The importance of this factor was obvious in a continuous production process industry, like steel-making, where a strike in one part of the plant would soon cripple the whole works. This question of the greater reliability of white workers was not simply a question of the responsibility of White workers as opposed to Black workers, but also a function of the White trade union structures and the laws governing them. Explicitly he stated that the problem involved in employing Black workers is that management might be unable to control any "wildcat" strikes. The existence of a functioning and cooperative White trade union structure with continuous discussion between them and management made such strikes by White workers unlikely while management were fearful of the converse in respect of Black workers.

Management went on to claim that, in fact, amongst White workers "strikes were an unknown thing in Iscor". This is an ideologically interesting but factually incorrect statement as there is a fairly extensive record of White strikes - official and unofficial - at Iscor. In 1941, one hundred men from the Pretoria heavy rolling mills went on strike for ten days over a wage dispute (Pretoria News 9/6/47) and in 1952 there was a major strike involving over 1 500 artisanal labourers which went on for over 10 days and was finally resolved by arbitration (Pretoria News 3/4/52). In 1956 a majority of workers in a combined meeting of artisans and operatives voted for strike action (Rand Daily Mail 3/10/56) but after a protracted disagreement with management were persuaded to accept arbitration. In November 1964, Iscor engine drivers and artisans went on a go-slow strike, "working to the manual", in support of higher wages (Pretoria News 23/11/64).

Historically, it was claimed, when Iscor was first established in the early 1930s, there was an abundance of White labour which had had some contact with industry and a rudimentary level of education. In other words they had already acquired some industrial discipline and low level skills - and their resultant higher productivity justified their employment as opposed to Black workers. Most management personnel expressed the view that, at present, White wages were not out of line with White productivity. Other members of management however complained at length about the low productivity rate among certain sections of the White work force. This was explained by the fact that due to the White labour shortage and also Iscor's marginally lower wages for Whites, Iscor was recruiting many "low quality Whites". Moreover, shift work was very unpopular with White workers and as a result Iscor was not getting the type of White labour it required. Substantiation for the latter point of view is provided by the high labour turnover for Whites - particularly amongst the younger workers (see the first Article).

At the Pretoria plant, apart from 1 500 white appren-

tices being trained for all plants, there were said to be 2 500 semi and skilled operatives, 1 400 maintenance artisans, 500 supervisors/ foremen, 1 000 staff (400 personnel officers many of whom are involved in apprenticeship training and 600 financial/clerical/production planning personnel), and 400 management staff. These figures are for the Pretoria works only and do not therefore include Iscor head-quarters in Pretoria.

(B) THE REORGANISATION OF THE LABOUR PROCESS

Artisans are involved mainly in maintenance and ancillary work. Due to increasing mechanisation, production itself generally falls to the operative labourers. Due to the increasing usage of Black workers in operative positions previously occupied by Whites, the general trend is to retrain White operatives where possible as artisans. White workers that are unable to qualify for artisanal training are either retrained for a further job classification as "senior operative workers" or as supervisors. According to management, there were however many White operatives whose possibilities of retraining for higher positions were somewhat limited. The cardinal principle adopted in the restructuring of the labour process as a result of Black advancement, and accepted by both management and the White trade unions, is that a White worker is either retrained for a better position or guaranteed the same earnings as before. Thus, for example, lubrication was traditionally done by White workers accompanied by Black workers carrying two oil drums. It became obvious that not only could Blacks do the White workers jobs, but that they were more than likely doing it in any case and had been for several years past. So after negotiations with the trade unions, the younger White workers were retrained as journeymen or craftsmen, whilst the older White workers who were too old to be retrained, or to make their retraining worthwhile to management, were made supervisors over the Black workers involved in lubrication. As a result of this particular restructuring, more than 60% of White workers involved

received wage increases.

This is not to suggest that there are no conflicts between the trade unions and management over the restructuring of the production process. Frequently negotiations are long and tortuous, but differences are reconcilable and Iscor management feels that it has achieved its principal objectives in such negotiations.

HOURS OF WORK AND WAGES

All production work is shift work. There are two 8-hour shifts and a day shift of 9½ hours. It seems that the day shift works a five shift week (i.e. a 5 day week) while the other shifts do a seven shift week. Workers get every third weekend off to go back to their homes. Cheap transport is apparently provided. Because of the shortage of skilled and semi-skilled White workers there is an excessive amount of overtime, which is apparently one reason for the high rate of resignations amongst White workers, and contributes to the difficulties in recruiting artisans.

All jobs occupied by Blacks are evaluated and specified by a particular rate. Wage grades for Black workers at Pretoria are the following:

	1972	1974
Grade I	18c per hour	34c per hour
" II	20c " "	36c " "
" III	22c " "	39c " "
" IV	25c " "	42c " "
" V	28c " "	47c " "
" VI	31c " "	51c " "
" VII	34c " "	57c " "
" VIII	37c " "	64c " "
" IX	non existent	69c " "
" X	" "	79c " "
" XI	" "	89c " "

Within these grades, if yearly increments are not included, minimum and maximum wages differ by one cent. The skill division corresponds roughly to the following grades: grades I-III general

labourer; grades IV-V operators; grades VI-VIII supervisors/"bossboys"; grades IX-XI are for personnel workers etc. We were not able to obtain a detailed breakdown of the number of workers in each grade. However, a SEIFSA survey for Pretoria works done in 1974 provides some information. Unfortunately it does not include the whole Black labour force, so it is not possible to state what percentage of Black workers received a particular wage. Furthermore, the skill classification differs somewhat from the Pretoria works classification. It does, however, clearly reveal that half the Black labour force receives the minimum grade of wages.

SEIFSA survey: (minimum wages 26/11/74)

Grade I	35c per hour	3864	workers
" II	40c " "	648	"
" III	45c " "	179	"
" IV	50c " "	36	"
" V	55c " "	18	"
" VI	60c " "	1	"
" VII	70c " "	5	"
" VIII	-	-	
" IX	86c+ " "	31	personnel assistants

Between 1972 and 1974 there were four wage increases for Black workers: October 1972 an increase of 15,8%; April 1973 an increase of 13,6%; October 1973 an increase of 20%; May 1974 an increase of 15,8%. Obviously these wage increases are in money terms and need to be deflated to take into account price increases which over these years showed quite substantial rises.

Black workers also receive increments for long service:

1-5	years	1c	per hour	per	year
5-10	"	2c	" "	"	"
10-15	"	3c	" "	"	"
15-20	"	4c	" "	"	"
20-25	"	5c	" "	"	"
over 25	"	6c	" "	"	"

After 10 years every worker receives a R30 bonus.

Iscor also has a "leave bonus system" for Black workers at the end of a completed contract. R37 to grade I workers; R39 to grade II workers; R43 to grade III workers; R47 to grade IV workers. There is however a catch. A worker only receives this if and when he returns for another contract period. Furthermore since contract workers don't receive holiday pay the word bonus is something of a misnomer. In this case it is more equivalent to their holiday pay. Non-contract Black workers receive three weeks full pay while on leave if they have worked for less than 10 years at Iscor and four weeks for more than 10 years service. Iscor belongs to the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa (SEIFSA) which lays down minimum wages for all its members.

Iscor management claim that their wages are higher than SEIFSA regulation wages, but they do admit that they are lower than those generally paid in private industry. They also claim that they do not lose much labour to private industry. However, it is not easy for a contract worker to move to private industry for he has only one choice if he resigns - to return to his "homeland".

However the most important aspect of Black wages is not wage increase per se nor comparative wage levels between different industries but the relationship between the reorganisation of the labour process and wages. It was openly admitted by management, that when Black workers are moved up into reorganised White jobs or jobs are fragmented, they earn only 50-60% of the previous White skilled worker's wage. It was not possible to get any detailed figures on this issue, but experience suggests that it may even be a smaller percentage. Of course Iscor argue that the wages paid to Blacks do not include the food and housing provided in the compound, which White workers have to pay for out of their wages. However, the housing provided for Blacks (pitifully inadequate as it is) is no

longer a cost to Iscor, and mass produced food costs Iscor very little. All in all, Black upgraded workers, while having increased their production output, take home less money than the previously employed White workers with similar or less output per man.

We do not have any figures on White wages. It was, however, made clear that White wages were slightly lower than in private industry. However, as in other state sector enterprises, there were substantial fringe benefits that accrued to White workers. (See Article 1). Housing, for example, is an extremely important way of attracting and keeping White artisans. It is also a very important way of tying workers to the company, and serves to reinforce the hierarchical structure of the company.

BLACK WORKER ORGANISATION

Reported strikes by Black workers seem to have been few in the history of Iscor. In 1934 the first year of Iscor's operations, there was a strike of Black workers demanding a doubling of the wage per shift (Daily Despatch 27/4/1935). In June 1946 1 400 Black steel workers at the Union Steel corporation plant at Vereeniging went on strike to demand a wage increase of 2d per hour. This strike was organised by the African Iron and Steel Workers Union. After an initial report nothing more on it appeared in any of the newspapers (Rand Daily Mail 27/6/46). Of course, the fact that few strikes were reported in newspapers or admitted to by management does not necessarily mean that few strikes took place in Iscor's history

No Black trade unions are officially or unofficially recognised at Iscor and management clings steadfastly to the Government-backed works and liaison committees. Although specific data on their functioning was not available, it was possible to obtain some information. It should however be treated with a certain amount of reservation for the whole position of these committees is particularly

fluid in most industries at the moment. Furthermore, the information presented, apart from being extremely sketchy, very definitely represents managements' point of view.

The liaison committee was the main mechanism used in Pretoria. It consists of 15 members nominated by the workers and 15 nominated by management. The 15 management nominees were not necessarily Black production workers. The most powerful position, that of the chairman, was the automatic preserve of the White head of the Black personnel department. Most of the members nominated by the workers were long period workers. Indeed the very rules under which nomination occurred ensured this. Workers could not be nominated unless they had been with Iscor for more than three years. It was claimed that there was a great respect for age. Certainly most of the members nominated by workers were claimed to be over forty. The committee holds office for not less than two years. The service length being determined by the committee. The liaison committee marked a new attempt by Iscor to introduce some structure into its industrial relations. Before the introduction of liaison committees management only had "informal discussions" with Black workers. Management claimed to be satisfied with the liaison committee in this form.

WHITE WORKER ORGANISATION

Historically, White labour in Iscor has been divided at the level of production relations between essentially White artisanal and White operative labour. This division was evident in the first years of Iscor's operations. As mechanisation proceeded, this served to intensify the process of deskilling and the replacement of artisanal functions by semi-skilled workers resulted in the traditional craft unions opposing the interests of semi-skilled largely White operative labour. As a result the semi-skilled workers founded their own union in 1936 - the South African Iron and Steel Trades Association (S.A. Iron and Steel Trades Association, Monthly Report, December 1948).

There were almost immediate attempts by the Nationalist Party and Die Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultur Verenigings to gain control of the association. This was at first resisted but by early 1938 prominent FAK members were well represented on the executive of the association and in 1949, the association withdrew from the South African Trades and Labour Council, over the question of Native trade unions affiliation, and formed a 'Coordinating Council' of their own in Pretoria. (The S.A. Worker (published by Coordinating Council of S.A. Trade Unions) January 1949, Vol. I, No 1).

