

FOREIGN INVESTMENT
IN SOUTH AFRICA

THE CONDITIONS OF THE BLACK WORKER

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A BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN'S VIEW
OF THE PRESENT URBAN, RURAL
AND INDUSTRIAL SITUATION IN
THE REPUBLIC.

- A Banned Leader of the
S.A. Students Organisation
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1. AFRICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRESENT REALITIES

The accelerated pace that industrialisation has taken in SA had affected all population groups. The group most affected is the Africans because the demands over labour shortages have drawn in Blacks into the urban and industrial situation on a vast and unprecedented scale. Never more have so many Africans, men and women, been forced to rely on themselves as a labour force - as is the trend today.

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

Notwithstanding restrictions, Africans have increased greatly in the manufacturing, construction, transport and trading sectors. Africans have also moved into jobs previously reserved for Whites, or Coloureds or Indians. Even the Railways Department - perhaps the most conservative sector that still commands a large force of White workers - has had to concede to the present industrial demands, allowing Africans to drive railway buses running into African areas. Africans are also being allowed to become shunters, a job previously classified as 'White'.

However, restrictions on Black workers have not stopped. The Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act has been modernised and improved to function more efficiently. The Wage Boards have become powerful and rather too strong even for the Government itself. So much so, that even the Prime Minister was forced publicly to condemn the uncompromising stand of some factory employers when African demands for higher wages were being resisted.

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

The illegality of strike action is further cemented by the Border Industries Act through which the White Power sector encourages development of industries in areas bordering on 'Bantu' areas, where a vast pool of labour is made available to industrialists. There Africans are taken on as factory workers but under different labour conditions from those which employers have to comply with in urban areas. For example, textile factories at Pinetown, New Germany and Hammarsdale can employ women in some yarn processing departments. These women do jobs that demand shift work - jobs which would be more suitable for men in a society that still clings to traditional beliefs; and more so when considering the existing male labour surplus. But because it is cheaper to employ female workers as machine operators, many factories given them preference to male workers.

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

This is not without its economic and social consequence.

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

pay largely in the hands of the White employers.

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

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

In the urban municipal townships residential rights are hard to acquire; and pretty intricate. Unless one has a permit one cannot spend the night in the municipal townships. The laws require that all visitors have to be reported at the Superintendent's office. This situation is further aggravated by the common practice of keeping a watchful eye on unemployed residents under the influx control regulations.

Employment today is mainly through the labour bureaus. In the mornings crowds of work-seekers will crowd at the local Labour Bureau, hoping to strike some job. Many return home hungry; some dejected; more so since some urbanised Africans have, through experience, become choosy about the type of jobs they are ready to take on.

Further pressure is added by the sharply rising cost of living. Food prices, transport, entertainment fees, medical fees, have spiralled increasingly within the last three years. This naturally makes the

urban African expect more for his labour. The supermarkets in the city shopping centres do offer cut prices in commodities; but it is not easy for the lowly-paid African to produce cash for everything he needs on the consumer market.

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

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

Africans are frustrated with the industrial situation. Here are some typical reactions.

I have been going to that labour office for almost two weeks now. Spending money. And I'm from all that way - Hammarsdale (15 - 18 miles). This Pinetown is far. Still no job. And I wouldn't want to go to that labour office they have there at Hammarsdale. The factories there don't pay as much. You are sent to a lousy low-paying job. There it's far. You pay more for transport.

The discrepancy in pay may be unfounded, but this shows the level of mistrust that has built up through years of bitter experience.

In factories the work conditions also deal out knocks, as in the case of Matthews who is about 24 years old. We had been at the same factory. Already he feels insecure, and lost. Like the young man above seeking a job some 15 to 18 miles from his home.

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

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

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

Again on meeting one of my former factory mates who had shown reluctance to take strike action, he answered my questions:-

Question:

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

Answer: Actually there is f...-all gained. As everything has gone up in the shops.

Question:

You mean it is still not enough, what are you getting?

