

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

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COMMENT

IS THERE A CRISIS?

Is there an international economic crisis or isn't there? Nobody seems to agree. Some economists argue that the worst is now over, that inflation is coming under control in most countries, and that unemployment rates will soon begin to fall as economies begin to pick up again. Is this true? Over the past few years we have been shown as much light at the end of the economic tunnel as the US generals saw in Ten years in Vietnam. Many economists dispute these more optimistic predictions. Some of them go so far as to say that even temporary respite is unlikely. But most of the critics argue that what is more likely is a temporary recovery followed by an even worse bout of inflation and a worse crisis.

We do not know what the answer is. There may even be light at the end of that tunnel. But one thing is certain; that those economists who act as government advisers and who lay down economic orthodoxy in Western Europe and the US did not foresee the present crisis. In a recent article entitled "The end of the Technocrats" in the influential French daily *Le Monde*, Roger-Gerard Schwartzenberg comments:

"The technocrats saw nothing and predicted nothing. Today faced with the rising tide of economic perils, they are adding indolence to lack of foresight. They hesitate, they stumble, they idle along, instead of reflecting and acting urgently to attempt to master the fundamental causes of the crisis."

Let us hope that Schwartzenberg is wrong, and that main-stream economists are being a little more active in reworking their theories than he suggests. But meanwhile it is worth considering the possibility that the inadequacy of their economic theories come from the neglect of the social and political dimensions of economic activity. Schwartzenberg makes the following very interesting analysis of the problem:

"The 'consumer society' is transforming itself into the inflating society, because it uses all available means to stimulate demand, and obliges everybody to engage in forced consumption. For consumption has a symbolic function. It becomes a 'sign', a factor of prestige.

To consume is to affirm oneself. It is to exist. I consume therefore I am. This is Thorsten Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption'. To publicly consume costly and ever renewed objects is to demonstrate to everyone one's monetary power, and so to situate oneself on the social scale. Hence social inequality accentuates this race for purchases, in a tide which drags everybody along with it. Each category wishes to align itself with the category above. Thus the consumption of the better-off frustrates the less well off, who wish to buy more goods. Inequality frustrates these desires, and so the market demand.

This strong demand inflation is thus the mark of a 'consumer society', and of an unequal society. It cannot be slowed down without energetically reducing the gaps in the standard of living and without redirecting growth in the direction recommended by M. Mansholt and by others. That is to say, by moderating the continually increasing consumption of material goods which are often of little use and durability, and by encouraging the satisfaction of non-material demands: health, culture, conditions of life etc.

To this end we must develop that collective equipment which is too often sacrificed: hospitals, cultural centres, museums etc. The state attempts to fight inflationary tendencies by budgetary policies. And in the budget the only flexible element, on the expenses side, is the volume of public investments.

From this there arises a *vicious circle*. Inflation slows down public investments, while it is such investments which could have an anti-inflationist effect, by improving the quality of life, and by offering the possibility of collective consumption which would reduce the expenses of escape (weekends) and of compensation (gadgets). For the race for individual consumption is often only a palliative to compensate for the limitations of the

technological universe.

In short, to satisfy real needs (health, culture, conditions of life) instead of artificially stimulating demands, is not only to increase the 'gross national happiness', it is also to clean up the economy. Basically, when the fringe groups contest the consumer society and inequality, they contribute to the real fight against inflation; a fight which attacks the causes of the ill, not its consequences. In this respect they are more lucid and more effective than our technocrats".

There seems to be a great deal of common sense in this kind of approach, which also helps to illuminate the relation between economic crisis and the political problems facing such countries as Britain, Italy and Portugal. It makes it clear that it is simply ridiculous to blame the whole thing on the trade unions. The trade unions are merely expressing the frustrations of their members, and in fact the leadership usually lags behind the membership when it comes to militancy. The solution to the problem cannot lie in an attempt to impose state control on union activity. This will push the conflict into other channels, and will probably make things worse rather than better.

The problem can in fact, only be solved by reducing the economic and political inequalities which still characterise advanced capitalist societies. This will mean giving workers and their trade unions more rather than fewer powers. It will mean extending the democratic control by workers over what happens to the product of their labour. Policies of this kind are already put into practice, both by government intervention and by direct agreement between management, owners and workers. In Britain the partial state take-over of British Leyland includes an increasing role for the unions in deciding company policy. (We hope to publish an article on this shortly). In Italy, a remarkable agreement signed by Fiat and the metal workers union (FLM) also reflects the extent to which workers threatened by unemployment are beginning

to demand and obtain increased control over employment and investment policy. As the danger of bankruptcies and unemployment increases, unions are demanding more control over employment policies. The Fiat agreement in essence give the trade union the right to redesign the firm in order to maintain employment in spite of the production crisis.

Fiat management has agreed not to dismiss any workers in 1975. After an extra 13 day end of year closure, on 93% pay, normal production began again in January. There will be a progressive reduction in overtime to do away with the situation whereby workers in the tractor section work overtime while those in automobiles are being laid off. The trade union will join the management in planning new investment programmes for Southern Italy, which is relatively underdeveloped, and so most affected by unemployment. The union will also take part in planning a programme of product diversification, and in re-organising work flow in the existing work plants. The union will be provided with all relevant commercial information so that they can take part in planning production.

Such wide powers in an unstable social situation could be dangerous, of course. If the situation deteriorates even further, the union might find itself simply having to share responsibility for sacking workers. The crisis is a national problem, as well as an industrial problem. National policies might conflict with those chosen by the union, and so make its position untenable. But the new agreement could also be part of a breakthrough on the national level. By accepting the principle that workers have the right to control the investment decisions that affect their jobs, it implies a different social role for workers and trade unions.

PROHIBITION ON FURNISHING OF INFORMATION

The following is the text of Section 2 of the General Law Amendment Act No. 94 of 1974:

Prohibition of furnishing of information as to business carried on in or outside the Republic, in compliance with order, direction or letters of request issued or emanating from outside the Republic.

- 1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any law or legal rule, and except with the permission of the Minister of Economic Affairs, no person shall in compliance with any order, direction or letters of request issued or emanating from outside the Republic, furnish any information as to any business, whether carried on in or outside the Republic.
- 2) The permission contemplated in subsection (1) may -
 - a) be granted either by notice in the *Gazette* or by written authority addressed to a particular person;
 - b) be granted subject to such conditions as the said Minister may deem fit;
 - c) relate only to specified goods or businesses or classes of goods or businesses or to orders, directions or letters of request issued in a specified country;
 - d) if it is granted by notice in the *Gazette*, relate only to specified persons or classes of persons.
- 3) Any person who contravenes the provisions of the subsection (1) shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction liable to a fine not exceeding two thousand rand or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

This means that no information about any business activity in South Africa may be furnished at the request of anybody from outside South Africa, except with the permission of the Minister. This prohibition is so broad that it is difficult to know what it will mean in practice. Firstly, it is important to note that it only rules out providing information *on request* or order. It does not make it illegal to provide information voluntarily. In fact if it did make it illegal to give information voluntarily, it would make it impossible to print any business news

in any South African newspaper. So it would seem that one can publish or provide information as long as nobody has specifically asked for it.

When introducing the measure the Minister of Economic Affairs said that it was designed to protect De Beers executives against pending anti-trust action in the United States. However, it has since become clear that something more than this was intended. In a recent statement a spokesman for the Department of Commerce said:

"S.A. refuses to submit to the kind of inquisition implied by the House of Commons sub-committee White Paper published towards the end of last year which calls the U.K. companies with S.A. operations to incorporate all sorts of information about their S.A. interests in their annual statements. We will not stand for that sort of thing." (Financial Mail - 16 May 1975).

A directive from the same department clarifies the point somewhat further:

"Care should be exercised when information is requested by a foreign principal from a person over whom the law in South Africa has jurisdiction if the information is not normally supplied or not normally required by the foreign principal to conduct its business."

All this seems to mean that the sort of information normally required by businessmen in the normal course of business will be permitted to flow, but that permission will not be given in the case of any other kind of organisation or person.

At first sight this would seem to be a clever move by the S.A. government to prevent embarrassing facts about working conditions in S.A. reaching the outside world. But in reality it is short sighted and stupid. The attempt to conceal the facts will probably create even more suspicion of the South African regime than would the facts themselves. Moreover, the facts regarding wages, profits and working conditions will still become known, and will have the added aura of "contraband" information. In its own interests the S.A. government should end the confusion by amending the law to make it applicable only to the De Beers situation in terms of which the Minister initially justified it.

THE RECORD OF BRITISH FIRMS IN
SOUTH AFRICA : IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

by Martin Legassick.

INTRODUCTION

My primary focus in this paper will be on wage levels in British controlled firms in the light of current British government policy "that it is in the national interest and in the interest of the firms concerned that they should be seen to be following enlightened policies for the welfare of their African workers". This policy is couched in the form of "self-regulation nurtured by publicity"; It consists of recommendatory rather than mandatory measures. Yet the declaration that "we do not intend to remain neutral" (Eric Deakins 13/1/75) constitutes a *political intervention* in British-South African economic relations which logically implies potential for changing the nature of such intervention, as well as inviting constant evaluation of its efficacy.

My particular specialisation and interest also affect this paper. I am not an economist, but an historian and sociologist who has been concerned, inter alia, with the development of the South African political economy. Hence I take my cue from Harry Oppenheimer who said recently that:

"surely there is something silly in discussing the level of wages in (British firms in South Africa) entirely without reference to the historical background, to the level of productivity prevailing, to the standards of education and skills, to the structure of industry and to the state of the labour market". (1)

I shall therefore start and finish by situating the operation of British controlled firms in the context of the South African political economy.

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

There is a prevalent view that the low level of African wages in South Africa was historically and is now determined solely by the "natural" economic fact of an abundance of African labour, without

skills, and emerging from a subsistence sector, offering itself on the market. South Africa is therefore compared in this respect with other underdeveloped societies characterised by "dual" economies. Harry Openheimer, in the already-cited article and elsewhere, has been an influential corporate exponent of such a view, and it is reflected in many firms' evidence to the Trade and Industry Sub-committee investigating wages and conditions of African workers in South Africa (TISC), as well as (to some extent) in the Report of that Committee.

There are general reasons for contesting such a view of "underdevelopment". It implies that all societies pass through stages of economic growth, that the existing state of "underdeveloped" societies is an earlier stage of a movement towards the existing state of "developed" societies. But the structure of "underdeveloped societies" should rather be *seen as new*, as distinct either from developed or non-developed societies; as a structure created with and by the growth of a world economy. There are specific reasons for contesting such a view of underdevelopment in South Africa. Particularly:

- (a) in many aspects it is in itself a developed society and it is invalid to try and separate aspects of it as characterised by "underdevelopment";
- (b) the apparent features of "underdevelopment" are not those of non-development but of a situation shaped by the dominant social forces in South African society, shaped in other words by political power, and racial ideology, as well as the "market".

It is convenient to refer to the complex of political and ideological measures which have shaped the operation of a market as *apartheid*. A recent writer has distinguished in South Africa between those aspects of *apartheid* which function in the interests of white workers, which he calls *job colour bars*, and those operating in the interests of employers, which he calls *exploitation colour bars*.(2) He and others have suggested that *job colour bars* operate flexibly in South Africa. Through their existence, in the form of denying opportunities of occupational mobility to Africans or other blacks, they are an impediment to industrial rationalisation, and hence to economic

growth; whether they are imposed by law or by "custom" (i.e. white trade union power). However, there is considerable evidence that the level of such colour bars has been and is increasingly negotiable. Indians and Coloureds certainly, and to a lesser extent Africans, have "advanced" up the scale of hierarchies, with whites moving ahead of them; sometimes in the context of a redefinition and / or dilution of job content. Certainly these are racialist measures. Equally employers, by and large, express opposition to them, though chiefly, as Harry Oppenheimer pointed out as early as 1950, to their rigidity (such as it was) rather than their existence.(3) But it would be a mistake to confuse the question of wage levels with the question of African advancement and job colour bars, given that Africans constitute (and would do under other circumstances) a majority of the workers at lower rungs of job hierarchies. Their overall standard of living is hence determined not by free occupational mobility, but by the rate of wages on these lower rungs.

This rate of wages, it is argued here, has been determined not by the "dual economy", but by specific political measures over a historical period, by the creation of what a number of analysts have called a *forced labour economy*. This does not mean that market forces do not operate, but that they are constrained in special ways by institutions whose effect is to create and reproduce an African population highly vulnerable to economic exploitation. (4) As J.L. Sadie, a leading pro-government South African economist has written, measures of racial legislation have "reinforced the market forces conducive to economic growth however inequitable some of them might appear to be".(5) The effect of this powerlessness and vulnerability has been to compel Africans to work at extremely low wage levels.