The association declared that there was a basic congruence of interest between employers and employees, it did not believe in strikes and took the view that the best interests of White workers would be preserved by preventing any employment of Black labour in jobs thus far defined as 'civilised'.

The divisions between operative and artisanal labour were most clearly illustrated in the strikes of February 1952. Somewhat over 1 500 men came out on strike over the rate of artisan pay in Iscor (Rand Daily Mail 22/2/52) (1). The traditional craft unions - notably the Amalgamated Engineering Union, but also the boilermakers, electrical workers, woodworkers etc. (excepting the iron moulders) led the strike and the Trade and Labour Council offered full support. The South African Iron and Steel Trades Association gave no backing to the strike and reached a separate agreement with Iscor management.

The strategy of the SA Iron and Steel Trades Association is one of reliance on the State and appeal to the government rather than strike action which they have explicitly rejected in the past. Typically in 1956, when wage negotiations in Iscor were deadlocked the association appealed to the government and then to the individual cabinet ministers to intervene and L. van der Berg, General Secretary, declared "I say we must inform the Government of the position and tell them that the people that they have appointed are wrecking things" (Pretoria News 11/6/56).

Appeal to the State as guardian of the workers' interests has had particular relevance to the beneficiaries of the 'civilised' labour policy and workers in the State sector, but significantly the association has made much less headway in other privately owned steel plants - e.g. Highveld. The divisions within the White labour force have undoubtedly served to further weaken the White workers position vis a vis management and although, according to management concerned with White personnel, the Trade Unions operate a closed shop at Iscor this would appear to be merely a formal arrangement and not indicative of the power of the unions. There appears to be extensive on-going consultation between White workers and management over the crucial issues of Black job advancement and wages.

CONCLUSION

Much of the empirical material we have presented speaks for itself. However, it also needs to be placed within a theoretical context for the correct conclusions to be drawn. We will therefore close this case study with some concluding remarks which situate the material presented in the context of Iscor as a capitalist enterprise under the control of the State.

Insofar as Iscor is a capitalist enterprise it resembles all other capitalist firms. It necessarily incorporates the basic principles of such enterprises within its own organisation. The two most important and distinguishing features of a capitalist enterprise are (a) that it is dependent upon the continuous appropriation of surplus labour in the specific form of profit; and (b) that it has a form of internal organisation and control which ensures this. It is in terms of these principles that the place of Black and White workers in the production process and the reorganisation of the labour process needs to be viewed.

There is a tendency in South Africa to view the racial stratification of labour in the firm from

the point of view of its protective function for White labour only. This is a fundamentally incorrect approach. It is both theoretically incorrect and historically inaccurate. When applied to the current situation, it quite clearly performs the ideological function of masking the underlying reasons for the tendencies to reorganise the labour process. For here it simply shifts the focus of the main beneficiaries from White labour to Black labour. The very word "advancement" suggests this. Black workers now seem to be benevolently given the chance to increase their wages and their job prospects. This is all true but it masks reality instead of revealing it. For the words capital and profit are absent as the principal forces or as the main beneficiaries of this process. Yet as we have pointed out the principal effects of the reorganisation of the labour process are the increased productivity of Black labour to the relative benefit of profits rather than wages. For the increases in productivity are not matched by the wage increases given to the reorganised or upgraded Black workers.

The form of organisation and control, internally specific to the capitalist firm, depends primarily upon the existence of an institutional hierarchy. This encompasses a hierarchy of delegated authority, of divided functions and of wages. The primary function of such a hierarchy is to ensure the subordination of labour in the production process and the social division of labour. It does so by maintaining mechanisms of control and attempting, by organisational means, to divide the labour force. Racial divisions can therefore play an important part in the internal organisation of the firm, especially if they be made to roughly coincide with the hierarchies of control and supervision in the production process. As we have shown White labour tends to perform a different function in the labour process from that of Black workers. The Black workers tend primarily to be productive workers whilst the tendency amongst Whites is to perform the functions of supervision and control or to perform functions *ancillary* to the production process. Insofar as they perform this

function these Whites are objectively performing the appropriate organisational function of the capitalist enterprise. Such workers play a different political and economic function in the production process. Because of the fact that they are not directly involved in this process they are separated through the hierarchical divisions internal to the capitalist firm from the Black productive workers. It does not matter whether they are called 'artisans' or 'operators'. Their structural position is akin to that of the "new petty bourgeoisie" (2).

Some form of racial stratification in the labour force is therefore to the benefit of management. The continuous operation of the enterprise only serves to reinforce this by reinforcing hierarchical divisions of control. This is very clear in the new plants where new forms of racial stratification are being instituted even amongst Black workers. Using Indian supervisors in the predominantly African plant at Newcastle or setting up new racial hierarchies at Saldanha between Whites, Coloureds and Africans, is a good example of this. The appointment of "bossboys" to liaise with White supervisors and partially supervise Black operators introduces hierarchical divisions within the African labour force as well. The whole process of job fragmentation increases this system of hierarchy, and constantly reproduces the usage of unproductive Whites as supervisors over Black productive workers. The system of wages with its gross divisions and extreme accentuations serves the same functions. Furthermore it also serves to increase and reproduce conflicts between White artisans and White production workers as well as increasing competition amongst Black workers.

Managements' different attitude to worker organisations - e.g. encouraging trade unions for Whites and liaison committees for Blacks - serves to reinforce the hierarchical divisions within Iscor. The constitution of the liaison committee and its functioning quite clearly shows that, notwithstanding the ability of Black workers to vote 50% of its membership, it necessarily functions as an

effective instrument of containment and control.

The final aspect in which control is ensured through the hierarchical and racial division of labour refers obviously to the extra plant measures at Iscor. The fact that most of the Black labour force as contract workers are under the bureaucratic control of the state labour bureaux system means that greater control can be exercised over them, even outside of the production process. Further, their containment in compounds under strict company supervision means that Iscor has an extremely effective system of direct control over most of its productive workers. While these extra plant mechanisms are obviously important in Iscor, the preference to employ contract workers and house them in compounds should not be generalised to private industry as a whole. Iscor is a heavy industrial enterprise, state owned with the possibility for constructing large compounds. Most private industries in other sectors do not conform to this pattern. They do not have the same problems in attracting local settled Black labour, and will have different preferences in regard to settled local labour or contract labour. They will attempt to ensure low absentee rates by other means than compounds. In other words, it would be a mistake to infer from this short description that the overall tendency in industry is to employ contract labour and ensure extra plant control in the same manner as Iscor.

Thus far we have been concerned only with racial stratification within Iscor as a capitalist enterprise. Iscor is, however, also a State Corporation and must also be seen in this context. In South Africa, the State is the principal employer of White labour and this has two major effects. Firstly, it operates to reinforce the already existent racial stratification within the society as a whole by absorbing surplus White labour that might not otherwise have been maintained in supervisory or ancillary functions in the private sector. In this way, the strict racial differentiation of labour is maintained, throughout the whole society. Secondly, the fact that the State

is the principle employer of labour has played an important function in securing the political and ideological support from the White wage earning strata for the form of state in South Africa.

In conclusion, the racial stratification within Iscor has its basis in the existence of the corporation as a capitalist enterprise. However, the existence of Iscor as a State enterprise and the specific function that it has served, along with other State enterprises, with regard to White labour in the society as a whole, explains the existence, within the corporation, of a higher White to Black ratio as compared with other, private, enterprises in South Africa.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) Estimates vary. Iscor claimed 700 - see the *Star 22/2/52*. But other press reports claim over 1 500 - see the *Rand Daily Mail 22/2/52*.

(2) See Poulantzas, N., *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, NLB 1975.

BLACK INDUSTRIAL PROTEST ON THE WITWATERSRAND, 1901-02

by Peter Warwick

A feature of the historiography of industrialisation during its initial stages of development in South Africa has been the acceptance that the role played by the black labour force was largely a passive one. Organised industrial action by black workers, however, can be traced back at least to the turn of the present century, when a series of protests by black workers on the Rand took place. During 1901-02 strikes and mass desertions occurred at the Consolidated Main Reef, Geldenhuis, Langlaate and Durban Roodepoort Mines, as well as at the Vereeniging Coal Mines and the Brakpan Electric Works. While each dispute can be understood fully only by examining the particular work context in which it took place, the protests happened at a time of transition in the Transvaal from a period of war to one of reconstruction, and in the circumstances of wage reductions and an offensive by Randlords, in close collaboration with the post-war British administration, to destroy completely the informal bargaining power of the black industrial work force on the gold reef.

The background to the protests will be sketched in as briefly as possible. During the South African War the workers who remained in the industrial region experienced considerable hardship. Shortly after the beginning of the war many of the 20 000 or more workers who remained in the mining area were commandeered by the Boer government either to provide unpaid labour for the commandos, or to work in other occupations related to the war effort. In January 1900 a maximum monthly wage for black workers of only 20s was introduced by the government, a curfew was put into operation, all assemblies of Africans prohibited, and frequent police raids made into the compounds to maintain control over the labour force and to discourage any protests by workers. Although Africans' expectations were apparently raised by the prospect of a British administration in the Transvaal, since pass books were burned *en masse* by workers when Roberts's columns entered Johannesburg in June 1900, afterwards the hardships of those in the industrial

area were consolidated rather than ameliorated. 8 000 workers were conscripted to build a new railway for transporting coal along the gold reef at the wage rate of only 10d a day; 4 000 men were drafted to form an inexpensive labour force for the army; and the remaining workers were retained by the mines for maintenance work at a wage rate of 1 shilling a day. Martial law restrictions were placed on the movement of Africans, so that many workers found it almost impossible to return home and, therefore, were compelled to remain on the mines long after their contracts had expired.

During the war the wages of black workers were reduced by the Chamber of Mines from their pre-war level of 50 shillings to 30-35 shillings. Equally important, however, wage rates outside the gold mining sector were maintained and often increased, and alternative employment opportunities in more congenial occupations were easily available in reparation work, in large-scale public works enterprises, at the ports, and even in other industries on the Rand itself. The gold mining industry was only able to recruit a work force in 1903 which was two-thirds the size of that which it had employed in 1899.

Death ratesamong workers in the mining compounds before the outbreak of war are not available, but immediately afterwards the number of deaths rose steeply from 92 in May 1902, to 247 in November. Between these months the average monthly death rate per thousand workers was 48,5 and in July 1903, a peak was reached of 112,54. Harsh though conditions may have been on the reef, workers were often in a poor physical condition when they arrived to begin work, having travelled long distances on foot or in closed railway trucks with no sanitary facilities (those transporting workers were classified as goods rather than passenger trains). The problem was exacerbated after the war by the congestion of the railway system, the shortage of rolling stock which caused the terrible overcrowding of workers in available trucks, and by further delays in the transporting of workers from Braamfontein to particular mines. One in eight mining recruits

were found physically unfit to begin work immediately.

