

# TRAINING CENTRES FOR COLOURED CADETS

**An analysis of the Training Centres for Coloured Cadets Act No. 46 of 1967, the regulations issued thereunder and the system in practice.**

(Reality is grateful to the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination for circulating this analysis. The Coloured Cadets Act, like so much of our "horror" legislation, has been largely forgotten by all but those who suffer under it. This is understandable. When each year produces its quota of appalling laws, the implications of the old are soon forgotten. That they should never be allowed to do so, this analysis reminds us all too well).

"Our main punishment was to be sent to the cells or to be beaten with a stick. Wherever we worked in the camp someone stood over us. We felt as if we were constantly treated as if being punished".

— One of the cadets from the training centre.

"We (the ruling class) are now forced as a result of these years of neglect (by the state) to introduce a system of labour camps—all right, call them training camps and make it sound as nice as possible—as part of South Africa's economic and social life".

—Mrs Catherine Taylor, United Party M.P.

Recent Press reports of widespread arrests of "Coloured" youths in and around Cape Town for non-registration in terms of the Cadet Act and the strong resulting discontent induced C A R D (Campaign Against Racial Discrimination) to investigate the background and practice of the system.

South African society is tainted by the presence of forced labour. The African labour force is usually the target of this coercion ("rehabilitation centres", prisons), but in recent years part of the "Coloured" labour force has been drawn into this scheme. Statutory laws and administrative edicts have taken over from the market laws of supply and

demand.

South Africa's mines, farms and factories have been built up on the backs of cheap, disciplined and preferably submissive labourers. It is against this background that the Training Centres for Coloured Cadets Act No. 46 of 1967 must be seen.

The Act was introduced by the Minister of Coloured Affairs and was supported by the Official Opposition (The United Party) and more significantly by the Federated Chamber of Industries. To make the Act more "acceptable", the support of various Government nominated and financed "Coloured leaders" was harnessed. The Progressive Party's sole parliamentary representative opposed the Bill in toto, as did the Teachers' League of South Africa.

The Labour Party, while not opposing the bill in toto, called on parents not to allow their sons to register for service until facilities and wage rates equal to those of White military trainees were offered.

#### **The Act and Regulations:**

The central provision of the Act is to establish centres for the compulsory training of cadets **for any kind of employment.**

All men between the ages of 18 and 24 and classified as Coloured **must** register for training. Failure to register makes the person liable to be arrested and sentenced to a fine not exceeding R200 or imprisonment up to 6 months or both, and enforced registration.

It is this aspect, among others, which gives the training camp the characteristics of a conscripted labour camp. On registering, a registration certificate is issued. The certificate must be produced within 7 days when demanded by a policeman or other registering officer. (This period of grace was granted as a concession to the Opposition. In practice it is often ignored, judging from Press reports of arrests.)

Moving the second reading of the Bill, the Minister of Coloured Affairs said, "I want to give the House assurance that in this case it is not the intention to employ raids, general interrogation in the streets and large scale prosecutions."

—Hansard, 20.2.1967

Two years later ministerial patience had apparently worn thin, for he told parliament "Raids may be carried out to obtain recruits for the Coloured Cadet Training Centre if Coloured youths of 18 continue to ignore appeals to register".

—Rand Daily Mail, 10.5.1969

By 1976 the situation had reached the point where the Press were reporting "Seventy-nine youths have been arrested since 9th June in Athlone for not registering for service in the Coloured Cadets, a spokesman for the Athlone Police said yesterday".

—Cape Times, 15.6.1976

From the recruits, the selection board set up in terms of the Act may (i.e. the Board has a discretion) exempt those who are:

- a) full time students or scholars
- b) permanent workers and apprentices or who
- c) possess mental or bodily defects
- d) by undergoing training would face undue hardship
- e) are unfit to undergo training for any reason.

The Board may exempt any recruit permanently or for such

period or on such conditions as the Board may determine. If it is borne in mind that one of the motives (see below) of the Act is to produce "trained and disciplined workers" this power of the Board becomes ominous. Cadets who are **not** permanently and unconditionally exempted are on parole as it were.