Thus, the vast majority of Africans have had, and continue to, work and live on incomes that are below the Poverty Datum Line, which "measures" the bare starvation minimum for existence, the minimum wage at which the labour force can be reproduced.

This complex of measures of *apartheid* has secured growth in South Africa on the basis of what a num-

ber of companies giving evidence to TISC called a "cheap labour" economy. If this means, as Charles Harvey has written, that the black labour force in South Africa exhibits many of the characteristics of labour forces in much less developed countries"(6) this is the *consequence of apartheid*. The question therefore posed to British companies appears to be that asked by Mark Hughes of Lord Stokes in TISC:

Lord Stokes : I have been brought up in this country for the last 40 years having to live with custom and practice and therefore I have got to live with it in South Africa.

Hughes : Would it be a totally unfair follow-up to that to suggest that had your business been in cotton in the Southern States of the United States in the early nineteenth century where custom and practice involved slavery, you would have accepted this as an inevitable fact of life?

Lord Stokes : I think that that is an unfair and unwarranted suggestion and quite out of the context of this meeting...We are quite proud of what we have done in South Africa...

Hughes : You see, custom and practice become offensive at a certain point?

Lord Stokes : I do not think our custom and practice has become offensive to anybody, so I do not think your question was quite warranted.

Hughes: The custom and practice of the country may become offensive?

Lord Stokes : We are trying to make sure... that we are working with good will to try and improve the conditions of employment of all the people we employ in South Africa...We have to do that within the limit of the economic parameters that are open to us (I, 148-9).

In fact, however, the assumptions behind this line of questioning are not quite correct. For the implication is that British companies are at best tolerating, accepting, or acquiescing in "offensive"

customs and practices, so that pressure may encourage them to exert influence against them. In practice the "cheap labour system" is a result of measures whose formulation and initiation dates from an era of British rule in South Africa in the interests of British-controlled capital. Research shows ever more strongly that the roots of apartheid, the modern system of racial differentiation and discrimination in South Africa, can be located in post-Boer War Reconstruction, in the era of Milner and the Kindergarten, who governed in the interests of maximising the profitability of the gold-mining industry. At that stage at least, there was a congruity between the "customs and practices" established by and within the South African state, and the interests of British firms. Analysis of the pattern of subsequent British investment would support this argument further. The most recent wave of British investment, into manufacturing industry, has built up most sharply in the latter 1950's and 1960's, precisely the period in which the institutions of apartheid have been most effectively "modernised" and strengthened. Decision-making on investment, in other words, had been determined by the effectiveness of South African "customs and practices" in securing a cheap labour system. It has sometimes been argued that the comparative lack of new British investment during the period immediately after 1948 (when the Nationalist government came to power) was a result of moral disapproval or fears for the stability of the new regime. In fact the evidence suggests the reason was the lag in construction of modern infrastructures in South Africa (transport, electric power, etc.) This was made good through large-scale loans to South Africa from British and other Western sources; and from the World Bank, which up to 1967/8 had loaned South Africa 250 million dollars, far more than to any other African country. In short, British-controlled firms are part and parcel of the South African system, historically creators of, and contemporarily primary beneficiaries of, the complex of institutions of racial discrimination.

THE RECENT RECORD OF BRITISH FIRMS: WAGES

"The majority of British companies in South Africa are paying substantial numbers of their African workers below officially recognised subsistence levels" was the lead sentence in Adam Raphael's first article (Guardian 12/3/73). Has the position changed? In particular, has the position changed *as a result of the current stance of the British government*: "self-regulation nurtured by publicity"?

The first point to make is that there exist differing interpretations of the causes of such wage increases as have occurred in the last two years. According to Harry Oppenheimer, they are the consequence of "structural changes in the South African economy" to which industrialists were "anyway adapting themselves, though perhaps more slowly than they should have done" quite apart from any other pressures. These changes are from a labour intensive to capital intensive economy, for which he considers 1970 to be a key date. For many others on the other hand, the *Guardian* exposé and TISC were ultimately a consequence of the wave of black strikes which swept South Africa, and particularly Natal, in January-February 1973. This argument gains support from the fact that previous exposés of low wages (Herbstein, 1971; First et al, 1972) did not have the same impact. However, it is certainly clear that the *Guardian* and TISC itself did stimulate more rapid response. Both Harvey (1974) (TISC, 1,333) and the TISC Report comment on this. Nearly one third of the 141 companies giving evidence to TISC reported an increase awarded in April or May, and on April 19th the TISC letter was sent out requiring submission of information by 18th May. Nearly two thirds reported their most recent increases between January and June 1974.

WAGE INCREASE STATISTICS

What more quantitative figures are there on wages? A survey completed by the South African Productivity and Wage Association for UKSATA in July 1972, and not initially made public, established three facts: (i) the wage picture in British-controlled companies did not differ significantly from that in South African controlled companies; (ii) in

both, some 80% of African employees were being paid below the Poverty Datum Line; (iii) this was likely to be the most favourable end of the picture, for they received a response from only 13% (1086) of 8852 companies approached. The wages represented (approximately) a 10% increase over the previous year. Raphael's more qualitative approach confirmed the situation. Of the 100 British companies he investigated, only Shell, ICI, and Unilever were paying all employees above the Poverty Datum Line, and some were paying between a half and a third of this standard. ICI had made wage increases in January, as had Unilever, and their wage rates' relation to PDL was queried at TISC.

From this time, surveys begin reflecting the impact of the strikes (it would seem). The very unrepresentative UKSATA survey in March 1973 can be qualified by reference to the NMDF survey of the same date. The latter shows black wage increases on average of the order of 20% in the year from March 1972 (though less at the higher grades). A survey conducted by Urwick-UAL, based on 150 000 black employees in 600 industries and commercial companies, showed 20-25% increase (30% in Natal) between August 1972-73 (Financial Mail (FM) 5/10/73). A survey commissioned by the Johannesburg Sunday Times estimated that the average wage of black workers went up by 21.7% (22.7% in manufacturing companies and 19.3% in non-manufacturing). This survey also found that large firms had larger wage increases than smaller firms: 22.7% for firms employing between 501 and 10 000 workers and 14.1% for firms employing less than 25 workers. Earnings figures released in December by the Department of Statistics covering September 1972-73 showed a 25% increase in African manufacturing wages, and a 20% increase in total African wages. The Natal Employers' Association, surveying African wages over a similar period, found a c.20% rise in unskilled wages, but less improvement in rates at higher grades. (FM 14/6/74). Over a roughly similar period, it should also be noted, the wages of African mineworkers also showed substantial increases, at least in Anglo-American's companies. But they started from a much lower base - there had hardly been any real increase in mining

wages since 1911 - and were subject to more bad publicity over a longer time period, as well as to labour pressures from African states supplying workers. Two increases during 1973 meant a rise of 70% in wages within eighteen months to an average wage for the underground worker (more highly paid than the surface worker) of R40 a month.
(FM 7/12/73)

In assessing these figures, however, several factors need to be taken into account:

1) FIGURES FOR MANUFACTURING ONLY.

Many of the figures are for manufacturing industry and account should be taken of African workers not only in mining, but in domestic service, in agriculture, in state employment etc., which are invariably lower absolutely, and likely to have lesser percentage increases. Moreover, the effect of wage increases cannot be assessed outside their effects on the economy as a whole, to which I shall return below.

2) CAN THE LEVEL OF INCREASE BE SUSTAINED?

To what extent can this level of wage increase be sustained? "Self-regulation nurtured by publicity" can hardly sustain the same level of publicity as was promoted by the *Guardian* exposés and the TISC investigation.

The evidence on this is in some senses limited. I have found little substantive evidence on British companies per se (which is where the information held by the DTI might be relevant). Moreover, Harvey (TISC, 1,327) mentions the problems of companies devoting attention to public relations rather than real advances. Such evidence, as I have located, concerns the movement of general wage rates in manufacturing in 1974. However, it is not clear whether one can expect significant deviation by British companies given the following:

- a) the 1972 UKSATA survey showed no significant difference between British-controlled and South African controlled firms;
- b) the firms giving major wage increases during 1973 (Tootal, Courtaulds, Slater Walker, Associated Portland Cement, Metal Box, RTZ) had all been subjected

to exceptionally unfavourable publicity (see on these increases, TISC, V, 32; Guardian 31/12/73);

c) a University of Natal survey of Natal firms which could identify a sub-sample of "progressive" firms "in which opportunities for advancement had been granted to Blacks, in which racial stereotypes appeared to play no part in employment policy, where respondents criticised job reservation, labour laws, and government policy in general etc." showed that the median monthly wage for unskilled labourers in such firms was R46.01, not significantly different statistically from that of all unskilled labourers R44.30). (Schlemmer 1974).

d) a number of firms giving evidence to TISC stressed that they could not move ahead of their competitors in wage terms; for example Marchwiel (I,514,517-518) Tootal (1,550), Armitage Shanks, (II,651), Burmah Oil (III,61), EMI (III,86), British-American Tobacco (IV, 403), A.Cohen (II,621-3), Bestobell, (III,23), GKN (IV,569).

For general manufacturing wage rates in South Africa, there are two surveys. The Urwick-UAL survey reported a slowdown in increases to 5-15% for median wages in the period from September 1973 to June 1974, based on 230,000 black employees in more than 340 companies. (FM 9/8/74). The Natal Chamber of Industries, basing itself on a cross-section of industry employing 15,000 unskilled workers, calculated the average unskilled African's wage increase during the first three quarters of 1974 as 16.59%. (FM 13/12/74). Both these suggest a *slowing down* in the average rate of wage increase.

3) INCREASES AND THE C.O.L. INDEX

To what extent are average and/or minimum wage rates advancing on the cost of living index? Even to reach Poverty Datum Line levels, let alone to reach the "target for minimum wages" (TISC Guidelines) of the Minimum Effective Level, requires substantial advances over the COL index.

As is well known, the S.A. consumer price index (CPI) is calculated on the basis of weightings applicable to whites, specifically for a white family earning R4 600, who are estimated to spend 25% of their income on food. Africans spend a higher proportion

of their income on food (since they have less absolute income) and food prices tend to rise more rapidly than the CPI. Hence COL estimates for Africans should be based on the rise in food prices, or on the rise in PDL estimates. But if the latter, there are still problems: Professor Potgieter of the Institute of Planning Research, Port Elizabeth, and researchers at the University of South Africa, both base PDL calculations on the assumptions that Africans have lower nutritional needs than other people, and that they are engaged in light work! (FM 5/4/74).

During 1973, taking these factors into account, it would seem that the wage increases of 20-25% *barely, if at all, kept ahead of* cost of living increases for Africans. Food prices rose by 20% during 1973. And, even after the publicity of that year, a *Financial Mail* survey of 10 major British companies found that only four could definitely be said to be paying all their workers' basic wages above the PDL. Three were on the border line, while three companies were still paying below PDL levels despite contrary claims to TISC! (FM 7/12/73).

What about 1974? Unless wage increases in British companies moved, in the first nine months of the year, significantly ahead of the average of 15% or less, then it seems that gains in *real* wages are still marginal. For example, a PDL survey in Durban in April suggested that African living costs had already risen there by 11.5% since the start of the year (FM 5/4/74). And the official CPI (with all its under-estimates) has risen by 10% in the first nine months of the year.

4) INCREASE IN THE ABSOLUTE WAGE GAP

Although black wages have, in the past two or three years, increased faster than white (the only previous period when this was so was during the Second World War), the *absolute gap* between black and white earnings still increases. Thus in 1969 the absolute gap between average black and white earnings in manufacturing was R225, and by September 1973 this had increased to R312. (FM 24/1/75). This reflects the differential access to power of white and black workers, and the effects of racialist

ideology. Equally, it is a manifestation of the characteristic pattern of divergence of absolute incomes between unionised and ununionised labour, which can be found in other situations as well.

5) HOW CAN A FAIR WAGE BE GAUGED?

The most fundamental point, however, against which to assess the current increases in African wage levels, is to question the concept of the PDL/MEL itself. Why should the whole debate focus around the Poverty Datum Line or Minimum Effective Level as appropriate criteria against which to measure wages? It is true that such levels, by measuring in literal terms the level of *starvation* wages, nourish moral outrage in so far as wages are found to be below them. That in South Africa the average African wage has habitually been lower than the PDL constitutes just such an outrage, which even arguments about "dual economies" and "abundances of labour" cannot circumvent. Such a situation is, as John Rex has pointed out, in theoretical terms a more extreme form of human degradation than slavery itself. At least the slaveowner regarded his slave as an investment whose productive output should be maximised by prolonging his life.⁽⁷⁾ In contrast, to pay below the PDL is, strictly speaking, a slow form of extermination of one's labour force, made "possible" but hardly palatable by its abundance.

