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AND EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

"There seems to be an impression in some quarters that the removal of the colour-bar would meet the natives' grievances, but it should be clearly understood that the removal of the colour-bar, even if it were possible in opposition to the wishes of the great bulk of the European population of the Witwatersrand, would advantage only the comparatively small number of skilled or semi-skilled natives, to the great mass it would make no difference whatsoever."

(Chamber of Mines Spokesman, 1905, Cited in F.A. Johnstone : Race, Class and Gold.)

On 27th January, a letter from the Department of Labour reminded the parties to the Industrial Council for the Transvaal Building Industry of the agreement which permits the employment of Africans as operatives (in Grade 1 jobs) *only so long as this does not lead to unemployment among White artisans.* This move was met by fierce opposition from employers in the building trade, opposition parties in parliament, the Trade Union Council of South Africa, and African trade unions in the Transvaal. "As always blacks are the last to be hired, and the first to be fired", said Mr. Shimone Khumalo, president of the Johannesburg branch of the S.A. Black Social Workers' Association; "This is plain discrimination".

The job colour bar in South Africa is unjust because it violates the notion of equal employment opportunities regardless of race. In so doing it denies "Coloured", Asian and, more particularly, African workers access to those jobs requiring greater skills which are more highly paid and often more fulfilling as well.

It is, however, incorrect to concentrate exclusively on the job colour bar. For this forms only one part of the mass of repressive legislation, administrative instruments and customary practices imposed especially on Africans and justified in terms of racist ideology. All these devices,

firmly rooted in our country's history, are designed to prevent the freedom of movement of African workers. At the same time containing their collective bargaining power. The system of migrant labour which denies contract labourers permanent residence at their place of work, as well as the denial of full, legal rights of association and negotiation to all African workers come immediately to mind. In this way the state, in containing the collective power of African labour, ensures a docile and pliable work force and serves the interests of employers.

Some earlier laws such as the Masters and Servants Acts (see SALB Vol 2 No 1) are now obsolete for they have been *surpassed* by the modern complex of laws that controls, directs and disciplines the African labour force. The Bantu Labour Act and the Bantu Labour Regulations in particular, which provide for the registration of African workers at labour bureaux, synchronize with the "modernized" pass laws in a huge administrative structure of surveillance, arrest and punishment that makes state control of African labour remarkably pervasive. The net effect of all this prevents the determination of wage rates through the internationally acknowledged process of collective bargaining. In sum this system of discriminatory secures the cheapness of African labour. These are the employers' colour bars and we shall call them exploitation colour bars. (F.A. Johnstone, *Race, Class and Gold*) to distinguish them from the job colour bars of the white workers.

It was - and still is - this cheap labour which made white workers insecure. For, so long as employers benefitted from the exploitation colour bar white workers had to protect themselves. This was especially the case in those categories of work in which Africans, with a minimum of training, could displace them. White workers tried, therefore, to set up job colour bars to protect themselves. The job colour bar, in South Africa, manifests itself in three ways: through statutory colour bars; protective trade union practices; and customary barriers.

The statutory job colour bar was first introduced on the gold mines in 1893 when the Z.A.R. ruled that blasting certificates were reserved exclusively for whites. This was later withdrawn but a number of other statutes were enacted reserving jobs for whites in the Z.A.R. The first statutory colour bar since the Union also affected mining being contained in the Mines and Works Act of 1911. After 1948 the Nationalist Government added the Native Building Workers Act of 1951, applying statutory job reservation to the building industry. However, it was the 1956 Industrial Conciliation Act which contained the specific provision enabling the Minister of Labour, upon the recommendation of the Industrial Tribunal, to determine that work of any class should be reserved wholly or in part for persons of a particular race. Although it is often averred that only 2,3% of the total labour force is potentially affected by these determinations, they nevertheless effectively exclude African, and other black workers from occupational categories higher than those from which they are legally excluded. Of late, this legislation has not been energetically extended. In fact, only one determination, relaxing an earlier one, was made between 1972 and 1976.

A more common form of job reservation, to be explored in a future issue of this Bulletin, is the protection given to certain racial groups by Industrial Council Agreements negotiated between employers and trade unions. This protection is provided by one or more of the following methods: A ratio clause restricting the number of semi-skilled workers to be employed for each skilled worker; a closed shop agreement whereby certain classes of work are reserved for registered union members only; effective limitation on the acquisition of skills through apprenticeships where jobs are reserved for skilled trade union members. For example, the Industrial Council Agreement for the Transvaal Furniture Manufacturing Industry states: "no employee who is not eligible for membership of any of the trade union parties to the Agreement, shall be employed on work or in occupations classified in classes 3,4,7,11,14,22,23 and 24." In recent years many exemptions have been

given to permit African advancement into jobs from which they had previously been banned. However, with the serious recession coupled with rising unemployment, Africans are likely to lose ground they had gained as the Department of Labour's action in the Transvaal Building Industry indicates.

The final type of job colour bar is customary. Africans, and other black workers for that matter, are often excluded as a matter of course from certain occupations even when no legislation prevents their employment. The factors at play here are ignorance of the law, fear of customer reaction, and pure racial bigotry.

Our argument is, therefore, that the job colour bar of the white workers was in large part a response to the cheap African labour supply created by the exploitation colour bar. Thus, the removal of the job colour bar *alone*, now as in 1905, would not effect a dramatic change in the status of African workers. It might satisfy a minority of skilled and semi-skilled workers but not the mass of the labour force. Only freedom of movement and collective bargaining rights could do this. It would require the abolition of the whole discriminatory system including laws which enforce separate African worker representation through works and liaison committees and prohibit the registration of African unions. Those employers interested in improving race relations and promoting sound industrial relations would be well-advised to recognise African trade unions as well as resisting the job colour bar.

THE WITWATERSRAND : 1901-1912*

by Sean Moroney

The period following the Anglo-Boer War is crucial to the history of labour relations in South Africa. During this period gold mining in the Transvaal was re-established as the most important industrial sector in Southern Africa. This period also saw the consolidation of a monopsonistic labour recruiting system which was to promote extensive labour migrancy throughout the sub-continent. The particular economic and social patterns thus created persist today. Little has been learnt about the people most affected by these social and economic forces, the mass of black unskilled workers, during this and subsequent periods. White worker responses, management's machinations and the State's participation have all been explored to some degree. We know virtually nothing about the processes of proletarianisation experienced by black workers or about their responses to the developing industrial economy.

This neglect has perhaps resulted from a lack of readily available material concerning black workers, in contrast with the relatively well documented activities of management and white workers. These two groups were always assured, as they are at present, of extensive coverage in the contemporary media. Such biases have penetrated South African historiography. The resultant gaps in our history must affect our understanding of present day industrial relations in Southern Africa. The fact that there has been very little evidence of tangible conflict between black workers and management has created the impression of workers as passive participants in the economy. This paper sets out to show that workers, in fact, responded in a variety of effective ways to the manipulative, exploitative and coercive measures adopted by management. These responses and the particular forms they assumed, indicated the formation of a worker rationality encompassing defence, protest and direct confrontation. Usually they did not take the form of strikes, mass walkouts or visible mass organisation. Instead, one needs to identify and interpret a wide range of other

* I am indebted to Charles van Onselen who read an early draft of this paper and provided some valuable criticisms and suggestions. He is not however, responsible for any of the weaknesses in the paper.

more subtle, expressions of worker-management conflict.¹ Such expressions developed within, and were thus determined by, a highly repressive economy in which management, in effective alliance with the State, devised and implemented an armoury of measures designed to erode the freedom of mine workers.

Although many of the workers recruited after the Anglo-Boer war would have experienced mine employment before hostilities broke out and caused the closure of the mines, the economic conditions of the rural areas at the start of the century did not make them entirely, or even considerably, dependent on industrial employment for economic survival. As a result, peasants possessed an economic base from which to resist the ravages of the labour recruiting system. The first decade was to see the steady erosion of this base by natural and political forces and the peasant economy was to give way to the predominance of the growing industrial mode. Peasants were to lose control of their means of livelihood and turn increasingly to mine work for subsistence. Their bargaining power in relation to the mine owners who needed their labour was eroded accordingly.

The Randlords emerged from the planning recess afforded by the war with a comprehensive plan to combine in labour recruiting through the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA). The scheme was designed to facilitate the systematic recruitment of cheap labour from Portuguese East Africa, the success of which would ensure depression of wages. It also provided for combined recruiting within British South Africa to eliminate competition for labour and the resultant upward pressure on wages. Recruits were to be assigned to member mines on a quota basis. In addition, a maximum average wage schedule was agreed upon which set wages below their pre-war average level. The motivation for these measures derived, in part, from management's irrational quest to work mines of marginal profitability.

Once management experienced initial resistance from

potential recruits in rural areas, it embarked, through WNLA and its agents, upon a devastating campaign making use of financial and livestock advances in conjunction with an increasingly effective taxation system, the collaboration of chiefs as well as deception and blatant coercion to obtain labour recruits.²

In the actual work situation, management developed a range of measures both to keep unwilling recruits in bondage and to extract most work for least pay, food and accommodation. The compound system and all its accompanying institutions of mine 'police', physical violence and social control, became crucial. In collaboration with the State, a sophisticated "pass" system was developed to prevent and detect "desertion". Laws such as the Masters and Servants Act were effectively used to suppress work stoppages and other forms of worker resistance. On many mines workers were systematically cheated of their wages and forced to stay longer than the periods for which they had contracted.

Despite the fact that worker resistance was progressively weakened, it persisted with considerable effect until the middle of the decade. It is in fact arguable that certain groups of workers during this period had the upper hand in relation to management. The latter, however, through the importation of large quantities of cheap Chinese labour during the period 1904-9, was able to reduce the upward pressure on black wages and destroy much of the basis for black worker bargaining power. Because of the progressive denudation and over-crowding of the rural areas black workers were to remain in a relatively weakened position even after the repatriation of the Chinese workers. Precedents for modes of resistance had however been established.

To summarize, the period under review can be broken into fairly distinct phases. Immediately after the war management made a concerted assault on the freedom of potential workers in order to recruit them not only in sufficiently large numbers but on terms satisfactory to management in the face of the

profitability constraints within which it chose to operate. Significant groups of workers at varying stages of proletarianization persistently resisted the machinations of management. They lost this initiative with the importation of Chinese labour although various forms of resistance were to persist.

It is in the context of these countervailing forces that workers resistance during this period should be examined. The patterns delineated above indicate the importance of seeking the roots of migrant labour resistance in the pre-labour situation, as this was the point at which the prospective worker could exercise his greatest measure of resistance. His refusal to be recruited was his most effective lever against the formidable powers of management. Potential recruits in British South Africa reacted strongly against the WNLA system. They were aware that it totally eliminated their freedom of choice as prospective labourers and that the maximum average wage agreement pegged their pay at less than they could bargain for elsewhere. Grant, Native Labour Commissioner to the Chamber of Mines, in evidence before the Transvaal Labour Commission of 1902, stated emphatically that the WNLA system, through prohibiting 'voluntary' labour, was coercive:

".....a native, before he seeks employment, generally asks a few questions, he satisfies himself as to the character of his employer, the nature of the work and the treatment to be expected. Having selected his employer he offers his service, and under these (WNLA) rules, however eager the boy may be to work, he cannot enter except through one prescribed channel, consequently his voluntary action is distinctly interfered with."