Answer:

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

Question:

You mean more work?

Answer:

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

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

In the urban situation, too, there is this anxiety. For example, there is this Durban talk of Kwa Mashu Township having to fall under the KwaZulu consolidation plan. People long used to striving for urban rights as 'Durban natives' cannot but feel worried over their future in the city of Durban. All those battles fought for Durban

residential rights. Again, there has been talk of Chesterville location having to move into Ntuzuma Township to the north of Kwa Mashu. Both Kwa Mashu and Ntuzuma are in the Inanda District. Yet people get excited on this subject. They sort of feel edgy, not knowing what to do. At Ntuzuma there were, as yet, no electrical facilities.

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

The anxiety is the same all over. At Johannesburg's Alexandra Township there is Sandton - that vast and sprawling White expansion scheme that is threatening to smother Alexandra. The people of 'Alex' are being referred to either Thembisa or Meadowlands. Thembisa is miles out to the north of Germiston. And Meadowlands is as far out of Soweto (about 20 miles). At Pietermaritzburg there is, now and again, a rumour of a possible move of Sobantu Village. Meanwhile, the city grows: towards them.

Anxiety breeds alienation.

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

Alienation brings with it frustration and cynicism - breeders of Social violence in a ghetto situation.

The 1960's and the early 1970's saw a marked increase in train

disasters in African areas. Trains carrying mainly African commuters and general passengers crashed and killed large numbers of Africans. The most recent rail crash near Durban occurred not many miles from Durban near Mariannhill. It was, as the case usually is, a train with mostly Black people.

This tendency is being seen as an expression of violence against Black people. When one bears in mind that the social neuroses in the Whites who operate the rail system can ooze out in their various jobs where they have Black lives in their hands.

Strikes have also showed a marked increase, especially after there was an apparent relaxation of Job Reservation. Africans began to move into jobs previously open only to Whites and Coloureds, especially in the building trade.

This apparent relaxation of Job Reservation was not a reversal of policy on the part of the White rulers - just a condition imposed by the shortage of White skilled artisans. Although the Department of Bantu Administration had promised that freedom of movement for Africans was going to be more relaxed, 1972 saw the processing of more than 11,000 pass offence cases. (Natal Mercury, Durban, 11 November 1973).

A growing worker-consciousness, prompted by a chain of strike actions which first began among Durban's dock-workers as early back as 1969, has led to a change of approach from the White trade union movement and from White leadership in general. A workers' Benefit Society was launched by the liberal sector of Natal's White labour and academic leadership groups, following a campaign for more wages to be paid to Africans. A Wages commission was formed, leading to the launching of the Benefit Society. Recently there has developed an

Institute of Industrial Education aimed at enhancing African aspirations in the trade union movement. Mr Harry Oppenheimer, the Anglo-American Corporation's chairman, also expressed concern at the African's involvement in SA industry and economy. But, as he put it:

This cannot be accomplished in a single generation and it requires massive investment not only in capital goods but in education and training of all kinds.
(Daily News, Durban, 18 July, 1973).

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

The power of the Bantustans was tested when the KwaZulu leader Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was forced into making a bitter attack on the Government for refusing him the services of a White secretary from Switzerland (Natal Mercury, Durban, 6 July, 1973); but the Chief's main worry appeared to be that of having 'let down' the Swiss industrialists who had offered the secretary's services.

2. ASSUMING THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE ABDICATION OF WHITE POWER

Any White success against the restiveness of the Blacks can only come on two basic assumptions; the short-term and the long-term assumption.

A. The Short-term Assumption

We may postulate on a possible confrontation between the Blacks (mostly) and the White power sector. Such a confrontation can by no means be clear cut, in view of the class interests of some sections of the Black community - (and by Black I mean African, Coloured and Indian). If the Blacks are weak and unorganised it may not be very difficult for the White power structure to stamp down any resistance by the Blacks; and unless the level of resistance comes to crystallize it is very possible for the White power structure to succeed against any Black confrontation. The Black confrontation can come from different angles. The students, if united and radical enough, could muster enough energy to enable them to stimulate the consciousness of the Black population. The unrest presently prevailing at African schools and universities and also as demonstrated by the Coloured students at the University of the Western Cape - could lead to further political assessment on the future position of the Blacks in this country.

