

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

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SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

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PROTECTION AGAINST VICTIMISATION

It was reported in the press (Rand Daily Mail, 16th March, 1978) that the Department of Labour has refused to act on an allegation of victimization of black workers lodged by a black trade union - the Building, Construction and Allied Worker's Union (BCAWU). The union alleged that in January works committee members at a Pretoria brick works were victimized. Attempts by the union to discuss the issue with management failed. A letter was written to the Department of Labour. No reply has been received. Union leaders then went to the department in Pretoria - but officials refused to discuss the case with them. As far as the Department is concerned, the union does not exist; therefore it seems the Department will not take up the victimization reported by the union. Instead, the Department's spokesman speaks of the workers complaints being dealt with at the brick works, with perhaps referral to higher bodies at a later stage.

Africans are completely excluded from statutory protection against victimization for trade union activity. The Industrial Conciliation Act excludes Africans from its definition of employees and thereby also from statutory protection against victimization. The Wage Act and Shops and Offices Act define trade unions strictly as registered trade unions so that Africans are also denied protection from these Acts. The only statutory protection against victimization enjoyed by Africans is under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act, but the protection is exclusively for liaison or works committees and *not* trade union activity.

A further problem faced by Africans as well as other workers is to prove that victimization took place. For example this is often done in the form of redundancy when union activists are relayed of first. Because of the difficulty in proving victimization the courts do presume that the charge brought against the employer stands until the employer has proved otherwise. This statutory provision is weakened immensely by the fact that the presumption of victimization falls away if the employer proves that there are grounds other than

those statutorily prohibited which justify dismissal. Examples of such grounds are moral misconduct and wilful negligence which include incompetence, insolence, dishonesty and disobedience to a lawful and reasonable order. Employers would therefore have little difficulty in coming forward with some or other reason other than victimization for dismissing a worker.

Even when African workers have clearly been victimized it is by no means sure that employers will be charged, in the case of Duens Bakery in Cape Town (SALB, Vol. 3, no. 2, Sept. 1976) it was established beyond any doubt that management had laid off four workers because of their active role in campaigning for a works committee, but no charges were ever laid against management nor were the workers compensated or reinstated.

Reinstatement is another area where African workers are severely discriminated against. The provision under the Industrial Conciliation Act whereby compulsory arbitration can be made to apply to a dispute arising from victimization, does not apply to Africans. Nor does the procedure whereby the Minister of Labour can order a reinstatement of victimized employees apply to Africans if the reason for victimization was trade union activity. Reinstatement or compensation of African workers is only possible under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act and that only when managers have been found guilty of victimizing workers for liaison committee or works committee activity, but not trade union organisation. Workers do not have the right at common law to claim reinstatement on the grounds of wrongful dismissal. It has been ruled that only a criminal court has jurisdiction over the remedies against victimization as laid down in the Act. The present legislation against victimization for Africans is therefore totally inadequate.

Clearly the main problem is the exclusion of African workers from the cornerstone of the South African industrial relations system, the Industrial Conciliation Act. This means that they cannot oblige employers, the Department of Labour or the Industrial Councils or registered unions to co-operate. They have to rely on the goodwill of these institutions. As long

as the state refuses to recognise African trade unions it seems probable that this goodwill will not be forthcoming.

The appointment of the Wiehann Commission has created an opportunity for a more imaginative approach to the problem of victimization. The commission should consider recommending provisions which establish a right to complain to an industrial tribunal or labour court against unfair dismissal. It is conceivable that a system of labour courts at the local level with a national labour court as ultimate arbiter might play a useful role in developing sounder labour relations in future. At the local level procedures should be simple and cheap, confined in some instances to relatively straight-forward issues such as wrongful dismissal or to preliminary hearings in more complex matters. At this level an advocate sitting with assessors representing employer and worker parties might suffice. The National Labour Court should, however, be a judicial body capable of creating precedents on all industrial conflict situations and hearing appeals from other courts.

However our support for a labour court to protect employees against victimization is dependent on the present Legislation being substantially amended. The provisions of the British Trade Union and Labour Relations Act of 1974 could provide this country with some guidelines. The Act lays down that, with some important exceptions, every employee has a right not to be unfairly dismissed by his employer. If he is unfairly dismissed the employee can complain to the Industrial Tribunal which may recommend his reinstatement or re-engagement, or award him compensation. The exceptions are persons employed in small businesses, or by spouse or close relatives, or part time workers. To qualify for protection the employee must have worked continuously for 26 weeks for the particular employer. By definition dismissal covers termination of employment by the employer, with or without notice; the expiry of fixed term contracts of employment without renewal; as well as constructive dismissal (i.e. where the employer by his acts makes it impossible for the employee to continue working for him). The reason

for the dismissal must be shown to be acceptable in principle and fair in fact. The onus is on the employer to show that dismissal was reasonable. The Act provides five acceptable reasons: namely, (1) that the employees could not do the job (i.e. physical or mental incapability or a lack of appropriate qualification); (2) that the employee was guilty of misconduct; (3) that the employee is redundant, in which case he may be entitled to compensation under the Redundancy Payments Act; (4) that it would be a breach of some statute to continue to employ him in that job; or (5) that there is some other substantial reason which would justify the dismissal of that sort of employee. Even if the employer shows that his reason for a dismissal is acceptable, he must still satisfy the Tribunal that dismissal is fair and reasonable. The compensation which may be awarded to an employee for wrongful dismissal may not exceed £ 5 200 or 104 weeks pay, whichever is the lesser amount.

However the fear of victimization is not merely a characteristic internal to the African worker per se, but is the product of a more generalised structural lack of legal protection. African workers are subject to influx control, pass laws, curfew regulations and are extremely vulnerable to police and state action against them. To look to improved mechanisms within the present legislative framework of African worker representation *alone* is to fail to perceive that the roots of the fear lie deeper and permeate all aspects of the work and living situation. Improvements in present industrial legislation alone will therefore do little to convince the majority of workers that their long term job security has been improved. This will only be ensured when their own trade unions are able to negotiate a dismissals procedure subject to trade union control into any agreement reached with their employers.

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P. Galt, *Security of Employment and Victimization in South African Law* (SALB Vol 3 No 1)

BANNING AND THE TRADE UNION

MOVEMENT

Ever since their inception, bannings have been used at crucial stages in the development of non-racial trade unionism as a means of destroying effective leadership. The first person to be banned under the Suppression of Communism Act was Solly Sacks, the effective secretary of the "mixed" Garment Workers Union. By 1956 the Minister of Justice, told the House of Assembly that the names of 75 trade union officials had been placed on the liquidators lists. Of these 56 had been ordered to resign from their unions. Since then, hundreds of other trade unionists have been banned by the Minister. By 1964 more than 50 prominent members of SACTU had been banned. Similarly in the 1970s trade union leaders have been hampered by bannings. In January 1974 four prominent TUACC trade unionists were banned. In November 1976 26 men and women involved directly and indirectly with the African trade union movement were banned in terms of the now amended Internal Security Act. More ominously for the first time in October 1977 a trade union organisation, the Union of Black Journalists was banned.

At the time of the 1976 bannings we wrote an editorial (SALB Vol 3 No 4) where we challenged Arthur Grobbelaar's assurances that the people banned were not engaged in legitimate trade union activities. We took our stand from the International Labour Code, Article 858 which reads inter alia that "the public authorities should refrain from any interference which would restrict or impede lawful exercise of (trade union activities)". We argued that it is the trade union members and not the Minister of Justice, who decides who is a trade unionist and who is not. We saw these bannings as an attack on the legitimate rights of African workers to organise.

Arising out of Grobbelaar's statement L. Douwes Dekker, Mr and Mrs EF Tyack of UTP three of those banned in 1976 sued Grobbelaar as an individual and TUCSA as a corporate body for libel and damages totaling R10 000.

After lengthy negotiations settlement was reached out of court. In terms of this agreement Grobbelaar admitted that there was no reason to believe that these three people were engaged in activities that would endanger law and order. The statement read:

The Trade Union Council of South Africa and Mr Grobbelaar never intended to imply in their statement that Mr. Douwes Dekker and Mr. and Mrs. Tyacke were anything other than dedicated persons in the Trade Union Movement who sought to protect the interests of working people through lawful channels. They had no reason to believe that Mr. Douwes Dekker and Mr. and Mrs. Tyacke were engaged in activities aimed at endangering maintenance of law and order and, insofar as their press statement was understood to say this, they unreservedly withdraw such allegations and apologise to Mr. Douwes Dekker and Mr. and Mrs. Tyacke for the damage done to them.

Damage to the effect of R1000 were awarded to each of the aggrieved parties.

Two points emerge from this libel case. Firstly the Minister should review all those banned in 1977 in the light of Grobbelaars statement and lift their bannings allowing them to continue their lawful trade union activities. Secondly the provisions of the Internal Security Act which enables the Minister of Justice, police and prisons to intervene in labour relations through the exercise of arbitrary banning powers should be removed from the statute book.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LABOUR INFRASTRUCTURE:
MIGRATION ROUTES TO THE WITWATERSRAND GOLD
MINES AND COMPOUND ACCOMMODATION-1889 TO 1912

by J.K. McNamara

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the early development of a system of labour recruitment, and accommodation and control for gold mines on the Witwatersrand, up until the formation of the Native Recruiting Corporation (N.R.C.) in 1912.