Once a worker had contracted through WNLA, he was processed through a degrading medical examination, usually railed as part of a "batch" in a cattle truck to the Reef and assigned to whatever mine required him, according to the quota system. It

was reported that workers no longer considered "themselves to be the free agents they were before the war..." and that a worker abhorred nothing more "than to be compelled to go and work where he does not like to go, even if he is told that he will be fairly paid, that sounds so much like 'being commandiert'".

Through an extensive oral reportage system potential workers rapidly developed an awareness, not only of the range of employment and wage rates available, but also of the variety of living and working conditions on each of the mines. Once they were able to secure their freedom from the WNLA system, their subsequent choice of employers was highly selective, being based on this knowledge and revealing a developed worker rationality. In an environment where death rates were sometimes one in ten the choice of mine could be a matter of life or death. One black contractor stated that workers considered bad mines to be "those which are not very much inspected and some in which ground is left hanging. The boys, when they are engaged, always ask whether a mine is a good one." There is evidence to show that some groups of workers avoided developing and deep level mines where conditions were known to be difficult and dangerous and management was prone to make immense work demands. Workers also gravitated to the mines where they knew they would find their friends or where they had already been part of an informal network of worker defence. Compound conditions formed a discernable, though somewhat secondary set of criteria.

Workers who wished to enter the Witwatersrand labour market, realising the evils of the WNLA system, would either develop their own routes to the Reef which avoided the WNLA tentacles or would make use of the system to their own advantage. Workers in the Northern Transvaal, for example, were reported to have adopted a definite route to the Reef which avoided the notoriously unscrupulous WNLA agent in the area. Others, in a variety of regions, learnt to "work" the WNLA system, to take advantage of the facilities and transport provided

by labour agents , how to use the complicated pass system and when and how to desert to gain access to other employment opportunities. Many WNLA agents reported during this period that recruits in large numbers were signing on to be transported to the mines and deserting once they neared the Witwatersrand. They would then enter the labour market as free agents, tendering their services where they so desired. Workers, especially those recruited in Northern Transvaal, who wished to rid themselves of obligations to WNLA and enter the Reef labour market independently, used Pretoria as a vital link. Many deserted the WNLA trains at Pretoria and either sought work there, in the military camps or private employ on a relatively permanent basis or used this employment to gain a pass to travel independently to the Reef. Still others, if they could not de-train in Pretoria or if they had travelled along different routes, deserted in Johannesburg and walked to Pretoria to seek a travelling pass to re-enter the Reef without hindrance. The special labour regulations of the Reef Labour districts did not apply in Pretoria and therefore black workers could not be detained for a period of 6 days for the purpose of identifying deserters. There was evidence of Mozambique workers using the same method. The Secretary of the Association of Mine Managers wrote in November, 1902:

"It appears that particularly in the case of North Basothos and Tsongas they are well informed that on arriving in Pretoria, and making a statement that they wish to go to Johannesburg in order to find employment, passports are freely issued to them without question; and they are fully conversant with the fact that by this means they can obtain work in Johannesburg at higher rates of pay.....officials assume that natives applying for passports have just arrived from their homes."

In 1906, statements were obtained from three workers who had adopted this method. They were all similar to the following:

"I deserted from the Robinson Deep on or about 28/10/06 and proceeded to Pretoria on foot. On arriving there I was arrested and when asked by the Pass Officer where I came from, I stated that I had been employed by a Dutch farmer, but had left there and wanted to go to Johannesburg to work on the mines. I was locked up for three days and was then given a travelling pass for which I paid 1/- and went to Johannesburg by train."

(S.N.A. 73/315/07.)

In 1902 the WNLA General Manager reported that in April that year, desertions had increased to 1510 from 899 the previous month. This he attributed to the fact that there was a "demand for natives by private employers and contractors who pay higher rates than the mines." He suggested a remedy of offering a higher rate of wages. However the Chamber of Mines persisted with its policy of depressing wages wherever possible and relying on the combined coercive power of its own and the State's institutions to counteract such worker resistance.

STRATEGIES OF WORKER DEFENCE AND PROTEST IN THE WORK SITUATION

During the period under review, workers "deserted" in large numbers. In the first instance workers deserted, as described above, to seek better work opportunities. This category of deserters can be regarded as "target deserters" who had specific work objectives in mind, perhaps even before they reached the Rand. In the second instance workers would desert when working or compound conditions became unbearable, when they did not receive full pay or when management detained them longer than they had intended. As such it was an active form of protest. This class of desertion I term "defensive". In many cases defensive deserters would also set themselves new work targets.

The "problem" of desertion occupied a substantial part of both management's and the State's energy. It drove the Milner Administration, in collaboration with management, to introduce sophisticated

methods of prevention and detection. As these methods (such as an expensive finger print system) developed, desertion became more difficult but did not reduce correspondingly. Instead, requiring increased determination and planning, it became a more conscious form of worker protest.

Desertion rates would vary from mine to mine, usually corresponding to the variation of conditions. Pritchard, Director of Government Native Labour Bureau, wrote in 1909:

"...generally speaking, the treatment of Natives on the various mines is largely reflected in their several rates of desertion."

(S.N.A. 90/1825/09, Memorandum on Native Labour Supply by Pritchard, 31 March 1909.)

An analysis of conditions and desertion rates on the different mines supports this view. The Simmer Deep, for example, had poor feeding, meat rations suspended for "inefficients", a large rate of cancelled shifts (21,4% per day), and reports of persistent ill-treatment underground. Its desertion rate during 1908 was 618,4 per 1000. As an example from the other end of the scale, Jumpers Mine had a desertion rate during 1908 of 1,6 per 1000. Inspectors reported that the standard of feeding in this mine was "adequate". that very few cases of ill-treatment were reported, that officials had a "good" attitude towards workers and that few shifts were cancelled.⁴

The procurement of a new pass was essential for a successful desertion, especially if a worker intended to seek new employment. Several instances of pass forgery came to light. The District Controller in Boksburg reported in December 1905 that within 7 months, 1507 workers had deserted from mines in his districts. During the same period, 18 Africans were convicted of forging passes. White forgers also operated on the Rand and sold passes to deserters at £5 a piece.

A further extension of defensive desertion manifested itself in general labour withdrawal by groups

of workers originating from a particular area or tribe or engaged at a particular mine. This form of worker protest is particularly suited to migrant workers who, once they desert, individually or *en masse*, or once their contracts are completed, may refuse to participate in the same labour market until working conditions are improved or home area conditions worsen sufficiently to force them out. This type of action had a strong impact in 1905, when, following the importation of Chinese labour, contract conditions for black workers were made less favourable.⁵ Large numbers of black workers from all parts of British South Africa withdrew their labour and management was obliged to improve contract conditions. In 1907, the Chairman of Rand Mines described this form of worker action as follows:

"The native method of striking is very simple. It must be remembered that he is not a permanent workman. He is always going home, and if he is not satisfied with the conditions of employment, he simply does not come out again. The conditions of South Africa make it perfectly possible for him to do this.."

(*Mining Industry Commission, Minutes of Evidence*, S. Reyerbach, Chairman of Rand Mines, 13 June 1907, p.97)

J.J. Ware of the Trades and Labour Council made a similar evaluation of black worker action:

"There is one thing with the Kaffir in which he is different to the white man. If things do not suit him he goes home and stays there, he does not go on strike, that is better than any strike."

(*Mining Industry Commission, Minutes of Evidence*, 28 October 1907, p. 1425)

This type of worker action did have an impact on WNLA and mine management policies. If it had not been for the importation of Chinese labour, commencing in 1904, it is probable that black workers would have won more significant concessions

from management through this method.

In the work situation most workers tended to assume defensive forms of resistance as they were denied any initiative within the Witwatersrand's repressive environment. For example, they protected themselves from the high demands made on them through minimum work requirements by keeping their level of efficiency as low as possible. Workers were aware of management's tendency to increase the minimum work requirements of contracts wherever possible. Self-imposed work limits were implemented as a reaction.

Taberer, a Native Affairs Department Inspector, told the 1904 Mining Industry Commission:

"I have had natives tell me that they are afraid to put in two holes because their bosses might make that the (required) task."
(*Mining Industry Commission 1907*, p. 1316)

J.H.Johns, a consulting engineer to a mining group, confirmed this type of worker reaction:

"I once tried it (piecework) in the Ferreira, and persuaded several boys to drill two holes instead of one. They were paid double for their work and we were all pleased, but they suddenly stopped, and when the mine foreman wanted to know why, they said: 'It is all right putting in two holes now, but presently the boss will think that two holes is the day's work.... They saw what we were working up to. They saw as well as some of the white men we have had to deal with, only the native was more honest about it. He stuck to it too.'"
(*Mining Industry Commission 1907* p. 18448-9)

As another defensive measure, workers made use of the legal system to remedy management's coercive measures. Under British administration, workers would appeal to inspectors from the Native Affairs Department as their "protectors" if they felt they had a case against management or individual white

miners. Workers wanting to lay a charge were faced not only with an unfamiliar legal system but also the inaccessibility of the inspectors.⁶ No doubt workers feared retribution from management and this must have also reduced the number of charges actually made. However, in one year alone, 1905, 3585 complaints were made at pass offices along the Reef regarding shortfalls in wages. Subsequent cases resulted in workers recovering £10,332 in wages due to them and improperly withheld. Workers also complained although less successfully, about assaults by mine officials and white miners. In 1905 118 cases of "ill-usage" were reported and 50 were settled in favour of the plaintiffs. In the same year 609 workers complained of being detained at the mines beyond the length of their contracts. Only 281 cases were settled in favour of the plaintiffs.⁷

As numerous as these cases may seem, it is probable that they represent only a portion of the actionable abuses to which workers were subjected. This type of worker action would have had only piecemeal results and did not directly lead to any reform within the mines. It may also have had a restraining effect on management. However, the action did reveal an ability for individual resistance which could have formed the basis for group organization and a common worker consciousness.

HOME GROUPS AND THE FORMATION OF PROTO-VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

It is impossible to argue that the type of consciousness displayed by black workers on the gold mines during this period, was that of a developed working class. Much worker resistance manifested itself in ethnic identity rather than an overall worker consciousness. However, it is important to view the development of ethnic solidarity in an industrial environment as a particular response to that environment, rather than a simple transferral of tribal values. Workers would form groups, usually tribally based, in their compounds to protect themselves from the compound police, possibly other groups, and most of all, from the coercive measures

of management. There is evidence that such groups provided an important measure of security for individual members faced with a daily struggle for survival in the compound and underground.⁸

I have termed these groups proto-voluntary associations. Because of their informal structure and organisation they were difficult to identify by management and were therefore well suited to the mine's systems of control. Management in fact, fostered tribalism in a variety of ways and this unintentionally added cohesion to these vital groups of worker solidarity, defence and resistance.