Within this context of student politics it is no more possible to talk only of African education or African studenthood. The situation of the Black student is fast becoming more and more common - as was the case, more or less, before the Bantu Administration Act and the University Extension Bill. (Editor's note: the two measures which enforced segregation in all universities and which changed the syllabuses of Black schools.)

Further, the confrontation can also come from the workers. They have recently shown that they are capable of holding their own as

- a) the ideology is incompatible with justice, human rights and indisputable integrity of Azania as one indivisible country;
- b) the Bantustan system, its leaders and their disciples are creations of the system who act like perfect robots before the traffic of separate development;
- c) the system is mere ligaments for which Blacks are supposed to scramble with undaunted, distorted political zeal while the white grandmaster with all the fat steak in his hand. As such this system serves to deflect the Black inalienable rights to rule and serve the greater Azania in worship of homeland political dumpings. The origin, the mastermind and the system of Bantustanism is diametrically opposed to all human sense, reason and dignity that it must be rejected for what it is worth. Any such independence as may a so-called homeland get will meet with the same rejection by all Blacks. We wish to state also that because we reject and do not recognise any such independence we will continue to liberate Azania as one and indivisible unity.

MPOSELWA
ZANI

UNAN

26/75

That this G.S.C. adopt the community development commission report.

MJI
ZANI

UNAN

27/75

That this G.S.C. adopt the report of the Commission on education.

SOKUPA
CHIKANE

UNAN

28/75

That this G.S.C. noting,

1. the many motions passed at G.S.C.
2. the many projects which are to be embarked upon
3. the lack of information in branch reports on projects - their failure to reflect the problems and subsequently repetition of previous motions rather than problem solving.

THEREFORE RESOLVES

1. that all branch-reports should reflect what has been done on every pertinent resolution and every project.

BEUKES
MJI

UNAN

10/ 29/75.....

(which the Black students themselves promoted), Black politics and national consciousness - then this generation may go down in history as the most patronising and opportunistic generation of intellectuals in the Black man's struggle. However, a historic irresponsibility of this nature, thanks to resolute effort on the Black campuses, is being avoided.

Never in the whole history of the Black man's political struggle have the Black intellectuals been so affluent and so aloof from the problems of the common Black man. Here I exclude the Blacks of Namibia as I intend to throughout this paper.

Sharpeville marked the end of political dominance by the intellectuals and the clergy; yet not many young Blacks have been ready to accept this simple fact.

Came Black consciousness: the Black intelligentsia went scrounging for it. Black consciousness began silently to enter the minds of all the Black people of SA. Suddenly, there was no differentiation in attire between the educated and the uneducated. Tribal attire was fast being adopted by the middle-class Black. The worker and the rural Blacks were watching. Their pride gained.

Black consciousness could not have come at a better time. The economy of the country was beginning to affect every individual more sharply and to a far greater extent; the rising cost of living and other bread and butter issues were getting a clearer understanding from among even the illiterate Blacks.

Came the strikes initiated mostly by the illiterate Black workers. The Black intelligentsia were not there - beside their fellow Blacks; as if some wait-and-see attitude was understood to be the better part of valour. Meanwhile, the illiterate and semi-literate Blacks were

getting their first taste of power within the SA economy; they saw their demands and strike actions suddenly put the whole country off rhythm. These workers saw themselves gain world-wide attention - and this time, without any intellectual leadership. A worthy victory.

On the other hand, Black students were busy articulating Black consciousness. The whole concept of White superiority in its various aspects was being brought into question and torn to shreds bit by bit. Until it became self-evident to almost every Black student that what was regarded as White and superior was nothing but a result of 'swaart gevaar' (black danger) complexes that the Whites had nurtured since the conquest.