However, one must question the validity of continuing to appraise wage levels in these terms, and in particular the transfer of this benchmark from South Africa (where for bodies like the Institute of Race Relations it has been long-time practice) to Britain, in particular to officially sanctioned "Guidelines" for British companies. For the continued use of this benchmark invites companies or researchers to regard the PDL or the MEL not as *necessary* but as *sufficient* levels for minimum wages, and encourages companies to use progress towards this "goal" as a public relations exercise. Indeed the cynic might suggest that the purpose of the PDL/MEL benchmark is precisely to encourage the payment of wage levels sufficient, but no more, to ensure the reproduction of an African labour force.

What are the alternatives? How, analytically, can a "fair wage" be gauged? How is one to measure the rate and level of exploitation in the wage relationship? Neo-classical orthodoxy gives little guidance on these questions. The United States document equivalent to the British guidelines, issued in February 1973, argues that a fair wage would be higher than the MEL, and suggests its assessment in terms of "productivity and the capabilities of the economy". Harvey makes a rather similar statement:

"Nobody suggests that Lancashire textile workers should be paid at the same level as Pakistani textile workers in Pakistan; Lancashire textile workers earnings are related to British conditions and British ability to pay. (Harvey, 1974)".

But how can one measure "ability to pay" by some criterion independent of what is actually being paid? Is this not simply a circular argument? Can it not lead to an acceptance of the guidance of "market forces" which, under "South African conditions", has consistently generated a sub-subsistence level of African wages?

One alternative, and an insidious one, is suggested in some employers' statements. At present, South African legislation permits a cartel of employers to draw up their own wage structure, submit it to the Minister of Labour, and have it become binding, where there does not exist any wage board or trade union. Under certain circumstances this could become nationalised as the creation of an "objective" wage scale. Thus representatives of Rio Tinto Zinc argued to TISC that they had "a scientific approach", "which we are not yet through, an exercise of categorising the jobs of all the people who work with us, both Africans and Europeans, so that we can get a more scientific assessment of each of these jobs (I,245)".

Quite a number of the submissions to TISC, and, indeed, many of the wage surveys I have quoted - where wage rates are attributed to particular "grades" of skill, show just such an attempt at "objectivity". That is, levels of "skill", become

in some sense *regarded* as the determinants of wages. But some recent research in wage structures in Britain suggests that it is quite impossible in any "scientific" or "objective" way to establish skill hierarchies which can act as the basis of wage determinations. In practice, as one might expect, such skill hierarchies vary from plant to plant. "A job which may in one plant be highly rated in terms of the plant's internal pay hierarchy may in another plant be lowly rated and vice versa".(8) And it may be assumed that the pay hierarchy is in fact determined by plant-specific and unsystematic worker organisation and pressure. This is perhaps the analogy on the micro-level to the macro-level differentiation in wage levels between unionised and ununionised workers. Any attempt to establish a "scientific" system then, must at minimum create a system in which the employees have no determining influence, and is likely to result in an inequitable result.

Another "benchmark" that might be considered was suggested by two submissions to TISC:

"Another simple test of the benevolent intentions of a British firm would be to eschew the fraudulent debate about what the poverty datum line is and to apply to all its South African employees regardless of race, the same earnings criteria as it applies in this country. (II,1011)".

"Hence insofar as the PDL becomes a guide for British companies in South Africa, their wage policies will not be determined by such recognised factors as labour productivity or the equitable distribution of aggregate incomes between wages and profits, i.e. on principles generally applied to the fixing of wage incomes in Britain. (II,1017)".

To take the wage levels in equivalent jobs in Britain as a relevant comparison might seem naive or utopian. Yet in the long run, "equal pay for equal work" on an international basis is the only criterion without an element of racism or neo-colonialism. Certainly, analytic problems would be created in assessing such a benchmark, which has in other situations opened all kinds of evasions. Moreover, as will be argued below, significant rises in wages *are likely* to generate unemployment under present conditions in South Africa.

But if equivalency to Britain is the only morally and analytically sustainable position on wages, then the consequences must be faced, and policy towards British investors in South Africa determined in that light, rather than by half-measures or glosses.

Another position to take is to leave the creation of a benchmark to forces on the spot. As J. Slater testified to TISC:

"Any industrial company in trying to decide how to treat its workers and wage rates normally has two factors it takes into consideration, what is demanded by the trade unions, what it has to pay in order to pay the labour competitively with others. Unfortunately in South Africa both these factors do not exist. (I,402)".

The demands of organised workers constitutes one form of concretising "South African conditions" or "South African ability to pay". However, as already mentioned, African trade unions have operated in the past and continue to operate under effective inhibitions. To what extent has or might this change? What is the attitude of British companies towards African trade unions?

THE RECENT RECORD OF BRITISH COMPANIES:
TRADE UNIONS

As is well known, registered trade unions in South Africa - those recognised by law as able to enter into binding agreements with employers on the basis of collective bargaining through the machinery of industrial councils - are confined in their membership to whites, Coloureds and Indians. Africans may form trade unions, but these may not be recognised or registered, and in practice African unionisation has been severely impeded by harassment and persecution of leaders, organisers and members. Industrial Council agreements can specify wages and conditions for African employees without the views of such persons being represented on the Council (except by a government official). In the case of African employees not covered by Industrial Council agreements, the main instrument for the determination

of wages (besides employers) is the government-appointed Wage Board, which can establish minimum wage levels. From 1953 Africans were permitted to form in factory works committees, though there was no reason for employers to deal with them in any way at all, and the system was not used to any great extent, nor has the amendment of 1973 brought any substantial improvement in African bargaining powers.

There are, however, some African unions in existence. Leaving aside a whole history of earlier suppressed unionisation, such bodies began to grow again in 1972. In 1969 there were reported to be 13 African unions with 16,000 members. By 1974 there were 22 African unions with a membership of 40 000. By May 31st, 1974 there had also been established under the 1973 legislation 1050 liaison and 175 works committees. (FM 19/7/74).

ATTITUDES TO UNIONISATION

Quantitative information on the attitude of British firms to unionisation is hard to find. There is on the one hand evidence for specific British companies. On the other hand there is evidence for samples of South African firms as a whole, leaving problematic the relationship between their position and those of British firms. One survey which posed the question of this relationship records a rather ambiguous answer:

There was no (statistically) significant difference between the apparent attitude of foreign owned firms and their South African owned counterparts to either the formation of African Unions or the Works Committee system. However, despite the lack of significance in the individual tests on firms' attitudes analysed by ownership, if one considers all aspects, one must conclude that foreign firms in general show themselves to be more progressive than the South African firms, as they evidenced greater support for Trade Unions and greater support for Works Committees; in addition a larger proportion of these

firms had actually introduced Works Committees. (9)

Moreover evidence can be of two kinds: on attitudes, or on practice. The first is easier to come by, but in almost every testable case there is a vast discrepancy between attitude and practice. Clearly the choices are (1) no recognition of any channel of communication at all; (2) recognition of a liaison committee; (3) recognition of a works committee; (4) negotiation with an African trade union, despite its lack of legal status. In terms of attitudes, one may express a preference for the situation one has, or for another: e.g. have no channel, and wish for a liaison committee; have a works committee, and be in favour of the legal recognition of trade unions.

The general evidence shows that *in practice* the position is fairly backward. A survey of 92 firms in Natal in 1972, employing 42 000 people, found that only 157 had experience of works committees and 57 experience of African trade unions: "the impression gained was one of very widespread ignorance of the government policy in regard to Works Committees" (Schlemmer, 1974). Fourteen per cent of the sample opposed *any form* of African labour organisation. Yet 68% of this sample favoured Works Committees, and 12% supported registered African trade unions. And, not long after it was conducted, but before the January strikes, the Natal Employers Association voted overwhelmingly in favour of the recognition of trade unions for Africans (FM 1/12/72). Another survey was conducted on a national basis in July-September 1973, including 454 firms from the five major industrial regions (only 282 responded, but this was not statistically significant). 88% of the sample were prepared to accept works committees, but *of these*, only 18% had them in operation. Regional figures were: Transvaal (11%), Eastern Cape (7%), Western Cape (35%) and Natal (just reached 40% from 28%) (Nattrass, 1974). (See also FM 13/4/73). In this case 71% of the sample were counted as favouring African trade unions, but this included those whose response was "indifferent", "inevitable", and "if they are incorporated into white unions". By industrial sector, Clothing and Footwear, Furniture,

Rubber Products, and Chemicals were most "progressive" and Base Metals, Wood, Paper and Paper Products, Printing and Publishing and Metal Products, most "reactionary". A third survey reported in the Guardian (13/5/74) from a "statistically representative" sample of manufacturing and non-manufacturing employers found that only 27% of the former and 13% of the latter operated even liaison committees, and only 15% of the former and less than 5% of the latter had functioning works committees. Yet of this sample 51% were in favour of integrated black and white unions, and 27% in favour of separate black unions.

What this evidence might be taken to indicate is on the one hand caution and conservatism, but on the other hand a growing *division* among businessmen on their attitudes to unionisation. Thus the May 1974 survey found that 43% of businessmen saw the works/liaison committee system established by the 1973 legislation as an *alternative* to black trade unionism, slightly more than those who viewed it as a steppingstone to black unions.

AGAINST UNIONISATION

The views of the former section are perhaps reflected in the statement by the head of Seifsa, an employers' organisation accounting for a third of the labour force in manufacturing: "In this industry there will be no - and you can underline no - negotiations with African trade unions" (FM 21/12/73). The reasons for this are summarised in Schlemmer (1974), on the basis of employers' responses: Works committees allow the restriction of labour issues to those concerning the individual firms (23% of respondents), they are not able to be manipulated by outside persons and groups (11%), they are able to be controlled or influenced by management (9%), they are more democratic than a trade union (5%). Likewise trade unions were perceived to: cause unnecessary trouble, be vulnerable to outside agitators, cause management to have to bear the brunt of problems and malpractices in other firms, be a 'waste of time', develop authoritarian/dictatorial patterns of leadership, be the first step towards Communism, have leaders who

spoke for themselves rather than the workers, be beyond the ability of Africans to run.

FAVOUR SOME FORM OF RECOGNITION

On the other hand there are employers who favour the recognition in some form of Africans as members of unions. It must be stressed that, of these, it is only the tiny few who will actually negotiate as of now with African unions. Transvaal clothing manufacturers, and the British-controlled Smith and Nephew (textiles) are the prime examples. (Cf FM 22/2/74). What are the motivations behind this? It appears to be believed that the "no communication" system has broken down, and that the works/liaison system does not provide an alternative:

Trade unions - are vital to the success with which the Industrial Conciliation Act has long operated in respect of White workers (Editorial, Financial Mail 25/5/73).

South Africa has what is acknowledged as one of the best systems of regulating collective bargaining in the world. We have achieved a measure of labour stability which is the envy of everyone. It seems to me that it would be most unfortunate if we failed to find some way, very quickly, of bringing the Black workers into the orbit of the same successful bargaining procedures. (Mr. Fleming of a Consulting Group, FM 9/3/73).

Black workers are increasingly aware of the power of the strike weapon, and it is quite certain that if better means of settling disputes cannot be evolved, this weapon will be used more and more.

(Harry Oppenheimer, Guardian 30/7/74).

Those firms advocating this position have been increasingly vocal during 1974. The debate within Anglo-American, and the apparent support, however qualified, by a major mining house for the principle of African unionisation marked a significant change: In 1946 African mine workers who struck

were brutally repressed by the police called in by the mining houses. There are signs that government has been rethinking its position on African unionisation. What becomes of crucial concern, therefore, is the character of the unionisation that may (*but only may*) possibly be permitted, since it would determine the structure of collective bargaining, and therefore of African Wage levels, for at least some time to come. One point in this regard is the registration of separate African unions, or the permitting of Africans to join existing registered and white-dominated unions. Clearly the latter choice would seriously diminish African chances of making an assault on the absolute white-black wage gap. It is also ominous that the visits by study teams from Anglo-American and from other mining houses, as well as, recently, by Marais Viljoen, the Minister of Labour, have been to France, Holland, Germany and Japan. "Should the British trade union system be used as a model rather than the Japanese, Dutch or German systems?", asked Oppenheimer rhetorically last year (FM 16/8/74). It is doubtful whether the implications in these models, of a corporate-style union system imposed from above, by employers and state, rather than generated by workers themselves, could be the instrument through which the bargaining power of black labour could be exerted to make significant dents in its share of total output.