The post-war British administration also introduced a much more sophisticated system of control over African workers. During the 1890s many mining companies systematically recruited workers from each other by employing labour 'touts' to procure newly arrived workers in the industrial area and to encourage desertions from the compounds of neighbouring mines, promising the workers better pay and conditions. In spite of legislative attempts to prevent such practices, especially the pass law of 1895, which compelled Africans to wear a metal arm badge (or later an official pass) numbered as a means of identification, desertions became such a problem because of the inconsistencies and maladministration of the law, which workers were able successfully to exploit, that in November 1898 the number of desertions reported by mining companies exceeded the number of workers legitimately discharged. This system provided black mine workers with the means to exercise selection in their ultimate choice of employer. After the annexation of the Transvaal, however, workers were confronted by a maximum average wage system, the establishment of a monopolistic recruiting agency, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, which was created with the intention of 'rendering impossible in the future the indiscriminate touting and traffic in Natives which in the past existed among the mining companies' (Chamber of Mines, Annual Reports for 1900 and 1901, p. 111), and by an administration determined on regulating labour to a greater degree within the industrial area. The Milner regime extended the pass department, developed legal procedures to deal with breaches of contract, introduced a scheme to register the finger-prints of all mining employees to help identify those who deserted, and established regulations to prohibit mining companies recruiting workers in labour districts. The possibility of black workers exchanging employers to find the most congenial working conditions was therefore considerably reduced; the mine workers' former bargaining power,

albeit exercised informally and on an individual scale, was largely destroyed by the new rapport which had been established between the mining industry and the state. It was in these circumstances that the protests by black workers took place.

The first endeavours of the W.N.L.A. met with only limited success and some active resistance on the part of workers. In 1901, 192 Venda workers refused on arrival at the mines to begin work, and only after a dispute lasting ten days were they eventually persuaded to do so. 29 Rolong workers also refused to commence work, expressing dissatisfaction with the rates of pay they found to exist on the mines, and the Association prudently returned them to Mafeking.

VEREENIGING ESTATE COAL MINE

The first serious protest by workers was in a number of respects untypical of the kind of unrest which followed later, since it did not take place on a gold mine where wage reductions had been enforced. On 7 September 1901, 162 Sotho workers arrived at the Vereeniging Estate Coal Mine from Aliwal North, where many of them had been waiting for up to five weeks for rail permits to enable them to travel to the Transvaal. Two days later the workers held a meeting after which they refused to begin work until they had been paid 1s 6d for each day they had been detained at Aliwal, in accordance with a promise made to them by the recruiting agent. When the Manager, E.M. Goodwin, assured them they would be paid in due course, the workers threatened to return home unless they were paid immediately. The next day 60 of the workers openly deserted, in spite of the warning that by doing so they were breaking the law; the group was detained after crossing the Vaal River and brought back to Viljoen's Drift. When the Sotho refused to re-cross the river, soldiers of the East Lancashire Regiment surrounded the workers, who armed themselves with sticks and stones in a bid to escape. Nine workers were shot dead and fifteen others were wounded.

The most prominent issue in the negotiations between the workers and the management was the deception practiced by the recruiting agent who had enlisted their labour; the workers insisted that the agent had promised them that their wages would be paid while they were detained at Aliwal, and that they had been brought to Vereeniging under false pretences, since they had been told they were to work for the government not for a private company. The dispute, however, followed a series of protests by Sotho workers against their maltreatment at the Vereeniging Mine; only a short time before the military had been called in to the estate to quell a disturbance, after which two white workers had been imprisoned for three months for assault. The workers may have known of the reputation of the Mine, increasing their determination not to take up employment there. Indeed, conditions on the coal mines at Vereeniging at this time were known to be particularly hazardous; 1 100 desertions took place from the Cornelia Mine between July and December 1902, and when a census of workers was carried out at the end of the year only 850 workers were found out of the anticipated labour force of 1 150. The spokesman for the Sotho protesters was the headman, Jacob, though it was claimed later that the most militant among them was a worker named Likwala. Although Jacob was officially charged with responsibility for the work party, on the two occasions when he was approached to use his influence with the workers to prevent further conflict, he refused to do so.

JOHANNESBURG LOCATION RIOT

On 1 January 1902, a disturbance took place at the Johannesburg location when 6 Zulu policemen and 2 white constables were attacked by 200 mostly Xhosa mine workers. The gathering of angry workers was dispersed only after shots had been fired into the crowd, killing 2 Africans and wounding a number of others. Later, 43 participants were sentenced to terms of imprisonment of up to 12 months. The riot provides evidence of the deterioration of relations on the Rand at this time between Xhosa and Zulu workers. Afterwards a meeting was held by the Zulu workers at the location, at which a petition

was drawn up to Sir Godfrey Lagden, the Commissioner for Native Affairs, requesting that a separate location be established for them, since the workers wished 'to be removed from immediate contact with other Natives (and more especially the Maxosa element)'. To analyse the riot as one of the earliest examples of 'faction fighting' on the mines, however, would be misleading, unless it is understood that the antagonism between Zulu and Xhosa workers was to a large extent the result of attempts by the mine owners to exercise greater control over the work force by 'divide and rule' tactics. It was reported to the South African Native Affairs Commission in 1905 that the policy of appointing Zulus as gangers over workers from the Transkei was one of the main reasons, in addition to the reduction of wages, why Xhosa workers had shown reluctance to work on the gold fields after the war. Supervision of the compounds and locations increased in intensity during the war and afterwards; many of those recruited for police work were Zulus.

CONSOLIDATED MAIN REEF MINE

Unrest on the reef erupted again at the beginning of April when 116 of the 183 workers at the Consolidated Main Reef Mine went out on strike. In spite of the intervention of the Inspector of Labour the workers refused to go back to work and were all arrested. The origins of the stoppage are not difficult to discover, since a contractor engaged in the construction of a boiler house at the mine was known by the strikers to be paying his employees higher wages than those they themselves received. The workers demanded either equal remuneration or the right to work instead for the contractor. Indeed, the dispute was aggravated by the intervention of yet another contracting company, Gratton and Stuart of Elandsfontein, which sent a worker into the mining compound to offer the strikers 20 shillings a week if they left the mine and came to work for the company. The Manager of the mine complained that 'if the contractors are allowed to go on they will obtain all the best boys, many of which are as good at certain work as

white men, and at the same time unsettle the company's boys'.

GELDENHUIS ESTATE MINE

On 6 January 1902, 536 Pedi workers had been registered for a six month contract to work on the Geldenhuis Mine. At the end of June, 448 workers struck work and demanded to be returned home, claiming that their contract had expired, though it did not run out until 6 July. The Germiston Mounted Police were summoned to the Mine and 16 leaders of the protest arrested and taken to Germiston, where they were charged under the Masters and Servants Act for inciting a breach of contract. The remaining strikers broke out of the compound and marched towards the town threatening to release the detained men by force, and they too were arrested. 432 workers were fined £2 or one month's hard labour, five indunas fined £2 or two months hard labour, and 11 other leaders £2 or 6 weeks hard labour. The company offered to pay the workers' fines on condition that they completed the contract, though over 100 of the strikers appear to have chosen to go to gaol with their leaders instead. The grievances of the workers derived from their dissatisfaction with the nature of their employment. As early as 8 January, Asaph Moruthani, the secretary to the Pedi Chief, Sekukuni II, who had been sent to accompany the work party to the gold fields and report on their conditions of service, complained that the men had been deceived concerning their ultimate destination. Sekukuni had originally refused to supply workers to private industry, but on the assurance of the local administration that the men were required for government work, he had permitted them to leave. It is unclear why the men almost worked out their contracts before resorting to protest action, though it is possible the men may have hoped that the company would turn a blind eye to such an incident so near the completion date of the contract. On 22 May, 164 workers, who had left their employment on the Ginsberg Mine and camped outside Boksburg, had been permitted to return to Pietersburg, together with over 100 workers who had deserted from the East Rand Mines, rather

than prosecuted and made to complete their contracts. It is possible that this episode set a precedent which other workers attempted to follow. The strike was led by the 5 Pedi indunas, whose task it was to supervise the work force and provide a link between the mining company and the workers' Chief. S.M. Pritchard, the Chief Inspector of Labour, believed the protest was wholly their responsibility: 'the strike was due to the indunas ... That these men were the instigators there would appear to be no doubt'.

LANGLAAGTE DEEP MINE

Shortly after midnight on 28 June, 1 100 workers at the Langlaagte Mine broke down the gates of the compound and marched towards the Village Deep Mine from where they had been enlisted earlier. A detachment of the Johannesburg Mounted Police pursued the deserters, who were armed with knobkerries, bottles and stones, and eventually persuaded them to return to the Langlaagte Mine, where they stoned the compound manager's office before going back to their quarters. The 15 leaders of the protest demanded the dismissal of the compound manager, and declared their intention to desert again the following morning unless this was done, though police supervision prevented another mass walk-out. Although the dispute appears quickly to have subsided, the roots of the unrest were deep. Because of the restrictions on the movement of Africans in the Transvaal, many workers at the mine had been prevented from returning home directly their contracts had expired. Moreover, the behaviour of the compound manager, Joseph Woichowsky, turned the workers discontent into open anger. Woichowsky had been guilty of rejecting almost out of hand applications by workers for temporary passes to leave the compound, which prevented them visiting a store situated within a few hundred yards of the mine. Almost certainly the Langlaagte workers depended on the store to supplement their diet. Protesters interviewed by the police after the walk-out also claimed that Woichowsky had presided over acts of gross cruelty at the mine. Trooper Brickhill of the J.M.P.

reported that:

> '... the Compound Manager illtreats them by having them thrashed both in the compound and down the mine with a cat-o-nine tails and thrashed them on the testicles: further ... they were shut up like dogs ... (they) stated they would work and not give any trouble if the Compound Manager treated them as human beings not dogs, and they would not continue to work while he was in charge of the compound and they would kill him if he continued'.

Clearly, the relations between the labour force and Woichowsky had deteriorated in the circumstances of renewed mining operations.

DURBAN ROODEPOORT MINE

Within a month of the Langlaagte and Geldenhuis protests further unrest was evident at the Durban Roodepoort Mine. On 21 July the black work force of 700 men held a meeting before the morning shift, after which they demanded to speak to the manager and refused to go underground unless they were given an increase in the 30 shillings a month for which they had been contracted. To emphasise their case the workers assembled in the compound with their belongings and threatened to leave the property. Within 2 hours, however, the protesters had been induced to return to work, 'assisted' by the black mine police, and the threat that if the stoppage continued the strikers would be punished in the same way as the Geldenhuis workers. Afterwards the 3 leaders of the protest, 'Canteen', 'English' and 'Madoda', all from Mozambique, claimed they had been misled by the recruiting agent at their kraals, who had assured them that they would receive wages in excess of those that had prevailed before the war, and that they would be contracted for a period of only 6 months. When they had arrived at the mine they found they were to be paid a mere 30 shillings a month, and that their contract was to extend for 12 months. The leaders, who had agreed to resume work only with

the consent of the strikers, emphasised they were underpaid, but that it was only a little more money they demanded.