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

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

This means that the White power structure, with its widespread propaganda machinery and its big defence budget, may be able to manage

to lull the Black workers; perhaps, also, manage to satisfy, even if only temporarily, the immediate needs of the rural populace. Then it would not be easy for the liberation movements to master enough support to stage a successful confrontation against the White power structure.

The Blacks, especially the Africans, can still rally and strengthen their ranks on a united basis. Mass reaction against White domination can still develop - as the recent strikes have demonstrated. (But, again, we cannot for the time being dismiss the grip that a consumption-orientated black labour can be subjected to in case of continued economic boom.) Nor can one dismiss easily the divisions in religion and tribe that can erupt within the Bantustans. Only national consciousness could bind the various Black groups together.

Bind is perhaps not the right word. The whole concept of Separate Development is a euphemistic way of describing apartheid, and goes the whole length towards separating and dividing their common problems and aspirations. Such is the Bantustan reality.

Already, there is power struggle that threatens Black unity among Africans, Coloureds, and Indians. This is the struggle between supporters of the Bantustan scheme and those who oppose it. While it has been said that Africans have come to accept the Bantustan leadership, this is not true. All involvement within this scheme rests in the hands of the African 'middle-class', which finds itself with some influence in sport, in the Church, in business, in urban and rural politics, in culture. The workers are left out.

The Bantustans are also making the African middle-class a little more prosperous. (The business leadership may go along with the scheme as long as they can make some gain from it. The Black civil servant will feel they are more relaxed and very much a part of the set-up. (It

ANNEXURE:

39/75:

That this G.S.C. noting,

1. the distortions presented by people sent abroad by bodies like South African Foundation in regard to the attitudes of Blacks in sport in this country,
2. that it is our duty to present the true feelings of Blacks as regards sport in South Africa,
3. that occasions like the multi-national games, South African games and tours by overseas teams like the British Lions and the French Rugby teams are seen by us as militating against the interests of Black sportsmen and Black people generally in that they are destined to disguise the naked white racist policy on sport as perpetrated by the Vorster regime and hence delay the progress of Black people in this country towards liberation,
4. that the importance of sport as an instrument for our liberation has long been recognised by us,

THEREFORE RESOLVES

- a. to mandate the executive to look into the possibility of sending Black people to present the Black man's viewpoint on sport through any means that they may deem fit,
- b. that these people who will present the Black people's real feelings be armed with all information about the racist nature of the S.A. white racist regime,
- c. that this be done in consultation with all Black sporting bodies which believe in non-racial sport as we do,
- d. that this be treated as a matter of urgency in view of the past happenings in sport.

MOHAPI
KHUTSOANE

UNAN

Res. 40/75:

That this G.S.C. noting,

1. the unashamed lack of conscience of people like Leslie Selume, Reggie Ngcobo and R. Naidoo to be used as pawns by racist to attain international figure in sport,
2. their unashamed defence of the racist regime internationally thus hood-winking the world into believing that there is a chance in the racist policy,
3. that the action actually militates against the struggle for justice and the liberation of the Black man,

/ THEREFORE RESOLVES.....

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

B. The Long-term Assumption

One could envisage a breakdown of the Separate Development scheme as originally blueprinted. This should result in the exposure of the fascist undertones inherent in the scheme. Such situation could come about within the failure on the part of the White power structure to convince Blacks that this scheme is in their own interests. Objective reality determined by the prevailing subjective economic tendencies in social and political development would bring about an absolute contradiction whose stalemate could only be resolved through armed conflict.

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

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

The long-term assumption pre-supposes growing external and internal pressure on SA and a growing non-collaboration from the Black populace. The natural response to this is sterner measures and high-handedness from the White power structure. Already, the rebuff suffered by the SA Government during the 1973 elections in Ovamboland (Namibia) has been a clear hint that Africans are not in favour of the Bantustan political philosophy which is being imposed on them. On us all.