There are a few substantial indications of how these groups operated. Many workers insisted on being assigned to the same mine as their "brothers", usually a group of recruits from a common area and tribe. This was general practice amongst recruits from the Transvaal, Cape Colony, Basutoland and even Portuguese East Africa. In 1903, for example, Angoni Chiefs (PEA) told a WNLA agent that they would only send tribesmen to the Reef if, amongst other conditions, "brothers" were not separated except in fairly large numbers. There is evidence of individual workers who had been separated from their groups, requesting permission to be transferred to the same mine as their respective groups. A number of actual disturbances or work stoppages amongst recruits were reported to have resulted from "home groups" being split up by WNLA. Such disturbances indicated strong determination to remain together with friends in the face of a strange environment.

Cape Colony workers maintained very cohesive groups. Group leaders, often headmen or *indunas*, would represent complaints of the group to management or would write to chiefs or magistrates of their home districts, complaining on behalf of their groups about ill-treatment or bad conditions. This tactic had some definite results as Cape Colony Officials would bring pressure to bear on the mines.

The groups provided valuable security for workers in a variety of ways. For example, workers affected by punitive food stoppages could rely on their

groups for relief. Pritchard, commenting in 1909 on the use of food as a punitive measure against workers, gave an indication of how workers found support from such informal groups:

"It is well known that natives share their food and it should therefore have been obvious to those in authority that punishment of this nature would fall as heavily on good workers as it would on malingerers and loafers who it was especially desired should suffer by it."

(S.N.A. 90/1825/09, *Memorandum by Pritchard*, 31 March 1909.)

Many isolated instances of worker action were based on "home group" organisation. In 1902, for example, 192 "Mapoch" tribesmen arrived in Johannesburg and, dissatisfied with their treatment, they refused to work for 10 days until they were persuaded that treatment would improve. In 1907 a group of Pondo tribesmen refused to work underground on the South Randfontein mine because they claimed they had contracted for surface work only. In May 1907 a group of 60 workers from a common tribe (unnamed) refused to work because their shifts were being cancelled. They decided to return home with their chief's brother.

Many of the work stoppages or strikes on the Reef in the early part of the decade appeared to coalesce along ethnic lines. This, Warwick confirms in his account of black industrial protest on the Reef between 1901-2:

"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 (22 May 1902) the dispute was fundamentally between the management of the mine and the Pedi work force, the unrest at the Durban Roodepoort Mine (21 July 1902) was apparently confined to workers from Mozambique, and the strikes at the Brakpan Electric Works (11 September 1902) was reported to have been an exclusively Xhosa affair. At Vereeniging (7th

September 1902) the Sotho workers cited the independence of their people as a symbol of protest....."⁹

It is probable that mass tribal action in the industrial environment, when it did occur, received its main impulse and cohesion via smaller, association-like, home groups. Very often strike leaders would be *Indunas* with traditional links and would have had smaller groups under their individual leadership.

It is difficult to estimate what degree of organisation was achieved by these groups. The sophisticated organisation demonstrated by the Ninevite movement over a similar period, as described by Van Onselen,¹⁰ indicated the potential for such groups. Indications are that some "home groups" did develop into associations with a structure geared towards an industrial environment. In 1907, for example, it was reported that:

"At Germiston a new Society has been formed, and so as to escape the stigmas of being called Ethiopian, the boys are told that it is not a religious movement but a Benevolent Society, formed to provide a purse for the East Coast Natives working on the Rand, out of which sick boys will be helped, boys dying friendless will be decently buried and boys preaching and teaching in Gazaland will be supported."

(*Africa's Golden Harvests*, October 1907, p.2)

This society was organised by an evangelist and is described by a missionary. As such, an emphasis is placed on its religious orientation but it is important that it provided benefits to workers that were meaningful within an industrial environment.

Although one can form only a sketchy impression of these groupings through available evidence, it is clear that they were vital to every worker faced with the vicious environment of the Witwatersrand. It seems that labour organisations have failed to realise their importance and to build on such grass roots structures amongst mine workers. Indications are that they persist today and should receive closer attention.

WORK STOPPAGES AND CONFRONTATION

Mass worker action during the first decade of this century was limited in scope and in numbers. Most disturbances were isolated to particular mines and many were mobilised through tribal cohesion. However, the riots and stoppages that did occur indicated the potential that did exist for the articulation of worker grievances and the organisation of effective resistance. Peter Warwick has given a detailed account of the fairly widespread, though piecemeal, instances of black worker protest over the period 1901-2. A substantial proportion of these disturbances were tribally oriented and have been mentioned above. However there is evidence that some confrontations, which usually took the form of work stoppages, demonstrated a definite worker consciousness.

In 1902, for example, workers on the Consolidated Main Reef Mine went on strike because they discovered that their wages were well below those being earned by a contractor's work force engaged in surface construction on the mine. The mine manager complained that:

"...the contractors, if allowed to go on will obtain all the best boys, any of which are as good at certain work as white men, and at the same time unsettle the Company's boys."

(S.N.A. General Manager, Cons. Main Reef to General Manager WNLA, 2 April 1902.)

The inspector of labour tried to mediate but the workers refused to stand down and were all arrested.

It was competition for their labour, and the realisation that it existed despite the WNLA system, that most stimulated workers to undertake measures of resistance like desertion as well as articulated wage demands. They also were galvanized into action when management transgressed certain rudimentary standards of treatment, as the following example demonstrates.

On Saturday 28 June 1902, 1000 workers at the Langlaagte Mine broke out of the compound, and marched towards the Village Deep Mine from where they had been transferred. A detachment of police "persuaded" them to return to the Langlaagte Mine. There they stoned the compound manager's office before going back to their quarters. Leaders of the march demanded the dismissal of the compound manager who had treated them with cruelty and had obstructed their free movement out of the compound. They also complained of being detained at the mine longer than their periods of contract. State officials defused the protest, as they did in many such instances, by promising that "the matter would be gone into". It is not clear whether the compound manager was subsequently dismissed. This action seems to indicate that through their experience at the Village Deep Mine, the workers had set certain standards of treatment which their new compound manager did not follow. They reacted forcefully.

Warwick enumerates other instances of management-worker confrontation during the period 1901-2. Other disturbances during the decade, as far as I have ascertained, were not as concentrated as they were over this initial period. Isolated incidents occurred in which workers made limited demands for the improvement of conditions.

A significant strike occurred at the Premier Diamond Mine near Pretoria in 1907. This mine had attracted a labour force of selective workers who were not prepared to sell their labour to the gold mines after conditions worsened in 1905. As a result, it had a high content of Basutoland and Transvaal workers who demonstrated a developed sense of resistance. Although unrelated to the gold mines and the WNLA system, the Premier, because it received many experienced gold mine workers, indicated the type of resistance that was developing amongst more experienced workers and had the potential to become an important force. In 1907 a major clash developed on this mine which, although it was labelled by management as a tribal conflict, appears to have had an important economic base. Basuto workers had attempted to undercut the rates

paid to Transvaal workers for certain prized classes of work. Management had been playing one group off against the other. The inter-tribal fight was reported to have been fierce but the only two deaths that occurred, resulted from police action. I judge the fight to have been staged, as a large number of workers immediately demanded to be sent home, possibly hoping that their uncompleted contracts would be waived in the face of unrest. Various reports indicate that living conditions, as a result of chronic overcrowding had become highly undesirable and that there was a high rate of deaths resulting from disease. A detailed examination of the Premier disturbances of 1907 and also of 1913 is beyond the scope of this paper. They do, however, provide a valuable index of worker consciousness during this period.

By the end of the decade, although Chinese labour had been repatriated and WNLA had been abandoned by some mines in favour of independent recruiting, workers still remained in a weak position as a result of the rapid deterioration of the rural areas and serious rinderpest epidemics. Management rapidly developed the manipulative forces at its disposal. In 1912 the Native Recruiting Corporation was established to enforce once again monoposonistic recruiting inside South Africa.¹¹ This further forestalled any possible improvement in the bargaining position of black workers. Workers from Portuguese East Africa continued to be recruited in large numbers and through their willingness to work for relatively low wages, also undercut the bargaining power of indigenous labour. The methods of resistance previously adopted by workers became less effective. There is evidence that management consciously excluded "troublesome" workers. Cape Colony recruits were reputed to have been particularly prone to resist management. Labour organisations, such as the I.C.U. that were to develop from the 1920's onwards, mistakenly neglected the power of black mine workers because of the lack of visible organisation displayed in this migrant dominated sector. The preceding analysis shows, however, that potential for organisation did exist. At the earliest stages of proletarianization, workers on the

Transvaal Gold Mines were not passive instruments of management. The period examined was unique in some ways but the patterns of resistance that were established, persisted throughout the century. Workers were quick to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the exploitative system to which they were exposed, and adjusted their actions accordingly. Within the confines of a highly repressive system, workers did make a positive attempt to minimise the effects of management's power. WNLA, for example, had to make some very definite adjustments in policy as a result of worker reaction. This article has shown that workers in a repressive environment turn to a range of alternative methods of varying effectiveness to express their protest and resistance.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1) Kornhauser *et al* have emphasised the importance of looking beyond strike action for evidence of industrial conflict in modern industrial economies: "...the general object of study is not the labour dispute, the strike or the lock out, but the total range of behaviour and attitudes that express opposition and divergent orientations between industrial owners and managers on the one hand and working people and their organizations on the other." Kornhauser, A. Dubin, R. and Ross, A.H. *Industrial Conflict*, New York: McGraw Hill 1954, p.12 Kerr also describes industrial conflict as expressing itself in a variety of ways which "are as unlimited as the ingenuity of man." Kerr, C, *Labour and Management in Industrial Society*, New York: Doubleday, 1964, p.171.
- 2) For details of these methods see Moroney, S. *Industrial Conflict in a Labour Repressive Economy: Black Labour on the Transvaal Gold Mines 1901-1912*. Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976, pp.19-31
- 3) I use the term "desert" which was applied by management to this act, in order to avoid confusion. The word has derogatory overtones. It implies a dereliction of duty. "Withdrawal

of labour" is more accurate but I have used this to apply to more widespread action (see below). The use of "deserter", "desertion", etc. was an important part of management's ideology. Such terms immediately suspended any critical examination of the conditions of employment which caused workers to leave in large numbers and justified the use of every possible pursual and punitive measure.

- 4) A worker's shift was "cancelled" and therefore, not paid for, if he did not achieve the required amount of work as set by the mine. Those employed in rock drilling, for example, would be required to drill a certain depth. If they did not achieve this in some mines, they would not be accredited with the work achieved below the requirement. This in fact created a situation where management was able to extract significant quantities of work for no pay at all. For more details see Moroney.
- 5) Management attempted to introduce a minimum contract length of 12 months. Subsequently, as a result of extensive withdrawal, contracts were reduced to 6 months and eventually, 3 months in duration, a reversion to the original situation. See Moroney, *Op Cit* pp. 125-130.
- 6) Some inspectors were reported to have been unsympathetic to workers and to have worked in close co-operation with compound managers and management generally. If a worker wished to lay a charge through the inspector at a pass office, he would have to apply to the compound manager for a day pass to leave the compound. This would almost certainly be denied if the manager realised the worker's intention. There is evidence that workers consciously obviated this problem by concealing their intent. See Moroney, S. *Op Cit* p. 102.
- 7) The courts were in fact very lenient towards white miners convicted of assault against blacks. Many were discharged with warnings. Such len-

iciency indicated the State's collaborative role according to which acts of violence against workers were covertly condoned. One inspector of the Native Affairs Department complained in 1906 that in a particular assault case in which the defendant was discharged with a warning, the magistrate made remarks during the case which made it "appear that he considers flogging of Natives by their employers as justifiable under certain circumstances."