BRAKPAN ELECTRIC WORKS

The final eruption of worker protest in 1902 occurred at the Brakpan Electric Works. On 11 September, 61 Xhosa employees under their leader, 'One O'Clock', struck work and marched to Boksburg, following the example of 40 workers who had left the property in June, where they demanded to lay their grievances before the Magistrate. They complained of ill-treatment at the hands of the resident engineer who, they reported, regularly sjambokked workers and had them thrown among burning embers; they protested, too, against the dangerous nature of the work caused by bursting boiler tubes. The Chief Inspector held an enquiry at the works, after which he concluded it had been the intention of the workers to obtain discharges on the pretext of ill-treatment. His verdict was endorsed by the magistrate of the Boksburg Native Court, who sentenced 55 strikers to one month's imprisonment with hard labour since, he believed, 'it was perfectly clear that the desertions took place with the object of getting more remunerative work elsewhere'.

The strikers described above were small in scale; they appear to have involved no more than 2 500 workers. They took place over a period of 12 months, in a variety of districts, and were not confined to one industry. Although the disputes a at Geldenhuis and Langlaagte occurred on the same day, there is no evidence to suggest that they were in any way directly related. The only specific link connecting any 2 of the incidents is that the punishments meted out to the Geldenhuis strikers was used by the management of the Durban Roodepoort Mine to threaten their workers to return peacefully to work. (But in view of the 'official' nature of the documentary evidence used for this study it would be unrealistic to conclude, therefore, that the action of one group of workers was necessarily completely unknown to any other group). None of

the protests appear to have been successful in their immediate aims, though the reluctance shown by black workers to migrate to the gold fields induced the Chamber of Mines to re-introduce the 1897 wage schedule at the end of 1902. Any continuing upward movement of wage-levels in the immediate post-war period, however, was prevented by the introduction of indentured Chinese labour to the Rand in 1904. Some improvements took place in the conditons of life in the mining compounds, though it has been argued that this can be related to the fear of censure from the British government on the part of Sir Godfrey Lagden, rather than to pressures for improvements from the mine workers themselves.(Jeeves, p.17)

Why, then, do the protests merit examination? In the first place they are the earliest organised protests by black workers on the Rand which so far have been analysed. Further research may show other strikes to have taken place before the South African War. Secondly, it is important to understand the way in which what Charles van Onselen has described as the 'individual, informal and largely unorganised' resistance to exploitation on the part of the first generation of black industrial wage-earners in southern Africa evolved into more formal and recognizable expressions of organised protest action. The development of black worker protest is most usefully conceived as a continuum of resistance to exploitation which includes opposition to wage labour on the part of Africans by raising necessary cash requirements in other ways (such as the sale of livestock and agricultural produce); resistance to recruitment by labour agents, who frequently practiced deception concerning wage rates, contracts and working conditions; selectiveness in the labour market to achieve the highest possible remuneration; individual desertions against unsatisfactory working conditions; strikes and walk-outs which though revealing recognizable leadership left behind them no permanent worker organisation; and finally the establishment of black trade unionism. The Industrial and Commercial workers' union, formed in 1919, has been interpreted for too long as a movement almost with-

out antecedents. Thirdly, small in numerical terms and unsuccessful though the protests of 1901-02 may have been, it would be surprising if they had been anything else in view of the penalties which faced workers who were brought before the courts, the intensification of police activity on the Rand during the war and immediately afterwards, the swift action of the army and the police against protesters, and the close community of interest between the government and the mining companies, which was attested to by the partisan spirit in which the investigations of the Chief Inspector of Labour were carried out. Finally, the protests took place in a common environment and evidence a number of common features.

The disputes occurred after a period of considerable hardship on the Rand during the South African War, and in the circumstances of a rapidly rising death rate among black mine workers, wage reductions, and a decline in the purchasing power of workers' wages as a result of the inflation of livestock and grain prices, and the prices of other consumption items. They took place, too, in an environment in which the expectations of workers had been raised as a result of the outcome of the war (in this respect the protests might be considered in the context of the industrial ferment in South Africa which followed immediately after the two world wars). Restrictions on the free movement of black workers in the Transvaal, institutional and legislative measures to control more effectively the black labour force, and the more efficient policing of the mining area, implied that it was much more difficult after the annexation of the Transvaal for workers to desert a company either to escape unsatisfactory working and living conditions and repressive supervisors and policemen, or to find alternative better-paid and more congenial work. In these circumstances individual protest action on the part of black workers was made more difficult, and the conditions of life in the mining industry made all the more bearable.

The deception of black workers by recruiting agents was protested against by workers at the Geldenhuis,

Vereeniging and Durban Roodepoort Mines; at the Brakpan Electric Works and the Vereeniging and Langlaagte Mines workers complained of their ill-treatment by other members of the work force; specific demands for higher wages were made by workers at the Consolidated Main Reef and Durban Roodepoort Mines.

In most of the disputes some form of leadership can be discerned. At the Geldenhuis and Vereeniging Mines negotiations were conducted by headmen in whose charge the workers were placed during their period of employment; at Geldenhuis the induna system provided the cohesive force for the protest, while at Vereeniging the headman, Jacob, appears to have been reluctant to act against the aspirations of the workers, though the *de facto* leadership may have lain elsewhere. In other disputes rank-and-file leaders are cited by name in the reports, though in view of the authorities' desire to prevent further protests, men may have been singled out for salutary punishment; thus, some of the leaders may have been created as much by the management as by the workers, though it is important to recognise that in the subsequent inquiries these men showed themselves willing to represent the grievances of their fellow workers.

The ethnicity of those taking part appears to have been an important binding force in the protests, often stemming from the immediate grievances of the workers. At Geldenhuis the dispute was fundamentally between the management of the mine and the Pedi work force, the unrest at the Durban Roodepoort Mine was apparently confined to workers from Mozambique, and the strike at the Brakpan Electric Works was reported to have been an exclusively Xhosa affair. At Vereeniging the Sotho workers cited the independence of their people as a symbol of protest; when the Provost Marshall attempted to induce the workers to return to the mine he was informed that 'they were Lorethodi's (sic) people and they were going to fight ... (the British) may beat the Boers but could not the Basuto'. Ethnicity appears to have been an important and understandably useful binding element

in the earliest protest actions by the first generation of industrial workers in southern Africa (in the Wankie Colliery Strike in 1912, for example). However, it would be premature to conclude, therefore, that class consciousness derived from the labourers' own perception of themselves as 'workers' had not yet begun to transcend ethnic divisions. The impression of ethnic cohesion in the protests may be exaggerated by the inadequacy of the available evidence, since it is possible that the ethnicity of the workers involved in some of the disputes may only have been assumed by the management to have corresponded with that of their leaders. Furthermore, the largest protest, that involving over a thousand workers at the Langlaagte Mine, was not described as having been confined to any one ethnic group .

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REPORT ON THE ANGLO AMERICAN CORPORATION GOLD MINES

by Martin Plaut

Towards the end of 1973 the Wages Commission of the Students Representative Council of the University of Cape Town undertook a study of the gold mining industry entitled 'A Mining Survey', in an attempt to provide an outline of the history of, and conditions prevailing on the mines as background to the deaths of 12 Black miners at the Western Deep Levels Mine on Tuesday 11 September 1973. The survey came to the attention of Anglo American Corporation who, in March 1975, invited the Commission to visit the corporation. The Commission accepted, and on 18 and 19 August, 1975, three representatives (including the author) met with various members of the management of Anglo American Corporation in Johannesburg. This article is largely based on discussions and interviews which took place during the visit.

Where no other source is cited all information was provided by AAC head office staff, and should be interpreted with care as the commission had no opportunity to discover the basis upon which the data was computed or to discuss and verify the material with the miners themselves.

EMPLOYMENT

In August 1975 the AAC employed approximately 153 000 Black and 17 000 White employees on its mines in South Africa and Namibia, of whom 116 000 Blacks and 12 000 Whites were employed in the Corporation's gold division. A breakdown of the Black labour force in the gold mining industry indicates the industry's dependence on foreign labour.

Country of Origin	%, June 1974	%, June 1975
Malawi	28	9
South Africa	23	33
Mozambique	22	28
Lesotho	20	23
Botswana	5	5
Swaziland	2	2
	100	100

The decrease in the Malawian contingent can be attributed to the ban on recruiting in Malawi in April 1974, ostensibly because of the plane crash, but the corporation suggested that the reason behind the ban was the desire on the part of the Malawian government to use the extra labour for local development and in agriculture and forestry in particular. While this ban had the effect of creating a Black labour shortage of 10% in the gold mining industry, AAC maintained that it experienced no shortage of Black or White labour in August 1975. Malawian labour has been replaced primarily by increasing the proportion of South Africans by means of an intensive recruiting drive in urban and rural regions. In this the corporation is aided by South African legislation which acts to 'lock' Black workers from the 'homelands' into particular job categories. (1)

The violence, damage and loss of production resulting from mine riots (of which there were 30 major incidents between September 1973 and September 1975 in the gold and coal mining industries, leaving 130 Black miners dead and resulting in between 30 000 and 50 000 breaking their contracts and returning home) have been an intense source of discomfort to the gold mining industry. AAC has felt this particularly keenly because of its international status and especially its African connections, the desire to maintain a liberal, progressive image and its extraordinarily high political profile. As a result the corporation has spared no expense

in providing itself with expertise in the field of labour relations by means of retainers and donations to individual academics and organisations both at home and abroad.

WAGE DIFFERENTIALS

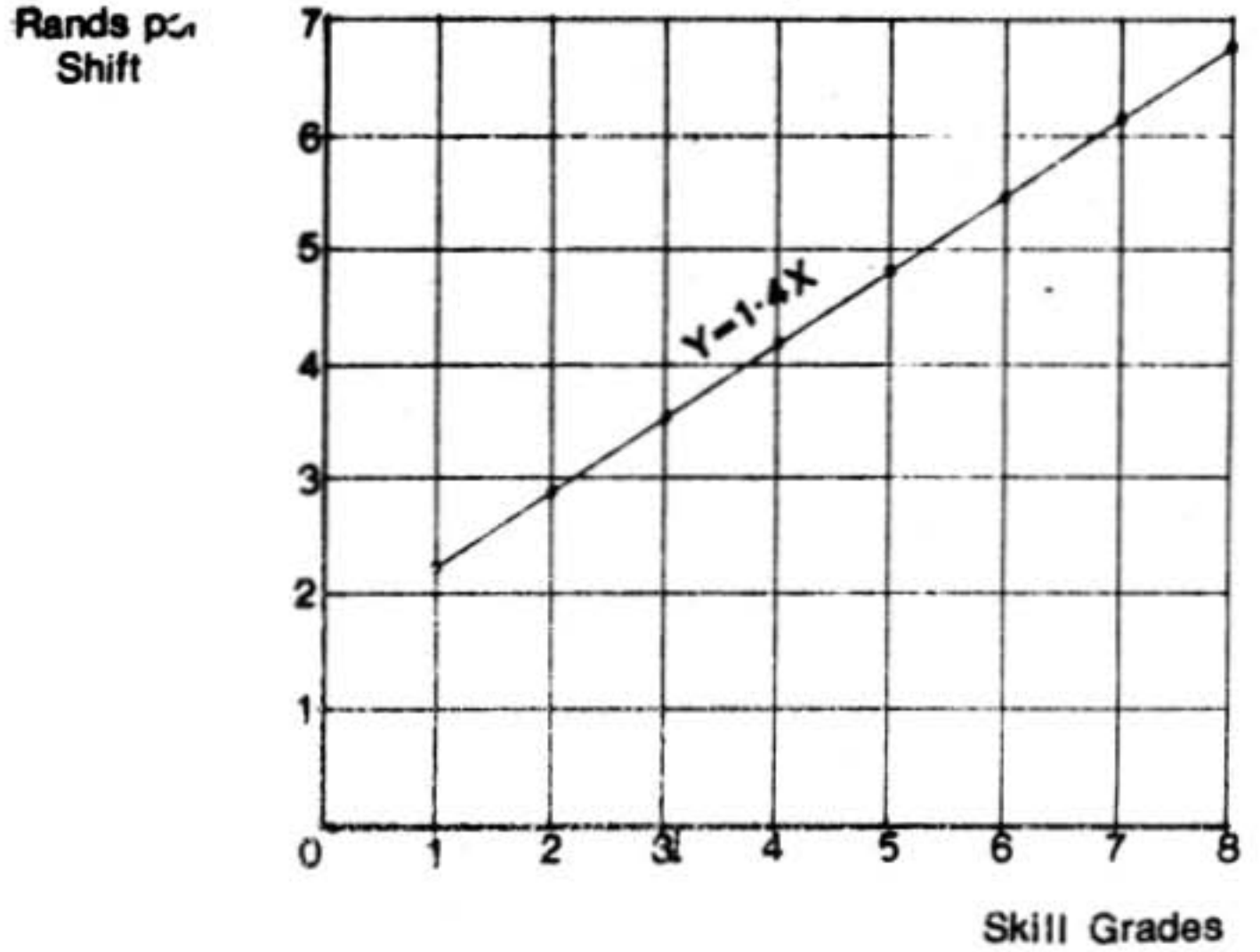
An example of this is provided by the way in which the corporation faced the problem of job grading and wage differentials which were seen as one of the factors behind some of the violence. In August 1974 Professor Patterson of Strathclyde University was brought out to South Africa to implement a system he had developed. The aim was to provide a unified method of job evaluation that could be applied to all mines. In June 1975 the method was adopted not only in the corporation's gold and coal divisions but in the entire gold industry - a necessity if the monopolistic nature of the industry was to be maintained. As one executive put it "to avoid workers playing one employer off against another and that's the last thing we want".