The basic problem in SA is the land. It is very common to hear people talk of the 13% of the land which is the sum total of land allocated to more than 87% of the whole of the SA population - the Africans. What many people ignore is that even that 13% is not yet 13%. There are still vast tracts of land in the hands of the Whites, especially the White farmers, the Conservation Department and Parks Boards. With the present consolidation plans for KwaZulu not getting off the ground, the whole land question can now be viewed not purely in its historic context but also within the present-day realities of totalitarian planning on the part of the White power.

As soon as talk began of a Zulustan the White population of Natal began to make efforts to frustrate the coming demands by Blacks for more land. Under the pretext of nature and wild life conservation many attempts have been made - with the consent of the White farmers who see the consolidation as a threat against their farms - to keep the rich parts and the strategically viable areas under White control.

Such actions definitely affect the urban and industrial situation - not only in Natal but throughout SA. Urban Africans are treated badly and told to go back to their Bantustan Homelands if White control in the urban centres is felt to be intolerable. The irony of this is that ample historical evidence can be found that Africans were already living in all the town centres in Natal long before these centres could even be described as 'dorpies' (villages). The worst part of this is that Africans have been driven out of the urban areas by influx laws, only to be allowed to re-enter as contract workers. As contract labour they are subjected to all kinds of inhuman conditions. Their sleeping quarters, work conditions, pay and general standard of living is such that crime and disease are a natural consequence. The aim of the present Government of having every African in the towns as a 'temporary sojourner' is already in

practice. The insistence of the Government on Works Committees for African workers, instead of proper trade unions, is in keeping with this principle.

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

Liberals, even the most consistent among them, have been found to be diverting and distracting the attention of Blacks from the basic demand: full democratic rights for all Blacks. Time and again liberals have proved to be mainly concerned with their aspirations as an alternative ruling sub-sector within the White power structure.

In several crucial issues they have been found to be deliberately obstructing the development of a national consciousness among the various Black groups - to the point of making frantic endeavours to split the ranks of Black organisations. The terms 'practical', 'moderate' have repeatedly been counterposed to words like 'unrealistic' 'radical' - or the most extreme 'communist-inspired'. A further demonstration of this practice is the approach adopted by many of the English-language newspapers of using the term Black to mean African, and exclude Coloured and Indian. The African team at the SA Games in 1974 was widely referred to as the 'Black XI' against the 'Coloured XI' and the 'Indian XI'. In 1971 at the SASO General Students Council Conference at Hammanskraal, the Rand Daily Mail reporters had to be sent out of the meeting place because of its insistence on using the term 'African' instead of 'Black'.

If there was at one time, some form of defence against these accusations the late 1960's and the early 1970's have proved the suspicions of the Africans to be correct. It has become self-evident that the liberal Whites cannot presently afford to lose the support of the Black middle class groups. They do not mind selling out all they have said in the past, or of buying one group against the other for the idea of a federated South Africa consisting of a white ruled 87% of the land and a fragmented 13% of the various mini-Stan States.

Since the liberals cannot support their credibility and image overseas without their control and manipulation of the middle-class Blacks, they have been forced to accept the concept of Separate Development. That is why a prominent Liberal Party leader has openly supported the idea of Federation. With its white electorate's support at stake, the Progressive Party went all out to say the moment for Federation had come. The Natal Progressive Party leader, Mr Harry Pitman, was bold enough to come out 'in favour of Natal and KwaZulu being joined together in one independent state with 'full democratic rights' for Whites and Blacks'. (Sunday Times, Johannesburg, 10 June 1973)

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

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

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

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

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

The social tendencies may spell a higher level of Black Power consciousness amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians, with the working-class Africans in the forefront of militancy, and the African middle-class somewhere in the background. Seeing that the realities of economic and political conflict revolve round the concepts of Power, it is highly possible that a stage of impass will be reached in which the African workers, with the help of some sectors among the intellectuals, will strive to resolve the prevailing conflicts of Power in relations between White and Black.