- 8) Groups of a similar nature and purpose exist in contemporary mine compound communities. Theology students who were hired as workers on mines during 1976, reported that: "It appears that there are several informal networks operating.....A circle of friends emerges out of a particular ethnic group which in turn extends to those working together." The students also reported that *Isibondas* played an important role as elected leaders within each room and facilitated discussion of common problems. This group is closely analogous to the type of leadership that emerged at the earliest stages of migrancy. See Matsobane, P., and Eggenhuizen, T. (eds) *Another Blanket*, Johannesburg: Agency for Industrial Mission, June 1976, pp 17, 22.
- 9) Warwick, P., "Black Industrial Protest on the Witwatersrand 1901-2", (Unpublished paper), University of York, 1975 p.7
- 10) Van Onselen, C., "South Africa's lumpen proletarian Army: 'Umkosi Was Ntaba' - 'The Regiment of the Hills 1890-1920'" . Unpublished paper. African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, April 1976.
- 11) See Johnstone, F.A., *Race, Class and Gold*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London 1976

"THE NEW UNIONISM : INDUSTRIALISATION 25
AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONS
IN SOUTH AFRICA 1925 - 1930.

by Jon Lewis

"Unlike the old trade unions, they greet every suggestion of an identity of interest between capital and labour with scorn and ridicule. Thus we see now these new Unions taking the lead of the working-class movement generally, and more and more taking in tow the rich and proud "old" Unions."1.

F. Engels, 1889

Although Engels was writing on Britain in the late nineteenth century, his words capture the atmosphere of militant trade unionism which emerged amongst black and white workers in the secondary industrial sector during the second half of the 1920's.

1. HISTORY

Hitherto, and since its inception in the 1880's, the labour movement in South Africa had been dominated by craft unions, with the exception of the Mine Workers' Union, which increasingly drew its membership from semi-skilled and unskilled whites. These unions with their activities centred upon the mines, had waged an intermittent and sometimes violent struggle against the mine owners over job reservation, which culminated in the Rand Revolt of 1922. The suppression of the strike by the Smuts government dealt a shattering blow to the MWU, from which it never really recovered. Trade Union membership in South Africa fell from 108 242 to 81 861 in the aftermath of the strike. The defeat also hastened the collapse of the central coordinating body, the South African Industrial Federation, which was already reeling under the increasingly authoritarian direction of its General Secretary, Archie Crawford. On the railways, members of the AEU who had struck were victimized. The general effect of the failure of the 1922 strike was to make the unions very wary of strike action.

This rejection of industrial militancy took insti-

tutional form with the passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1924, and the Wage Act in 1925. These measures brought industrial relations very firmly under the law and a system of conciliation. However, these developments benefited the established unions, which were powerful enough to safeguard their interests within the Industrial Councils - those representing artisans, public sector and white collar employees.²

Thus the South African Typographical Union, for example, was to be a consistent champion of the policy of collaboration within the Industrial Councils.

This period also saw the beginnings of independent trade union activity amongst Africans and Coloureds, with the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa (ICU) in 1919, under the leadership of Clements Kadalie. In his own words:

"The object of this Union was to organise those workers not catered for by the white Unions into 'one big Union'".³

By 1927, the ICU claimed a membership of 100 000. However, membership was random, scattered and unorganised, and included large numbers of labour tenants working on white farms. It had been argued that the only section of the ICU's membership which was capable of being effectively organised was the African urban working class, "and it is in their failure to organise this group that the ICU can chiefly be criticised".⁴ Thus the ICU failed to give support to African workers during the 1927 strikes in Durban and Johannesburg.

The Report of the Native Economic Commission of 1930 - 32 refers constantly to a class of 'urbanised natives' who had lost all contact with the land and were wholly dependent for their existence on the wages they received. These workers had been forced into the town by the breakdown of production in the reserves. This must have meant that even the casual migrant worker was now more dependent upon wages. However, the Commission pointed out that the position of the 'urban-

ised native' worker was rendered insecure by the pressure of large numbers of rural migrants, less skilled and less efficient, and consequently cheaper as far as employers were concerned. Employers preferred to employ Africans from rural areas, "the latter being found more docile and unsophisticated". The ICU failed to take account of these differences because it was primarily concerned with building a wide front of support around the political grievances of non-whites in general. At the same time, Kadalie, receiving support from the Amsterdam International and the British TUC, and increasingly under the influence of white liberals, came to reject militant trade unionism. In 1927, after expelling communist office holders from the ICU, he declared that "strikes were wicked, useless and obsolete".

However, coincidental with the political emasculation of the 'old' unions, and the failure of the ICU, the South African economy witnessed a rapid expansion in the manufacturing sector, and this was to lay the basis for the emergence of the 'new' industrial unions.

11. THE GROWTH OF SECONDARY INDUSTRY

"South Africa is in the midst of a far-reaching economic revolution, the keynote of which is the efflorescence of a great variety of secondary industries and the progressive industrialisation of large sections of the population".

L Motz (1929)⁵

The number of manufacturing establishments in the Union increased from 3 638 in 1915-16 to 6 645 in 1929-1930. At the same time the total number employed in private industry rose from 101 178 to 201 180 during the same period. These industries received an initial boost during the First World War when it was impossible to import certain consumer goods. Thus, for example, the furniture industry on the Reef developed in the following way: 3 firms were established in 1912, 2 in 1915, 1 in 1916 and 3 in 1917. By 1929, there were 50

firms in Johannesburg alone. Secondary industry further benefited from the protection policy of the Pact Government after 1924.

"The policy of protection is becoming deeply ingrained in the national consciousness, and is having decided effects in the introduction of new industries. The home market for the products of the local manufactories is assuming growing proportions, with the gradual disappearance of the old prejudice against the home-made article, the improvement of the quality of the latter, and, most important, the increasing purchasing power of the population, not excluding the non-European elements."

L. Motz (1929) ⁵

A change in the industrial infrastructure was bound to influence the nature of working class response. The 1935 Industrial Legislation Commission noted:

"The trend of industrial development during the past few decades has been such that it is much more convenient for employers to negotiate with one large union representing all classes of workers in their industry, rather than with a number of separate craft unions representing only sections of their workers".

The Labour Force

The enlarged labour force needed for these industries was recruited from the ranks of the newly-proletarianised, both black and white, who had been forced off the land and into the towns, by economic hardship, government policy, and the increasing domination of large capitalist agriculture.

The statistics for employment in private industry reveal a distinct pattern of labour recruitment in secondary industry. (See Table 1 below)

TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY

CENSUS YEAR	WHITES		COLOURED		AFRICANS		ASIATICS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1915-16	34 938	4 586	11 983	3 288	34 682	383	10 212	1 106
1929-30	45 168	13 234	17 975	6 791	69 216	679	8 764	502

Two trends are immediately obvious from these figures: (a) the rapid growth of white female labour and (b) the preponderance of African males. These trends would be proportionately stronger for the Reef since the majority of Coloured and Asian workers would be employed in the Cape and Natal, respectively. It will be argued that these groups - white women, and black male factory workers - played a prominent role in the 'new unionism'.

111. SKILLED AND UNSKILLED

Wage labour in South Africa has been characterised by a massive disparity between the wage levels of skilled workers and those in unskilled or semi-skilled work. This situation arose out of the specific historical circumstances of conquest and the development of the mining industry. In particular, high wages were necessary to induce skilled labourers to come to South Africa, whilst continued subsistence production in the reserves allowed the mineowners to pay Africans (who constituted the majority of unskilled labour) a wage below the necessary level for the reproduction of their labour power.⁶ Secondary industry could thus benefit from an already established labour market.

The Report of the Industrial Legislation Commission of 1935, drew attention to the degree of disparity in wage rates: (See table 2 below)

TABLE 2: WAGE RATES AS AT 31st MAY 1935.

INDUSTRY	AREA	SKILLED	SEMI-SKILLED	UNSKILLED
Furniture	Rand and Pretoria	2s 5 d- 2s 9 d p.h.	8½d - 1s 10½d p.h.	6d p.h.
Laundering Dyeing and Cleaning	Principle Industrial Centres	£6 p.w.	£1 5s - £1 10s P.W.	£1 2s 6d p.w.
Sweet Manu- facturing	Principle Centres	£6 p.w.	£3 p.w.	£1 4s p.w.

The rates contrast sharply with ratios for other countries. For instance, the average hourly earnings of male unskilled workers as a percentage of skilled rates amounted to 75% in the U.S.A. in 1927.

Mr. F.A.W. Lucas, K.C., Chairman of the Wage Board, argued that this disparity between skilled and unskilled wage rates ("which might be roughly stated as the difference between £1 a day and £1 a week") led to considerable pressure for deskilling and for the downward reclassification of skilled work.

".....the skilled worker's wage was relatively to the native's wages so high that much of the semi-skilled work which formed part of the skilled man's work was handed over to the native, generally without any increase of wages.....This process also tended to push the skilled man in some industries into entirely supervisory positions."

Chairman of the Wage Board (1928)

The tendency towards job fragmentation in order to take advantage of cheap labour was also noted by the Native Economic Commission:

"Work which, if the divergence between the wages of skilled men and of labourers were similar to the difference in Europe, would be done by the skilled man and thus help to keep up the number of posts for skilled men, is in South Africa, wherever possible, lopped off the skilled man's task and assigned to native labourers".

This process had a number of implications for the various sections of the labour force employed in secondary industry.

a) African Workers

In the first place it meant that many African workers who were categorized as labourers, in fact, carried out semi-skilled work. This implies the development of an increasingly stable African working class, which in turn had implications for trade union organisation. Thus Roux writes:

"It was found that the African workers in the so-called 'secondary' industries were easiest to organise. Though often classed as unskilled, they are really quite skilled and it is not easy to replace them at short notice. They are usually location residents and have their wives and children with them, though they may not have severed completely their ties with the countryside. They constitute the nearest approach to a Bantu proletariat in South Africa. In contrast to the more shifting and semi-peasant miners, building labourers and railway construction workers here today and gone tomorrow, always preoccupied with cows and land, these urban workers were comparatively quick to grasp the idea of trade union organisation."⁷

The Native Economic Commission found evidence of a blurring of skill classification on the basis of colour.

"There is a slow but increasing infiltration of more advanced Natives into the non-manual occupations."

There is also evidence that a small number of Africans were performing highly skilled work.

b) Unskilled White Workers

This group probably suffered most from the wide disparity in wage rates, since their standards were set by the highly paid skilled whites. Government commissions during the period were well aware of the situation, and the problems it caused in finding jobs for 'poor whites'. One of the reports submitted by the Economic and Wage Commission (1925) argued that:

"With the present volume of production the existing wages of Europeans are possible only if Europeans are restricted to a limited number of supervisory and more skilled posts. Work which is not of this character cannot be paid similar rates. While in any industry the rates of skilled and unskilled labour at any time is influenced by the stage of technical development which the industry has reached,

a high standard of rates for skilled work encourages the employers to organise production on the basis of a small ratio of skilled to general labour. For the two reasons stated the great mass of wage earners - native, coloured and *white* - are restricted to work calling for no special skill or capacity for initiative, and rates of pay for general unskilled labour remain low."