The various obstacles to a cheap labour supply in the years after 1899 will be identified, particularly the lack of a transport infrastructure from labour supply areas, and the resulting hardships experienced by Blacks walking overland to the Witwatersrand gold mines. The physical hardships implied by terrain and distance, and more importantly, the activities of labour "touts" and agents, bogus police and thieves who made their money dealing in or exploiting labour as a scarce and vulnerable commodity, will be considered insofar as they adversely affected the labour supply and led to the raising of wages on individual mines.

The collective reaction of mine-owners, represented by the Chamber of Mines, the Native Labour Department and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) will be described in terms of the effort to obtain greater control over Black labour, and hence effect an improved supply and a reduction in wages. The proliferation of rest camps and depots on overland routes, sea and rail transport from Northern Transvaal, the Cape Colony, Mocambique and Central Africa, and the various legislative enactments aimed at securing greater control over the labour supply, will be documented. Reference will also be made in this description to the collaboration between recruiters and traditional chiefs, *izinduna* and headmen in order to secure labour from the rural districts of South Africa.

The appearance of compound barracks on the Witwatersrand as a form of cheap labour accommodation, and the extent to which they can be seen as a further form of control over workers, will be considered. Finally, compounds will be contrasted with the emergence and decline of an urbanized mine work force drawn from squatter townships on the line of Reef.

The choice of the particular historical period (1889-1912) for description is determined partly by source material and partly by historical theme. The most important single sources are the Chamber of Mines Annual Reports (henceforth CMAR), which are fairly comprehensive in the early years, and include the annual reports of WNLA, and the various commissions dealing with Black and White labour. After 1915, however, the WNLA reports and many commissions are omitted, the volumes become somewhat slimmer, and hence are less reliable as comprehensive historical sources.

This limitation is not a serious problem from the point of view of this paper, however, since the time period during which the reports are most exhaustive covers also the critical "pre-organised" labour situation, and the first steps in the development of a labour infrastructure. Industrial policy and action in relation to recruitment, control and accommodation were formulated at this time, setting precedents which in some cases still endure at the present day. The period also covers the ascendancy of WNLA as the first recruiting body to systematically organise a labour supply for gold mines.

2. THE NEED FOR A CHEAP LABOUR SUPPLY

The discovery of gold in the sparsely inhabited Witwatersrand area posed an immediate problem of labour supply for a developing and expanding industry, particularly as labour shortage led to competition between individual mine-owners:

This competition has in some cases taken the regrettable form of over-attempts to bribe and seduce the employees of neighbouring companies to desert their employers...a manager finding

himself short of labour has...scarcely any other remedy than that of raising his rates of pay (1st CMAR, 1889, p.9).

Higher wages depressed working profits and threatened many mines with closure. The newly-formed Chamber of Mines provided the first forum for agreement among mine owners and formulation of common strategies to obtain an adequate, cheap labour supply. The first remedies embarked on included collusion to reduce wages of Blacks to common maximum levels, pass regulations to control desertion, active attempts to secure "large drafts of natives from outside districts" (1st CMAR, 1889, p.10), and legislation to eliminate competition in recruitment.

In essence, the organisation of a labour supply appeared to the industry to be the most important means by which a reduction in wages could be effected: "the increased supply would facilitate a further reduction of wages..." (2nd CMAR, 1890, p.77). One of the biggest obstacles to generally reducing the cost per head of Black recruits, was the activity of labour "touting".

3. TEN YEARS OF LABOUR TOUTING: 1889-1899

The great demands for labour, the shortness of supply, coupled with the general state of "lawlessness" on the Rand and the lack of effective organisation among mine-owners, provided a lucrative opportunity for idle Europeans and their Black "miners" in the Transvaal. These 'highwaymen of labour' set themselves up on the main travel routes around the labour districts, and intercepted groups of travelling Blacks on their way to the fields. The tout usually demanded their existing travel passes, if they had any, and then sold these "boys" to the mines:

...a few of the most powerful companies...spend thousands a year in paying touts who seize upon natives actually on their road here, and get paid 10s or £1 per head for escorting them to the particular mine for whom they have an order... Touts do not bring a single boy here. There is an abundance of labour to be obtained in this

country...and it is our duty to induce that extra labour to come, and not to fritter away thousands every year in escorting boys who were coming anyhow (6th CMAR, 1894, p.19).

The powerlessness of individual mine-owners forced them to enter into agreements with touts by placing orders for labour. The tout appeared to have enjoyed the upper hand in this relationship. A certain Ferreira, for example, received fees from one company to supply labour, and later induced these same labourers to leave this employer and take service with another, for which the tout again received fees (8th CMAR, 1896).

Beckett's compounds, erected with Government permission to issue travelling passes outside of the labour districts, came to provide labour touts with a centralized source of workers. In these compounds, Blacks were forced to buy goods and stores before being given a pass to go home, and any White man "willing to pay these debts would have the first supply of the Natives" (3rd CMAR, 1891, p.54). It was not until 1894 that the Chamber was able to secure an agreement with Beckett and co., "under which touts will no longer be allowed to enter the compound at Pretoria" (6th CMAR, 1894, p.47).

Pass Regulations for the Witwatersrand were drafted in 1893 and specified that workers arriving on the Rand would exchange their travelling passes for district passes (6th CMAR, 1894). These regulations were supplemented the following year with the clause that Blacks be issued with metal arm-badges for better identification of deserters (CMAR, 1895). Loopholes in the law still existed, however, and these were initially exploited by touts:

The law...lends itself to touts and others who induce natives to desert their employers and enter their service, by reason of their being enabled to bail the natives out for the sum of 10s, whereby the native avoids the repayment of the initial outlay in bringing him to the fields (8th CMAR, 1896, p.104).

The law was amended and the fines raised to £3 (10th CMAR, 1898) but desertion continued, encouraged by the touts, who promised deserters unrealistic wages on other mines:

...the touts, having only one object, viz., to collect "boys" in order to deliver them to companies at the highest obtainable premium, make any misrepresentation that may conduce to that end. Later, the native finds that he has been deceived with regard to wages, which are often far below what the tout promised, and naturally becomes discontented; but for this he blames, not the tout, but the mines; and makes the fact speedily known in the district from which he came. Thus, in some degree, the natural influx is discouraged (10th CMAR, 1898, p.4)

It was apparent to the industry that nothing short of a concerted attempt to create a total monopoly over labour would be needed to effectively reduce labour costs and wages. The organisation of labour needed to be

placed under the control of a single responsible institution. Under such an arrangement, only responsible agents would be employed, and any information given to the natives with regard to wages and conditions of employment, etc., would be accurate (11th CMAR, 1899, p.40).

The Native Labour Agent Bill of 1899 provided for the appointment of licensed labour agents in the territories, and stipulated penalties for those without licenses and those who induced employees to desert an employer for another employer. It also provided for a written contract with Black recruits. The era of touting had largely come to an end. This legislation appeared to be necessary also because it hampered the activities of the Department of labour (established in 1894):

the intense competition set up by these touts made the work of the Department in collecting labour, in accordance with the actual conditions regarding pay, exceedingly difficult (11th CMAR, 1899, p.57).

The Chamber, however, seemed to have attributed their difficulties in recruiting labour, as well as the high rate of desertion, to the touts' inaccurate promises to Blacks regarding wages, and did not appear to consider these problems as possible manifestations of their own wage policies. In 1897 for example,

in consequence of the notice of the coming reduction in wages, there was a considerable exodus of natives... (9th CMAR, 1897, p.114).

Further controls on desertion were implemented, particularly the fingerprint system of identification, established by the Department of Native Affairs in 1901. Only pass offenders had their prints taken at first, but the Department recommended that the mines take prints of all their recruits (13th CMAR, 1902), which has been the practice ever since.

Legal action against the system of touting was only one of the steps needed to bring the supply of labour under the control of the industry. The Chamber had appreciated early on that

...the supply of native labour would be much improved if the difficulties met with by kaffirs in the course of their long overland journeys, could be done away with (2nd CMAR, 1890, p.73).

4. OBSTACLES TO THE FLOW OF LABOUR FROM

SOURCES OF SUPPLY

The closest sources of labour to the mines were in the populated areas of the Northern Transvaal, the Cape Colony and the East Coast of Mocambique. Northern Transvaal Blacks, however, chose rather to remain in their kraals because of low mine wages and a small pox epidemic respectively, while Cape Colony Blacks also demanded higher wages, and in addition refused to work

underground (5th CMAR, 1893). Mocambicans, on the other hand, were already arriving on the Rand after having walked from their home country, but this supply was inadequate, partly because of the presence of a number of obstacles en route which appeared to have discouraged greater numbers from undertaking the journey. Two aspirant contract recruiters, Best and Williams, described some of these to the Chamber:

The greatest and most dreaded of these are at the Transvaal borders, and for the succeeding hundred miles. In the first place, scarcity of food and shelter; from the borders to the Rand, on all the main foot-paths, can be seen the evidence of this evil, skeletons of those who have died are frequently seen, and at almost every store and dwelling near the road can be found those whom sickness or fatigue has compelled to give up the road and to either find a friend or perish. Secondly, many travel without a pass, not having the necessary shilling to buy one, and are forthwith taken by touts and agents (often assisted by the useful veld-cornet), and forced to work for their greatest foes, the Boers and the railway construction contractors, who do not, we are told, scruple to use the sjambok freely, and often refuse to pay the natives even after three or four months service. In addition to these general evils, the Inhambanes and Chobis are often cruelly treated by Mangonis, a class of Shangaans on their way through the Shangaan country; this alone prevents all but the very bravest from leaving their homes (6th CMAR, 1894, p.35).