The manner in which Black permanent underground wages were decided upon is indicative of the manner in which the method operates. ('Permanent' in the sense that they were fully operative. Of the 93 500 Blacks underground, 71 367 were in this category). The miners were divided into skill grades as indicated below:

Grade	Number	%	Classification
1	12 331	17,3	unskilled
2	11 226	15,7	"
3	7 031	9,9	"
4	33 815	47,4	semi-skilled
5	1 228	1,7	"
6	571	0,8	"
7	1 770	2,5	skilled
8	3 395	4,6	"
	71 367	99,9	Total, June 1, 1975

Note: All % corrected to the first decimal place.

The grades were then plotted on a graph with wages set so that they approximated a line with a slope of 1,4. It was maintained that in order to keep turnover at an acceptable level the slope should be more than 1,25, while a slope of less than 1,5 was considered by management to be morally 'defensible'. Below is an approximation of the graph:



The pseudo scientific nature of the procedure is indicated by the fact that not all employees are on the same graph. White miners' wages for example, are plotted on a different graph allowing the existing wage differentials between Black and White wages to be maintained.

As Hyman points out the entire concept of job evaluation as an objective, value free means of evaluating pay scales is highly suspect. These scales are generally based on payment rated according to

the degree of responsibility, skill, effort and conditions, with the two former categories assigned a weighting more than double the latter two. This effectively entrenches the values implicit in managerial ideology within a statistical technique. "In effect the criteria of job evaluation encapsulate, with all the accoutrements of "science" and "objectivity", the principles of status hierarchy described by Lypton and Hamilton: skilled are elevated above unskilled, white-collar above manual, and managerial and professional above subordinate occupational groups" (Hyman, R. *Inequality, Ideology and Industrial Relations.* British Journal of Industrial Relations, No. 1 March 1976). It is hard to conceive of a more transparent case of reification.

AAC has recently made much of its increases in wages (Optima, 2, 1975). Gross remuneration of Black underground workers have increased from R38,00 p.m. to R90,20 p.m. in the period June 1972 to June 1975, an increase of 137,4%. They fail to point out that in the corresponding period the gold price had increased from R46,81 to R112,24, an increase of 139,8%. (South African Reserve Bank Quarterly Bulletin, September, 1972, September 1975). Nor do they mention that the 22 500 Black surface workers on the mines are paid according to a different scale which begins at R1,40 per shift as compared with R2,20 for underground labour. The mean wages for Black underground and surface labour are R84,00 and R48,00 per month respectively.

DEFERRED PAY

Not all wages are paid out to workers immediately as deferred pay exists in two forms: one voluntary and one compulsory. Voluntarily deferred pay is held by the industry for the miners until the end of their contracts. Interest accruing to the voluntarily deferred pay is not paid to individual

depositors as the Chamber of Mines considered it would be too costly to administer each sum separately. The interest is instead paid into the Deferred Pay Interest Fund which was set up in 1918 and is administered by two government officials and three members of the Native Recruiting Company to donate the proceeds to 'general welfare work'. On 31 December 1973 a sum of R10 257 289 had been deposited by 117 389 depositors, an average of R87,03 per person. Interest accruing from this was R376,381 for 1973 representing a return of 3,7% at a time when commercial banks offered a return of 5,5% on three month deposits, despite the fact that they had to bear the costs of administering the accounts separately. The question must be asked as to precisely what use the above funds are put, as they form a substantial pool of cheap finance. Compulsory deferred pay exists for miners from two countries - Malawi and Mozambique. The Malawian scheme allows 60% of wages to be deferred after the first six months. The Mozambique deferment was set up in terms of the Mozambique Convention and requires that 60% of pay be deferred from the commencement of the contract.

WORK HOURS

26 shifts are worked a month consisting of 8½ hours working at the rockface and theoretically 9½ hours if measured going from and returning to the compounds. In practice these hours may be considerably lengthened. This is particularly prevalant on the night shift as Black workers experience difficulty in returning to the surface. What tends to happen is that White miners simply leave for home after 5½ - 6 hours leaving the Blacks to straggle back in small groups. The cage operators refuse to raise them to the surface resulting in Blacks having to wait as much as four to five hours beyond their shift. Matters are made worse by the refusal to raise Black and White miners together. It is not unheard of for Black miners to miss the last cage and have to sleep underground until the following shift.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Living conditions have been seen as a further cause of tension and AAC has decided to spend R250m on housing over the next 6 - 7 years. Considerable attention is being given to providing more acceptable conditions but the chief cause of frustration, the fact that the housing is almost exclusively for men only, has not been removed. At present only approximately 1½% of all Black miners are housed with their families on mine property, despite the fact that mines may legally house 3% of all Black labour in married quarters. For Black workers with permanent urban residence rights the mines may build as many married quarters as they wish, but as few workers in this category are recruited (a position that may alter given the increased wages and the present recession) the provision has little practical effect.

LABOUR RELATIONS

The corporation has, since 1974, introduced a dual system of communication, a system which allows no confusion to occur between the instructions that emanate from above and recommendations from below. The downward channel is described as 'briefing groups' designed by the Industrial Society of London and the upward channel is the traditional mine one of tribal representatives superceded in some cases by works committees. The briefing groups are a formalised means of transmitting instructions down the hierarchy with regularised (generally once a month) meetings of small groups of employees of a particular rank who are addressed by the members of line management, to whom they are directly responsible, before, in turn, each addressing their subordinate groups. The whole process is subject to careful monitoring by means of written records and check by senior management on their subordinates' briefing procedures. The aim of this method appears to be the tighter control of information within the organisation. Its expressed purpose is to destroy what might be called the informal counter information networks which are developed by employees

as a means of opposing management decisions. In the briefing manual the 'grapevine' is seen by management as being 'irresponsible, consistently vicious' and 'invariably gets facts wrong'. 'Misunderstandings' are seen to lead to poor management-staff relations, work commitment is lost and there is resistance to change. Perhaps most important, the solidarity which develops between the first line supervisor and workers is seen as a target for attack. It would appear that these spontaneous forms of worker resistance are the primary reasons for initiating this innovation.

The older form of tribal representation begins with every 16 men in a room electing an isibonda who is subject to approval by management. His function is that of a room prefect and he is responsible for allocating cleaning and cooking duties and discipline. Above the isibonda is the tribal representative (better known as a 'police boy') who is responsible for 20 - 30 rooms. These men carry sticks, walk a beat, break up fights and ensure discipline is maintained. They are apparently decidedly unpopular as during major disturbances they fled for their lives and in the coal division their rooms were set alight. Above the police boys are the indunas, who represent ethnic groups, settle minor differences and negotiate with the compound manager.

The works committee system (although not a legally defined works committee) was introduced experimentally on the Western Deep Level mine about three years ago and is now being instituted more widely.

WORKS COMMITTEES

The works committees are structured according to job categories, every 10 - 15 men of one skill electing a representative onto a committee of between 20 and 26. One member of this committee is elected onto a general communication council called the 'Big 50' consisting of 48 representatives plus 2 Black personnel officers. 4 men are elected from this onto an Advisory Communication Council which meets with management. The lowest committees meet every month, the Big 50 every two months,

and the Advisory Communication Council 'as and when necessary'.

At meetings a secretary - normally the committee organiser - notes in a book the remarks, grievances and suggestions of workers which are then sent to the departmental personnel officer. It was reported that the committees operated fairly successfully with workers taking considerable trouble to present well-reasoned problems and issues such as leave, hostel conditions and general problems at work. Local management response, on the other hand, was felt to be 'not very good'. Often suggestions and problems relating to work were merely dismissed as 'rubbish' while others were simply neglected. One of the main problems was that even when suggestions were accepted, there was no feedback to the committees. Other issues, particularly relating to wages, although reaching the Advisory Communications Council cannot be dealt with even within the corporation as they are dealt with by the industry as a whole. Apart from removing minor difficulties the committee system appears to have little viability. Despite their existence management was unable to anticipate the riots and when they occurred the system was abandoned by both sides as neither placed much trust in the committees' efficacy.

The other channel of upward communication is via a system of informers. Although disapproved of by Head Office, their existence was acknowledged. Informers operate directly with the compound managers and other officials and indirectly via the police, who maintain a separate chain. AAC management expressed, on several occasions, a willingness to deal with a Black trade union (a considerable change from the attitude of the gold mining industry in 1946) provided it was properly constituted, but maintained, quite correctly, that it was not their task to initiate such a movement. They insisted, however, that management will place no obstacles in the way of its formation.

SECURITY FORCE

With the escalating violence in mine compounds the corporation has moved in two directions. On the one hand it has extended the velvet glove of increased wages, better communications and housing facilities, and on the other hand it has provided itself with the mailed fist of an effective security force which has grown to the point that it amounts to, as one executive put it, a private army. It was impossible to arrive at its exact size, but it was described as 'very considerable', with its equipment including a helicopter. Its dog handlers are trained by the South African Police and the purchase of tear-gas vehicles are being considered.