In other words there were not enough non-manual and skilled jobs to absorb the entire white work force. This situation was not improved by the continuing fragmentation of what skilled jobs there were. However, in addition, white unskilled labour was hindered from assuming semi-skilled work, which had been newly created by secondary industry. The Native Economic Commission concluded:

"Owing to his virtual exclusion from unskilled work (by reason of his being uneconomic at 'civilised' rates of pay - author) the European has not been able to find his way into certain higher classes of work. Through employment in labourer's work many labourers acquire the skill necessary for various kinds of semi-skilled work. Thus the European, being excluded from labourer's work, has been prevented from becoming qualified for such semi-skilled work, while Natives, through working as labourers have become qualified for it. This handicap on the European has been aggravated by the fact that Natives when they are so qualified and actually do such semi-skilled work seldom get a wage higher than that which is customary for labourers work."

Whilst the Pact Government provided jobs directly for 'poor whites' on the railways and in the post office, the Industrial Councils and the Wage Board were expected to maintain a 'civilised' standard of wages for unskilled whites in industry. The Chairman of the Wage Board argued that part of his job was to "fix steps in the wage gap for semi-skilled work", and that this would provide jobs for unqualified whites (as well as providing an incentive for Africans). However, this intervention by the state was strongly resisted by em-

employers. As regards the Industrial Conciliation Act, employers were able to circumvent its provisions by merely dismissing white workers and substituting black. (In 1930 the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended to allow wage agreements to lay down wage rates for workers not defined as 'employees' in the original Act, i.e., for 'pass carrying natives'.)

Furthermore, the records of the Trade Union Congress (SATUC) are full of complaints from unions such as the Garment Workers or the Furniture Workers', to the effect that employers refused to honour Industrial Council agreements and wage determinations, consistently underpaying workers and ignoring agreements on the rates of qualified to unqualified labour to be employed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the early struggles of the 'new' industrial unions were around these issues. (It will be shown below how industrial legislation related to the African Unions.)

Manufacturing industry was still in its early stages during the 1920's, and large-scale factory production was not yet dominant. In order to accumulate capital employers were forced to keep wages as low as possible. In certain industries this was achieved by employing female labour and juveniles. This also warded off political pressure by providing jobs for 'poor whites'.

i) *White female labour* - was concentrated in certain industries. For example, in tailoring and clothing the number of white women employed increased from 1 687 to 3 238 between 1925/6 and 1929/30. The number employed in sweetmaking increased over the same period from 583 to 1 063. A female work force was particularly welcome to employers since women were traditionally unorganised and underpaid in relation to men. In fact, the Economic and Wage Commission (1925) recommended that the Wage Board should take two-thirds of the man's rate as the standard for women's wages. The 1935 Industrial Legislation Commission endorsed this policy and showed that it had been carried out by the Wage Board.

ii) *Juveniles* - In certain industries it became standard practise to employ large numbers of workers under the age of 21, who were not entitled to the full rate of pay. A similar technique was to employ 'probationers' or 'learners', who again received less than the full rate, often sacking them once they became fully qualified. The furniture industry during this period demonstrates both techniques at work.

The investigation of the Wage Board into the Furniture Manufacturing Industry for 1930 found that, in the eleven largest firms in Johannesburg there were 261 journeymen to a total of 396 apprentices and probationers. The Board concluded that "the number of probationers is undoubtedly excessive". On the Rand as a whole, during November and December, 1928, the Board found there were 596 skilled workers to 734 juveniles and apprentices. The existence of large numbers of apprentices involved new problems of trade union organisation since only qualified journeymen could traditionally join the Union. Also, since apprentices were under indentured contract they could not strike.

It was reported to a meeting of the NEC of SATUC in 1927, that furniture manufacturing employers were ignoring the Industrial Council agreement, and that matters had come to a head on 21st February when the Central Mattress Company had locked out all men who were entitled to a rise under the agreement. At the 1927 Annual Conference of SATUC, Mr. Merkel, speaking for the Transvaal section of the Furniture Workers Union "complained that men receiving above the standard rates were being sacked and replaced or re-engaged at the minimum rate allowed by the Industrial Agreement". (In other words, they were being placed back on the first rung of the wages scale.)

c) Skilled White Workers

These workers were continually threatened by a process of job fragmentation and deskilling. The threat came as much from cheap white labour as cheap African labour. The 1935 commission in explaining the displacement of men by women in em-

ployment argued :

"The preferential employment of females is, as we have shown above, part and parcel of the world-wide economic development in which less scope is being offered in certain spheres for skilled employees and more and more for machine minders, semi-skilled labour and unskilled labour".

The same process was transforming apprenticeship into a cheap labour device. In his report to the 1930 Conference of SATUC, A M Merkel makes the point.

"The question arises again, is systematic apprenticeship a practical and satisfactory method today, remembering that the young worker is bound by contract from 5 to 6 years to an occupation wherein mass production and repetition work has replaced technique and skill?".

During the 1930's the Furniture Workers were to lead an agitation for the amendment of the Apprenticeship Act, a move which was strongly opposed by the old craft unions, such as the AEU and SATU whose skills had not yet been undermined.

The vulnerability of skilled workers in secondary industry attracted them to trade unionism, and in certain cases they were to play an important although contradictory role, within the 'new' unions.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL LEGISLATION

a) The Industrial Conciliation Act, 1924.

The 1935 Commission agreed that:

"The promulgation of the Industrial Conciliation Act marked a definite revival in trade unionism. This is recorded by Gitsham and Trembath (Labour Organisation in South Africa, 1926):

'....the Act has tended to foster the growth of trade unions among those workers who were previously badly organised. Several new Unions have grown up or have become stronger since the Act was passed, for example

in the Confectionery, Furniture and Leather Industries. In fact, employers have often encouraged workers to organise so that proper representatives may be appointed on industrial councils."

The point is that in order to benefit from the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act, it was necessary to organise along industrial lines, since agreements were negotiated for the industry as a whole. This avoided the situation which many of the older unions faced of having to negotiate through joint trade union bodies, often weakened by division of interests between the individual unions. It is interesting that the S.A. Industrial Union (successor to SAIF, and organised on the 'one big union' principle) was refused registration precisely because it claimed to represent all workers, and could not represent any one industry in particular.

b) The Wage Act 1925

Black workers (who were 'pass bearing natives') did not fall under the definition of 'employee' laid down in the Industrial Conciliation Act, and were therefore excluded from its provisions. However, the Wage Board, under the chairmanship of F.A.W. Lucas "held that the Wage Act made no distinction between employees on the ground of race or colour. It gives as its reasons the fact that in many undertakings natives and non-natives were doing the same class and kind of work, and in some instances were working side by side in the same occupation". White workers had hoped this would work in their interests on the basis that if wages were set high enough employers would prefer to employ whites rather than blacks, at the same wage. In fact, this only occurred to a limited extent, and in an address given by the Wage Board Chairman it was stated that:

"The number of natives employed in some industries had been to some extent reduced as a first result of wage regulation, but the position of those remaining in the industry had generally been improved. The reduction meant that those who had been retained were being trained to become more efficient workers."

Furthermore, Roux argued that the introduction of

the Wage Board had certain important implications for the organisation of trade unions amongst Africans:

"Before deciding what minimum wages were to be fixed for different occupations, the Wage Board held meetings in the different industrial centres. Representatives of the employers and of the workers were asked to lay whatever information they wished before the Board. The new Unions took advantage of this machinery, which gave Bantu workers for the first time, the opportunity of bringing their grievances officially to the notice of the authorities."

Once the wage determination had been made, trade union organisation was necessary to make sure that employers actually paid the full rates.

A contributory cause of the decline of the African Unions after 1930 may have been the restrictive amendments to the regulation of the Wages Act, which were introduced in 1929.

"Under the first regulations made under the Wage Act it was possible for the Wage Board to consider an application for an investigation from any unorganised body of Natives who could show that they were authorised to make their application. However, in 1929 the regulations were amended and they now require persons supporting the application to sign it themselves, which in practice makes it impossible for any large body of Natives to make a successful application within the terms of the Act and the regulations, and since the promulgation of the amended regulations no application from Natives has been received by the Board."

c) The Role of the State

A discussion of industrial legislation prompts the question as to the role of the State. Kaplan has argued that the establishment of the Pact government in 1924 marked a decisive victory for 'national capital', in alliance with the white working class, over mining capital. I would tentatively suggest that this thesis is borne out in the field of industrial legislation. The ICA did no more

than draw the ring, within which the registered unions (largely white) and employers (representing 'national' manufacturing capital) could fight it out without resorting to strike action. The Wage Act, it could be argued, did more to raise the level of wages. But often minimum wages were set as low as £1 p.w., and employers who disobeyed a wage determination were treated quite leniently by the courts. Most important of all, this legislation did not challenge the ability of the employers to make full use of cheap labour, at the expense of white workers. In fact only in the mining industry was legislation passed to enshrine a colour bar, and fixed ratio of white workers. Farming (representing 'national' agricultural capital) was not touched by this legislation. (It is however true, that in return for tariff protection, manufacturing industry was expected to maintain a certain ratio of 'civilised' to 'uncivilised' labour. Even so, it could be argued that tariff protection and not the manufacturers themselves, was financing 'civilised' wages.)

The policy of the Pact Government towards white labour was to safeguard white workers already entrenched in the mining industry, and to solve the problem of unemployed, unskilled whites at its own expense (by ensuring jobs on the railways, post office and in the municipalities) rather than by penalising the newly emerging manufacturing sector. Furthermore, the jobs provided for 'poor whites' would have been partly financed out of taxation paid by the mining companies.

V. THE 'NEW UNIONS' IN ACTION

a) SATUC

Although it had no colour bar, SATUC was almost completely composed of all-white unions. It originated with the convening of a special congress of trade union representatives by the Minister of Labour, Col. Creswell, in March 1925. Even the name first chosen for the organisation - the S.A. Association of Employees' Organisations' (changed at the 1926 Conference) - was suggestive of compliance and collaboration. However, the first congress duly shocked its

sponsors by electing a communist, W.H. Andrews, to the position of secretary, which post he held throughout the period under review. From the first the influence of the Left - which increasingly coincided with the 'new' industrial unions - was established.

In the first place, the constitution of 1925, although allowing for card votes on policy, provided that "all elections of persons shall be by ballot of the delegates present."

This allowed small and newly formed unions to exert pressure at the Conference. Also, many of the old unions refrained from joining SATUC, or like SATU and SAMWU withdrew their membership. Commentators at the time, and since, have ascribed this to alleged left-wing control and the absence of a colour bar⁹.

However, this had the result of allowing those unions which remained greater freedom of action, released from the dead hand of trade union conservatism, which now characterised the older unions. As the 'new' unions increased in size, so their influence within SATUC grew. Between 1926 and 1930 the GWU (formerly the Witwatersrand Tailor's Association) increased its affiliated membership from 300 to 900 (although actual membership by this time would have been considerably more), and the Furniture Workers' Union increased from 240 to 800 over the same period. Also, by the 1930 Conference many new unions had been formed and become affiliated.