The most serious obstacle appeared to be the sheer distance and the nature of the country to be covered on foot. An individual seeking to work on the Rand mines

has to travel long distance on foot, in some cases nearly 500 miles. He comes generally without clothing or food, and suffers greatly in the course of his journey from cold, wet

and hunger (2nd CMAR, 1890, p.76).

As Best and Williams noted, however, this was not the only hindrance. Travelling Blacks were also redirected to other work, often unpaid, on their way to the Rand:

It is in many places the custom of the farmers forcibly to stop any native found resting or sleeping on their farms. If these natives are coming to the fields, and have consequently no money in their possession, they are compelled to work without payment for a few days before being allowed to proceed (2nd CMAR, 1890, p.76).

The chief culprits in this respect appeared to be the farmers in the Bethal, Ermelo, Standerton, Carolina and Barberton districts (4th CMAR, 1892). Similarly, during the period 1889 to 1894

natives on their way from the East Coast to the Witwatersrand mines are being turned back by police of the South African Republic and sent to work on the Transvaal section of the Delagoa Bay railway (3rd CMAR, 1891, p.41).

Another problem on the journeys to the mines was the fact that Blacks were being constantly relieved of their money. They were "continually fined all along the road" by police because they did not have the necessary travel passes (3rd CMAR, 1891, p.50). Passes were issued by district field officers and traditional chiefs and headmen, and were then exchanged at the nearest landdrost for "reis" (travel) passes on payment of 1s. Those who did get reis passes were sometimes intercepted by White touts who tore up these passes, and forced them to work for new ones, and also made them buy goods (6th CMAR, 1894). They were also forced to buy another pass, a piece of paper stating "pass the bearer", on payment of 1s (6th CMAR, 1894). At a later stage of their journey, these Blacks were as a result often arrested and fined by police for not being in possession of authentic passes.

"Bogus policemen also sometimes deceived Blacks by demanding payments of £2 per head for passing through "small pox areas" (5th CMAR, 1893). "Vaccinations" were also repeatedly administered by "doctors" at 1s per head on roads to the labour districts, and sometimes also in the rural areas. On a trip to the Zoutpansberg in the Northern Transvaal, the Native Labour Commissioner reported that the

...law enforcing vaccination has been converted into a means of constant annoyance and irritation, coupled with what can only truthfully be described as an unrighteous plundering of the native ... In one native location that I visited the farce reached such a climax that the chief assured me that only a short time ago a gentleman put in an appearance, styling himself "doctor", though having, as I was informed by a credible European, no diploma whatever, who stated that he was authorized by the Government to vaccinate the tribe. As the bulk of the men had already been vaccinated and some mulcted of the fee as many as three times, they declined, at the same time saying 'We suppose you only want the shilling.' They then proceeded to collect a number of shillings, which satisfied the visitor, and he left without vaccinating a single individual (6th CMAR, 1894, p.69).

At Viljoen's drif on the Vaal (map), trainloads of recruits were given vaccinations at a fee of 1s, passed over the river on their way to the fields, and were again vaccinated on the Transvaal side at Vereeniging, this time for 1s 6d. Certificates which they had received at the drif were destroyed and new ones supplied, for a further 1s fee.

This double vaccination system was "nothing but a money-making affair" on the part of the doctors and the so-called Government Vaccinating Officer for the Transvaal (10th CMAR, 1898, p.89).

Another complaint emerged at Viljoen's drif, where a fumigation centre had been set up. Transkeian natives complained that they had been robbed, and their clothes

burnt in the fumigator, by "Free State Dutchmen" at the centre (8th CMAR, 1896).

Outright robbery by both Black and White was also common on the roads. In one reported case robbers were masked, with their "faces muffled, and with spectacles on", and robbed 5 workers returning home of wages totalling £96 (2nd CMAR, 1890, p.77) In another case, 6 returning workers were relieved of £150 near Komati Poort (7th CMAR, 1895).

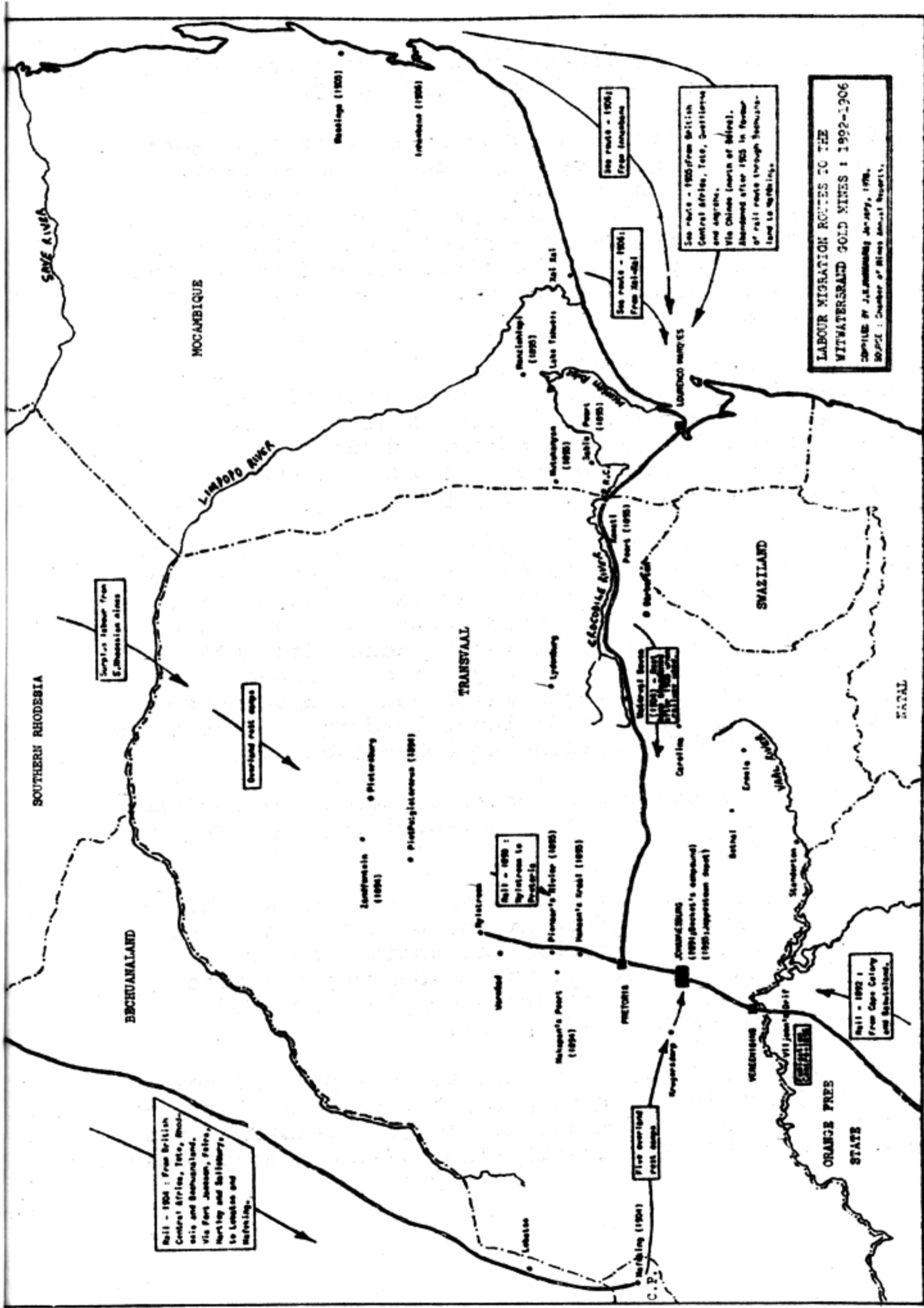
It was evident to the Chamber that such incidents, including the activities of touts, threatened to discourage Blacks from undertaking the journey to the fields, and compounded the natural difficulties of terrain and distance. These problems clearly interrupted the supply of labour, and made it difficult for individual mines to honour maximum wage agreements, and forced them to rely on labour touts. These factors provided the major stimulus to the various attempts to develop an organised labour recruitment system.

5. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LABOUR RECRUITMENT INFRA-STRUCTURE

The organisation of labour supply routes to the Witwatersrand before the formation of the N.R.C. in 1912 can be divided up into three main time periods:

- a. activities of the Chamber of Mines and individual mine-owners, particularly in the Cape Colony 1889 to 1893;
- b. operations of the Native Labour Department and the Native Labour Commissioner in Northern Transvaal and Mocambique 1894 to 1900;
- c. operations of WNLA, particularly in Mocambique and Central Africa 1901 to 1911.