For lesser problems AAC has drawn up a comprehensive disciplinary code with penalties ranging from a reprimand to dismissal. In practice it is acknowledged by Head Office that the code is little consulted and rough 'justice' is dealt out on the spot by Police boys in the compounds and by White miners underground. It is reported that although frowned on by Head Office, the practice of manacling men to fixtures when they are disorderly or drunk continues as a means of discipline. The corporation appears to be changing the means of labour repression from one of overt coercion associated with primitive accumulation to the more sophisticated means of organisation more appropriate to an advanced market society. However, as in all transformations of this sort, the preceding patterns of communicative interaction, possessing a partially independent dynamic of their own, evidence themselves in residual forms which exhibit a resistance to their objective redundancy.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) Budlender, G., Responsa Meridiana, Vol.3, No. 2, August, 1975.

THIRD WORLD WORKERS:
AN OVERVIEW

by Peter Waterman

STRUCTURE

The process of what is called modernisation in Europe was one of a comparatively rapid transition from an economy based on small-scale agriculture to one based on large-scale industry. Along with this went the creation of a wage-earning majority in the population and a mass working class in mining, factory production and transport - and often in agriculture itself. It was in this new mass, engaged in social production but deprived of social ownership, that socialists saw the potential for the overthrow of class-divided society and its replacement by one of abundance and equality.

The process of what is called modernisation in the third world follows a strikingly different pattern. Industrialisation here means the development of extractive industry (petrol, rubber) for export purposes, the importation of capital-intensive import-substituting industry, the creation of export-oriented assembly plants, and possibly the development of a small highly-capitalised agricultural sector. Whilst the 'green revolutions' create unemployed peasants as fast as agricultural workers, the capital-intensivity and narrow local market of productive industry fails to provide sufficient new jobs. This implies a wage force growing slowly or even negatively in relation to population. Within this wage-earning force, secondly, the working class may not predominate numerically. The 'revolution of rising expectations' amongst the masses means that even if there is little productive base there must be a mass of white-collar workers either to serve the masses (sanitation, health, education) or to control them (police, army, bureaucracy, and again education). Even if the working class proper does predominate over the middle-class wage earners, it is unlikely to have a solid core in industrial production.

Thirdly, the pattern of urbanisation without all-round industrialisation means that the wage-earners as a whole may well be a minority of the urban population, the rest being petty-entrepreneurs in the 'bazaar sector'. In less extreme cases there might be a wage-earning - or even a working class - majority, but most of these are likely to be employed in tiny units of 10 or less.

Formation of a homogeneous working class in Europe required the overcoming of various 'vertical cleavages' amongst the workers, such as those of religion, language, etc. But in most cases the ethnic and cultural homogenisation of the population has already been occurring over 100 or 200 years. In the case of the third world these processes are almost everywhere occurring simultaneously. This means that one finds workers divided from one another by such structures as those of caste (typically India), race (Malaysia), language (Peru), religion (Lebanon), sect within a religion (Senegal), or be several of these simultaneously.

This is, then, frequently a minority working class, growing but little in relation to the population, thinned out by the high proportion of white-collar workers, surrounded by a mass of non-workers in the cities, and internally divided. And yet, on the other hand, we nonetheless see taking place a process of homogenisation and consolidation. This is partly a function of time and the birth of second or third generation workers. Partly it is a function of the wage-employment situation, in which workers in many occupations and industries nonetheless find themselves in a common situation of domination and exploitation by employers and managers. And partly it is a function of the strategic position occupied economically and politically by even a small working class, so that workers and other wage-earners have their attention rapidly and dramatically drawn to the power they have simply by all stopping work at the same time!

The process that in Europe produced a mass working class also simplified social relations in another

way, by producing a fairly homogeneous class of industrial-financial-commercial capitalists that came to dominate economically and socially and increasingly to control the state. The relationship of conflict between labour and capital became *the* social and political issue, and it remains so today. The lack of a thorough-going industrialisation in the third world means that a comparable simplification of social structures and social relations has not in general occurred. The new working class finds itself subordinate not to one ruling class, but conflicting capitalist and feudal classes (Ethiopia, Thailand), or such 'modernising elites' as capitalists, bureaucrats and politicians who have not yet coalesced into a stable power bloc. The crude exhibition of great wealth and power by the dominant strata do tend to alienate the working class. But this is not true of the middle class of teachers, clerks, students and professionals. The fact that many of these are themselves wage (or salary) earners and that they have skills (literacy in the official national language, legal or financial expertise) the workers lack leads to some kind of dependence on them. But, whilst these strata might themselves be unionised and have some considerable interests in common with the workers, they have their own specific class-like interests and may abandon the workers if and when they achieve these. The relationship with the rest of the poor is even more complex.

There exists a multiplicity of ties and divisions between the workers on the one hand and the non-working-class majority of the poor on the other. The typical third world worker is himself an ex- (or future-) farmer, petty-trader or unemployed man. Whilst a worker he will continue to have family members in these other positions. He usually inhabits the same districts as the rest of the urban poor and faces many of the same problems as they do. He will commonly send cash gifts back to the village or receive food gifts from it. Yet the workers have a highly specific relationship to production, and their ways of seeking protection and improvement are highly distinctive. One does not have to assume that

the regularly-employed modern-sector workers are privileged (a tricky problem both conceptually and empirically) in order to understand that in normal conditions their demands may divide them from their unemployed brothers, their peasant fathers or their petty-trader wives.

CONSCIOUSNESS

We have noted some characteristics of working-class structure in the third world. These features create obstacles to the development of the kind of consciousness that could be considered appropriate to its present situation and condition as well as necessary to overcome it. Non-consciousness of class is not, of course, confined to third world workers, but the extent and variety of 'other-consciousness' is much greater than in industrialised capitalist or post-capitalist countries. One writer concerned to stress the existence of class conflict in Senegal nonetheless recognised the existence amongst workers of the following allegiances, loyalties, values or aspirations: ties of kinship to the extended patriarchal family; those of ethnic group; those of age group within a clan; petty-bourgeois aspirations; 'macro-racism' and 'micro-nationalism'; adherence to a particular religion, or even to one sect within a religion (Diop 1967: 100). Amongst Latin American workers we may note the absence of a distinct working-class culture, and the presence of patron-client relations under which a worker will enter into a personal relationship of dependence and obligation to an employer. Research in Nigeria suggests that it is general for industrial workers to aspire to petty-entrepreneurial status. Algerian workers reveal fatalistic and magical attitudes that spring from rural life. In Algeria, however, it has been stressed that such attitudes are reproduced in the city by the irrationality, violence and arbitrariness of modern life. (Although such a situation was exaggerated by the effects of the long colonial war in this case, the point has a general validity).

Why refer to all of these as 'other-consciousness'? Because they either have a pre-working-class

origin, or express the direct interests of non-working-class strata, and in neither case can be shown to serve the long-term interest of workers as a permanent class. The point will become clear if we contrast other-consciousness with working-class consciousness. Perhaps it would be better in this case to talk rather about working-class consciousnesses. This is to indicate that one is not talking about a *thing* so much as a *process*. There are, in fact, different levels of consciousness which are yet distinctively working class. And one can also identify a process of development or escalation, occurring either gradually or explosively, from a low level to a high one (reverse processes are also possible).

The lowest level of working-class consciousness is one of simple definition of oneself as a worker, sharing common interests with others similarly defined. We can identify the existence of this first level when we see, for example, workers of different ethnic origins in a Nigerian factory rejecting tribalism in the workplace despite their confinement to ethnically-limited friendship circles outside it. The second level is the identification of a class to which the interest of one's own class is opposed. In Nigeria such an identification is not universal, but it is general amongst workers in the longer-industrialised South, and amongst the workers in larger enterprises. It must be noted, in the Nigerian case, that identification of such an enemy is usually in terms of 'big men' (the rich and powerful) rather than in terms of a specific capitalist class and pro-capitalist state. Later, and higher, comes the definition of one's total social universe in terms of this class opposition, the vision of an alternative society and the demand that society be transformed to fit this vision. This level is rare but is nonetheless significant. It was reached by the working class of Shanghai in the 1920's. It developed amongst Chilean workers under the Allende regime. And one can find evidence of it either *sporadically* amongst a national working class or *sectionally* within such a class in the history or present of most third world countries. At such moments we see workers

occupying factories, creating their own forms of government, or prepared for insurrection.

ORGANISATION

Just as we can talk of class-consciousness and other-consciousness amongst third world workers, so can we talk of class and non-class organisation amongst them. In terms of stable organisational forms, the 19th century process in Britain was one from the guild and benefit society to the craft union and cooperative, and eventually to the national trade union movement and mass worker-based labour party. In the third world, too, one could find guild-type organisation amongst wage-earners in China in the 1900's, in Latin America around the same period, and in the Middle East as late as the 1950's. Whilst these have not survived in conditions of large-scale industry, other organisations - specific to the third world - frequently have. The 'common-origin association', such as the regional clubs of Peruvian workers, the town or village improvement unions of West African ones, are typical forms of self-protection for the migrant worker, unfamiliar with the urban and industrial environment. Such associations offer fellowship, information, and they frequently provide benefits, loans and other kinds of assistance. In Nigeria they have been said to hold the loyalty of the workers better than do trade unions. The reason why these may be called 'non-class' organisations even if they exist *primarily* amongst workers is that they are not restricted to workers. The guild is by its very nature an organisation of owners and employers as well as their craftsmen and apprentices. The improvement association will typically include the unemployed, the petty-trader, the civil servant and some 'big' or 'prominent' men amongst its member.

The contrast is clear with the trade union, an organisation of wage-earners as wage-earners, united on the basis of their occupation, skill or industry, in order to protect and advance their common interests vis-a-vis an employer. Or is it?

Although these organisations were originally created in Europe by *workers*, they are there today multi-class organisations, including many middle-class wage-earners. This seems to me even more true in the third world. It is not only that, given the structure of employment, it may be the teachers, bank clerks and other white-collar workers who are amongst the earliest and best organised. Nor that they may represent a very high proportion of trade union membership. In the case of Nigeria we find that with the unions of minibus drivers or taxi drivers, who are also in some cases owners, we find *petty-entrepreneurs* in the movement.

It is also necessary to consider the question of leadership. In India it is well-known that unions are often led by lawyers and other university graduates. In Nigeria they are frequently organised by entrepreneurs, individuals for whom union organisation is just one business amongst others, and who may be serially or simultaneously involved in commerce (and in one particular case known to me it was commerce in union secrets). Furthermore, national trade union organisations have often been created from above by nationalist politicians (Africa from the 1940's), by anti-landowner, pro-capitalist politicians (Latin America from the 1930's), or by a corporatist state seeking effective control over the workers (Egypt after 1952).

Finally, we need to take into account the fact that some movements are heavily dependent on international trade union organisations or other foreign bodies (CIA prominent amongst these) whose values or interests coincide to a greater or lesser degree with those of a major power or power bloc. Whilst in many cases this is done covertly, particularly where money is concerned, in Cyprus the sums concerned are published in the Annual Report on Trade Unions as 'income from other sources' and prove to be some 60 percent of total union income.

In each of these cases doubt is thrown on the working-class nature of the organisation or movement.

Of course, these non-working-class individuals, classes or organisations may help the working class achieve some of its own interests, but they have their own distinctive concerns which can and do conflict with those of the working class in the third world.