It is, therefore, the reality of a power conflict that will decide how the Africans work towards their economic and socio-political liberation.

3. PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF AFRICAN WORKERS' CONDITIONS:

A. External Contradictions

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

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

The denial of rights to industrial workers in the factories strains boss-worker relations. Job Reservation is a common practice in industry. Though Africans are gradually being allowed into 'better' jobs, there are still other jobs exclusively in the hands of the other race groups. In Natal, especially, most of the strategic jobs that Whites no longer need to hold are given to members of the Indian community even in African border areas.

SA still maintains a primitive and exploitative system of labour control in her use of external and internal contract labour. The migratory labour system means that in a large sector of the economy feudal norms of labour contract are still in practice, thus keeping the secondary and tertiary industries in an uneven balance so far as any improvement of the worker situation is concerned.

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

This conflict is further increased or contained by another stumbling block in the improvement of workers' conditions: illiteracy. Most African workers, especially those in the primary industry, are illiterate. Their meeting with modern ways of work operation and of raising productivity is not without its problems of alienation. Worse still, when the workers become accustomed to these modern ways, their integrity becomes involved since they find themselves expected to bend to the conditions set by a machine.

This is where consciousness comes in. Now and then, a consciousness of self-improvement develops, but since he is regimented in his place of work the worker finds it difficult to hold to a firm line of thought and action; all his assessments and moves are rendered unstable. Factory workers are also subject to the conditions of instability suffered by migrant workers confined to the mine compounds, though with slight differences. This lack of workers' rights, the discouragement of trade unionism and harsh labour rules are a source of insecurity.

Worse still is the continuation of foreign investments and the complacent attitudes of overseas investors, for no African worker believes in the often repeated and well moulded lie that the withdrawal of foreign investment would harm the African worker more than anyone else. What more has the African worker to lose?

At the 2nd General Students' Council of SASO in 1971, the whole

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

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

B. Internal Contradictions

SA's trade unionism will only mature with the destruction of the power of the White workers' unions. White workers enjoy a power that should not by right be theirs. The White worker is almost as privileged as his boss. White unions help in the shaping of official policy on African labour. They enjoy an over-rated power as was recently demonstrated when the Minister of Labour 'agreed in principle to sweeping revisions of the labour laws, but only if trade unions accept employers' proposals'. The Minister was referring to the proposed inclusion of Coloured, Indian and African artisans in the building industry. (Daily News, Durban, 22 July, 1973.)

This 'power' of the White trade unions has led most Whites into believing that the African worker is really helpless and cannot do things on his own. What these Whites forget are the laws enacted by the White Parliament that they help vote into power to make the laws.

The recently-established Institute for Industrial Education claims as its intentions - giving formal trade union education to the African; creating a trade union orientation in the African's industrial environment; boosting African initiative by granting a Diploma course in Trade Unionism and giving diplomas to successful candidates; working on Wages Commissions for the assessment of Black pay conditions and helping to teach the African of his role in the union and in society.

The question is whether the African worker has to be channelled through formal education to improve his conditions? What does 'formal' education mean in terms of White-Black relations and the existing conflicts of Power? The trade union type organisation proposed by the Institute is sure to become ineffettual and misleading since it pretends that the capitalist patterns of economic exploitation have not been changed and remoulded whereas capitalist norms have extended themselves to contain the social-democratic struggle of the workers in almost all structures of labour. More, the resurgence of worker-consciousness among Blacks has shown that the Black workers, especially the Africans (with the stress shifting to Border Industries), now know that the factories are not there to help them but to exploit them as labour resources.

This is why Black trade unions have been tinged with Black Power ideas. Black Power is expressive of an overtly political approach by the Black towards his being Black and towards his human rights.

The Institute of Industrial Education proposal to publish regular papers from African students studying for their diploma can be seen as implying that the student unionists would be needing White research and academics with the facts that the Whites need to assess the conditions within the Black community. This suspicion is further cemented by the inclusion of an Academic Panel in the structure of the Institute. One can only conclude that the Institute is already

working on elitist lines.