Two years after its formation, the Chamber made a suggestion to the Republic's Volksraad that the State bear the expense for the construction of shelters and



LABOUR MIGRATION ROUTES TO THE WITWATERSRAND GOLD MINES : 1892-1906
 COMPILED BY J.A. LANGRISH, JANUARY, 1978.
 SOURCE : Chamber of Mines Annual Report.

rest camps along the labour routes. This was rejected with "astonishment" (3rd CMAR, 1892, p.50).

The Chamber made little headway in recruitment, apart from a few isolated successes, such as an agreement secured from the Cape Colony Government to obtain reduced rail rates, "one half-penny per man per mile, when 25 men or more are forwarded in one batch" (4th CMAR, 1892, p.41). The first train from the Cape coast had arrived in Johannesburg in that year, and it was immediately clear that

The transport of goods and mining material is rendered cheaper and made independent of the changes of the seasons, while facilities are now offered for getting native labour from Basutoland and the native districts of the Cape Colony (4th CMAR, 1892, p.41)

The opening of this supply route (map) allowed further negotiations to be made to obtain labour from the Cape. The basic strategy was to make contact with traditional authority figures such as headmen and *izinduna* who mustered their subjects for recruitment (5th CMAR, 1893). One such scheme did not succeed, however since recruits rejected the wages which had been accepted on their behalf by their traditional leaders, and deserted on the road from Vereeniging to Johannesburg.

A Native Labour Department under a Labour Commissioner was set up in 1893 to regulate recruiting on a more systematic basis:

The establishment of the...department marks the first determined effort on the part of the local mining industry to tackle the native labour problem, and endeavour, while lowering the rate of native wages, to secure an ample supply of labour (5th CMAR, 1893, p.43).

Local rural chiefs were authorized to supply passes to their subjects in order to protect them until they reached the Labour Commissioner in Johannesburg. The Commissioner (William Grant) also undertook an expedi-

tion to the Northern Transvaal in 1894, and set up a number of depots at Makapan's poort, PietPotgietersrus and Zandfontein (map). Operations were temporarily halted at some depots due to the Malaboch war in the area against the "Woodbrush" tribes under chief Magato, who had refused to pay taxes.

The depots were organised for medical inspection, vaccination, supply of travel passes and sufficient food to enable recruits to reach the next depot en route to the mines. Batches of travelling recruits were also "protected" from molestation by each gang being accompanied by a responsible "*induna*" (6th CMAR, 1894, p.3). Touts still intercepted these gangs on occasions, however. On arrival at the mines, these *izinduna* and headmen were also given employment to ensure that their subjects fulfilled their work obligations. On one occasion, a headman from The King William's Town district specifically requested that he also be employed on the mine to which his subjects were proceeding, "in order that I may encourage them in their work". (5th CMAR, 1893, p.29).

The basic strategy of the Department, and of the Chamber in earlier ventures, was to make use of existing Black authority figures in the recruitment process. This collaboration provided the initial stimulation for the development of what is now called the "Tribal Representative" system on gold mines today. While present-day "indunas" and tribal policemen in mine hostels are in virtually all cases not traditional *izinduna* or headmen in the homeland areas, they perform a similar function to that performed by their historical counterparts, namely to "encourage" their subjects in their work.

In 1895 the Labour Commissioner continued with the work of establishing depots. Four were constructed for sleeping overnight between Makapan and Pretoria at Pienaar's rivier, Hamaan's kraal (map), and on the land of two farmers (Kaufman and Froom).

The Commissioner then journeyed to Mocambique and set up three depots near Komati Poort "at points intersecting the paths used by natives from Gasaland to the Rand",

at Mutukanyan (present day Matucanhana), Manzimhlopi Mazimchopes), Sabie Poort and Tshibingwene (7th CMAR, 1895 p.53; map).

Recruiting activities were continued by the Rand Native Labour Association in this period, utilizing the depots that were constructed. The Transvaal labour source also showed more potential when the Pretoria Pietersburg Railway Company agreed to offer reduced fares from Nylstroom to Pretoria at 5s per head (10th CMAR, 1898; map).

The Anglo-Boer War, however, further aggravated the labour supply since, during the hostilities, the "bulk of the boys" left the mines, and many were recruited into the army. WNLA was formed in 1901 in a concerted effort to restore the labour supply.

The most serious problem in the recruitment of Mocambique workers (the most important source of supply at the time), remained the great distances and hazards of the journey to the Rand. The Delagoa Bay railway to the Rand had been completed by 1894 (Thompson, 1971, p.312), and Best and Williams had recommended in that year that the line be used to transport recruits, but it was not until 1905 that this was done, partly because the necessary concession had not been obtained until that date from the Netherlands South Africa Railway Company.

The Waterval Boven overland halfway camp to the Rand (map) was abandoned after being in operation for one year, and in 1905 the train trip from Ressano Garcia took 26 hours, and carried a maximum of 2000 men (16th CMAR, 1905; 17th CMAR, 1906).

As soon as the Delagoa line became used for transport of labour, WNLA was able to greatly expand its operations along the East coast and hinterland of Mocambique, and further North. Depots were set up at Xai Xai and Massinga in 1905, and at Inhambane in 1906, and sea routes were charted from these collection points to Lourenco Marques, from where recruits travelled by rail to the Rand (map).

Another sea route from Northern Mocambique (Tete, Quelimane), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and British Central Africa (Malawi) via the port of Chinde was inaugurated in 1906 (17th CMAR, 1906). The Western side of Central Africa was found to be more practicable from the recruitment point of view, however, and this sea route was abandoned in favour of a land and rail route established earlier in 1904 which involved the use of rest camps a day's journey apart between Fort Jameson and Hartley. Blacks were then transported by rail from Southern Rhodesia through Bechuanaland (Botswana) to Mafeking (this rail was built in 1896-7; Schapera, 1947). From Mafeking recruits walked to Krugersdorp, stopping at five rest camps along the route, apparently arriving in "excellent" condition (16th CMAR, 1905).

In the first five years of its existence, WNLA had extended its operations to Central Africa, and set recruiting in Mocambique on a firm footing. In the territories of Lourenco Marques, Gasa and Inhambane, WNLA had by 1906 established 12 European residence camps, 71 receiving camps or rest houses, and employed 24 Europeans and 1450 Blacks (excluding staff at Ressano Garcia and Lourenco Marques; 17th CMAR, 1906). A traveller through the country at that time was able to state that of the hundreds of kraals he visited,

in no single kraal did he find more than one or two men who had never been to work at Johannesburg, and in many kraals there was no man at all who had not been on the mines (17th CMAR, 1906, p.7).

WNLA had also begun to penetrate into South Africa, particularly Pondoland, where cattle advances were made to prospective recruits (hut taxes were advanced in Mocambique). It was left, however, to the Government Native Labour Bureau in 1907, and later to the NRC in 1912 under the general supervision of Henry Taberer, to finally establish recruitment in South African territories.

6. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPOUND ACCOMMODATION

The gradual extension of the recruitment system into

the country surrounding the Witwatersrand was accompanied by the appearance on mines of barracks housing mineworkers.

The first compounds appeared to be groups of wood and iron huts, often built back to back, in order to share walls and thereby reduce costs. Floors were of soil, anthrap or asphalt. In a report on mortality rates, doctors did not approve of the "present system of having earth floors merely in the compound huts...", mainly because they served as receptacles for sputum infected by pneumo-cocci, and recommended instead that huts be constructed with impervious floor, and also that they no longer be built back to back, as this reduced ventilation (14th CMAR, 1903, p.125).

Before 1900, most sleeping bunks were of wood and constructed by the inmates themselves, which tended to aggravate overcrowding. At this time also, rooms were lit by candles, but mines were supplied with electricity by 1900, and mine managers were urged to provide lights in rooms as the candles constituted fire hazards (11th CMAR, 1900). Certain mines claimed to have installed electric lights in compound rooms by 1904 (15th CMAR, 1904).

There is some evidence that the basic washing facilities in the early compounds consisted of large "baths" which resembled water tanks. These baths appear to have first been recommended for general use by doctor Hornabrook in 1899:

Every compound must have either a bath lined with cement or a shed with a cemented floor properly drained. Should the bath be used the water must be constantly running through to the overflow pipe, and so conducted back to the dam. No bath should exceed 5 foot in depth. If the shed is used, then there must be a free supply of water close at hand, either at the entrance to the shed or in the room (11th CMAR, 1899, p.171).

Some mines appear to have opted for baths since later reports discuss the planting of trees "around the baths

in the centre of the compound" (13th CMAR, 1902, p.471).

In the first two decades of its life, the mining industry experienced an alarmingly high mortality rate in the Black labour force, particularly among those recruited from Tropical areas north of latitude 22° South. Most of these deaths were due to pneumonia, Silicosis and other respiratory disease (14th CMAR, 1903, p.122). The death rate of Blacks from British Central Africa averaged 115,9 per 1000 per annum. Deaths were highest during the coldest months of the year, at which time underground workers labouring at 70 degrees fahrenheit came to the surface where temperatures were often below freezing point.

Industry action in order to reduce the death rate was particularly important in view of the fact that the British Colonial Government was considering the suspension of labour recruitment in tropical countries.

The absence of change houses on mines was given as one reason for high mortality (15th CMAR, 1904, p.88). Among a range of other recommendations, medical experts suggested that housing conditions be reviewed. This was the main task of the Coloured Labour Compound Commission of 1904.