There are several other problems about the character of the unionisation potentially involved. One big worry of South African employers has been the potential political character of black trade unions. In the past, indeed, black trade unions have taken on a political role. What else should one expect when the institutions of the South African state continue to operate on the basis of racial differentiation, and *political* measures inhibit the bargaining power of black workers? Moreover, the way of avoiding a political dimension to unions would be to extend equal political rights to Africans on the basis of universal franchise. Finally, since the concern about unionisation seems to apply chiefly to semi-skilled Africans (Cf FM 9/3/73), it is possible that it could serve

to widen the gap between the incomes and interests of such Africans (a minority) and the majority of the African population.

Who are the firms in favour of unionisation? One would expect that it would be the more capital-intensive concerns, less resistant to organised pressure for increasing the cost of labour. However, there are some labour-intensive concerns (some of them very large employers of labour like Premier Milling or South African Breweries) in favour of unions, while large capital-intensive employers (SAPPI, Toyota) support liaison committees. What of British firms? Smith and Nephew are the exception. There appear to be a few others (Premier Milling, Cadbury-Schweppes, Metal Box, Afrox) who are having discussions towards greater "worker participation", whatever this means (FM 30/8 /74). But the bulk of the fragmented evidence, for example that at TISC, suggested that large British firms do not intend to initiate negotiations with African unions or African workers until *government* defines the terms of recognition, if it should. (And the only firms expressing opinions on this question were the minority who gave oral evidence; those giving written evidence might well be less "progressive" especially since many of them, as engineering firms, are members of SEIFSA).

RESISTANCE TO SELF ORGANISATION OF WORKERS

More serious, perhaps, and more immediate, is the actual resistance of British firms to the self-organisation of African workers. In November 1974 workers at Pilkington's struck because of the dismissal of an employee who had been there twelve years. Over three years before the Managing Director of Pilkington's SA told Dennis Herbstein he had no objection to Africans joining a union but:

About three years ago there was an attempted walkout by blacks, but no demands were made on us. We told them if they went through the gate they might not be allowed

back. They didn't go. We sacked an agitator and later found out he was from the African National Congress. (S.Times 18/4/71).

This time they "did go", and on returning to work a day later 22 persons including 8 works committee members were sacked. A charge was initiated against Pilkington's for victimisation, which was withdrawn only when a Supreme Court order reinstated all those dismissed, though under rather stringent restrictions. Fighting the case was only possible because of union-type assistance from outside the factory.

Equally significant is the case of British Leyland. After the passage of the 1973 legislation, African workers at the Durban plant, a majority having joined the Metal and Allied Workers Union, requested of the Department of Labour the recognition of their works committee, while the Union secretary also tried to open communications with management. During that period Lord Stokes was telling TISC that:

"From conversations I have had out there I gather that there are problems in negotiating with them (Africans) because they prefer to discuss vertically as there seem to be various families or groups of people that they like to negotiate with rather than, even if we tried to organise it, with a cross-section; it would not work very well because they have allegiance to various tribal connections. (I, 140)".

Leyland resisted talking with the union, and refused to negotiate with the works committee (as opposed to "communicating" with them), instead trying to foist an unwanted liaison committee onto the workers, bringing in Head Office people and government representatives as persuaders. Workers turned in blank ballots for the liaison committee election and demanded a referendum on representation by MAWU. This was refused, and they struck (while Lord Stokes was in South Africa). Leyland

and the government decided the strike was illegal, and those engaged in it were dismissed. Then there were negotiations with MAWU and apparent agreement on the basis granting *de facto* recognition to in-plant operations of the union. When the men returned to work however, 65 were discharged and paid off, including four of six elected shop stewards, on the pretext of a shortage of supplies due to Leyland strikes in Britain (though those who remained were working excessive overtime!) The position remains the same: and indeed Leyland, which had been contemplating reducing its percentage interests in South Africa, announced last November a £22 million increase in investment in South Africa to acquire interests of minority shareholders. (10)

Dorman Long (associated with British Steel), Scottish Cables, and Sarmcol, have also all refused recognition to the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

BRITISH COMPANY POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

The real advance (in wage levels) will be achieved only in the much longer term, as we progress from the present low-wage labour-intensive economy to a high wage capital-intensive economy.

(Harry Oppenheimer, FM 8/6/73).

The greatest danger facing South Africa is not so much the threat from outside the borders, serious though that may be, but mass unemployment and disturbed race relations.

(Prime Minister Vorster, HAD 14/9/70)

It has been argued that British firms have not been making *significant* advances in black wage levels, nor are they prepared to negotiate with African trade unions which might create the conditions for such advances. At the micro-level, nevertheless, any rise in real wage levels by companies must be compensated for by (a) reduced profits; (b) increased prices; (c) greater volume of output or (d) economising on employment. What has happened at the micro-level is hard to assess systematically. All there is to go by, virtually,

is the evidence of firms to TISC - and this question was one of the few on which some firms giving only written evidence provided unsolicited opinions. However actions rather than attitudes are the crucial test, and it is for this reason that a more rigorous public accountability by British companies would be desirable: one would like to have information from *all* British companies in South Africa (and not just those with the better records) as to the consequences of any rises in wage rates. At the macro-level, there is the question of who is to pay for any rise in black wage levels, which cannot be answered in narrowly economic terms, but rather by examining the structure and distribution of power in South Africa. In this context there are major controversies about (a) the extent to which rises in real wages will exacerbate the (growing) South African problem of black unemployment; (b) the extent to which the purported structural changes in the South African economy are compatible with the existing patterns of racial differentiation and power distribution.

The TISC report minimises the significance of real wage increases producing micro-level unemployment, as does John Knight, specialist adviser to TISC, in a subsequent paper (V, 66-7). (11) Harvey, however, in evidence to TISC (I, 315ff), found that firms he interviewed had or would mechanise in consequence of higher wages. He suggested that alternatives were possible: raising productivity through better health or better management techniques (though this would involve increase of output by the firm or else inflationary effects?), or retaining "excess" employees because their wages were a low proportion of costs. The TUC mission found, on the other side of the coin, employers opposing a sharp rise in African wages and consequent mechanisation,

partly because economy of capital was desirable, given the scale of industry, and partly because it was the the policy of the government to keep industry labour intensive within limits. They therefore tended to think that from this point of view their ability to control levels of

wages for the bulk of their labour force while also securing a measure of advancement at the cost of higher rates for a much smaller proportion of the work force worked generally for the public good.

In evidence to TISC, both these perspectives (and others) were reflected. Some firms (e.g. Courtauld's, British Leyland, General Electric, Tootal, British Oxygen, Associate British Foods, Chubb, British Electric Traction, Rank-Hovis-McDougall, etc.) mentioned a general problem of excess labour, or specific categories which might be eliminated. The potential consequences are illustrated by Courtaulds. In June 1973 the Guardian headlined a University of Natal report on a visit to the Beaumont Estate in Natal, a Courtauld's forestry operation which had received adverse publicity from Raphael, in company with F.C. Aldred, a director. There had been major improvements in housing, wages, pensions, medical aid schemes etc., and the report congratulated the firm on providing "a model of its kind in South Africa" of working conditions for Africans. (20/6/73). However the "reforms" actually took place at the expense of displacing 2 000 workers, 40% of SAICCOR's total employment at pulp mill and forestry operations! (FM 29/6/73). Moreover, while Lord Kearton told TISC that wage increases would cut the rate of return from 11% to 5% (unless there was mechanisation), the actual increased wage costs were £100,000 (and in 1972 profits of the pulp interests were over £3.5 million). (CIS Courtaulds Anti-Report). Other firms seemed to think they might absorb the costs of retaining "excess" employees in various ways. And others argued micro- or macro-level ("humanitarian") reasons why rapid rises in wages would be undesirable: being driven out of the market, or being forced to declare redundancies.

The question is perhaps clearer at the macro-level; what is important both analytically and morally, is not the actual wage increases in British companies themselves, but their dynamic effects on the economy. This is both an economic and a political question. It depends on an assessment of the *character* of the South African political economy,

and the ways in which it is changing and can be changed. One might crudely isolate three current positions on this. Neo-classical orthodoxy on the subject is roughly represented by Professor Ian Little, who argues that since South Africa has, in common with other developing countries, an excess supply of unskilled black labour, outside pressure to increase wage levels is wrong because it will "reduce the rate of creation of jobs in a situation where this should be the first priority. (Guardian 28/5/74). On the other side is Oppenheimer who, in arguing that South Africa is in the process of transition from a low wage labour intensive economy to a high wage capital-intensive economy, is maintaining that outside pressures are being exerted in the right direction:

there comes a time when, for economic as well as moral reasons, this type of industrial organisation, a system which is highly labour-intensive, making use of large numbers of undifferentiated units of labour with low productivity and low wages, must come to an end. For it there must be substituted a high productivity, high wages, capital-intensive organisation such as exists in the advanced industrial countries of the world. (Oppenheimer, 1974).

A similar argument was implicitly made by numerous firms to TISC, though with stress on the need for a careful and cautious transition, to avoid the generation of unemployment, (e.g. I. 222; 246-7, 305, 538, II, 723, III. 38, IV, 471, 716).

Certain large firms in South Africa, in other words, appear to have an interest in increasing capital-intensity and wage levels which is *independent* of the existence of a labour shortage *in toto*. For it is clear that over the last decade the creation of jobs has not kept pace with the rise in African workseekers, and current estimates suggest that the African unemployment rate is increasing at over 100 000 a year. (Cf V, 8; FM 24/1/75; TUC Report). (No actual statistics of African unemployment are kept officially in South Africa, it should be stressed). What is in short supply is labour with

adequate "skills" to operate within the increasing proportion of South African industry, which for "technological reasons" (that is, technological dependence on advanced industrial countries) is capital-intensive. This is the result of the South African sociopolitical system of apartheid in general and of educational apartheid in particular. Large firms can compensate for this by paying higher wages (though one is still talking, it should be noted, of near starvation levels) and providing on the job training or in-house training schemes. This is the erosion of the job colour bar, or more strictly, the alteration of its level, which, as already pointed out, is quite compatible with the maintenance of apartheid. Moreover there is every indication that this kind of skilled labour can be "stabilised" in a particular job, while still lacking residential and citizenship rights in the "white areas". The contract or migrant labourer remains (Cf TISC I, 321). That is Oppenheimer is incorrect in arguing that "the new (capital-intensive) organisation will obviously be incompatible with the industrial colour bar and the migrant labour system". (Oppenheimer, 1974). They can continue, pragmatically modified and modernised. Moreover the emergence of this sector of the economy is quite compatible with a general rise in the level of African unemployment - to which Oppenheimer and other firms can only pose the answer of greatly increased levels of investment, and in particular foreign investment.

But the possibility of solving the employment problem is not simply a question of creating jobs, but of the structure of demand resulting from particular income structure. Harvey suggests, in Keynesian terms, that mechanisation may have employment-creating effects in machine-producing firms, and higher wages for Africans will increase demand for consumption goods (which tend to be produced by more labour-intensive methods). (Harvey, 1974). Some slim evidence might be said to exist that this was the effect of the wage rises of 1973, since there was a 1.6% rise in average employment during the year. (Guardian 26/11/73). Even this, however, is lower than the average

rise over the last decade or so (4%), and one would not expect the effects of wage increases to make themselves felt so immediately. An equally fragmentary piece of counter-evidence is that both Unilever and Associated British Foods, dominant firms, who welcomed wage rises because of their effects on demand (both being producers of consumption goods) (I, 164-6, II, 887) are intending to mechanise their operations: i.e. there is no indication that they *would* remain sufficiently labour-intensive to have significant effects.

Other, slightly different, arguments which have been made in connection with wage rises and their effects on income distribution should be mentioned. Knight believes that the migrant/contract system ensures that high wages do spread to the poorest sections of the population in the "homelands". (He claims that in the case of a raising of wages and reduction of employment in 1973 the *total* wage bill was raised, and remittances to the homelands were also raised). (Knight, 1974). "In such circumstances whether the elasticity of demand for labour exceeds or falls short of unity becomes important". Yet, as he concedes, this does not necessarily apply for the urban areas (though this depends on one's assessment of the extent of extended or immediate family connections by such people with the reserves, as well as on their capacity to remit income). On the other hand, it has been pointed out that wage competition between firms in urban areas is largely eliminated by the restriction in African mobility from job to job, as well as by direct recruitment to jobs through labour bureaux. (25) Therefore wage rises in British firms do not 'spread' themselves necessarily to other firms or sectors.