C. The Absolute Contradiction

The realisation of the priorities for the improvement of Black workers conditions, within the existing contradictions and fascist orientation of SA's socio-economic system, demands absolutes in the tendencies of the priorities.

Whites talk of the need for African trade unions in terms of African workers being a potential threat against the economy - unless they are properly organised and trained. This was markedly expressed by the managing director of a big company when he said that it was in the interests of the economy to have African leaders working openly for 'worthwhile, feasible' changes rather than having 'agitators' operating underground (Daily News, Durban, 3 August, 1973)

Changes, according to White employers, are worthwhile and feasible if you strive to get them on the terms dictated to you by your boss - and with you being a 'temporary sojourner' within the industrial situation.

But the 'temporary sojourner' is becoming slippery and self-sufficient in his ideas: that is the chief cause for anxiety. Before the 'Bantustan reality' was ushered in it was both appropriate and beneficial for workers to strive for purely economic victories.

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

Pure economic demands are going to retard economic growth as the spiralling of prices has shown. Already, most factories today want to talk of increased productivity as a counter-balance to increased wages - taking the increased productivity as a counterpart to increased consumption. In this situation workers will be making demands basically

on the White controlled economy, notwithstanding any degree of political autonomy in the Bantustans.

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

4. ACTION LIKELY TO BE TAKEN BY AFRICAN WORKERS:

A. Basic Self-reliance

The African workers have shown the ability to organise independently. Given the chance of non-interference from either official or liberal circles, they are able to work on their own initiative. Examples of self-help are the new interest in savings clubs; there is also the 'lottery' practice known as isitokofela; and burial societies'. It is perfectly feasible for workers to launch self-help programmes in literacy, trade union education and bursary schemes for their children.

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

Since the formation of the first African trade union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) by Clemens Kadelle in 1919, the Black worker has battled desperately to define his role in relation to the White-dominated economy. The 1922 strikes proved the utter conservatism of the White workers and their reactionary attitude towards African, Coloured and Indian labour interests. From thenceforth Black union rights were fought against and discouraged by White workers themselves.

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

local levels.

The migrant worker may in time find that he has done more than he c share for SA's vital industries such as mining, shipping, agricultu public transport, public health cleaning. This gradual realisation by Blacks of their role presupposes trade union awareness amongst Blacks. There are already marked signs of a resurgence of worker consciousness throughout the country.

What the African is also aware of is that his worker consciousness cannot operate outside the context of national consciousness or political resistance against White dominance. (But this national consciousness can be achieved only if the African worker redefines concepts about the nature of the national economy and of his share :

In 1971 Black students at Wilgespruit formation school went into the disparity existing between the theoretical and the practical aspects of Separate Development. The Black South African Students Organisation (SASO) had taken the initiative in criticising the policy pursued by the White ruling sector. Later, the Bantustan leadership was to trail behind, as if cementing the cracks.

At the July 1971 SASO Conference the latent power of the Black workers and the potentials of a Black workers' bloc were already being envisaged (Although a Black Workers' Project formed by SASO in 1972 has not achieved much towards the realisation of the aims born out of Black students concern over the Black workers' rights, the reasons leading to the formation of the project are of considerable significance.) The shortcomings of the project to date must be attributed to the general aloofness of Black students and intellectuals from the workers which many educated Blacks fail to overcome; another reason is the lack of a working class consciousness within t ranks of Black labour, where tribal affiliations still exist.

(over Duplessis)

However, a Black Allied Workers' Union was formed in August 1972, among several small unions. This led to the White-dominated Trade Union Council of SA making an all-out effort to win the affiliation and support of Black workers' unions: they have gone so far as to launch a campaign to organise Black labour. This can only be seen as a move to contain the growing worker consciousness amongst Africans; but the White ruling sector cannot now undo all those rulings that were made to bar Black workers from gaining trade union rights.