The support of Bill Andrews for the formation of industrial unions should be stressed. During the war he had worked in Sheffield with J.T. Murphy, an engineering worker, and a leader of the shop stewards movement and of the struggle for Industrial Unionism.¹⁰ Andrews was undoubtedly influenced by this experience.¹¹ If Trembath and Gitsham's book on Labour Organisation (published in 1926) is at all representative of trade union thinking at the time, then it would seem that the theory of industrial unionism was in the ascendancy:

"...it is safe to say that the vision of the future is the organisation of all the workers on industrial lines, with some controlling council for the whole

of South Africa."

"Specialisation and the interlocking of trades tend to make the old craft division obsolete. The trustification of Industry has also tended to eliminate the single employer. We find therefore, that Trade Unions are becoming now-a-days either Industrial Unions or Amalgamated Unions, covering workers in the numerous more or less related sections of any occupation."

The theory of 'Industrial Unionism' was influential in the organisation of the Building Workers' Industrial Union (1916) and the National Union of Railway and Harbour Services (1916). However, neither union was able to overcome craft and sectional differences within its respective industry. By 1926 there were eight unions operating in the building industry, and nine on the railway.

Perhaps the more important function of SATUC at this time was to lend its influence and personnel towards the organisation of new unions. These unions included: the Furniture Workers 1925, the Sweetmakers Union 1925, the Boot and Shoemaker Union 1925, the Reef Native Trade Assistants Union 1926 (this was organised by Solly Sachs), the Canvas and Rope Workers Union 1927, the Transvaal Leather Workers Union 1929 (organised by A.M. Merkel after the collapse of the Transvaal Branch of the National Leather Workers Union. In 1926 the National Union had a membership of 3 000.)

One of the most striking features of the SATUC period was the attempt, for the first time, to organise women workers (almost exclusively whites, in the Transvaal at least) during this period. The leading figure was Fanny Klennerman, who attended the first conference in 1925 on behalf of the newly-formed Women Workers' General Union (WWU), and demanded that Congress give support to her organisation. The WWU was instrumental in the organisation of the Sweetmakers' Union, and later organised cafe employees in the face of intimidation and attempts by the employers to establish a 'company union'. A Waitresses Union was eventually estab-

lished, although this was short-lived. The WWU also aided women workers in the distributive trades, and consistently championed women's interests in the male-dominated TUC. The point is made by an incident when Fanny Klennerman, as secretary of the Waitresses Union, wrote to ask NEC of SATUC to request the Minister of Labour to appoint a woman to each of the four subsidiary Boards of the Wage Board. The meaning not being clear to the men on the NEC, it was agreed: "that the letter be sent back for further explanation".

The militancy of the 'new unionism' is exemplified in the methods adopted by the WWU:

"The WWU is increasing its strength and influence and is adopting the method of lunch hour meetings outside the various shops, works and factories in order to bring home to the women workers the need for organisation and the fact that there is a union catering for them and willing to take up their cause".

b) FNETU

The first African industrial unions began to appear early in 1927, largely due to the initiative of communist party members like Wienbren and Thebidi. These first unions included the Native Laundry Workers' Union, the Native Mattress and Furniture Workers Union, usually growing parallel with a sympathetic registered union.

It would be interesting to know to what extent these unions, which were active in the Johannesburg area, developed out of the earlier ICU. Certainly most of the leadership had held office in the ICU until Kadalie's purge against C.P. members. Also, the Johannesburg branch of the ICU, representing exactly those urban industrial workers which the ICU had failed to organise, seems to have been sympathetic to the expelled communists. At a branch meeting, immediately after the expulsions, a resolution was passed demanding that the matter of the expulsions be referred to the national conference of the ICU. This was achieved despite Kadalie's efforts from the Chair to have the motion over-ruled. Two

weeks later 500 members of the Johannesburg branch voted solidly to elect Johannes Nkosi, a C.P. member, to the branch executive.

The South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions was formed on March 25th 1928, at a meeting of over 150 delegates representing 10 000 workers from the African Laundry Workers, Motor Drivers and Garage Workers, Bakers, Clothing Workers and Engineering Unions. The Federation appointed Weinbren, Kotane and La Guma as president, vice-president and general secretary. The choice of La Guma was particularly significant. A leading theorist in the C.P. at this time, he championed the 'Black Republic' slogan and rejected Bunting's policy of continued reliance on the white working class.¹² In fact, the formation of an independent black trade union movement marks a break with the C.P.'s earlier stress on non-racial working class organisation. The number of African unions continued to increase during 1928 and 1929, with the formation of the African Dairy Workers' Unions, the Native Motor Drivers' Union, the Amalgamated Food and Drink Workers Unions, the Steel Workers' Union, the Cold Storage Union, the Cotton and Rope Workers' Union, the Soap and Chemical Workers' Union. By mid-1928 it is estimated that membership had reached 15 000.

The late '20's was a period of considerable industrial militancy amongst African workers. In 1927, 4 418 'non-whites' went on strike (as compared with 740 whites), whilst for 1928 the figures were 5 074 and 710 respectively. The pattern seems to have been one of strikes in response to the victimisation of trade unionists; and strikes designed to enforce payment of the legal wage rates laid down by the Wage Board. In May 1928 African Workers brought Leonardo's Laundry to a standstill, after the victimisation of one of the employees. Although forced back to work by the police, the strikers secured his reinstatement. During the same month the Native Clothing Workers' Union successfully co-ordinated a one day strike in 3 Johannesburg factories to demand full payment for Good Friday. On September 25th, 1928, 170 African, Indian and Coloured workers at the Transvaal Matt-

ress Company struck to enforce the implementation of a Wage Board determination. "Before nightfall the employers had capitulated and advised the Mattress and Furniture Workers' Union (non-European) that the demands of the workers would be fulfilled. In October African Furniture workers in the Louis and Metz factory struck successfully for payment for overtime.

One of the failings of the ICU had been its inability to distinguish between trade union activity and political protest. Although the FNETU was certainly not non-political - in fact, in 1929 it affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions - it remained strictly a trade union body. The strikes which were undertaken by the African unions arose over wages or out of grievances in the work place. Also, the stated aims of the FNETU were limited to dealing with working conditions: the demand for a 48 hour week, and equal pay for equal work.

The use of lightening strikes over immediate issues indicates effective shop-floor initiative, and the considerable success of this tactic demonstrates the bargaining power of the workers and the fact that they could not easily be dismissed by the employer. The militancy of African workers is demonstrated by the strike at Donner's Laundry in October 1929. The strike, which was 100% solid, was called over the issue of intolerable working conditions and the failure to implement Wage Board determinations. "The boss offered to reinstate all but two on conditions demanded by the union, but these terms were rejected and the strikers took their passes and subsequently obtained employment in other laundries."

This latter statement indicates that African Unions were working in a favourable employment situation. Conversely it is argued that the Depression led to the collapse of the FNETU and African trade unionism in 1931. It is probably also true that this decline was hastened by the internal conflicts in the C.P., and the ultra-left policies pursued under Wolton and Bach. In the same way that the ICU had tied its fortunes to the careers of a few individuals, so the Federation was too closely linked to

the C.P. to survive the internal conflicts of the latter.

c) The 'old' and the 'new' : the origins of the Garment Workers' Union.

A history of the early GWU (the strongest union to emerge from this period) and its predecessor, the WTA, demonstrates many of the arguments which this essay has tried to put forward. The WTA had been dominated by master craftsmen deeply rooted in the British craft tradition. During the early 20's most still worked in small tailoring shops, and in fact at that time the WTA still included 'middlemen' in its membership (tailors who took work from the merchant tailors to sub-contract to others). The membership of the union changed dramatically with the expansion of factory production. In December 1925, a meeting of factory workers was held to elect a committee for the Factory Section of the union. During 1926, Dan Colrairie became union organiser. Within 4 months the membership of the Factory Section was increased by 300, with 90% organisation of factory workers on the Rand. By 1928, when Sachs became Secretary of the GWU, the membership was 1 750, of whom 2/3 were in the factory Section, and 3/4 were women workers.

It is interesting to observe the changing response of the WTA to perceived threats from other sections of workers. In 1924 the union called for the replacement of 'Kaffir pressers' by whites. The same point was made, together with an alleged threat of Asiatics to white standards, in evidence to the Cape Town conference on unemployment called by the Secretary for Labour. In August 1926, attention was drawn to the fact that firms were increasingly employing girl machinists to do the work of Trouser-makers, and it was agreed that attempts be made by the Industrial Council to stop this trend. However, later that month the union's constitution was altered to admit non-Europeans, (this meant Indians and Coloured, since Africans were not eligible to join a registered trade union) - presumably on the basis 'that if you can't beat them, join them'. Also, from 1928 Sachs gave moral and often tangible support to the Clothing Workers' Union under Gana Maka-

beni. The threat of undercutting and job-fragmentation, which accompanied large-scale machine production, forced the WTA to open its ranks to an increasingly semi-skilled workforce. However, friction between the two sections remained. At a general meeting held in 1932, the old membership complained of the heavy expenditure occasioned by strike action and legal expenses. One speaker commented, in connection with the 1931 general strike that, "the old leaders would have prevented it". The tailors section finally seceded in 1934 to form a separate union.

VI. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 'NEW UNIONISM'

Firstly, it is important to place in perspective the movement I have described above. The majority of White unions did not affiliate to SATUC, and were not associated with the developments of this period. Furthermore, most of the activities I have described took place mainly on the Rand (but then this was the area of most intense industrialisation). However, there is evidence of a more broadly-based trade union response to secondary industrialisation. Similar unions - for example, a Garment Workers Union - were formed in the Cape. In Natal, by 1928, Indian Workers had organised unions in the printing, furniture, garment, leather, tobacco, liquor and catering trades. Also in the Cape, the remnants of the ICU formed into the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Federation comprising African and Coloured unions.

In dealing with the 'new unionism' as an 'inter racial' phenomena, this essay has tried to suggest that within one section of the working class - namely, those employed in secondary industry - there was considerable overlap of functions within the labour process between different racial groups. It is further suggested that, at the economic level, the class determination of this section of the working class was not affected by racial categories, and that, therefore, a basis for inter-racial class alliance existed. (In secondary industry at least, White workers remained productive, and had not yet come to perform the 'global role of capital'). Contemporary communists certainly believed this to be the case, and the incidence of joint strike ac-

tion by black and white workers seemed to substantiate this view.

In May 1928, 400 white workers (75% women) from Germiston's 3 clothing factories struck over the victimisation of 3 workers. The Native Clothing Workers' Union, which was 100% strong in Germiston, offered to bring its members out in support. Some 120 African workers struck in solidarity. As a result of the strike the 3 dismissed workers were reinstated. However, only a week or two later, the white workers failed to assist black workers in a similar dispute, involving the dismissal of a black. In this case the Chairman and Secretary of the Clothing Workers' Union, Gana Makabeni and Thebidi, and four others were charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act, whilst 75 of the strikers were charged under the Masters' and Servants' Law, and each sentenced to 10 days imprisonment, or a fine of £1. There were other examples of inter-racial solidarity. In 1928, the African workers at the Ideal Laundry struck in support of a white woman employee who had been victimised. In 1929, a mutual defence pact was agreed between the African Furniture Workers' Union and the white union. The pact was observed by African workers in October, but in November during a strike of 200 African and Coloured mattress makers, the white workers scabbed. The left-wing leadership of white unions contemplated resigning in disgust over the incident.