All these fragments of arguments however need to be situated in terms of a more elaborate model of the functioning of the South African political economy, a model which does not yet adequately exist. Much of the effort involved is econometric - to assess how different levels and structures of demand, different imperatives of the operation of large multinationals and small firms in South Africa, would alter the dynamic of the situation. But the

model is also essentially a political model. If wages are raised to any significant extent, and in particular if there was any substantial progress towards base wage rates correlated with British, the question would be: who would pay? And this would be a political question. There are obvious alternatives. If the beneficiaries were to be a semi-skilled black urban/contract workforce, the onus could fall on (a) sources abroad - through higher tax on imports; (b) rural blacks - by a *laissez-faire* policy; (c) white workers - if there was a radical reorientation in the demands of white trade unionists, or if government or employers chose to or was able to neglect or weaken white workers power; (d) employers - either through cutting profit rates and lowering the growth rate, or by being subjected to higher taxes.

One would not want to assume that future decisions are necessarily determined by the patterns of the past. However it seems fairly clear that one of these options is not inconsistent with (and indeed is quite strongly consistent with) the whole trend of government policy in South Africa. As I have argued elsewhere, "there can surely be little debate that the pursuit of economic growth, by continued capital intensification, and the pursuit of separate development, have been, and continue to be, quite compatible". For a long time government spokesmen have been arguing that capital-intensification of industry in the existing industrial centres would permit the displacement of "surplus" blacks to the reserves/Bantustans. Thus any problems of increased unemployment are removed to the periphery of South Africa, out of sight and out of mind of the prosperous, where indeed they can be "neo-colonised" by the granting of political independence so that white South Africa feels no responsibility for the welfare of the unemployed. Let black leaders face the problem of overstocked, underdeveloped, territories whose inhabitants are, as the result of South Africa's good will in having "created these employment opportunities for them", able to supply "a commodity, the commodity of labour" to urban industry if and when they are lucky, and then to return to their poverty-stricken homes.

(Quotations from South African Cabinet Ministers, taken from Legassick, 1974). In other words, the existing structure of racial differentiation and distribution of power allow the development of Oppenheimer's "high wage capital-intensive" economy along with the Nationalist party vision of separate development (which, in different forms, is increasingly accepted by other white political parties). The institutions which created a cheap labour force are equally capable of controlling (but not remedying) growing African unemployment.

Equally the current British policy of encouraging the (slow) transition towards a high (or, let us rather say, higher than starvation) wage economy, at least in certain sectors, is compatible both with increased African poverty on average, and with support for South African government policies. To the extent that this policy becomes more effective, to the same degree it furthers these ends. Analytically, it is perhaps necessary to recognise that the questions are *political*, at the South African end as well as the British. Current policy constitutes a political intervention for supposedly economic ends (increasing African economic welfare). As the history of black South African trade unions shows, however, such a goal cannot for those concerned in South Africa be pursued outside the question of political rights and of democratic rule. Albert Luthuli once attacked those who accused the African National Congress of being unrealistic in its programme and "ignoring the immediate interests of African which, they allege, are limited to bread and butter politics such as fighting for adequate wages, better housing, etc". "In our view" he continued:

attention to these local needs need not cause the shelving of the fight for fundamental rights. The vote in all democratic states is the *only* key to democratic rights, privileges, and obligations. (11)

To assist in attaining these political goals, calls for the withdrawal of British investment in South Africa have been made, and are in the context of this analysis a possible, and equally realistic and equally humanitarian strategy.

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THE ABOLISHION OF THE
MASTERS AND SERVANTS ACT

by Colin Bundy

Commentators in the South African press hailed with hearty satisfaction last October's announcement that the Masters and Servants laws were to be abolished. It was 'one of the most enlightened legislative moves in years'; it represented a 'new deal' for agricultural and domestic employees; such 'a wise decision' was 'excellent news for South Africa'; and, more generally, the step was applauded as further instance of the less dogmatic, more flexible, and increasingly 'modern' approach of the Vorster regime.

These reactions fall some way short of an adequate or accurate response to the abolition of the Masters and Servants legislation. Certain other questions arise. Why did South Africa retain these laws a century after Britain repealed essentially the same statutes? Is there any similarity between their repeal in Britain in 1875 and in South Africa in 1974? Why did the laws exist in the first place; in whose interests did they chiefly operate; and have they ceased to do so now?

THE HISTORIC CONTEXT

Viewed historically in the context of class relations between (predominantly white) employers and (predominantly black) employees, certain obvious features of the legislation's past strike one immediately. The first is that the laws were originally enacted when the overwhelming number of employers were farmers; secondly, that they have remained most relevant and most frequently applied in agricultural labour relations. In the wider social context, the Masters and Servants legislation was conspicuously clumsy and ineffective, and came to be replaced by other more specific, more complex measures to control the labour force. Finally, that by the time of their repeal, the laws were of very slight overall significance in disciplining black labourers in South Africa, and cost

white employers very little.

The legal emancipation of slaves in the Cape was enacted in Westminster in 1834. The buying and selling of servants, as well as the total restraints on slave mobility, were ended; but many features of the Master/Slave relationship continued to be reproduced in the system of 'free' labour that succeeded it. Certain of these features were actually buttressed by legislation - the Masters and Servants laws exemplified such legislative efforts. Particularly on farms, relations between employer and employees resembled in important aspects owner/slave relations: the payment of workers at a subsistence level, the degree of physical discipline administered by the farmer, and the ambivalent interdependence between farmer and farm-workers, living on - and off - the same land, jointly experiencing, in tragically opposite ways, the ties of dominance and bondage.

Legal emancipation was not accompanied by social emancipation: without education, without political rights, without a base of economic independence, ex-slaves could not withhold their labour even at the low wage levels being offered. At the same time that slave labour was replaced by cheap labour, there began the process of transforming tribesmen into low-paid agricultural workers, not only through the dispossession of the African tribesman's lands, but also through his involvement in a system of rents, taxes, and fees, and his integration into the exchange economy.(1)

THE CAPE MASTERS AND SERVANTS ACT

In the Cape, the Master and Servant laws of 1841, and especially the law of 1856, were ostensibly colour-blind, and were also 'fair' in that they spelled out obligations of both masters and servants. But since almost all masters were white, and almost all browns were servants, an apparently race-free law consolidated rather than weakened race domination. The main effect of the law was to entrench the class rather than the colour aspect of racial domination -

to strengthen whites at the expense of blacks - within the framework of a law that was tilted in favour of masters at the expense of their servants.

The 1856 law made the registration of contracts compulsory, and made the breach of contract by master *or* servant illegal. The range of offences constituting breach of contract by a servant, as well as the severity of the penalties thus incurred, made the law harsher than its predecessor. Breach of contract by a servant was defined to include insubordination, neglect, insulting behaviour, and desertion. Breaches were punishable by fines and/or imprisonment.

The main author of the 1856 act was J.C. Molteno, the most prominent spokesman of the Cape farmers. Farmers in the Cape then, as throughout the nineteenth century, complained bitterly of a 'labour shortage' - they complained, that is, that at the wages they were offering, an insufficient stream of brown or black labour was forthcoming. (The several commissions appointed to gnaw away at this perennial problem all contained abundant evidence that African farm labour *was available* where higher wages were paid; but that African peasants preferred to wring a living off their own land, or off white-owned land that they occupied on a quasi-feudal basis, rather than working for low wages.) To these farmers, the Act represented the enrolment of the force of the State on their behalf: the controls and discipline which the farmer had hitherto exercised haphazardly, on a private and individual basis, the court-based administrative machinery could now exercise systematically, publicly, and on a large scale.

The extent to which the statutes were an attempt to bind the farm worker to his employer through coercion and discipline rather than through the 'laws of supply and demand', dear to the political economists of the nineteenth century, was made very clear in the Cape by an amendment of 1873. This discriminated against farm servants, making them liable to a particularly harsh penalty - imprisonment with hard labour, spare diet, and solitary

confinement. In Natal, the law of 1850 relied heavily on intimidation and discipline: it included a flogging clause (Natal earned the grim soubriquet of the 'lashing colony' in the late nineteenth century) that qualified minor infringements of the 'proper' behaviour of servants for severe corporal punishment.

Master and Servant statutes were also passed in the Boer republics (Transvaal 1880, Orange Free State 1904) and all Master & Servants legislation continued to operate with minor amendments in the Union and then the Republic of South Africa.

THE ACT DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The legislation came in the twentieth century to be applied almost exclusively to Africans in agricultural and domestic service. An important amendment of 1930 saw the laws extended to cover labour tenants (as well as wage labourers) on white farms, an application that had been held invalid in a 1921 court case. This was significant inasmuch as labour tenancy long remained, in South Africa's rural areas, preferable in the eyes of black labourers to complete proletarianization.

Prosecutions under the Masters and Servants laws showed a gradual, steady decline in the twentieth century: in 1928, there were some 43 000 prosecutions; in 1955 28 500 prosecutions; in 1968 just 23 000, while for the year ended 30th June 1973, there were 16 477 cases in terms of Masters and Servants laws *and* the Bantu Labour Registration Act. This decline - quite evident in absolute terms - is even more striking when viewed in relation to prosecutions under other legislation. Other laws that directly affected the mobility and 'obedience' of African workers, like the pass laws, trespass and vagrancy laws were applied with an enormously accelerated frequency: in 1928 there were 44 000 pass law prosecutions and 10 000 for trespass; in 1960 the respective totals were 670 000 and 166 000 prosecutions. In short, the use of Master and Servant laws to bring offending employees to book declined quite sharply at the same time that other statutory

controls over black South Africans were being greatly extended and intensified. The reason for this will become clear below: Before making them explicit, it may be instructive to examine the operation of the British Masters and Servants law in the nineteenth century, and see what grounds there exist for comparison between metropolis and colonies.

THE BRITISH ACT

In Britain, the early 1820s was a period of sharp conflict between capitalist employers and the 'combinations' (as the infant trade unions were known). In 1824, under intense pressure from Westminster Radicals, the House of Commons repealed all the statutes that made combinations illegal. In the following year, the Ministers 'came to the conclusion that they had been guilty of a serious blunder'⁽²⁾ in this blanket repeal. An Act was passed which sharply restricted the forms that combinations might take; a step, comments the great liberal historian Halévy, that appeared to discover a method "by which disorder among the working class could be suppressed" even while conferring upon the proletariat the right to organize.⁽³⁾

During this same phase of acute class conflict, the Masters and Servants Act of 1823 was passed. At its heart were provisions that discriminated against the servant: the master who broke his contract was liable to *civil* action for damages or the recovery of the wages due, while the defaulting servant was punished for a *criminal* act, and liable to hard labour for three months. Breach of contract by a servant was widely defined: not only failure to enter in service, or absence from service, but also any 'neglect' or 'misdemeanour or misconduct' in the execution of contracted service.

A REMNANT OF EARLIER LEGISLATION

This law drew on earlier legislation - especially the lengthy Tudor statute of 1563 - and indeed possessed a lineage that extended back to the fourteenth century. At that time, wage labour was making its

first general appearance in England, mainly in the form of commodity production based on domestic industries; and legislators devised contractual relationships that nestled within the prevalent unfree labour relations of the late feudal period. In essence, the Masters and Servants laws were not part of the general law of contract, but the tail end of the penal labour laws essential to the early growth of the capitalist system in Western Europe. By the nineteenth century, the law of 1823 was "the last remnant of extra-economic compulsion to labour". (4)

The number of prosecutions in England under the 1823 Act, according to a detailed study of the operation of the law, declined relative to the number of employees: between 1858 and 1875 (for which years statistics are available) an average of 10 000 cases a year were prosecuted in England and Wales. The source of these prosecutions in terms of which employers used the law - is emphasized in Simon's study: essentially, the law was the recourse of the small employer. In the textile, coal and iron industries, prosecutions were initiated by "small and backward undertakings". (5)

In addition to this pattern in the industries mentioned, the Act was also commonly used in agriculture. Simons writes that where "old yearly hirings still survived, as they did very extensively in agriculture, prosecutions were apt to be frequent"; she adds later that in agriculture "prosecutions were certainly very common." A member of Parliament testified in 1865 that "when the spring of the year came round and labour bore a high price ... a great number of agricultural labourers found themselves in consequence the inmates of a gaol because they ... attempted to break their contracts with their masters." (6)

In other words, Simon illustrates very clearly that in the British instance, the Masters and Servants Act was relied on by employers who found it hard to keep labourers in the face of competition from larger and more successful capitalists. The repeal

of the legislation in 1875 came after years of militant trade union pressure, at a time when the law "was no longer worth preserving" as far as the most wealthy and influential part of the capitalist class was concerned. In the same way that mid-Victorian entrepreneurs jettisoned protection for free trade, relying on the operation of the market to secure their profits, so they embraced the mobility of a free proletariat instead of having labourers inhibited by the workings of a law harking back to a much earlier stage of capital accumulation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE

Simon's study has significant implications for the South African case. We have already seen that the nineteenth century statutes in South Africa were urged by farming interests, and also that their use became almost exclusively restricted to agricultural and domestic service in the twentieth century. As in Britain, 'small and backward' employers were the beneficiaries of the law. In contrast to nineteenth century Britain, however, the electoral and representative power of agrarian capital remained far more powerful. Any suggestion of repealing the Masters and Servants legislation before - say - 1960 would have encountered stern resistance from a sizeable farming interest.