Whilst this creation of unions from above or outside is a common feature, we have a myriad of examples of individual movements and unions created by ordinary workers from below. And this is often after prolonged and bitter struggle against a vicious colonial power or local ruling class, both of which have been capable of using exile, imprisonment and the execution squad to prevent the working-class from organising itself in this simple but fundamental way. A good example might be the trade union movement in South Yemen. During the 1960's there existed and developed a powerful and radical trade union movement in Aden that had to face not only the repressive measures listed above, but also the organised use of torture by the British army, and the bombs and bullets of Egyptian-financed groups. The movement built up during this time had a determining influence on the post-independence regime.

Even if the trade union movement has been built from below in this way, however, we must still note the multiplicity of problems created for its consolidation given the structure and consciousness mentioned earlier.

We should note, firstly, that whilst unionisation rates may compare not unfavourably with those of more industrialised countries (in Latin America rates are 10-45 percent of the wage force, in the industrialised capitalist countries they are 22-54 percent), that union members are only a tiny proportion of the labour force (in Latin America - excluding Cuba - they are 0.4-31.7 percent of the labour force). Furthermore, commitment to the unions and participation in them is usually low. Whilst 19th century British workers might have been giving 5-10 percent of their income to their unions, workers in India in the 1960's were giving only 1 percent. Whether the reason is that the

state is providing many of the services and security that unions had to provide in the 19th century British case, or whether it is that the common-origin association is providing them, the effect is to reduce the importance the worker gives to his union. The evidence for this is provided by the low rate of membership participation in third world unions. Indeed, in the case of Africa, it has been suggested that the most effective control exercised by members over their leaders is by splitting away or abandoning the union.

This leads naturally into the second problem, the multiple fractures and divisions affecting most union movements not created or supported administratively from above by the state or ruling party. Both in Africa and India an increase in union membership has gone alongside a process of 'mushrooming' under which there appear increasing numbers of unions with a decreasing average membership. At national level we find the union movement frequently divided on strategy lines (moderates versus radicals), on ideological lines (Marixists versus Liberal Democrats), on power-bloc lines (Prague-Communists, Peking-Communists, Brussels-Reformists, Washington-Reformists). And this is not to mention the local or international activities in the trade union movement of such states as Egypt and Nkrumah's Ghana, of the ex-Christian World Confederation of Labour, and of the myriad national political and religious movements.

Despite all these problems and ambiguities, however, unions remain the typical and universal organisation of the worker, the one that he cannot do without and through which he both discovers himself and imposes himself on society. The efforts made to capitalise on them to influence, control and smash them, are all witness to their significance for the working class. Even in the most adverse conditions, such as those of South Africa, in which unions are banned and the workforce structured on ethnic lines under 'tribal representatives', worker protest breaks through and the demand is for independent and democratic trade unions. And one finds that movements

deeply marked by their administrative creation and incorporation, such as that of Ghana, nonetheless keep repeatedly taking direct and specific action in the interests of workers as workers.

Before going on to consider the nature of working-class action, however, something must be said about party organisation amongst workers. Attempts in the third world to create worker-based parties on the European Social-Democratic or Communist model have in general been dwarfed by the development of massive multi-class parties: Congress in India, TANU in Tanzania, the Peronistas in Argentina after 1945. But revolutionary socialist parties with a solid working-class base have long existed in a whole series of third world countries. Although there have been a number of interesting deviations from the pattern, these have mostly been parties affiliated to the international Communist movement with its head-quarters in Moscow (exceptions include the Trotskyist movement in Ceylon, the independent Marxist leadership that developed after independence in South Yemen, or that has long led the Bolivian mine-workers). It was amongst the workers of Shanghai that the Chinese Communist Party gained its first mass base and won cadres necessary for its peasant-based revolution. The Cuban Communist Party, based on plantation and other workers, was involved in an insurrection in pre-war Cuba and has always had considerable influence amongst the workers. The Sudanese Communist Party retained a working-class base despite severe repression, until the destruction of the Party and execution of its leaders in 1971. One must beware, however, of assuming that parties such as these are revolutionary just because they say they are. The only one of the above three that both initiated and concluded a successful anti-capitalist revolution was the Chinese one. The two others have both been involved, at one time or another, in compromises with authoritarian and pro-capitalist regimes. The support that these parties receive from workers may be based on the fact that they are effective reformist parties rather than seriously revolutionary ones.

ACTION

It seems to me that the activity of the working class in the third world can be divided into three categories. The first is *reformist* in the sense that it seeks gradual incremental improvement within an existing socio-political system. Demands for higher wages, better conditions, more rights are all expressed in quantitative terms and are understood by those demanding them to provide a 'fair' share, or 'equal' rights within the system. These demands represent the immediate self-interest of the workers involved - and this can be workers in one factory, one craft category, or one industry. If cooperatives are proposed, then, as in Singapore, it is not as the seed of a future socialist society, but in order 'to become capitalists ourselves' (Elliot 1974: 52). Such demands and actions are necessary, and they *may* have radical implications, but there is nothing essentially radical about them. And, in general, they are sectionalist in nature, being limited in the sector covered, and failing to connect up with the very different interests and demands of the non-wage-earning majority of the poor. In one Indian case in which attention was directed by reform-minded unions toward the landless poor, the form was the typically paternalist one of 'bringing them enlightenment' rather than an act of solidarity with a mass peasant struggle against landlords. The 'Aurangabad Experiment' was an educational and training scheme, backed by the state and international organisations, based on the concept that the sufferings of the peasants are due to their 'extreme poverty, unnecessary idleness, caste and family organisation' rather than to state-supported landlordism, and could be overcome by family planning and individual self-improvement (see Gunnar Myrdal's introduction, Aurangabad Experiment 1973).

The second type I would call *radical-democratic*. By this I mean action that directly challenges the rich and threatens their power whilst failing to define them as capitalist or without seeking to

replace them by socialism. Radical-democratic action can occur in a series of third world situations. One is that of colonial rule. In much of Africa it was the organised urban working class that provided the main mass base for nationalism, mass strikes signalled the beginning of mass nationalism, and its threat was enough to make the colonial power settle with those whom the French called *inter-locuteurs valables* (responsible intermediaries). Another is that of imperialist intervention, as in Dominica in 1965, when workers from the giant El Romano sugar mills played a major part in resisting US occupation. Another is that of oligarchical or aristocratic rule, as in Ethiopia where trade union action was the beginning of the movement that led to the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974. A fourth is that of self-styled radical regimes that are in fact elitist and authoritarian, as in Ghana where the port and rail workers of Sekondi-Takoradi went on prolonged strike against the Nkrumah regime in 1961. In all these cases we clearly see the workers speaking and acting with the masses or for them, leading one commentator to describe Nigerian factory workers as the 'political elite' of the masses (Peace FC). But the results of radical-democratic action are at best a political revolution rather than a social one. At best they lead to the introduction of such a regime as that of Peron in Argentina of the 1940s. Whilst addressing itself to the workers and introducing significant social reforms, this regime eventually abandoned them to a conservative military coup rather than provide them with arms for its own defence. It was right to do so. To have enabled them to take armed action on their own initiative against reaction might have led them to transcend to radical-democratic action and pass to the next level.

This type I would call *socialist-revolutionary*. As a historical parenthesis we may note that all the successful anti-capitalist revolutions of the 20th century have taken place in conditions approximating those of the third world today (the exceptions prove the case: the Czechoslovak and East German revolutions took place 'under the Soviet umbrella').

A tiny working class combined with a landless peasantry to bring about the Russian Revolution in 1917. An even smaller working class was involved in insurrection in China in the 1920s, acting (as noted above) as the first mass socialist force in that country. In agrarian Yugoslavia revolutionary Communist workers provided the core of the peasant guerilla army that introduced socialism in 1945. In Cuba it was the Communist-influenced working class that ensured the anti-capitalist development of the revolution after 1960. Such socialist-revolutionary activity is, naturally, rare. It takes an exceptional crisis or combination of crises to prepare workers to abandon ingrained customs, values and practices in order to risk all for a future that may be desired but which cannot be known. Such a situation nonetheless appeared recently in Chile. Here the electoral victory of a radical-reformist alliance of Communists, Socialists and left Christian Democrats was based on appeals to a well-organised and experienced working class permeated with socialist ideas. The bitter reaction of foreign and local capitalists and landlords to the moderate reforms introduced led the workers to transcend the radical-democratic phase and surpass their traditional organisations and leaders. They then began to take control of factories and to develop their own forms of worker-led government in the industrial councils *(cordones industriales)* and communal councils *(comandos)*. The depth and extent of this movement can be judged by the extremity of reaction by the US-backed military coup. This felt it necessary not only to arrest and execute leaders or activists and party members, but to decimate the working class itself in order to control it.

But even in such radical actions of workers and unions we must note complexity and ambiguity. Just after independence in Algeria there were widespread takeovers of industrial and agricultural enterprises by the workers. This would seem to have been a revolutionary socialist action of a most ambiguous nature. Unlike the Chilean case, however, this did not so much represent an *attack* on capitalism as an act of *self-defence*. The French

owners had abandoned these enterprises and in the absense, at least for some time, of Algerian bureaucrats to replace them, workers had to take them over if they were not to starve. Reformist action can also be ambiguous in implication. An initially limited action for a straightforward economic demand can develop into a radical-democratic (or revolutionary) one if there is resistance by the ruling class, if that class is weak, and if there is a radical (or revolutionary) leadership to hand. The 1963-4 wage demands in Nigeria provide a case of escalation, temporarily, from a reformist to a radical-democratic level. The weak, corrupt and arbitrary regime of politicians and businessmen then in power failed to take the strike movement seriously and rejected the workers' demands. This enabled the socialist labour leaders to find a ready echo amongst the workers for the demand that the government resign. The demands, demonstrations and criticism of the regime by the organised workers found considerable support amongst the rest of the urban poor.

CONCLUSION

I see a determinate process occurring. This is the development of the one *necessary* modern class. It is obvious that modernisation demands industrialisation and that industrialisation demands workers. It is not in this that importance of the working class resides but in the fact that whilst one can conceive of enterprises run without a capitalist class or a managerial caste (foreshadowed in the workers' councils of Yugoslavia, the Israeli kibutz, the Chinese commune), we cannot conceive of industry run without workers! If modernisation in the third world means the overcoming of Mao's 'Three Great Differences' (mental and manual labour, large-scale industrial and small-scale agricultural production, town and country) then it must also imply the increasing number and power of the working class, including the self-transformation of the peasantry into an agro-industrial working class. Should this not occur, the countries of the third world will either remain in a stagnating or worsening situation, as

in India, or imitate the inegalitarian, violent and increasingly-crisis-ridden pattern of the industrialised West, as - possibly - in Singapore and Hong Kong.

The multinational companies and ruling strata in the third world, equate development with growth of industry and of GDP. It is therefore a puzzle and concern to them that the organised working class should not contribute to this 'essential' and 'rational' process in some way or other. It appears that both the liberal theorists and the (usually less-liberal) politicians are prepared to use any strategem in order to get the workers to devote themselves to increased production - to use material incentives, possibilities for individual social mobility, bribes and power for labour leaders, divide-and-rule, unify-and-control, the threat of violence, the use of terror - everything except *access to* the means of production and of power. So long as this is not achieved, I would argue, working-class turbulence and attacks on ruling-class legitimacy will continue.