The Commission's main finding was that air-space per room resident was not as important as adequate ventilation, which was seen as the prerequisite for health since it reduced carbon dioxide levels in the air. Accordingly, the Commission recommended the extensive use of the "Rand Mines-type of hut" which allowed for 200 cubic foot and wall ventilation which would guarantee a low proportion of carbon dioxide in the air, particularly in the evenings when the room was full. The Commission felt further justification for the relatively small amount of air-space it allotted to residents, by referring to an observed "native custom":

The Kaffir has most gregarious tendencies, and all of the witnesses interrogated on the subject agreed that this tendency showed itself strongly in the huts. No matter what size of room was given them, or how much air-space per head was

alloted to them, they would congregate in one end or corner of the room, and sleep all huddled up together, just as they have been accustomed to do in their own kraals. The witnesses agreed that this was a custom most difficult to prevent or interfere with (15th CMAR, 1904, p.403).

A minority report was, however, submitted by Dr George Turner, Medical Officer of Health for the Transvaal, in which he attached special importance to greater air-space, contending that the minimum should be 300 cubic feet per man. He pointed out that increased density of population increased mortality, particularly of pneumonia, and referred to the fact that a particularly virulent type "was seen to spread from bed to bed" (15th CMAR, 1904, p.410). A similar point was made by Surgeon General Gorgas of the United States Army called in by the industry nine years later, when it appeared that the recommendations regarding ventilation had not been able to entirely curb the mortality rate which, according to the Government, was still too high (25th CMAR, 1914). Because of the high death rate, the Union Government in May 1913 suspended recruiting in areas north of latitude 22° South.

The tendency of Black compound residents to "sleep all huddled up together" seems, on closer inspection, to have been based on factors other than "custom". The Compound Commission also reported that Black residents attempted to block up existing ventilation louvres, in order to stop the flow of air coming over the top of the interior walls. The Commission did not, however, consider that this air would have been sufficient reason for residents to huddle together for warmth. J.W. Thomas, an expert on ventilation, criticized the recommendations of the commission on these grounds a year later:

...abundance of fresh air was regarded as the chief thing necessary in the sleeping huts, whilst the comfort of the inmates appears to have been less considered by the Commission than by the mine managers, who were prepared to warm the inlet air if necessary. The winter nights on the Rand are some what severe, so that the

flood of frigid air coming in through the four large ventilators...must be intolerable to the "boys" lying near the ventilators, should the mine police insist on the clothes being removed from the inlets, against which, naturally, the kaffirs have a not unreasonable desire to pile them (16th CMAR, 1905, p.58).

The Chamber eventually responded to these criticisms, and issued a circular to mines in 1911, recommending that ventilators and roof louvres be allowed to be opened or closed by room residents (22nd CMAR, 1911). No alteration was foreseen with respect to air-space requirements at the same time, however, which, according to the Commission's evidence would have had to be increased if air circulation in the room was blocked or restricted in any way.

Since this early period, air-space has been gradually increased, but each successive legal limit is only applicable to newer compounds constructed after each limit is proclaimed.

7. COMPOUNDS, TOWNSHIPS AND THE CONTROL OF LABOUR

Older compounds remained unchanged largely through considerations of cost that would have been incurred by mine companies had they been obliged to enlarge existing compound rooms.

The quality of construction of the earliest compounds both before and after certain basic standards of health and hygiene were introduced, indicates that they were built as cheaply as possible within these constraints. The minimum air-space requirements spelt out by the Compound Commission were conservatively estimated, with the result that many mines already qualified for this requirement without additional expense. Other mines claimed that their short life expectancy did not warrant further expense on accommodation (15th CMAR, 1904). Compounds continued to provide a crudely economical method of labour accommodation for mines struggling to work ores of variable values in an era of acute labour shortage. This fact must be kept in mind when consideration is given to the role of

compounds as a form of control over workers.

The concentration of workers together under the close supervision of compound "tribal" police appeared to have helped to check "loafing" or absenteeism (Moroney, in this issue). The workers' dependence on the compound food supply was also used to control absenteeism by withdrawing rations from loafers (Moroney). Dependence on the shelter provided by the compound itself has also been used in more recent years to the same end, as in cases where "loafers" are evicted from the compound and forced to sleep outside, exposed to climate and to criminals.

While compounds were used in these ways to control absenteeism, the most serious problem of mines was that of desertion, which can only be effectively checked by closing compound gates and controlling entry and exit. This action, although it was used in certain instances on individual mines, was not universally adopted on gold mines. The "closed" compound principle first used at Kimberley to eliminate diamond thefts was not only actively rejected by local traders around mines because of the threat it posed to sales of goods to mineworkers (16th CMAR, 1905, p.50), but it would have also implied additional expense for mines through the provision of further internal facilities for permanent inmates.

The answer to the problem of desertion for the industry lay not in closing compounds, but in the development of Pass Regulations. The preference for pass laws, rather than the "compound system" as a means of putting a stop to desertion, was noted as early as 1889. In that year, the Chamber addressed a number of queries to Mine Managers in order to get their opinion on the best means to halt desertion;

QUERIES ADDRESSED TO MINE MANAGERS	REPLIES	
	YES	NO
3. Are you much troubled by Natives deserting your service?	49	21
What means can you suggest for putting a stop to same?		
Fixed tariff of wages	5	
Compound system	7	
Pass system	16	
Discharge ticket	10	
Longer engagements	6	
More police supervision	12	
Retention of wages	11	
4. Do you think the Compound System for Natives could be carried out with advantage here?	22	33

(Source; 1st CMAR, 1889, p.90)

Most mine managers favoured the pass system, followed by police supervision. The pass system itself required more police, which posed initial problems, but in ensuing years pass regulations became the industry's main weapon against desertion (see above, section three).

That the industry did not regard compounds as wholly essential in the overall structure of labour supply control was also evident in the fact that some mines began to draw a proportion of their workers from squatter townships which had begun to appear along the Witwatersrand. One advantage of such labour was that no expenses needed to be incurred in the provision of accommodation facilities. The benefits of local township labour was also apparent to mine-owners frustrated with having "to waste their time continually instructing fresh batches of natives" (8th CMAR, 1896, p.22). Such a problem motivated G. Touliot, President of the Chamber in 1897, in commenting on the recommendations of the Industrial Commission, to suggest that

one of our chief aims should be to get a class of labour that stays, and in that direction I should consider it a distinct advantage if we had been allowed to establish at a short distance from here some huge location, where the natives can live with their families...they would have ensured a supply of skilled labour...I know that such an idea is not favourably considered in many well-authorized quarters...(9th CMAR, 1897, p.24).

The Chamber put forward a resolution to the Industrial Commission "to sanction the establishment of native locations in the vicinity of the mines..."(9th CMAR, 1897, p.66). The Government Commission, however, did not accept this resolution, arguing that

experience has taught that the establishment of locations does not improve the Kaffirs in any way, but only tends to their deterioration. As soon as a Kafir with his family lives in a location, his highest aim in life is to see his wife and children work and himself look on (9th CMAR, 1897, p.78).

Six years later Sir George Farrar (President of the Chamber in 1903) referred to a scheme for establishing locations along the reef. The Government, however, appeared to be reluctant to consider such schemes, and also began to take action on existing locations. Police complained to the Chamber in 1908 of the "irregular native locations which existed at various places on the Reef" (19th CMAR, 1908, p.xliv), and began to remove illegal locations on mine properties. The mines were obliged to apply for married quarter land grants to the Minister of Mines if they wished to have mine working families on the property. Today the proportion of married to migrant workers is less than 3 percent.

Restrictions such as these appear to have led to the industry concentrating their attention on developing compounds as the basic unit of accommodation on mines, and thereby maintaining an employment policy which has fundamentally affected the history of labour, and relations between Black and White in South Africa today.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPOUND AS A
MECHANISM OF WORKER CONTROL 1900-1912

by Sean Moroney

In this paper I wish to describe the development of mine compounds on the Witwatersrand after the South African War and to highlight the central role they came to play in the process of labour extraction. The compound provides a useful focus of the labour system on the Witwatersrand over this period by linking state sponsored mechanisms of labour control (the pass laws, masters and servants act and labour recruiting) with the internal processes of the individual mines (control, discipline and coercion).

INTRODUCTION

The years following the South African war saw a decided qualitative change in the Witwatersrand's many mine compounds. Symptomatic of the period of more efficient exploitation fostered under the Milner administration, and particularly as a result of the strict controls introduced for Chinese labour from 1904 onwards, the compounds came to resemble more closely the effective institutions of worker control that were to dominate the South African migrant labour system throughout the century. (1)

In the years immediately following the South African war there were dramatic changes in the Labour market of Southern Africa. A number of factors, including the growth of alternative, more attractive, work opportunities, (2) induced greater competition for labour within the South African market. Urgent representations were made by mine management for the state to remedy the "labour shortage". The 1903 Transvaal Labour Commission of Inquiry and the subsequent importation of Chinese indentured labour in 1904 were instituted in response. In addition the industry initiated measures to reduce internal competition. The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association was established to undertake combined labour recruiting and a maximum average wage schedule was agreed upon within the industry to prevent further competition. Because of the stringent profitability constraints within which the mining industry operated and

the continued exploitation of low yield mines, labour could not be attracted through increased, more competitive wages. Management devised a range of mechanisms to recruit and retain labour. WNLA and later other recruiting agents waged a concerted campaign to obtain labour from within Southern Africa using a variety of methods. (3)

Due to the nature of the labour market and the often deceptive or coercive manner in which workers were obtained, management, in close collaboration with the state, devised a range of mechanisms to ensure the completion of contracts and prevent desertion. The pass-laws were a crucial component of management's strategy. (4) In conjunction, the Master and Servants Law, prohibited strike action by black workers and thus ensured their continued cheapness. Within the mines widespread violence and coercion was employed to ensure the continued subjugation and productivity of workers. The compound was the social pivot of this system of labour repression.