Where a worker has not been working to the satisfaction of his employer, he may be dismissed, sent to the training camp and then be employed later by the same employer.

The following was reported by the newspaper "Post" (29.11.1970) "An 18 year old Athlone boy, Michael O'Shea was dismissed from his job and sent to Cadet camp. O'Shea, an apprentice plumber, was sacked at the end of October and the next day ordered to report to Cadet Camp in Faure."

It was admitted by the CRC Executive member in charge of Welfare and Pensions that the Department of Coloured Affairs was aware that O'Shea had been working, and that O'Shea's boss had reported him to be sent to camp and said that he did so in the boy's own interest.

This after assurances by a Nationalist M.P. that "this measure (does) not interfere either with the studies of Coloured students or with the work of those who are employed".

—Mr J. P. A. Reynecke—Hansard 2.3.1967

The threat of being sent to a labour camp must surely influence workers to be more docile. To this extent it is a psychological weapon in the hands of the employers.

While only a few hundred Coloured workers are at present being called up, fear of this fate influences many thousands.

"Perhaps many of these people will never see the training centres because the fact that they have been registered will prompt them to greater serviceability".

—Dr S. W. van der Merwe NAT—Hansard 20.2.1967

A recruit who is selected for training and who fails to report for this when called upon to do so will be liable on conviction to maximum penalties of a fine of R500 or imprisonment for 3 years or both.

Training includes physical exercises, sport, drilling exercises and the performance of any kind of work, but consists mainly of training for any kind of employment. The normal training period is for one year. This may be extended to a further training period of not more than one year if the cadet has not rendered "satisfactory service". Cadets spend 4 months in the labour camp at Faure and the rest of the period in employment.

Shoddy work or indiscipline at his place of employment can result in the cadet doing a further period of training (cheap labour?) at the labour camp, or a lengthening of his period of training of up to one year.

As the Minister of Coloured Affairs explained, "Cadets who are placed in employment with a view to training in the private sector but who fail to perform their duties or to make satisfactory progress will have to go back to the State-controlled centre."

In other words there will be a very powerful incentive for such youths to put their hearts and souls into their work lest they be endorsed into the labour camps.

Any period during which a cadet serves a sentence of im-

prisonment or is absent from the labour camp or his place of employment without leave is not taken into consideration in determining the duration of a cadet's training.

Both the Act and the regulations issued thereunder made provision for the disciplining of cadets. Cadets can be charged in a magistrate's court for contravening or failing to comply with any regulations and be sentenced to a fine of up to R200, imprisonment up to 6 months or confinement at a training camp.

Cadets who are absent without leave from the labour camp or their place of employment are, if convicted, liable to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 3 years or to both such fine and such imprisonment. The effect of this is as in the Army, to make desertion a criminal offence. It is thus true to say that cadets are subjected to military discipline and all that it entails. Any cadet who refuses or fails to undergo to the best of his ability any training he is required to undergo in terms of the Act is subject to similar penalties.

In terms of the regulations if a cadet inter alia contravenes the rules or the regulations applicable to the training centre, and wilfully disobeys any rightful order or instruction given by a person authorised to give such order or instruction and uses indecent language or acts in an insolent or threatening manner or in any manner whatsoever causes discontent, unrest and insubordination amongst cadets and conducts himself in a manner prejudicial to good order and discipline or unlawfully admits any female person to any part of a training centre, he should be guilty of an offence. The principal is given the right to try the offender in certain instances. The principal of the centre is empowered to impose on a cadet upon conviction, any one or more of the following punishments namely a reprimand, forfeiture of privileges for a period not exceeding 4 months, forfeiture of allowances, increase in the normal hours of work to the extent of, or pack-drill exercises not exceeding, 3 hours per day for a period not exceeding 3 days, and confinement. If the principal of the training centre decides to impose punishment, he must send the details to the magistrate of the district who may confirm or set aside or vary the punishment.

That cadets in private employment are subject to military discipline is confirmed by a further regulation which deserves to be quoted in full; "Until such time as a cadet is finally discharged, he shall at all times, wherever he may be, remain subject to these regulations as if he were within the confines of a training centre."