Despite the backwardness of white workers, there is evidence of genuine inter-racial solidarity. This showed itself in terms of trade union organisation when the garment, leather, furniture and canvas unions dropped their colour-bar against Coloureds and Indians. It might be argued that this was in order to absorb the threat which they represented to the position of white workers in these industries. Even so, those who were admitted certainly benefited from membership of the trade union. Furthermore, the GWU and the Furniture Workers' Union held joint meetings with their African parallels, whilst the European and African laundry workers unions actually both affiliated to a joint executive committee. Although mixed trade

unions (i.e. admitting Coloureds) had existed for many years in the Cape, these activities marked a major breakthrough on the Rand, and it might be argued that this contributed towards the beginnings of a more 'enlightened' racial policy on the part of the TUC. In 1929 SATUC recommended to its affiliated unions "the enrolment of all employees in their respective unions, irrespective of race or colour.....or, alternatively, that a policy of parallel branches in the unions be adopted." 13

The 'new unions' revived the techniques of industrial militancy, which had lain dormant since 1922. Evidence of the militancy of the new unions has already been given. The GWU, for instance, led over 100 strikes, 2 of which brought the entire industry to a standstill, between 1928 and 1932. Although the union was later to make full use of conciliation machinery, Sachs maintained that the strike weapon should never be given up.

Enough has been said already to demonstrate the significance of the 'new unionism'. But it might be argued in the last analysis, the movement was a failure. The women's unions were short-lived. The African unions virtually all collapsed within a few years. The continued growth of the GWU, the Furniture Workers' and Leatherworkers' unions provides much clearer evidence of continuity and success. These unions were to provide the backbone of the Left within the trade union movement. However, even the African unions did not completely disappear - Makabeni's Clothing union survived, the Laundry Workers' Union was later revived by Max Gordon - whilst attempts to recruit women workers, in such industries as sweetmaking and tobacco were revived. In fact the Waitresses' Union continued to exist as a subsection of the Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Union. Furthermore, the NEC of SATUC continued to represent the interests of sweetworkers to the Wage Board after the demise of their union. The latter union was later revived by Mr E.V. Spark with the help of SATUC.

Most important, during these years, there emerged a group of trade union organisers whose influence was to continue to be felt for two decades. The group

included names such as Sashes, Weinbson, Merkel and Kalk, from the white trade union movement; La Guma, who helped organise unions in the Cape during the 1930's,¹⁴ Moses Kotane and Gana Makabeni, both workers, who were destined to play a leading role in the revival of African trade unionism during the late 1930's and the war years. The impact of the 'new unionism' is best demonstrated at the Cape Conference held jointly by the Cape Federation of Labour Unions and SATUC in 1930, which resulted in the formation of the Trades and Labour Council, specifically on a non-racial basis. The new unions were beginning to change the balance of forces within the labour movement.

FOOTNOTES:

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INDUSTRIAL DECENTRALIZATION, JOBS AND WAGES

by Keith Gottschalk

INTRODUCTION

Industrial decentralization policies have been carried out by governments representing diverse ideologies and interests, from the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom, to the Communist Party of the Chinese People's Republic.

These differing versions of industrial decentralization share in common one aim: to raise the living standards of persons in the least-developed regions of those countries. The South African Government claims that its industrial decentralization programme is a positive aspect of its apartheid policy, helping to "develop the Bantu peoples".

This note has two aims: to collate some of the known facts about industrial decentralization, and offer some preliminary conclusions for future researchers to investigate further.

INDUSTRIAL DECENTRALIZATION IN THE
CONTEXT OF APARTHEID

a) Impact on the Expansion of Employment

The South African Government's industrial decentralization programme differs from those in other countries in that it is an integral component of its apartheid policy, with two main prongs:

- i) preventing new jobs from becoming available to African workers in the industrial conurbations, by using its powers under various enabling statutes, especially the Environmental Planning Act (nee Physical Planning and Utilization of Natural Resources Act), 88/1967;
- ii) offering private investors extensive and diverse concessions (subsidised by tax-payers) to establish or re-locate factories as "border industries" in the white-owned peripheries of the statutory "Bantu homelands" (nee reserves) or in "economic growth points", viz. small towns both within the now renamed reserves, and the white-owned countryside.

The net result has been a serious *decrease* in new employment opportunities for African workers.¹ In 1968 for example, the first full year the Government enforced its powers under the Physical Planning Act, the Government prohibited entrepreneurs from building and expanding factories which would have employed another 15 355 African workers in the industrial conurbations. During the same period only 5 000 new jobs were created in "border areas".²

Subsequent official statistics have been conflicting, or undetailed aggregates, or covering heavily overlapping but not precisely identical periods. We know, however, that between January 1968 and January 1972 the Government refused permission to employers to hire another 52 218 African workers in the industrial conurbations; and that the Minister of Labour proudly told white voters that by 1969 the Government had used other powers to reject applications to have new industrial zones proclaimed, and imposed restrictions upon the use of existing industrial sites which resulted in preventing another 220 000 African workers being employed. During virtually the same period (January 1968 to December 1971) only 29 500 jobs were created for African workers in border industries.³

From January 1968 to January 1976 the Government had prevented the employment of 92 000 African workers in the industrial centres by its Environmental Planning Act vetos. Between January 1968 and December 1975 the Government had created or assisted 82 183 jobs for African workers in border industries.⁴ It is not known how many more than 220 000 jobs for African workers had by this date been prevented by State proscription of municipal applications for re-zoning land for industry.

The Government's own incomplete statistics would give us, on paper, a ratio of 3,1 jobs vetoed for African workers in 1968 for every job created, and 9,2 jobs blocked for every one job created for African workers during the first five years of its "industrial decentralization". How close such a paper ratio approaches to the actual situation would depend on information the Government has not yet re-

leased:

- * what proportion of "new" jobs created in border industries are in fact new, and what proportion merely existing jobs relocated?⁵
- * how many employers whose applications for larger quotas of African workers were rejected subsequently re-applied and had such a quota granted by either hiring more Non-African workers in addition, or other legal manipulation?
- * how many employers, refused permission to hire more African workers, simply went ahead and hired them illegally?
- * whether employers would have hired every additional African worker they applied for, or were in some instances testing official reaction; and conversely how many employers, learning of others' refusals, did not apply at all for permission to hire more African workers⁶, but hired more Non-African workers, increased automation, or switched to other forms of investment or speculation?
- * what was the negative multiplier effect of the above on service and other jobs for African workers?
- * what proportion of new jobs created in "border areas" would have been created there anyway, in the absence of government aid or the Physical Planning Act vetos?

Further research is needed to quantify these factors. But whatever the precise ratio, it appears clear that the Government's "industrial decentralization" programme destroys far more new jobs than it creates.

b) Impact on Wages

Wages and other employment conditions are detrimentally affected as well. Every potential job vetoed in the industrial centres means one African worker less has his pass stamped to permit him or

her to be employed in those towns. Thus forced to seek employment locally in "border industries", African workers fall prey to the worse terms of employment the Government permits "border industries" to offer: fewer holidays, less paid sick leave, five more working hours per week, and lower wages. In 1970 one job in border industries was paid only 29% of the then current Johannesburg wage for the same job.⁷

In that year 61 658 "superfluous appendages" (African women and children, the aged and invalid) were endorsed out of the towns⁸ to burden their relatives in the reserves, so increasing the pressure on African work-seekers to submit to employment on any terms.

At the beginning of this decade, examples of wages offered in these "border areas" and "economic growth points" included catering jobs at the Government's Turfloop University for R7 per month; African women workers employed at a Potgietersrus factory for R6 per month, and a sisal processing plant near one Ciskei "resettlement township" which obtained enough African workers by offering a wage of R5 a month.⁹

In 1974 East London, a "border industry" area, had minimum wages gazetted on average one-third lower than wages for the same jobs in Port Elizabeth, though the cost-of-living is virtually the same in both towns. Unskilled workers in East London factories were paid in nearly every case below R20 per week, in some cases only R8 per week. African women workers suffered under the cumulative impact of race and sex discrimination, their wages being still lower than those of African men workers doing the same job.¹⁰

Clothing workers in Babelegi "border industry" factories started at R5 per week in 1975, while even qualified machinists with three years experience were paid merely R10-11 per week - nearly 50% lower than the current wages in Johannesburg.¹¹

An authoritative official source gave the *average*

wages of African unskilled workers in border industries in 1974 as:¹²

	BORDER INDUSTRY WAGES IN RANDB:			AVERAGE ANNUAL LEAVE IN DAYS
	PER HOUR	PER WEEK	PER MONTH	
Brits		9-00		21
East London		10/11-00		14
Kimberley		8-65		17
Kingwilliamstown	20/25c			21
Ladysmith		8-00		12
Newcastle			40/90-00	14
Phalaborwa			40-00	14
Pietersburg		7-00		10
Potgietersrus		6-50		14
Richard's Bay	17c			14
Rustenburg		8-00		15

Operatives, artisans and engineers naturally receive higher wages. These jobs are fewer than unskilled jobs in border industries factories, and a smaller proportion of the workers filling them are African, due to not only massive state discrimination in education expenditure between Black and White per pupil, but also to the fact that job reservation has not extended to a range of jobs in some "border industry" areas.¹³ Further as African workers are promoted into semi-skilled and white-collar jobs, prevailing managerial practice is to drastically reduce these jobs' wages to a fraction of their formal levels.

The managing director and public relations officer of the Bantu Investment Corporation are among the editors of a companion publication to the one cited above. This large, glossy-paged volume gives the average African weekly wages at "economic growth points" inside the "Bantu Homelands" as:¹⁴

"GROWTH POINT"	AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE
Babele	R 7-00
Butterworth	7-00
Isithebe	7-00
Letaba	7-80

"GROWTH POINT"	AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE
Montshiwa	R7-80
Seshego	7-80
Umtata	7-80
Witzieshoek	7-80

The Government's termination of all minimum wage legislation for African workers inside the reserves from 1970 onwards has not been without effect.¹⁵ The granting of constitutional independence to the Transkei has not so far substantially altered the average wages in Butterworth and Umtata.

Further, such depressed wage levels now have repercussions on wages paid to black workers in the industrial conurbations. In at least one round of collective bargaining, the employers argued that they could not afford wage rises for African, Coloured and Indian workers due to undercutting competition from sweated labour in "border industries".

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The South African Government's variant of industrial decentralization is an integral component of its pass laws and apartheid policy. This industrial decentralization programme has:-

- i) seriously reduced the number of new jobs created for African workers; and
- ii) severely depressed wage levels in an increasing proportion of the new jobs it permits to be offered to African workers - jobs at "economic growth points" and "border area industries" already account for over 12% of manufacturing employment.¹⁷ African workers in these areas are denied the option of seeking jobs at higher wages in the major conurbations, unlike workers in other countries with industrial decentralization programmes.