Prior to the South African War mine compounds developed along rudimentary lines compared with the tight security of those in Kimberley. However, as a result of the changes in the labour market after the war, management paid closer attention to compound security and efficiency. The relative freedom of movement previously enjoyed by workers was drastically reduced as the compounds became virtually "closed" (5). Desertion became increasingly difficult and absenteeism was reduced. In 1903 the Department of Native Affairs reported that "loafing" was "practically stamped out". In June 1903, 5,4 workers per thousand "loafed" as opposed to a rate of 33,7 for the corresponding month in 1899. (6)

Compounds at the turn of the century generally consisted of a rectangular gathering of huts or barracks in which workers lived. The courtyard in the centre would contain the kitchen, washing facilities (if they existed) and possibly the compound manager's office. Extensions of corrugated iron and wood were often built onto the original brick structures, making the courtyard more cramped. Conditions varied from one mine to another.

However some were bad enough to necessitate official action in terms of the rudimentary minimum standards laid down in 1905 by the Coloured Labourers Health Regulation Ordinance. Official action was hardly vigorous and often consisted of informal requests for improvement which allowed for lengthy stalling action on the part of the mines concerned. (7)

Compound rooms or huts accommodated anything between 20 and 50 workers. Usually double decked bunks were built against the walls and were often turned into separate cabins by their occupants nailing strips of wood over the openings to protect themselves and their belongings. As a result of overcrowding in most cases, workers were forced to sleep on earth floors which, because of poor drainage and leaking roofs, became muddy during rain. Heating facilities were seldom provided and workers installed their own *Imbonla* or fire buckets which usually had no chimneys. Damp conditions combined with poor ventilation and the fumes of the fire buckets contributed towards the high incidence of respiratory disease rates on the mines. Workers would also experience drastic changes in temperature as they emerged from an underground shift and often had no opportunity to dry their clothes. Usually they would have to stand in the heat, wet or cold waiting for their work and meal tickets.

In 1903, 5022 African workers were officially reported to have died on the Witwatersrand mines and the causes were summarised as follows: (8)

Pneumonia and meningitis	59,90%	Intestinal infections	11,86%
Tuberculosis	5,39%	Scurvy	5,87%
Accidents	4,08%	Other	12,90%

At the turn of the century few compounds had washing facilities but by 1903 most had installed concrete baths in the courtyard in which workers washed themselves and their clothes. (9)

The remarkable variation in conditions from one mine to another appears to have been determined by a mixture of their different profitability rates and arbitrary managerial attitudes. The variations were reflected in death rates which in 1903 ranged from 31,10 per thousand per annum on the Wemmer mine to 135,21 per thousand on the Witwatersrand Deep Mine. By 1905 the death rate for the Langlaagte mine was still as high as 135,68 per thousand. (10) An inspection in 1908 revealed that despite government requests for improvement, conditions on the Randfontein group of mines (11) were as bad as, or worse than, after the war.

Diet also contributed to the high rate of disease and death. The industry's drive to keep "working costs" as low as possible, determined that the workers' diet was both monotonous and deficient. Scurvy rates grew to alarming proportions after the war. Vegetables were rare as part of a compound diet and the mealie-meal, the staple content, was inferior, being derived from oven dried imported grain and had minimal nutrition. (12)

Medical officers as well as the Department of Native Affairs made recommendations for improvements to the diet and accommodation with varying tones of urgency. The government was loath to introduce and enforce regulations. In addition, those medical officers most aware of the prevailing conditions were usually employed by the mines and therefore found it difficult to press too strongly or openly for improvements, if they were in any way inclined to do so. (13) The most that medical officers achieved were piece-meal improvements and the widespread introduction of "Kaffir-beer" as a nutritious diet supplement from 1903 onwards. Workers did whatever they could themselves to supplement their diet. (14) A black contractor estimated in 1907 that mine workers spent over twenty of the fifty shillings they then earned per month on food purchases. (15) It was clearly to management's benefit for workers to spend a considerable portion of their wages on food. T.J. Britten, who conducted a study of "Native Wastage" for the Chamber of Mines in 1904 recommended that the mines should provide

Greater facilities to the natives to spend their money by the establishment of a greater number of eating houses and kaffir stores, conducted under the supervision of the mines.

He said all managers agreed with him that if this was done workers would spend longer times on the Witwatersrand on the presumption that they had earning targets which would take longer to reach. (16)

Food, as an extremely scarce commodity in the compounds, became an instrument of coercion in the hands of management. Food stoppages were used in some mines to punish "loafers" and "inefficients" who did not go on shift or complete their quota of work. Mines in the Consolidated Gold Fields and J.B. Robinson groups were noted by Pritchard of the Native Affairs Department in 1909 as being most inclined to use this method. In the case of the J.B. Robinson mines

At one time the food ration was refused to 'loafers', as they termed them, with the result that, in some cases I am informed 'inefficients' (who possibly may not have been physically able to perform the standard day's work) and actually sick natives have been in the past deprived of food. It is well known that the native share their food and it should therefore have been obvious to those in authority that punishment of this nature would fall as heavily on good workers as it would on malingerers and loafers who it was specially desired should suffer by it. (17)

On the Geldenhuis Deep Mine workers were given a bonus of "one pound of raw meat" if they drilled an extra 48 inches in one shift. The Manager reported that "the experiment has been found to act as a splendid inducement to Natives to become more efficient, while the native efficiency of this mine has increased during the last few weeks by leaps and bounds." (18)

The physical conditions outlined above constituted the debilitating compound environment in which workers'

goals were maintained at a conveniently low level, concerned primarily with day to day survival and the eventual completion of their contracts. The alternative chosen by many was to desert. Those who remained found relief in liquor, which was traded illegally in great quantities and varieties. On those Sundays when shifts did not go down (19) workers would buy meat to cook over outside fires and drink whatever concoctions they would obtain or brew themselves. Sunday revelry sometimes developed into inter-tribal or even inter-compound clashes. Workers also found human contact and sexual release in nearby locations if these were allowed to develop and access was permitted.

STRUCTURES OF CONTROL

The central authority in the compound was the white manager. Workers understood that he exercised extreme power over their daily working lives. Higher management relied on him to maintain discipline and a continuous pressure on workers to work their shifts. The compound manager, through the tremendous power he exercised, often determined the level of coercion and violence that would prevail throughout the mine. He could choose to provide relatively good accommodation and food as well as protection against violence inflicted by white workers. If he left labour control in the hands of cruel compound policemen, neglected compound conditions and condoned or encouraged violence, his mine would earn a bad reputation. Some compound managers in fact intervened effectively on behalf of workers who had been cheated of their pay. (20) Mr H.M. Taberer, at the time an inspector for the Department of Native Affairs, admitted in 1907 that the compound manager, with his force of "police" was the *de facto* ruler over the workers' lives, having complete control over their freedom of movement through the pass system. (21) Only compound managers could issue special passes for workers to leave the compound if they were not going on shift.

The manager had under his command a group of compound "police" who played a crucial collaborative role in controlling workers. As van Onselen found in Rhodesia compound "police" on the Witwatersrand, were also

selected because of their social distance from the majority of Africans amongst whom they would work. (22) On the Witwatersrand, workers from Natal and Zululand remained a small proportion of the labour force during the period under review. (23) Evidence indicates that Zulus were appointed as compound "police" on many mines. Numerous complaints against their excesses were recorded. Tribal headmen and sons of chiefs of various tribes were also appointed as police on some mines. (24) Some mine managements recognised that the level of antagonism between workers and "police" of different tribes was non-productive and appointed "police" representative of all the tribes in the compound. (25)

However, management also used tribal difference as a means of maintaining division amongst workers. Buckle, Chairman of the 1931 Native Grievances Enquiry listed the following as the three "safeguards" used by managements:

- " (1) The personal influence of the compound managers.
- (2) The native respect for European authority as personified in the police.
- (3) The inter-tribal jealousies which have always rendered it possible, in the last resort, to protect Europeans by utilising one tribe against another." (26)

Evidence shows that inter-tribal jealousies were maintained through the compound "police" separate accommodation (usually according to the preference of workers themselves), tribally composed work gangs and through differential access to scarce commodities like food.

Heading the compound "police", and directly under the compound manager was the head Induna. He supervised the compound police and fed the manager "with a constant stream of politico-economic intelligence". (27) The "police" wore uniforms and handcuffs and carried sjamboks which they used liberally as they "hustled" workers from the compounds to the mineheads

to go on shift. When complaints arose regarding the use of sjamboks, management argued that they were merely meant to be "badges of office" and disclaimed responsibility for their other uses. (28) "Bossboys", another key group of collaborators, controlled workers underground and extended the violence of the compound system. They also used sjamboks to maintain discipline (29) in conjunction with the white miners who also dispersed blows freely.