The threat of draconian punishments, must surely "persuade" all but the most courageous and defiant cadet that to attempt to change the status quo both politically and economically is not worth his while.

A cadet may study in his spare time only with the permission of the principal. The number of working hours in every week shall not exceed 56 including time taken up by meals and the tidying of dormitories. This in effect works out at 10 hours work every working day—something which would not be tolerated by a free labour force.

During his training the cadet receives such pay and allowances as the Minister of Coloured Affairs together with the Minister of Finance may determine.

When a cadet is placed in employment the regulations state that "he shall receive the wages normally applicable to per-

sons performing the same work at such a place, but in any event no less than the pay and the cash value of privileges received from the State by cadets at a training centre." (It might be asked what are the advantages to employers of employing cadets if they are subject to the same wages as other workers. The answer lies in the fact that the cadets are bound on the pain of punishment to be submissive, docile and unquestioning. Cadets while at the labour camp are protected by neither the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 28 of 1956 nor the Wage Act No. 5 of 1957 and are thus accorded no legalised bargaining power in respect of wages and working conditions.

Unlike other workers, e.g. shop and factory workers, cadets are not automatically entitled as of right to leave, instead the consent of the principal has to be obtained even when they are working in private employment.

At the conclusion of his training, the cadet is issued with a discharge certificate. If the conduct of a cadet during his period of training is regarded as mainly unsatisfactory, his discharge certificate may be endorsed accordingly. Given the fact that employers are likely to demand the production of a satisfactory discharge certificate from ex-cadets, this is yet another "incentive" for a cadet to conform. The conditions for the issuing of a satisfactory discharge certificate are self-explanatory, namely (the cadet) did not, during his training, commit any serious breach of the domestic rules which could harm the good order and discipline at the centre, during his training he was not convicted of any serious contravention of the regulations, by his conduct he had set a good example to others during his training etc.

#### **Motivation for the Act:**

"The aim of the new Cadet Training Centre at Faure is to build up a feeling of national pride among Coloured youths, as well as pride in their work, and to provide the private sector with trained and disciplined workers!

—Col. J. C. van Dyk, Principal of the Centre, addressing a management seminar, quoted Argus 21.11.1969)

There were various stated motives for the Act being introduced. One of the main motives was to provide "indigenous, reliable" labour to replace "foreign" (African) labour in the Western Cape. Since 1955 it has been state policy to attempt to remove African workers from this area. This policy which was presented as a safeguard to Coloured workers who were asked to see African workers as threatening their jobs, served no other functions than to divide the labour force still further and to prevent "mixing" of Coloured and African workers. "Mnr Viljoen (die Minister) het gesê die kleurlinge gaan geleer word om werk to doen. Hy gaan sy eie volk dien. Hy gaan Wes-Kaapland vir die bruinman en die blanke beskerm en beveilig met sy arbeid."

—Die Burger 8.3.1967

(Mr Viljoen—the Minister—said that the Coloured is going to be taught to work. He is going to serve his own people. He is going to protect and secure the Western Cape for the Coloureds and the Whites with his labour).

While at first it was also envisaged that this labour would be used in the agricultural sector, the cadets have increasingly been utilized by the expanding state sector and more particularly its security arms, e.g. police, prisons, army and navy. Those who are not employed by this sector

are absorbed probably by the business and farming sectors. Given the inadequacy of Coloured education, freedom from compulsory military training and the decline in the role and influence of the churches, there has been a gap in the process of socialisation of Coloured youths as "trained and disciplined workers" to feed the needs of the economy. The answer thereto lay in the Cadet Act—"As far as Whites are concerned, military service was expanded . . . Something similar is now envisaged for the young Coloured adults in order to lend some direction to their lives and to train them for some kind of work."

—Minister of Coloured Affairs, 20.1.1967.

One extra added benefit of the Act to employers and the State is that the cadets could provide a useful, docile scab labour force in times of strikes and riots. While as yet they have never been utilized in this role, the existence of a conscripted labour force poses a direct threat to the rest of the working class's bargaining power.