The purpose of this policy may lie in reconciling conflicts of interest between pressure-groups supporting the governing National Party. It enables the Government to preserve a sliding colour bar in existing industrial conurbations for artisans

and other white blue-collar employees, thus preserving their electoral support for the Government. Simultaneously it compensates businessmen for job reservation by offering them new investment opportunities at "growth points" with less colour bar, still cheaper black labour, cheaper credit and tender preferences.

Available to all white businessmen, industrial decentralization is applied to as to benefit especially Afrikaner entrepreneurs. Controlling shareholdings are exceptionally interlocking in South African corporations; additionally East London, Kingwilliamstown, Hammarsdale and Richard's Bay are designated "growth points".

Nevertheless, two-thirds of job relocations are from Johannesburg (an opposition-controlled municipal council) to other Reef towns¹⁸, (almost all Nationalist controlled). Cape Town and Johannesburg businessmen (largely opposition party supporting) are hindered by maximum labour quotas under the Physical Planning Act, They, and Durban businessmen, are also subject to pass law restrictions on their employment plans. But industrial decentralization as applied does raise land values, and create investment opportunities and servicing sub-contracts in mostly Afrikaner country towns with Nationalist controlled municipalities. State corporations, employing managerial personnel overwhelmingly Afrikaner, are more in evidence in "border areas" and "growth points" than in the major conurbations.

Industrial decentralization, as applied, helps ensure that the Afrikaner segment of the entrepreneurial class remains organised in separate *sakekamers* and *handelsinstitute*, and continues its political support for the National Party instead of breaking away *en masse* to affiliate to the FCI and Chambers of Commerce and transfer its political allegiance to the Opposition parties.

So the Government's industrial decentralization programme is a manipulation of South Africa's economy to hold together politically conflicting interest groups within the ruling Afrikaner Nationalist al-

liance. Its benefits flow to the ruling class; its costs are suffered by black workers.

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AND THE TRANSVAAL CLOTHING INDUSTRY

By Erica Emdon

Since 1974, the Environment Planning Act has come to act as a serious constraint on the Clothing Industry in the Transvaal. It is a perpetual threat promising the possibility of prosecution or more serious still, closure.

The main victims of the Act have been the numerous small and middle sized clothing firms in the Witwatersrand, Pretoria and Vereeniging complex. Durban is exempt from the Act as it is considered by the Act as having the same status as a border area. Because in a border area there is no restriction as to the amount of Blacks employed by industry, or the ratio of such Blacks to Whites, Durban and Pinetown firms can freely employ any number of workers they wish.

The Western Cape area and Port Elizabeth region (E. Cape) are regarded as Coloured Preference areas. In Coloured preference areas Coloured labour is employed in preference to Black labour. If unemployment among coloureds is below 2% and the figure is therefore negligible, firms applying to hire Black labour are almost always granted permission. In the Western Cape this has invariably been the case, hence the lack of prosecutions and harassment in terms of the Act.

In Port Elizabeth, on the other hand the situation has been different. Because of the state of the motor industry and other related factors, Coloured unemployment has been and is rising. If it rises above 2%, firms applying for increases in Black labour are refused permission. Thus rising unemployment amongst coloureds has the effect of creating conditions of more serious unemployment among Blacks. In Port Elizabeth there were two prosecutions in 1976, but it seems that since November the situation has become more serious with rising unemployment. More prosecutions are to be expected in 1977.

The reason why the Clothing Industry has been singled out for attack is difficult to answer. A tenta-

tive reason which has been forwarded by various members of the National Union of Clothing Workers and the Garment Workers Union is that the Union for Black workers in the Clothing Industry is so strongly organised and poses such a threat to the government that the government is somehow retaliating by implementing the Act in the Clothing Industry and thereby weakening the strength of the Union by causing its members to be retrenched.

However, as Jimmy Thomas, the secretary of the Industrial Council for Clothing says, "the existence of a black union in our industry might be a contributing factor but it is not a major". He feels that since 1951, with the Tomlinson Commission report, the Clothing Industry has been earmarked for decentralisation. This, he says, is because the industry has a high concentration of Black labour and relative to other industries is less site-bound. These reasons are obviously more substantial ones and help far more in establishing why the Clothing Industry has been the target of the Act.

THE ACT AND THE RATIONALE BEHIND IT:

The Act was first passed in 1967 and was called the Physical Planning Act. Its main purpose seemed to be to encourage decentralisation. However, it was not until after it was amended in 1974 to the Environment Planning Act that it gained some weight. It was the later legislation which provided for an inspectorate whose sole task was to police the act that gave the act the forcefulness which it now has.

The main section which concerns us is Section 3 of the Act. This section details how when a factory is established by employing "Bantu" labour or needs to be extended, written permission must be obtained from the Minister. The extension of a factory is defined by the Act as meaning an increased number of "Bantu" workers. Thus when an industrial set-up wishes to increase its number of employees it has to have the written approval of the Minister.

This does not apply to all areas in the country but to certain Magisterial Districts which were set up under the Act. In the Transvaal, the Pretoria, Wit-

watersrand and Vereeniging (PWV) complex is a controlled area and thus in terms of the Act, whenever an enterprise wished to increase its complement of "Bantu" labour over and above the number employed at January, 1968, it had to apply to the Minister for permission. As mentioned earlier, Durban is excluded and is not a controlled area.

If there were a sound economic motive behind the Act, it would operate in a similar manner to decentralisation policy in any other capitalist economy. Usually in a capitalist economy there comes a time when the urban areas are too overcrowded or overdeveloped. Also problems such as rural unemployment need to be curtailed. The normal course of action which the government of such a country takes is to provide economic attractions for decentralisation such as less tax and so forth. In this area South Africa approaches the norm. The reason why it is necessary to provide concessions is that in the short term decentralisation is not attractive to industry and hence government must cushion short term hardship in order for the overall long term benefits of decentralisation to be felt.

However, the way in which the Environmental Planning Act is being implemented is at odds with the kind of economic motives just discussed. Because it is applied so harshly in the Transvaal, and is applied with the same weight to small and large firms, it makes it impossible for the right type of firms to decentralise. The size of factories in the Transvaal is in general small, employing an average of about 80 workers. Only firms employing an average of 500 or more workers could, from a practical and economic point of view, seriously contemplate decentralisation. Normally the trend is for labour intensive firms to decentralise as this combats rural unemployment, and because it is cheaper to decentralise. However, in the Clothing Industry the only firms which can afford to decentralise are capital intensive firms which are usually the large multinationals. Furthermore, the acute shortage of skilled labour in the clothing industry along with a shortage of middle-management personnel makes decentralisation even more

difficult to envisage.

The labour-intensive firms are mainly small (\pm 50 workers) and cannot decentralise. By clamping down on these firms the Government restricts their ability to generate capital sufficient to decentralise. Only by being free to expand in the urban areas to a stage where sufficient capital can be generated to decentralise can the labour intensive firms contemplate moving. Decentralisation is meant to spill over from urban development but the Environmental Planning Act restricts urban development itself, by debarring the employment of additional "Bantu" workers.

The official motivation for the Act is to "encourage" decentralisation to border areas. It can be argued that this seemingly rational economic motive is in fact a smokescreen for a piece of legislation with no sound economic motive totally bound up with the ideological framework of apartheid.

It will become clearer, by looking at the actual way in which the Act has operated, how ideological the motivations behind the Act actually are.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACT AND THE EFFECT

OF ACT ON CLOTHING INDUSTRY

*(Interview with J. Thomas:
Secretary Industrial Council
for Transvaal Clothing
Industry.)*

The way in which the Act has affected various firms in the Transvaal has differed markedly. The worst effect the implementation of the Act has had is to force certain enterprises to close down. Three factories, Solson Clothing, Chilton Bond and Rosalind, who were under the same ownership, closed in 1976. The reason why they were forced to close down was because they moved premises which entailed putting in a new application for a quota. The application was refused and without Black labour these factories could not continue.

Firms which have not closed down have had to exist in such an insecure environment that often contingency arrangements have had to be made. Some firms have partially decentralised by moving towards Indian and Coloured areas such as Nacefield in the hope of gaining a priority on Indian and Coloured labour to make up for the enforced shortage of Black workers. However, they found they still could not complete their quotas as Indian and Coloured workers were moving away from the clothing industry to shops and offices or to more highly paid industries.

Obviously, those firms who can actually fully decentralise are able to more or less escape the adverse effects of the Act. However, decentralisation proper requires that the enterprises concerned are large enough to be able to afford to decentralise. Only eleven firms in the Transvaal have been in such a position, two of which are Henochsbergs and Springbok Clothing. It seems unlikely that others will follow.

Some firms which have been lucky enough not to have had to close, but which have not been able to decentralise, have operated as usual within the confines of the law. However, severe restrictions to their operations have been experienced. Firms who in 1968 functioned with a quota of 75 Blacks to 150 Coloureds and Whites now still employ 75 Blacks but the Coloureds and Whites have moved elsewhere. This means there can be no expansion and they grow smaller by the day. Some firms have found loopholes through the law which have been facilitated because of the fact that a concern may constitute itself as a wholesaler and a factory (cut, make and trim). Nevertheless, in general, law-abiding firms cannot hope to expand.

Finally some firms which have transgressed the law have actually been faced with prosecution. One firm, Pretoria Underwear Manufacturers paid admission of guilt fine in May, 1976. One factory, Venus Knitting was brought to court in 1976 and acquitted over a technicality to do with the fact that a quota could not be determined since it had not been established in 1968. The National Clothing was acquitted of charges in September over the

definition of the word "Bantu" in the Act. The word "Bantu" was not defined in the Act and the ordinary meaning was considered too wide. Six other firms in the Transvaal had charges against them dropped because of the case. However, the case has not acted as a precedent, for a firm, Pelt Products, has just been prosecuted in Port Elizabeth on the same technicality.

Towards the end of 1976, the Transvaal entered a period of amnesty after one year in which the industry was repeatedly bombarded by prosecutions or the threat thereof. After representations by the Industry to the Minister of Planning, it was announced that a survey would be conducted by the Department of Planning to examine employment patterns before more prosecutions would take place.

Also exemptions were given to firms before October 31st who were contravening the Act. Smaller firms which could not decentralise, it was said, would be treated more leniently.

CONCLUSION

A situation is being created in the Clothing Industry in the Transvaal where there is a growing artificial shortage of Coloured and White labour amongst a plentitude of untapped Black labour. Because clothing firms cannot increase operations or enlarge their premises and get more Black workers except with special permission, the clothing industry is unable to expand and create new jobs for Blacks. In the Transvaal, the industry only grew 2% compared to a growth of 98,4% in the Western Cape and 112,5% in Durban, from 1968-1972.

Along with this tiny growth is the fact that Coloureds are moving out of the clothing industry to other industries and to shops and offices, while White skilled workers in the industry are in dire shortage. Because of the Act, Blacks cannot be employed in place of these workers as it would be violation of the quota.

Obviously such a situation contributes to the growing unemployment problem, estimated by the Finance Minister to be increasing to 10 000 a month.