OTHER LEGISLATIVE CONTROLS

The policy of the Nationalist government has operated, in several respects, to make the Masters and Servants laws increasingly anachronistic. First, the barrage of laws that controls, directs, and disciplines the black labour force has been rationalized, centralized and strengthened. In particular, the Bantu Laws Amendment Act (67 of 1964) is a legislative keystone, with the registration of black workers at labour bureaux and the subsequent directives - or endorsements; while the huge administrative structure of surveillance/arrest/punishment that rests on the Pass Laws makes state control over labour as pervasive and potent as it is. It will be readily appreciated how cumbersome are the workings of the Masters and

Servants laws - with the need for the employer to be involved in a court case for each offender - compared with the sweeping bureaucratic vigilance and ubiquity. And how irrelevant and blunt a penalty is a few months imprisonment when compared with the abilities of Bantu Affairs officials to correlate, canalise, and centralise the 'labour units' - to dictate, that is, the lives of workers involved in a migrant system that takes on more and more of the characteristics of bureaucratically ordered forced labour.

DESTRUCTION OF LABOUR TENANT SYSTEM

Even the farmers, for so long the twentieth century beneficiaries of laws that even in the nineteenth century were retrogressive, have recently found the Masters and Servants code less necessary to secure the labour of underpaid, rightless workers, less essential to punish labour tenants who retained distinct rights, however limited, on white-owned lands. The success of the government in reducing labour tenants to the status of wage labourers has greatly exceeded the success of all previous efforts in pursuit of a long-standing policy. The Bantu Law Amendment Act of 1964 gave the labour authorities far greater control over labour tenants, and the number of registered tenants fell from 163 000 in 1964 to 27 585 by 1970, until in 1973 it was announced that there were no longer any labour tenants in the Cape, Free State or Transvaal, and only 16 000 in Natal. (7)

INFLUX CONTROL

Parallel with the destruction of the labour tenant and squatting systems on South African farms, and their replacement with full time wage labour, has been the greatly increased influx control of urban Africans. The fears of white South African farmers - fears that have matured for 150 years - that African labour will be attracted away from the farms into the cities have been greatly soothed. A single quotation demonstrates eloquently enough the advantages of centralized labour control laws over the Master and Servant statutes:

"A record of every registered Bantu farm labourer is kept in a central register in Pretoria, and the position is that the labourer cannot be employed in the urban areas, because as soon as his service contract must be registered, it will be established that he is a farm labourer, and then he cannot legally be taken into service." (8)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Masters and Servants laws in South Africa, as in Britain, served to benefit the most backward employers in a capitalist economy; as that economy became more industrialized, they played an increasingly insignificant and ineffectual role in coercing and controlling labourers, and were largely replaced by more effective because more specific and more highly centralized measures.

Even so, they were retained long, long after their abolition would have been tolerated with equanimity by South Africa's larger, least backward, employers: they were retained because they were still of some use, specifically to those farmers who relied on indentured workers and labour tenants. In Britain their repeal came about through a combination of trade union opposition and a willingness on the part of the industrial capitalists to abolish an archaic law. In South Africa, the colonial setting and the historical suppression of black workers' organizations precluded effective union pressure against the laws.

When pressure did come, it did so partly in the form of a generalized movement by black workers for better conditions, and partly in the form of specific pressure from an external group of workers. Dockworkers and miners in Mobile, Alabama, refused to discharge South African coal from a ship, citing a clause in the 1930 tariff that prohibited importations of goods produced under forced labour. The repeal of the penal provisions of the Masters and Servants code seems to have removed the grounds for the court action pressed for by the United Mineworkers Union in Alabama to prevent the importing of South African coal.

Gracefully enough, the South African government announced its intention to repeal the laws that had attracted such pointed critical attention. It could conduct the repeal with something of a flourish secure in the knowledge that even the (politically so influential) 'small and backward' agricultural employers were sufficiently equipped with other means to acquiesce in the employers' consensus that the Masters and Servants legislation was not only anachronistic but also obsolete.

References:

- (1) C. Bundy: The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry (African Affairs, October 1972)
- (2) E. Halévy: History of the English People in the 19th Century, Vol.2 (Benn, 1961)
- (3) Ibid., p.210.
- (4) D. Simon: Masters and Servants (in J. Saville (Ed.) Labour and Democracy)
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Quoted in Simons, op. cit.
- (7) House of Assembly, Debates, 13/6/73.
- (8) A.H. Vosloo, Deputy Minister of Bantu Development, opening an agricultural show at Middleburg 25/4/68. (University of Cape Town Wages Commission: Report on Farm Labour.)

Colin Bundy
Manchester Polytechnic.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON LABOUR

by Foszia Fisher

In March this year Dr Jacob MP, United Party spokesman on Labour, introduced a private member's motion calling for the State President to set up a commission of inquiry into labour relations in South Africa, with specific reference to the labour requirements of the mining industry. The debate which followed produced no evidence of any new government thinking in regard to the question of trade union rights for the African workers. But it did show that there is a consensus of opinion between the two opposition parties in favour of full trade union rights. The United Party, in line with their new policy, argued forcefully in favour of such rights, and were supported by Dr Boraine on behalf of the Progressive Party. We print below a statement of United Party labour policy by Graham McIntosh MP. As an introduction we shall summarise the more interesting points made on either side in the parliamentary debate.

We should like to stress two points made by UP spokesmen. Dr Jacobs pointed out that "the works or liaison committee is primarily a communications device and not a negotiations device". That is, it is a device which may be able to settle minor problems which arise from misunderstandings, but can play no real role in settling the main problems of wages and working conditions. Workers will only accept those wages and conditions which they have had some share in setting. This requires a system which gives the workers some power, rather than simply the right to be heard. Communication of a kind can occur between superior and inferior. Negotiation can only occur between equals, and the works or liaison committee systems give the workers no source of power through which they can counter-balance managerial power.

H. Miller also made an important contribution, in which he underlined the part already being played by the unregistered unions in settling disputes peacefully. He praised the unregistered unions: "who had trained workers and who used their best endeavours to try to bring about some form of peaceful negotiations in regard to the problems that existed".

Alex Boraine made the obvious and irrefutable point that the (white) Mine Workers Union

"would certainly not for one moment agree to disband that union and form a works committee or a liaison committee".

It is nonsense for the government to argue that the works or liaison committee system is anything but discriminatory when it is obvious that all those workers who have the choice of registered unions wouldn't ever consider choosing anything else.

The speeches by the National Party members stand in sad contrast. They remain based on crude short-term self interest and equally crude racism. Mr Rossouw claimed that all that Dr Jacobs had said:

"simply means that the honourable members of the Opposition want to throw the labour market wide open, that they want to do away with job reservation".

He seemed to think that this statement constituted an adequate refutation of the whole Opposition case. But he still went on to claim that most Africans in the mining industry:

"are not yet in a position to realise the importance and the necessity of a trade union and to accept the responsibility which it entails".

This kind of argument is not of course consistent with the whole theory of separate development, which, unlike the old baasskap principle, assumes that Blacks are capable of running their own institutions. But perhaps consistency is too much to hope for.

The other hoary old argument dragged out by the NP, and bolstered with a quotation from the International Socialist League in 1916, was that trade unions "have a political motive at the back of their minds". This speaker went on to claim:

"the strikes which took place, the misunderstandings which were there, are due to the political agitation which took place behind the scene".

The I.I.E. has analysed the agitator thesis, and the role it plays in the thinking of National Party spokes-

men, at some length in "The Durban Strikes 1973" (see particularly Chapter 4 "The Politicians Respond" p102-5). Suffice it to say here that there is no evidence for the "agitator" thesis, but that for these spokesmen it is an a priori assumption, not a matter requiring evidence since Africans are not capable of acting on their own.

Although there is a clear contrast between government and opposition in this debate, there are still two points of criticism which can be levelled against the United Party, or, in the first case at least, perhaps only against the more conservative wing of the party. One of the conservatives, Tony Hickman, said in his speech:

"There are black trade unions at present, and our only fear is that, since these approximately 20 trade unions are totally without control the situation may arise that these trade unions may indeed abuse their position for political purposes. The government has no control over them whatsoever. What we are requesting is that the Government should act wisely, even at this stage, when the people are perhaps not yet ripe enough".

Now this statement may just be an attempt to talk to the Government in its own idiom. But it is still ambiguous, to say the least. What kind of "control" does Mr Hickman envisage? Surely there are already too many controls of all kinds in South Africa? There would be no objection to the kind of controls over constitutionality and financial stringency implied in the present process of registering trade unions, but Mr Hickman seems to mean something more than this. It would be pointless legislating to permit African trade unions and then controlling them so tightly that they could not give expression to the wishes of their members. Such organisations would be trade unions in name only, and would play none of the socially constructive roles that real trade unions can play. We hope that the UP will clear up this ambiguity satisfactorily in the future.

The second point of criticism of the UP and of the Progressives too, is brought out by the *coup de grace* which the Minister of Mines administered to the

debate. He produced a letter from the Chamber of Mines in which the Chamber said that it did not want a commission of inquiry at all. The Chamber is the kind of body which, for a number of different reasons, one would expect to be politically allied to the Opposition. It is evident that, if the Opposition is to present a strong case in favour of trade unions, they must first convince their business allies. Businessmen are always, wrongly but understandably, nervous of trade unions. But South Africa has reached a stage of development in which the long-term interest in creating institutions of peaceful participation and negotiation is in conflict with the businessmen's misperceived short-term interest in keeping total control over their workers. The Opposition parties, on the whole, seem to understand this. But it is no use just saying so in parliament. They must go all out to convince their supporters not only to favour union rights for Africans, but also to immediately recognise and negotiate with the existing unregistered unions.

THE UNITED PARTY LABOUR POLICY.

by Graham McIntosh.

The United Party's labour policy rests basically upon seven main points. The South African social situation with its various groups and peculiar problems, which are the product of our history, make our situation rather complicated. Thus the matter of influx control and migratory labour will be dealt with separately.

The seven basic issues are as follows:

- 1) It is the belief of the United Party that every worker must have the right to industrial representation and also, unless it is impracticable, access to bargaining machinery. It is important that workers should be able to organise themselves and be able to exercise their rights as well as to have opportunities to study those rights and to look after them. The only people who can really look after their rights are the people themselves and any form of paternalism is likely to mean a breakdown in communication and will not ensure that industrial peace is maintained.

For many people their labour is the only commodity which they have to sell and it is their only security in life. It is thus particularly important that people's rights to withhold their labour and also to bargain for better conditions and reward for their labour should be ensured. It is thus a foundation of any labour policy that this right be recognised.

- 2) It is important that in South Africa each worker must be seen as such and not as a particular worker who has special privileges or disabilities because of his or her race. One of the myths of South African labour relations is that labour conditions can be different for different race groups. The fact of a modern economy in the Western style means that labour regardless of race, must have certain minimum facilities. Because of the belief that if Blacks obtained senior jobs, whites would automatically be deprived of such jobs, South

African labour has developed the legislation known as 'Job Reservation'. This aspect of our labour policy must go.

The United Party has long believed in the importance of the principle of equal pay for equal work for equal responsibility or as it is commonly known, the rate for the job. Implicit in this policy of the rate for the job is the fact that workers must be seen as such and not as racial groups.

- 3) The United Party firmly believes that the Industrial Conciliation Act must serve as the basis for the regulations of industrial peace. This Act is generally acknowledged as being an excellent one and labour legislators throughout the world regard it as a model to be followed. It has served very well thus far in preserving industrial peace for White, Coloured and Indian workers but it has been deliberately designed to exclude 'Bantu'. This Act should be amended as soon as possible to allow for Black workers to be covered under its terms.

It ought to be the responsibility of the existing trade unions and also the Department of Labour to educate and train people to act as shop-stewards and also to learn the intricacies of the Industrial Conciliation Act as well as other labour acts so that they can negotiate effectively with employer organisation.

- 4) It is United Party policy to allow labour itself to do the organising. It is not for a political party to tell labour how they must organise. This is covered by the Industrial Conciliation Act. If the trade unions wish to have mixed unions or if they wish to have separate racial unions then that is up to them to decide. The same applies to whether workers choose to have works committees or liaison committees. Provided that industrial peace is maintained and that fair wages are paid to all,

then the political parties in government ought to be satisfied.