#### **Conditions at the Camp:**

Two cadets were interviewed about their reasons for registering and conditions at the camp—they requested to remain anonymous. Cadet A said he registered for training because of his parents' fears that he would be arrested if he did not.

"I spent 6 months at the camp. When I was recruited I was earning R23 a month; in the camp we were all paid R9 a month no matter what we did".

Twenty-four people slept in a room, and a "sergeant" and "corporal" were chosen by each room. Many of the people in A's troop had been employed when called up.

"Discipline was extremely strict. All our thinking was done for us and if we did not toe the line, we were beaten with a stick.

Our main punishment was to be sent to the cells, usually for a week. This was mainly for fighting, gambling or drinking."

No one in A's troop was employed outside the camp and he was surprised to learn that such a provision existed.

Most cadets worked in the camp or were drilled.

"We hated working in the camp because someone always stood over us. We especially hated having to work in our superior's gardens. Most of us found this very degrading."

Food was described as "all right, but never enough".

Cadet B said that work was much easier to obtain with a good reference from the camp.

"What we all hated was that we felt we were constantly being treated as if we were being punished."

"I especially hated the forced long distance running and being made to crawl through the dust."

"Once a cadet was beaten till he bled and then tied to a pole. His friends had to carry him while he was still tied to the pole. The beating took place in the bush and the authorities did not know about it."

Films about the camps were shown, telling cadets about the way officers would like them to live.

Complaints of other cadets centered on too little food, fear of corporal punishment and receiving unfavourable references from the camp or employers.

It should be noted that the Act and Regulations make provision for a maximum period of only 3 days detention in the cells, not the week which Cadet A claimed was usual.

Further, it should be noted that corporal punishment is expressly ruled out in terms of the Regulations.

Regulation J 35 reads:

"An instructor shall not strike or assault a cadet, except in self defence or in defence of someone else . . ."

The interviews seem to indicate that there is a marked tendency to disregard the regulations and for those legally responsible to turn a blind eye or at least to be "uninformed" as to daily practice.

#### **Success of registration scheme and training:**

Originally 90 000 youths were to be included in the initial registration and every year after, 20 000. This was reduced to an estimated yearly registration-expectation of 15 000. In the most successful year, as regards registration—1973—9 331 registered.

Mr J. de la Rey de Kock, Commissioner for Coloured affairs, said on May 2, 1974 that only 40 per cent of Coloured youths between ages of 18 and 24 registered.

December 1972—Mr F. L. Gaum, Commissioner for Coloured Affairs at the time said 73 per cent of all cadets who had completed training were still in employment after a period of a year, in positions which had been found for them.

Theron Commission, June, 1976, Page 273:

"It was repeatedly mentioned that in spite of intensive and nationwide information dissemination about the obligation to register, there is yet a large group of young men who do not do so. According to witnesses, the apparent reluctance to attend this institution is due to the stigma which attaches itself to boys who have been there. Compulsory service, which applies to all young men and in which boys at the centre will be included, will be more acceptable."

#### **Conclusion:**

Ordinance 50 of 1828 provided that "no Hottentot or other free person of colour lawfully residing in this colony (Cape), shall be subject to any compulsory service to which other of his Majesty's subjects therein are not liable."

This ordinance repealed the "Vagrancy" proclamation of 1809 and several other proclamations of a similar nature, which required inter alia that persons of colour carry passes if they were to leave their fixed places of residence, this measure being enacted to protect the farmers' labour supply.

The Cadet Act which has reintroduced the concept of compulsory labour for Coloured workers, and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Amendment Act which has reintroduced influx control for Coloured workers are a reversion to the situation as it was before 1828.

CARD opposes these measures and calls for their repeal. We realise that these are merely some of many measures reducing significant proportions of the South African population to unfree labour. African workers are already in many ways unfree. While until recently, Coloured workers have been relatively free it seems as if the State's intention is to reduce this freedom systematically in order to provide "trained and disciplined workers" for local and foreign entrepreneurs.□