Workers reacted against the compound and underground collaborators in the limited ways that they were able to. The mining industry of which the collaborators were the agents, "the abrasive edge of managerial practice and policy", (30) suffered as a consequence of the high rate of defensive desertion and labour withdrawal that occurred. (31) Sir Godfrey Lagden, Commissioner of Native affairs, while on tour of the Cape Colony in 1904 with the S.A. Native Affairs Commission, wrote a memorandum to his office drawing attention to the fact that potential workers in the Cape refused to be recruited for the Witwatersrand "because they are set upon and hammered by the Zulu police on the mines". (32) I have been unable to find direct evidence of individual retaliatory action by workers against compound police but I am convinced that it occurred. (33) Such action would have produced minimal results compared with labour withdrawal. Management was more concerned to prevent labour withdrawal than to protect its own collaborators.

Each mine compound had, as a vital part of its coercive machinery, a detention room, or, as it was known to workers, "stocks" a result of the fact that stocks were used in these rooms until the time of the Milner Administration. (34) In 1903 the acting pass commissioner judged the mine detention room to be:

an absolute essential as being the only means of controlling riotous and quarrelsome natives. It must be remembered that in the majority of cases mines are situated in a very considerable distance from any charge office or goal, and

as it not infrequently happens that a native 'runs amok' it is necessary that he should be promptly dealt with in order to prevent further developments". (35)

The Commissioner claimed that department inspectors were always informed whenever a worker was detained so that such workers were "seldom detained for more than a few hours". However it is clear that the use of detention rooms was hardly controlled as judiciously as the Commissioner tried to make out. Compound police could detain workers as they saw fit and numerous cases emerged where white miners and contractors also made use of the detention room to punish workers under their supervision underground. (36) In 1905 a white contractor, Anderson, on the Croesus mine was found guilty of assaulting

one native Jim Simali by placing handcuffs on his wrists and handcuffing him to an iron staple attached to a wooden plank made fast to the floor and did keep the said Jim Simali in this position for 4 days without food or drink.

In defence Anderson claimed that

This is a common practice on the mines to lock up natives like this - a kind of punishment. We are not allowed to lash them so they are locked up.

Simali had refused to return to work for Anderson on the night shift, as he had already worked an entire day shift. Anderson was fined £20 or one month's imprisonment. (37) Far from controlling the use of the detention rooms, some compound managers abused the institution. In 1909 the Assistant Compound Manager at the Village Deep was found guilty of assaulting a worker and "inflicting various wounds" by thrashing him with a sjambok while he was fastened by handcuffs to a table in a detention room for about 12 hours. (38)

In June 1902 1 000 workers at the Langlaagte mine went on strike, broke out of their compound and marched towards the Village Deep Mine from where they had been recruited. The strike was defused by police action. However one policeman reported the complaints made to him by the workers:

The compound manager ill treats them by having them thrashed in the compound and down the mine with a cat-o-nine tails and thrashed them on the testicles: further that they were not allowed out of the compound for a moment, that they were shut up like dogs. Also that the compound manager gave instructions to the native police to hit them when they saw fit, stated that they would work and not give any trouble if the compound manager treated them as human beings not dogs and they would not continue to work while he was in charge of the compound and they would kill him if he continued (39)

It is important not to generalise with regard to such patterns of violence. The fact that the Langlaagte strike was partially a result of the disparity of conditions experienced by the workers who had previously worked at Village Deep, indicates that workers themselves recognised the differences. In 1905 the District Controller at Boksburg noted the considerable variations in conditions:

On certain mines, no harsh treatment of any nature whatever will be permitted. On others, I regret to have to state, it is not only passively winked at, but in some cases actively condoned... (40)

The compound structure provided a cover for violence at all levels of the labour extraction process. In the first instance, a worker, if he wished to lay a complaint of assault, and presuming he had a day off shift, would have to obtain a special day pass from the compound manager to proceed to the nearest pass office. The manager could refuse such a pass if he realised the workers's intention, which he would in

most cases. Native Affairs inspectors or police investigators would always have to obtain the manager's permission to enter the compound and would probably have to state their purpose. They could easily be misdirected by the manager as Pritchard, the Boksburg Native Affairs District Controller had experienced:

...the Department will always be at the mercy of the Manager and Compound Overseers, as far as our intelligence is concerned... the crux of the reason why our intelligence is defective, is the fact that Compound Overseers do not - and I go further and say *dare* not, report to the Officers of the Department every occurrence having reference to the conditions of the natives under them... the mere giving away of 'compound secrets' might mean summary dismissal. (41)

In the closed society of the compound, witnesses could be prevailed upon to make themselves unavailable. Pritchard exemplified this in 1905:

On the new Modderfontein Gold Mining Company a very serious case of assault was unearthed in which a native who had been kicked in the ribs, died of the effects. The case was handed over to the Transvaal Town Police, but, notwithstanding their most strenuous endeavours, no prosecution was instituted, owing to the fact that the principal witnesses were - in my opinion - spirited away. (42)

Whatever the decision of a court might be, the complainant would still have to return to his compound and perhaps suffer reprisals, possibly of a more covert nature. A worker had very little to gain by laying a complaint:

... I am of opinion that all cases of ill treatment do not come to the knowledge of our office in the form they should. Witness the case of Rex vs Seames. In this the natives admitted on oath, that they had never complained, or thought of complaining, of

what was subsequently found to be wholesale flogging of a most brutal nature. (43)

The compound extended the clandestine nature of the widespread pattern of underground assault. In the same way it protected management from workers taking legal action against other forms of abuse, particularly illegal pay deductions and extensions of contract time. Compound society was regulated by its rules and survival necessitated compliance and subjugation.

Even where workers did lay a complaint of ill-usage and Native Affairs and police investigations led to a prosecution, the law courts, reflecting standards of settler justice, did not strain their powers to punish assault. Punishment for white miners convicted of assault was always minimal. For example, a Native Affairs Official noted in 1906 that in a particular assault case in which the accused was merely discharged with a warning, the magistrate made remarks in court which made it "appear that he considers flogging of natives by their employers as justifiable under certain circumstances". The District Controller continued:

This may in some way account for the number of assault cases in which I have recently failed to obtain convictions against white men for assaults of natives". (44)

Although individual government officials (45) attempted to act against abuses and even agitated for reforms, policy makers in the Milner administration would consistently refrain from interfering with the mine's internal labour extraction processes and continued until its demise, to tread its collaborative path. (46) This attitude was reflected in the action of what one speculates to be the majority of department inspectors. An African contractor told the 1907 Mining Industry Commission:

The complaints of natives are many, but are not known, and even if they are known they are winked at by the so-called Inspectors who spend much of their time in chatting with the mine officials and neglect the people whom they are supposed to look after. (47)

The manner in which the State supported the compound system is reflected in the following two cases. In 1909, as a result of an increasing incidence of assaults being exposed, the CID Deputy Commissioner wrote to his superiors as follows:

I desire to draw the commissioner's attention to the so called mine police boys employed by the different mine companies. These boys are not in any way legally sanctioned either to arrest or otherwise detain natives... still they are to be seen going about armed with handcuffs and a badge making arrests. In the mine compounds there are cells in which the natives are imprisoned and in which they are frequently handcuffed under cruel and unnecessary conditions, and no steps appear to be taken by the Inspector of Mines Department or Native Affairs Department to remedy matters. (48)

The commissioner of police proposed that the compound "police" should be drawn under the control of his department, a proposal which the Native Affairs Department opposed strenuously and successfully. The latter was very loath to interfere with the "individuality and influence" of the compound manager "so essential to a well controlled native compound". (49)

In 1905 Brownlee, Magistrate at Mount Fletcher in the Cape, was sent to Johannesburg as a result of complaints sent to their district magistrate. He took statements from the workers on the New Heriot and Driefontein mines which revealed particularly indiscriminate punishment being meted out by white miners and very little attempt being made by compound overseers to rectify the situation. The reason for assault ranged from lack of skill on the workers part to plain unprovoked violence. White miners punched, kicked and struck with instruments such as sjamboks, jumpers, stones, hammers, shovels and leather bands. Workers' heads and groins appear to have been prime targets, although some miners had sufficient foresight to hit them only where they were clothed, so that marks would not give evidence of their action. (50)

Officials of the Transvaal Native Affairs Department became highly indignant at the fact that Brownlee, from another colony, had come to investigate and expose conditions on "their" mines. In their objections they inadvertently gave an indication of their attitudes to assaults on workers:

..... without in any way desiring to justify the assailant I cannot but think that the natives gave considerable provocation by their insolent and insubordinate manner. It should not be overlooked that miners are, as a rule a rough and ready class who give a blow as a means of correction as naturally as a duck takes to water..... though nothing could excuse anything in the nature of a deliberate flogging. (51)

CONCLUSION

Beyond providing for coercive labour extraction and the continued subjugation of workers, compounds during the period under review became effective instruments to quell worker unrest and resistance and to prevent inter-mine organisation. This purpose was most clearly articulated by Buckle, chairman of the 1913 Native Grievances Enquiry. He recommended

that steps ought certainly to be taken to render compounds more easily convertible into places of detention, where the compound has strong, steel cased gates which can be locked from the outside, and one entrance, and high walls with no outer windows, a comparatively few armed men can prevent exit from it and thus isolate a disturbance which might otherwise spread with alarming consequences. (52)

Police and management tactics during strikes that have been documented, indicate that consistently, the first step was to persuade or force workers back to their compound. Promises of reform would be made and assurance given by state officials. However, once back in the compound, workers would be less militant, and promises were never fulfilled.