The one point on which the United Party does feel strongly is that industrial representation should be done on an industry-wide basis and not on the basis of labour unions representing all industries. This opposition is based on the fact that, generally speaking, such broadly based labour movements are developed to serve ulterior motives of people who are ideologically committed to a Marxist-Leninist view of society.

- 5) There must be no discrimination in the application of the social security legislation to workers other than on the basis of the labour that is provided. Benefits which workers enjoy must be efficiently supplied and contributed. The United Party has long stood for the establishment of a National Contributory Pension Scheme and this should be integrated into the labour set-up in South Africa.
- 6) It is essential that workers benefit from improved training facilities and also educational facilities. One of the tragedies of South Africa is that a tremendous untapped potential in our Black communities is not being used because of inadequate educational opportunities.
- 7) It is important that there should be established an Industrial Court of Appeal to which employers and employees could go in the event of their feeling that they have been discriminated against in any way. This would be a proper Court of Appeal and not simply a tribunal.

The whole matter of migratory labour and influx control affects seriously the South African labour pattern and allied to this is the matter of housing.

The United Party's policy on influx control is quite clear. It is opposed to the Nationalist system where influx control has a political purpose in reducing the numbers of Blacks in the so-called White areas. Under United Party policy influx control would be retained but only as a means to regulating the flow of people into the towns until adequate housing has been provided and so as to prevent slums developing.

The United Party is opposed to enforced migratory labour and regards the rights of a man or a woman to live with his/her own family as a fundamental right which may not be denied them by the state under any circumstances other than those of War or National Emergency.

In line with this policy the United Party would seek to provide adequate and decent urban housing for all workers regardless of colour. The freehold rights to property would also be granted.

Inevitably a Party in Opposition is limited in what it is able to achieve but the United Party would seek to implement these fundamental matters in the field of labour relations when it comes to power.

Graham McIntosh
United Party MP
for Pinetown

THE DEFY DISPUTE : QUESTIONS OF SOLIDARITY

by Mike Kirkwood.

The themes of colour and class are intricately woven in the history of the South African labour movement. Working class solidarity across the colour lines was a 'dreaming platitude' which generated much Utopian thinking amongst South African socialists in the first part of the century. The class analysis has necessarily been refined since then, particularly as regards the position and role of the white worker.

Industrial action by Black workers in the 1970s has often thrown into relief the solidarity issue with regard to relatively privileged Indian and Coloured workers and the mass of African workers. This happened again at the Defy Industries factory (Jacobs, Natal) in May, when a dispute between management and workers in the assembly Department led to a lock-out (our definition, on the basis of the available evidence) of 45 African and 65 Indian workers.

We attempt no more here than a presentation of the dispute within the broad perspective of the problems of solidarity.

Defy Industries is a member of the Glynwed Ltd. group of companies, which is quoted on the London Stock Exchange. It is believed that the company is 84% British-owned, with two British directors sitting on a board of ten. The company is expanding, and now has operations in Jacobs, Prospection, and Newcastle in Natal, and in Cape Town. Last year it acquired the Electrical Construction Company (Pty) Ltd. which manufactures air-conditioning equipment under franchise from Amana Refrigeration Inc. of America. The company makes stoves and washing machines for the consumer durable market, and is also in the industrial heating market through the wholly-owned Wireohms S.A. and its subsidiary Wireohms Rhodesia. Last year the company went public. A cursory look at its performance on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange reveals that shares initially offered at 115 cents had settled at around 80 cents by the end of May 1975, with a 'low' of 65 cents over the period since the first offer. The dividend yield declared at the end of 1974 was 9,4 cents and by May 1975

this had climbed to 12,5 cents, somewhat exceeding expectations. An earnings yield of 19,3 cents had risen to 24,9 cents over the same rough period.

The following extract from the Director's end-of-year report for 1974 may have a bearing on the May dispute: "In order to minimise the effects of inflation and the high cost of holding excessive stocks, stock levels will be reduced and maximum efficiency and high productivity will be achieved in manufacturing." The company's 1974 profit figure (R1,845,000 after tax) represented an increase of 21,3% over 1973, but the board expected a difficult market in 1975 because of lower spending on durables and the competitive effect of the introduction of television.

Something of the company's attitude in the labour relations field can be gathered from the existence of a liaison committee, a statement in the annual report that the company had given insufficient attention to the training of Black employees, and the appointment during 1975 of a Black personnel officer. Balance is provided by the hostility expressed by workers towards the company's labour and welfare officer, who is also secretary of the liaison committee.

THE WORKERS

The Indian workers in the Assembly Department are members of a registered union, the Engineering Workers Industrial Union (Natal Branch), which began to recruit members at Defy Industries (Jacobs) in 1975. Although they thus enjoy, formally at least, more recognition and security with access to institutionalised bargaining procedures, many of them are semi-skilled workers receiving the same wages as Africans employed in this department.

About half of the African workers in the department are members of the unregistered African Metal and Allied Union, which is not recognised by management though Mr Alpheus Mthethwa has made approaches to them on behalf of the union, of which he is secretary.

This situation, in which Indian and African workers shared common pay and working conditions but had different avenues of recourse available when the dispute could

no longer be settled within the factory, shaped the line of action which, as will be seen, workers were to take.

African workers representatives, elected by departments, have taken part in liaison committee meetings at the factory : a perusal of the committee's minutes over the past year reveals something of the frustrations experienced by workers as well as a background of conflict over a production bonus which directly led to the dispute.

The liaison committee's constitution states that it 'shall not, by resolution or otherwise, reverse or amend any instruction given by management nor can it interfere with any disciplinary action undertaken by management'. The chairman of the committee quoted this clause after a worker representative, Mr Gilbert Phungula, had requested that if an employee was to be discharged, the matter should be referred to the committee. The request came at a meeting on the 3rd June, 1974, the answer on the 18th February, 1975 - a rate of delay which does not suggest that the L.C. is productive of 'dialogue' when important principles, rather than day-to-day administrative matters, are at issue. A concession was made, however, and the minutes tell us that 'in order to avoid the circulation of distorted information relative to persons having been discharged, the supervisors would be advised to comply with this request.' This degree of accord on an important principle was to acquire irony in the May dispute when the proposer, Mr Phungula, was one of the nineteen workers discharged by the company. A review of the minutes shows that he was a consistent and acute champion of such worker freedoms as can be defended within a liaison committee framework . Some examples of minutes revealing his role and the tenor of working life at Defy Industries follow:

'Mr Phungula complained that employees wanting to remove their purchased pots on Saturdays were stopped by guards.....

reported that some old employees were on the same rate as new employees.....

reported an instance where an employee had contracted T.B. and had been discharged, then re-engaged

and placed in the enamel shop, which could aggravate his condition.....

stated that workers did not understand why only 40 hours normal time was recorded and 45 at other times.....

again brought up the question that Africans doing inspection of Grey and Black enamel components were receiving a lower rate of pay than Coloured inspectors.....

wanted to know why the African sprayer, doing the same work as a Coloured sprayer, did not get the same rate of pay.....'

Mr Phungula and the other workers were discharged after all the assembly workers had completed intelligence tests to assess, apparently, their usefulness to the company. One worker I spoke to had another view of his dismissal: 'He was too clever and he talked too much.'

THE DISPUTE

The dispute took place over a production bonus applying to all workers in the Assembly department. Management unease over an existing bonus system was evident at the end of August, 1974, when it stated that 'it was not company policy to extend bonus systems as this system tended to create an artificial standard of living' (sic).

It was the Assembly department workers who, in the eyes of management, were enjoying life at this artificial level. It was held that, after a move to a new assembly shop, bonus earnings had become 'unrealistic' due to the introduction of mechanical aids such as air-operated screwdrivers and simpler methods of assembly. This had created an 'imbalance' with wages in the rest of the factory, and this in turn had led to 'dissension in other departments'. Management thus wished to 'correct' the bonus system after discussion of any 'legitimate grievance'.

Against this background management and assembly workers came to a working agreement in September, 1974. This constituted a 'mutual arrangement' in terms of the present Industrial Council Agreement, Clause 10 (12)C,

according to which 'incentive bonus rates... once established may not be altered except for the following reasons... a mutual arrangement has been come to between the employer and the employee'. The agreed system was based on a rate expressed as a percentage of the basic wages varying according to the number of stoves coming off the assembly line in the department. In view of the fact that both parties appeared satisfied with the arrangement for several months, there appears to be no way in which management could argue - again in terms of Clause 10 (12) - that the arrangement 'made an error in calculation'.

The ground for the dispute was laid in mid-April, 1975, when management, in line perhaps with the section of the director's annual report referred to earlier, again wished to alter the bonus system.

After the stoves come off the assembly line they are inspected and tested. Rejects are then taken out and the remainder are sent to the warehouse. Under the new system proposed by a member of management, Mr L.J. Emanuel, the bonus was to be based on the count at the warehouse end of the process.

Workers understandably protested, but the new arrangement - 'mutual' is a difficult word to define under prevailing industrial conditions in South Africa - was nevertheless instituted. Mr Emmanuel told the workers, however, that the unfair complications of the new system would be looked into. It is obvious that Assembly workers cannot be held responsible for defects arising in earlier stages of production.

Matters came to a head on Friday, 16th May, when assembly workers received only approximately half the bonus that they would have received under the old system. They could not work out why their bonus earnings had dropped so drastically. There were also, understandably, growing anxious as to management's delay in carrying out their promise to eliminate unfair complications.

They immediately sent two African representatives, Mr Phungula and Mr Doncabe, to talk to the foreman. He suggested that as it was late they should raise

the matter on Monday 19th May.

On that day work started as usual at 6.45 a.m. A shortage of ventilation pipes prevented the assembly line from moving, and while they waited for these parts to be brought from stores the workers took advantage of a forced halt in production to send their two representatives to the foreman again.

Mr Emanuel spoke to them in the foreman's office. When the representatives told him that the workers wanted to know about the bonus system, he appeared to lose his temper. Shouting, he instructed the representatives to resume production within two minutes or take off their overalls and leave the premises. He refused to discuss the new bonus system or to report on his investigations into unfair complications.

The two minutes were, perforce, used in reporting to the other workers on the meeting with Mr Emanuel. While this was going on the ventilation pipes arrived and the worker concerned, Mr Simelane, began fitting the pipes to the stoves on the assembly line. There was thus, in fact, no work stoppage beyond a normal halt in production. Mr Emanuel nevertheless ordered the workers to leave unless they were prepared to accept unconditionally and indefinitely the existing bonus system.

The assembly department workers, considering themselves to be on the receiving end of a lock-out, moved to a discussion of strategy. It is precisely at this point, in retrospect, that their hopes of an immediate, if limited and localised victory might have been brightest. Such hopes would have rested on solidarity within the boundaries of a single department, based on a shared experience of a particular exploitative practice, and the availability of institutional channels to some of them which, successfully used, might have furthered the interests of all. Solidarity, though confined to a single department, had cut across the racial line.

An instrument - the Engineering Workers Industrial Union - seemed available to the Indian workers, and it seemed that they could use the leverage it offered

to advance the claims of African workers on whose support their action thus far had depended. The workers therefore moved in a body to the office of the E.W.I.U.

Let us suppose that the scenario thus far had developed as workers had reason to hope it might. The union concerned had an excellent case to make for its workers. If it had played its part vigorously and correctly:

1. all workers might have been re-instated;
2. the right of workers to negotiate any change in a bonus system to their satisfaction might have been established, while the Defy management would have been in a weak bargaining position, facing the prospect of a fine and back-pay adjustments for unilaterally altering a 'mutual arrangement' - not to speak of the lock-out itself;
3. the morale and level of consciousness of *all* workers in the factory would have been raised;
4. by bringing the Metal Allied Union into the negotiating picture as much as possible, the Engineering Workers Industrial Union might have made a significant contribution to the development of African worker organisation.

What actually happened was that the registered union failed to act, thus betraying the trust of its own workers, and deprived the unregistered union of the lever it might have used on behalf of African workers. Workers were told that the secretary was away on holiday and nothing could be done. Worse, it referred the workers to the tender mercies of the Labour Department. Since it is on the cards that the Labour Department will accept the management's definition on the incident as a strike, this did no more than expose the workers to the possibility of legal charged.