A review of :

R. COHEN: LABOUR AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA 1945-71

(Heineman Educational Books, 1974)

by Charles Simkins

It is likely that the situation of South African workers, their relationship with the rest of their society, their organisations and possible lines of development will be elucidated by study of labour conditions elsewhere. Because of our historical British connection, South Africans are likely to find it relatively easy to gain some understanding of British labour history and industrial relations. Less is generally known about the position in North America and continental Europe, while next to no information is available concerning workers in Africa, Asia or Latin America. The latter gap, in particular, needs to be filled. The forces which shaped the labour market in many countries of tropical Africa were also at work in South Africa during the critical period from 1800 to 1950; traditional economies were permanently disrupted by the introduction of manufactured goods and by military/administrative measures specifically designed to create a cheap supply of wage labour for the mines, plantations and industry. Many Latin American states, on the other hand, occupy positions close to South Africa on the international GNP per capital league table, having reached roughly the same state of industrial development and urbanisation and, like us, have markedly inegalitarian social structures.

Cohen's book forms part of the second phase of the study of labour movements in tropical Africa. The continent-wide generalisations of a decade ago have recently been followed by individual studies on Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. To this list, he has added Nigeria, a country in which primary associations like trade unions, co-operatives, ethnic associations and professional bodies have proved more durable than political institutions in the post-independence era.

The industrial workforce started to grow rapidly after the end of the Second World War; the growth rate of large scale manufacturing over the period 1950-64 is estimated at 15% per annum and this has been maintained despite political instability and war. Nonetheless, the manufacturing sector of the economy remains small, accounting for at most 8% of GNP in the early sixties. Of a labour force of about 28 million people according to latest reliable estimates, about 1,8 million (6,4%) are wage earners.

At the end of the Second World War, giant expatriate firms controlled both the export of primary production and the import of manufactured goods. The dominance of foreign capital has persisted in the manufacturing sector, supported by post-independence policies, such as import duty relief, development of low rent industrial estates, pioneer industry tax exemptions and industrial loans. In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that an enduring feature of industrial relations is tension over the degree of Nigerian participation in the private sector; access by Nigerians to senior positions is severely limited. There is no evidence that, over the period, any effective resolution of this tension was found. A frequent response on the part of expatriate managements has been to appoint token Nigerians to company boards; criticism of this gambit has been voiced by trade unions and sections of the labour leadership advocate nationalisation of the major industries as the only effective way to promote local participation.

Cohen's investigations lead him to two less obvious and interesting conclusions about industrial workers in Nigeria:

(i) He finds little evidence to support the thesis that workers in the early stages of industrialisation are more prone to absenteeism, wild cat stoppages, violence, industrial sabotage and general indiscipline than are workers in societies that have been industrialised for several generations.

Rather it appears that, where reasonable conditions prevail, productivity is high and absenteeism is low and that there is evidence of substantial acceptance of the industrial work ethic.

(ii) In contrast to the situation among politicians, the bureaucrats and the military, there are generally good relationships between members of the various Nigerian groups in industrial employment. Although the civil war affected labour organisations, there was never complete fragmentation as occured in other sections of the society.

Turning to union structure, three important features of the Nigerian scene may be discerned :

(i) Repeated attempts to create a unified central labour organisation have failed. The reasons for this are numerous and range from leadership personality conflicts to tensions induced by competition between international labour organisations for local trade union support,to differences ın the way in which various central bodies have desired to relate to party political activities and the Government. While warning against simplistic dichotomies, Cohen finds it possible to distinguish both a moderate and a radical wing of the labour movement. The moderate wing believes in meaningful dialogue with management, expects the Government to consider the interests of workers, is neutralist with respect to party politics and is class collaborationist. The radical wing sees strikes as essential in dealing with stubborn management, the Government as representing neo-colonial interests, believes that workers need their own parties, and is oriented towards class conflict.

(ii) The number of registered trade unions has grown from 14 with a membership of less

than 5 000 in 1940, to 873 with over 650 000 members in 1971. There are a great number of small unions; unions organising less than 1 000 members account for 85% of registrations, while over 50% of all unions have less than 250 members. Again the reasons for this are numerous and include permissive legal provisions for union registration, diffusion of industries into widely separated and poorly connected areas, ethnic pressures leading to regional organisation, and the attitude of employers who generally favour the formation of company rather than industry-wide unions.

(iii) Trade union leadership is more compact than would appear from the fragmentation of membership: general secretaries constitute what amount to a profession and simultaneously offer their services to a number (often five or six) of unions. Accompanying this is a marked fluctuation of interest by union membership; except where a check-off system operates, dues are mainly paid when a major claim or grievance arises. From funds so generated, a professional secretary is hired to press demands with management. If necessary, he will call the workers out on strike. If the claim is not granted after a short time, his services will be terminated; if it is, the absence of discontent will itself result in a decline in interest. Trade union membership characteristically displays a sceptically instrumental attitude towards the leadership; unions are expected to cater only for fairly narrowly defined economic interests, since a multitude of other organisations cater for social, religious and cultural requirements.

Interesting also is Cohen's examination of the unions as political agents. Trade unionism is conventionally regarded as more 'political' in underdeveloped countries than in the industrialised

West; while this assertion is subject to substantial terminological and empirical criticism, one can identify factors which increase a predisposition to political activity. One of the most important is the weak industrial position of unions. Especially where there is a concentration of extractive, service and simple processing industry, demanding highly unskilled workers, combined with a huge pool of surplus labour, the strike threat is rendered largely ineffective by the ability of management to replace workers who withdraw their labour.

This factor has an important influence on the way in which the wage bargain is struck in Nigeria. Despite an inherited official preference for voluntarism in industrial relations, collective bargaining is, in fact, only a minor factor in the adjustment of rates of pay for the country as a whole. Much more important in the setting of wage levels has been the work of government wage commissions appointed successively in 1945, 1955, 1960, 1964 and 1971.

Each commission recommended an increase in wages and salaries for government employees; in each case, increases were awarded. After each award, there followed a round of demands in the private sector for corresponding increases. Characteristically there is a rise in the number of strikes (following a major public sector pay award) in support of private sector claims. Given this mechanism, it becomes important to discover what factors determine the appointment of wage commissions. Cohen makes a case for regarding factors associated with union pressure, political sensitivity to potential urban discontent and attempts to win political support from workers, as most important. This is in opposition to other analystswho stress the importance of shifting conditions in the labour market. Trade union pressure is applied through basically political campaigning: petitions, delegations and appeals to public opinion.

The greater part of Cohen's work applies to

conditions in Nigeria before the military coup in 1966. His penultimate chapter, however, analyses the position of trade unions under military rule. At the beginning of the period, workers in the Federal area accepted cuts in living standards as part of the civil war effort. Industrial action directed against the decline appeared from the beginning of 1968. The right to strike was restricted; this dampened but by no means stopped unrest, despite the appeals of union centres, and the period 1968-70 saw an increase in grass-roots militancy while the influence of the leadership decreased. As soon as the war ended, the pressures for a wage review mounted rapidly. As a response, and as a means for stimulating demand, the government agreed to appoint a commission whose ultimate effect was to raise wage and salary rates by about 30%. Initially, the government vacillated about the extent to which these increases should be applied to the private sector. This provoked unprecedented industrial unrest, which ceased only when demands for full application were conceded.

If the process of improving the lot of the workers is political, what are the political resources of the unions? Cohen identifies these as:

(i) The creation of and adaptation to a way of wage bargaining which is fundamentally political, though not dependent on the presence of an electoral system. This is enhanced by the relatively precarious hold the politicians had, and even the military has, on political power.

(ii) The ability to represent a group wider than their membership at critical times.

(iii) Unlike the military and the bureaucracy, the unions have a multi-ethnic leadership and organisation, which would be a particularly useful political asset if there were a return to civilian rule.

(iv) Economic development implies a tendency for groups to form on the basis of economic interest rather than ethnic affiliation; groups already representing a class interest will then be placed in an increasingly advantageous position.

While a direct application of particular aspects of Cohen's analysis to the South African situation would require cross checking with other accounts of labour conditions in the developing world it may be concluded at this stage that his work gives us grounds for believing that a number of channels may be found for advancing the cause of workers, even under generally tough third world political and economic conditions. The search for such channels, however, will certainly involve a move away from thinking within a narrow framework of standard industrial relations' models.

A Review of:

CHRISTOPHER HIRD: YOUR EMPLOYERS' PROFITS

(Pluto Press Workers' Handbook No.2)

by Foszia Fisher

Wage negotiations are about the way in which a company's product will be shared between profits and wages. The outcome is partly a question of power, but it is also a question of information and argument. In the battle of words the employers hold nearly all the cards. They have all the information about the company. They draw up the accounts and the balance sheets, and they are in a position to withhold or distort information.

But the workers are not entirely helpless. Both private and public companies have to publish a certain amount of information, and although this information is often obscure or unreliable, it can be interpreted. Hird's book, "Your Employers' Profits", has been written in an attempt to give workers the tools they need to get all the available information, and to interpret it when they have got it. He sets out his aims as follows:

Workers need to know:

* What they can get in any bargaining situation
* Where the money will come from
* How secure they are in bargaining - is the company really going bankrupt? How important is a particular part of the company to any group of workers?

* To achieve this, workers need to discover:

* Who controls and owns the factory and the firm
* The size of the firm's surplus
* The size of the firm's true profits and how they appear in its accounts
* The firm's plans for the future.

Hird guides the reader through the complications of the different kinds of companies; explains where to get the information that is available for each kind, and then shows, point by point, how to weigh up and interpret the information. Particularly useful is Chapter 13 "The Concealment of Profits", in which he discusses the many ways in which, within the limits of the law, the true profit position can be hidden. These methods include the techniques used in valueing stock, the system of depreciation, and the way in which research and development expenses and other over-heads are treated. Another complication in the interpretation of balance sheets is the fact that different kinds of company have different aims in producing balance sheets. Most public companies, other than those effectively controlled by a small group of large shareholders, aim to produce reports which will impress the public and boost confidence in the firm. Private companies, on the other hand, are mainly concerned with minimising tax payments. They are therefore much more likely to use all the available loopholes for understating profits.

Today many companies are associated in groups. This gives rise to another form of manipulation of accounts. By techniques such as loans at unusually low or high rates of interest, and intra-group sales and purchases at artificial prices, it is possible for profits to be spread between members of the group. This means that workers employed by a subsidiary cannot be satisfied with understanding the accounts of their own firm. They need also to know the position of the group as a whole, as reflected in the accounts of the holding company.

"Your Employers' Profits" is written for a British audience, and so some of it does not apply to South Africa. Disclosure requirements are not identical in Britain and South Africa, and of course, the detailed information on where to get particular items of information does not apply. The IIE is at present preparing a Workers' Handbook, provisionally titled "The Worker in the Factory", which will contain details relevant to South Africa. However,

"Your Employers' Profits" will remain an extremely valuable supplement, and contains more detailed analysis of the difficulties of interpreting information than it will be possible for us to include in our more general Handbook. It is also written in simple language, with many illustrative examples, so it will be very helpful to workers and trade unionists.

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