Black workers, on the other hand, cannot and shall not in the foreseeable future move any closer to the realisation of workers solidarity and trade union consciousness outside the context of national consciousness. Black workers will sooner or later come to a stage where they will have to use their power. That power can only be wielded in solidarity.

The consciousness of Power grows as is shown by the number of strikes since 1972; with it grows the power to articulate demands; At Hammarsdale about 14 factories in the border area managed a general strike for a day in a week of unrest. This is perhaps the only area where all factories were closed for at least a day as an expression of solidarity by the workers. This new strategy of a general strike was for the first time put into operation.

The Black intellectuals have also realised that as Blacks and as an exploited sub-group they, too, fall under the definition of worker. The SA Black Theatre Union (SABTU) was formed as a development of this new thinking among intellectuals and artists. In the same manner some students are now beginning to think that SASO's militancy and SASO's conscientisation of students and workers can only come out of overtly political involvement.

Black workers may soon want to do away with the tendency in SA factories of stressing wage gains on the basis of overtime work and

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

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

B. In Terms of the Long-term Assumption

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

The policy of Separate Development and its failures may be decisive in fostering working class consciousness, not only among African workers but also among Coloured and Indian workers, and so to the solidarity of the three Black workers groups.

Within this solidarity Black workers may find themselves in open resistance against a growing fascist repression. This would lead

to the forging of links with liberation movements, and to a solid link with Black students who, by then, ought to have become highly radical in the face of objective reality. For education is impossible within a repressive situation.

The dangerous economic policies of the White power sector can now lead only to strengthening fascist tendencies. It is now clear that only the sharing of power, economic and social, can save the country from complete totalitarianism and possible chaos.

This point of national crisis is evident in the sudden interest SA is showing towards outside loans and foreign investments. It is further demonstrated by her seeking favours from American business so as to involve American economic, political and military interests which no change of party rule, Democratic or Republican, can perhaps undo. This would mean possible American involvement in case of a showdown between the White power sector and the Blacks. With the withdrawal from South-East Asia there are fears from urban Africans of the United States switching its interests into Africa. The chain of invitations that take African middle-class leaders and scholars to New York instead of London has given rise to fears of a change of orientation that may draw America into SA. The increase of American influence in dress, university literature, sports goods etc is becoming greater in the city centres.

Could any struggle between the White power structure and the dissatisfied Blacks be a short-term confrontation? Very unlikely. On the other hand, the consciousness of confrontation that is developing among the Blacks may come to mean that the African worker has for the first time come to see his interests in terms of bread-and-butter issues as well as self-confidence in his power potentials. No Black leadership has had to tell him that he needed - as used largely to be the case before Sharpeville. The recent strikes were spontaneous moves

from the workers themselves.

Meanwhile, the Black leadership has been busy scraping an extra rand here and there. The Black student shares the dissatisfaction of the worker. Only, they have not yet reached a common purpose. That gap, however, is fast being filled; this is why the White power structure has resorted to the barring of so many student leaders in the last eight months. Those students were perhaps not aware of how they might stimulate a student-worker alliance within SA's third world context of Black-consciousness. It has happened before in history that a political slogan or directive has got out of hand and become too big for its initiators. This is what has been happening with Black Consciousness. The Black student has suddenly discovered that he cannot develop the concept of Black awareness any further outside the focus of national consciousness and of Power if he is to view Black Power as an expression of solidarity between the Black race groups and as an expression of self-determination in opposition to the super-imposed, 'divide and rule' concepts of Separate Development. Black Power is, therefore, a natural development.

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

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

To envisage a future non-racial South Africa without some forms of participatory democracy within a planned economy is far removed from human and social reality. Solidarity between the Black groups can only be found in, and be strengthened by, class awareness. Only an equal sharing of the wealth and fruits of labour from the national

economy can now save the explosive situation. Or SA may yet become another Vietnam and the Middle East rolled into one.

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