EXCELLENT BUT KEEP IT ROLLING

What had happened was that a lethargic subscriptions-and-benefits union, whose organisers collect money (75 cents a week) while the secretary does paper-work, had been confronted by the spectre of militancy. The dynamic which raised this spectre should not be understood as an isolated phenomenon. The solidarity of

the assembly department workers developed, it is true, around what is in its very nature a localised and sectional interest : the bonus agreement. Yet behind the assembly workers at Defy a 'queue' was forming : we have management's word for it that the relatively advanced bonus rate was causing dissension among workers in other departments. The solidarity was, as has been remarked, inter-racial. Here again this aspect should be set against the background of Mr Phungula's assiduous attention (vide minutes of the liaison committee quoted earlier) to the matter of the differential rates of pay to Coloured and African workers doing the same work. We do not need to pursue the picture beyond the boundaries of the Defy factory in order to suggest that the spectre glimpsed by the assistant secretary of the E.W.I.U. was a whiff of smoke from a large and far from extinct volcano.

The concept of 'solidarity' expresses awareness of common interests and the determination of the group defined by such interests to uphold these by collective action. If the dynamic of economic and social change in South Africa is such that previously stratified 'layers' are now gripped by an interlocking momentum, the objective basis for solidarity exists even when the issue at stake for a particular group of workers appears sectional, as at Defy. The advance towards solidarity would probably have been considerable. What is also apparent is that when the impetus of the assembly action began to falter, and management counter-attacked on the day following the lock-out, it was a failure of solidarity which stood revealed. This phase highlights the role of the unregistered Metal Allied Workers' Union, and the problems which confront such a union at present.

The African workers involved had come to the Metal and Allied Union office after the failure of their supportive approach to the E.W.I.U. The Union immediately sought to engage on behalf of its workers and began to collect information to this end. But what could it do?

Its strength in the factory had been growing : as mentioned, about half the African Assembly workers were already members. But without a spontaneous

and fairly general show of support for the Assembly men by other Defy workers a power strategy was impossible. And only if management was faced with the reality of a power strategy would it begin to see the sense in talking to a union from which it had little to fear on the score of institutional or legal pressures. The Metal and Allied Union nevertheless attempted what it could on this flank. Its problem was to find a registered union which could be persuaded to declare the dispute at an Industrial Council meeting. The E.W.I.U. would not be drawn. Metal and Allied next approached the S.A. Boilermakers, Iron and Steel Workers, Shipbuilders and Welders Society, a registered union for White, Coloured, and Indian workers which also has some members at Defy. This union contacted management at Defy, took its word for it that it was a strike, and left it at that.

Meanwhile management had counter-attacked. When the Assembly workers returned to the factory on Tuesday, after Monday's lock-out, two 'tests' had been arranged for them. One was a speed-sorting test involving nuts and bolts, the other an I.Q. test using geometrical shapes. After these tests had been completed all but 19 of the workers (11 Indians, 8 Africans) were re-employed. The bonus system was scrapped. The basic wage was raised, but this only meant the workers were left with the equivalent of the old basic plus (approximately) the low bonus rate which had occasioned the dispute: the effective overall wage had dropped considerably. Management could see the whole operation, in terms of ends, as a successful exercise in trimming for productivity and efficiency. As to means, who was in a position to argue that one?

The workers had lost. Cordial contact continued between the re-employed and the discharged. With the exception of Mr Phungula, the formal worker leadership had been taken back, though another informal African leader was also discharged. It is believed that representation were made to management by the re-instated on behalf of the 19. Metal and Allied advised on U.I.F. procedures, helped in the search for new jobs, kept in touch. It also continued to look for a legal toe-hold. But its most significant role here may turn out to be its function as the 'memory' of a worker movement which is still learning as much from its defeats as from its victories.

BOOK REVIEW

LIZ CLARKE AND JANE NGOBESE:

WOMEN WITHOUT MEN.

(PUBLICATION OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BLACK RESEARCH).

by Jean Westmore

The first publication of the Institute for Black Research, 'Women Without Men', focuses on the conditions of family life existent in the Nqutu district of KwaZulu : the poverty, the general living conditions, the different sources of family income, and the effects on family life (especially on the role of the woman) caused by the institutionalised system of migratory labour which removes most of the men from the family home for the larger part of their lives. Furthermore, an attempt is made to assess the Poverty Datum Line for the district of Nqutu, and by a comparison of this figure and the average family income, in cash and kind, the need for more intensive community and agricultural development projects as illustrated.

The most useful way in which to analyse 'Women Without Men' is perhaps in terms of the proposed aims of the Institute for Black Research itself. I have adopted this approach as presumably the Institute of Black Research has been set up to provide a specifically Black research perspective - a perspective that has up until now been absent in Social Science in South Africa. These aims I take to be three-fold. Firstly, the gathering of data regarding Black community issues from a Black point of view for scientific comment, that is, as a fact-finding organisation. Secondly, the analysis of the data with the end of assisting meaningful community action. Thirdly, the presentation of the material gathered for the publications in such a way that it can be understood and appreciated by the average man in the street.

As a fact-finding organisation, the Institute for Black Research has provided and uncovered very startling information regarding conditions in Nqutu. The most startling information concerns the average monthly income of the sample of families interviewed. Whereas the study estimated that the average family in Nqutu (N=7) requires a minimum amount of R103,99 per month to enable them to live on the border of

human poverty, the average monthly income of families investigated was a mere R14,87, and this included all possible sources of income for the families, ranging from the contribution from the migrant worker(s), income from farming, home industry, pensions, and so on. Furthermore, the researchers note that the Tomlinson Commission estimated the incomes of African peasant families, in cash and kind, to be approximately R194 p.a. in 1952, i.e. R16 p.m. Twenty-two years later, Nqutu families according to the sample, are receiving less. Since the rand in that time has deteriorated to half its value, the families have half the buying power they had in 1952. (p55)

Although the information collected is very revealing regarding the severe conditions of poverty existent in Nqutu, a number of questions regarding how it was gathered spring to mind. Firstly, the researchers mention that their sample was drawn from the Under Five's clinic conducted at the Charles Johnson Memorial Hospital and at the district of Mangeni and Manxili, and that this has introduced 'some kind of bias into the sample'. Given that the aim was that of the collection of data in a scientific manner, just noting that there was some kind of bias in the sample does not suffice. The researchers should have attempted to calculate the extent of this bias (even if this had been added as an appendix as perhaps such 'formalities' are not important to the layman, but they are to other investigators), so as to assess the validity of their findings.

The second point of interest regarding the methodology of this study, is that the Poverty Datum Line calculation was used. The P.D.L. is a conventional tool used by main-stream bourgeois sociologists and other (even some business organisations) in order to assess the bare minimum that an average family can exist on per month. The P.D.L. is basically a static tool, a standard, and implies essentially social reformist strategies e.g. usually in the context of the need for the rise or increase in wages. It has furthermore been suggested that the P.D.L. is in fact legitimizing poverty wages. Now what seems to be interesting about the use of the P.D.L. calculation in this study is that the

aim of the Institute is to study Black Community issues from a Black point of view (which seems to imply that this constitutes a different kind of exercise than when White researchers investigate Black Community issues), and yet use is still made of the conventional tools used and developed by White social researchers. Nor can the researchers argue that they alone have used this conventional tool in an innovative and creative way, as other White researchers have made just as creative use of this tool. (e.g. Verity Cubitt and Roger Riddell : The Urban Poverty Datum Line in Rhodesia). What would seem important for the viability of Black research, would be the development of more dynamic measures and tools that would imply the need not merely for certain reforms in the socio-economic situation, but for change in the position of Blacks in the total social structure which is the real problem behind the community issues that the study is concerned with. What form a Black methodology and epistemology would take is an issue that Institute for Black Research could tackle and come to terms with.

The second aim of the Institute for Black Research which was outlined above was that of a fact-analysing organisation. Presumably when one analyses the facts that one has collected in a scientific study, one attempts to enterpret them in a meaningful way, by putting them in some or other theoretical context. This the researchers involved in the present study have not attempted adequately. Except for a brief introduction to the 'Bantu Homelands' in chapter 1, and some mention of the system of migratory labour in chapter 3, the researchers have not attempted to put the rural areas of the homelands into any broader context of the political economy of South Africa. The rejoinder that this publication is meant for the audience of layman does not suffice, as what is required for the layman to appreciate the seriousness of the issues being tackled by this study is just this; that he/she be presented with a framework in which an understanding of how the conditions pertaining in the rural areas are intimately related to the social, economic and political conditions existent in the total South African system. Without an attempt to do this, the

reader might suppose that all that is required to 'solve' the problems of poverty and malnutrition in the rural areas is piece-meal reform and small-scale community projects, whereas what is really required are certain major changes in the political economy of South Africa, and thus in the social structure of our country as well.

There are two points which can be made with reference to the issues tackled by this study which illustrate what has been said above. The first point is related to the position of the woman in the rural areas of the homelands. The problem revolves around the disruption of family life caused by the institutionalised system of migratory labour. With the removal of the man from the family home for the greater part of his life, the woman is left to manage all the responsibilities on the home front. Whereas her traditional roles were those of mother and the cultivator of the soil (i.e. she did the planting and weeding of the soil, while the man was the tiller and the hunter), the woman now has to take *full* responsibility for the land. Furthermore, she has to deal with all the family and economic crises that are faced alone, and in many cases find extra work in the homelands as well, in order to increase the family income. This occurs especially when the man has formed another relationship with a woman in the urban areas and is perhaps supporting another family there as well. Often, if the remittance from her husband is too little, or has stopped completely, the woman is forced to migrate to the town to seek work. This has a disastrous effect on the children. A point not brought out by this study but that has been noted by other studies (*Lawrence Schlemmer and Peter Stopforth : A Study of Malnutrition in the Nqutu district of KwaZulu*) is that there is a higher tendency for malnutrition amongst those children that are not in the care of either parent, and are being looked after by others e.g. grandparents.

Now although these points regarding the resulting effects of migratory labour on the nature of family life are stressed by the researchers, by not placing the rural areas in perspective within the whole South African situation, it becomes difficult to imagine how a meaningful strategy for action to rectify

this problem can be constructed. Clearly it involves rather drastic changes in the system of labour supply presently operative in South Africa, as well as major changes in the concept of 'urban African' that exists in present policy. These implications the researchers do not spell out here : a plea for community development projects on a greater scale does not seem adequate. This seems to be an area the the Institute of Black Research could focus attention on in future publications.

Similar considerations arise when the need for agricultural development projects are mentioned. The point is simply that no successful agricultural development can have any hope of being effective as long as the majority of men are absent from the rural areas for the greater part of their lives. The women cannot be expected to fulfil the role of mother, land cultivator, home-maker and partial breadwinner, as well as to attend instruction on how to cultivate the land more effectively: there just is not time to attend to all these activities. Once again, without spelling out the relation pertaining between the conditions in the homelands and the conditions in the rest of the country, it becomes difficult to assess the possibilities of conducting effective agricultural development projects, as there are more issues at stake than just the conditions existent in the rural areas themselves. Thus it would seem that this study has two very important limitations in terms of the aims of the Institute as being a fact-analysing organisation with the end of assisting meaningful community action. Firstly, no framework is provided in terms of which the conditions in the rural areas can be interpreted within the political economy of South Africa. Secondly, that there is no indication regarding the type of strategies for effective community action that would assist in alleviating the present conditions in the areas being studied.

The third aim of the Institute for Black Research that was outlined was that of communicating to the average urban (Black and White) what the conditions in the rural areas are like. This aim is effectively achieved. The presentation of the publication which includes numerous photographs (although this does of

course, raise the price of the booklet), and a number of anecdotes of some individuals in the community being investigated, does bring out in a vivid manner the dire conditions in which the members of the community have to attempt to carve out some form of existence. The factual material is well intergrated into the verbal dialogue so that it does not become too cumbersome for the reader to handle. Lastly, the publication covers very briefly the most important aspects of the life of a family in Nqutu so as to provide the reader with a good over-all picture of the living conditions of the members of this community. But one reservation in the context of this aim should be noted. Surely the results of this study should not only be made known to the average urbanite, but also fed back into the community itself as part of an educative programme aimed at raising the awareness and consciousness of the members of the Nqutu community regarding their situation.

In conclusion, the contribution of the Institute for Black Research to the understanding of the Black communities in our South African 'reality' can only be assessed in terms of the extent of which it is fulfilling the need for types of research that are at present not being covered by other Institutes in their research programmes. It would seem that in terms of both their own purported aims, and the one above, that the Institute for Black Research has not demonstrated in its first publication what precisely it is that makes it distinctively Black research. The main challenges facing this organisation revolve around its ability to demonstrate to fellow researchers that a more dynamic and critical understanding of our South African situation can in fact be achieved in their programmes. The I.B.R. has set itself a complicated and much neglected task. The Black intelligensia has too readily accepted in the past the concepts and tools of "white sociology". We look forward with interest to its future publications.

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