I hope that I have been able to reflect the development of the compounds on the Witwatersrand in a way which not only describes their environment but which also indicates their vital role in labour extraction. Indeed the former is merely a symptom of the latter. During the century compounds were to become more uniform and sophisticated in their methods and structures. However, their violent and coercive roots were to have a determining influence on patterns of industrial relations.

NOTES

1. Compounds in the gold mining industry have been discussed by other writers including Van Onselen, C. *Chibaro*; "The Role of Collaborators in the Rhodesian Mining Industry 1900-1935" *African Affairs* Vol. 27, October 1973; Pearson, P. "Authority and Control in a South African Goldmine Compound" African Studies Institute, Wits. Mimeo. This paper confirms the observations made by these writers. However an attempt is made to place the development of the compounds within a particular historical context - a period during which pressure for production increased and the compound became consciously included as a managerial mechanism to extract most production for least expense.
2. See Moroney *Industrial Conflict in a Labour Repressive Economy: Black Labour on the Transvaal Gold Mines 1901-1912* Honours Dissertation Wits 1976 pp.1-2.
3. *Ibid.*, pp.19-31.
4. See Johnstone, *Class Race and Gold* pp.35-39.
5. The fact that the compounds were not completely closed was due largely, van Onselen claims, to opposition from trade and commerce, which sector thrived on the custom of mine workers who bought food on a large scale to supplement their diets. Correspondence to the Department of Native Affairs from representatives of trade and commerce, confirms this claim. See SNA 2/251/01. Letter from the Association of Chambers of Commerce of S.A.; also SNA 2/300/01.

6. Secretary for Native Affairs 23/1761/03. Report of the Chief Inspector. "loafing" was a term applied by management to a labour pattern symptomatic of the Witwatersrand's work environment. Long shifts, bad health, mistreatment. the effects of liquor and poor motivation caused a considerable number of a mine's work complement to absent themselves from the daily shift. "Loafing" or absenteeism can be viewed as a short term worker strategy in protest against conditions or merely to ensure recuperation and ultimate survival.
7. Fergusson, Central, Robinson, North Randfontein, South Randfontein, Porges and Stubbs.
8. These figures do not reflect the numerous workers who died on the way to or at home of diseases or injuries contracted or received while on Witwatersrand mines. There is evidence that this incalculable death rate was substantial. Figures taken from Coelho Report SNA 40/12/03 p.19.
9. SNA 9/1200/02. Report by inspector Pietersen on compounds, 23 July 1902; See Coelho Report, SNA 50/2912/03 and Report on the compounds for further details of compound conditions of the Randfontein group of mines, SNA 76/1616/08, October 1908.
10. SNA 40/2265/02. Comparative Death Rates on Various Mines, 1903; SNA 56/1303/05. Report by Dr Turner.
11. Fergusson, Central, Robinson, North Randfontein, South Randfontein, Porges and Stubbs.
12. In 1903 Dr Sansom, the District Health Officer, instigated an enquiry into the quality of meal used on the mines. Samples of the meal were examined by a government analyst and many were found to be unfit for human consumption containing moulds, weevils and other insects. SNA 28/2788/03. Sansom to Windham.

13. In March 1902, Wybergh, the Government Mining Engineer, wrote to Dr Turner, a government doctor, about the high rate of preventable illness in the mines and commented on the compromising situation of mine medical officers: "... so long as they are paid by the mining companies they dare not press their opinions where expensive alterations or improvement are required. They are simply at the mercy of their employers, and would in very many cases undoubtedly be dismissed if they made themselves unpleasant. Of course there are honourable exceptions... but you must be aware of cases in which medical reports have been suppressed or amended even when made by very responsible men." SNA 7/609/02, 21 March 1902.
14. The Chamber of Mines supported the introduction of "Kaffirbeer" the privilege thus granted would render the natives more contented and inclined to prolong their stay on the Rand". SNA 14/1858/02.
15. Makhothe in evidence before the 1907 Mining Industry Commission. Minutes of evidence p.1449. Such food purchases would often benefit the mining companies themselves as they owned mine stores.
16. Herman Ekstein Archives 138:395 T. Britten, Report on the wastage of Native Labour on the mines of the Witwatersrand District 1904.
17. SNA 90/1825/09. Memorandum by Pritchard on the position of the Native Labour supply as at 31 March 1909 p.21.
18. Ibid. Pritchard quoting Hallimond p.22.
19. When shifts did not go down on Sundays workers were not paid for the day, nor were they provided with mine rations as a general rule.
20. SNA 61/3868/05. Smith, District Controller Krugers dorp to Windham, Secretary for Native Affairs.

21. *Mining Industry Commission, 1907 Minutes* of evidence p.1315. The central position of the compound manager from worker's view is reflected in the names given to mines. A large proportion were named after compound managers, their attributes or characteristics:
- eg. Henry Nourse Deep - Madonnel (McDonald)
 Van Ryn West - Thomas
 Robinson Deep - David
 Primrose in Singangau - Fierce Temper
 Bonanza - Spensile - Spencer
- SNA 8/858/02. "Revised list of Kaffir Names on Mines", 14 October 1907.
22. Van Onselen, C. "The Role of Collaborators in the Rhodesian Mining Industry 1900-1935" *African Affairs* vol. 27, 1973 p.403.
23. In 1903 for example, Zulu tribesmen constituted only 1,02%, of the total African work force on the mines. SNA 27/771/03 Report of WNLA Board of management 2 April 1903. Zulus also appear to have monopolised positions in the State's black police force.
24. Chiefs played a corresponding collaborative role in the recruiting process. The cooption of tribal authority in the labour extraction system is an important theme. For further details regarding chiefs as collaborators see Moroney, *S. Op Cit* p.28.
25. *Native Grievances Inquiry Report 1913-14* UC 34 p.19.
26. *Ibid.* p.64.
27. *Ibid.* p.16.
28. *Ibid.* p.19.
29. *Ibid.* p.19.
30. Van Onselen, C. *Chibaro* p.141.

31. For a more detailed description of these strategies of worker protest see Moroney, S. "Mine Worker Protest of the Witwatersrand 1901-1912" *South African Labour Bulletin* vol. 3 No. 5, March-April 1977. pp.11-15.
32. SNA 39/2936/04. Lagden to Windham. This strong reaction was confirmed by reports submitted by 18 Cape Chiefs who were taken on a tour of the Reef's compounds in 1903, in an attempt to promote recruiting in their home areas. Almost without exception they cited the rough treatment by compound police, usually named as being Zulu, as one of the chief complaints of the workers they had interviewed and a retarding factor in recruiting.
33. Van Onselen's study of the Ninevite organisation shows that collaborators were singled out "for singularly unmerciful attention". The Ninevites had penetrated many of the Witwatersrand compounds and there was a likelihood that their methods of dealing with collaborators were emulated by workers. Van Onselen, C. "South Africa's Lumpenproletarian Army: 'Umkosi waNtaba' - 'The Regiment of the Hills', 1890-1920" *Conference on Southern African Labour History* University of the Witwatersrand, Institute of African Studies April 1976 p.16.
34. These rooms were referred to rather euphemistically as "isolation rooms" by management in compound plans etc. Although stocks were taken out after the war, they were replaced by handcuffs attached to a pole on the ground.
35. SNA 39/3069/03 Memorandum on the unpopularity among Cape Colony Natives of Service on the Rand p.5.
36. SNA 53/701/05. Complaints of Native labourers from Mqanduli, Driefontein mine 9 March 1905.
37. SNA 57/2147/05 Court transcript: van den Berg vs Anderson 13 May 1905.

38. SNA 89/1261/09 Press clipping entitled "Savage Brutality".
39. SNA 11/1308/02. Report of Trooper Brickhill 26 September 1902.
40. SNA 61/3868/05. Boksburg Controller to Windham 15 December 1905.
41. SNA 61/3838/05 Boksburg District Controller. 15 December 1905.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. SNA 68/2579/06. Kimberley to Pritchard 10 August 1906. The controller reported that his office had processed 18 ill-treatment cases over 8 months. In nine cases the assailant was warned, in three fines ranging from £2-£5 were imposed, in four the assailant was acquitted and three cases were dismissed because of insufficient or conflicting evidence. For details of the substantial number of cases in which workers laid charges for assault see Moroney *S. op cit* pp. 102-105. In 1905, 118 cases of "ill usage" were reported to pass offices.
45. Jeeves points out that "during 1902 and early 1903 the departmental inspectors who were supposed to act in some sense as the 'protectors' of Africans on the mines, investigated thirteen cases of alleged assault upon black mine workers by their white overseers and twenty-eight complaints concerning wage irregularities. In the same period well over 3000 Africans were disciplined for breach of contract and for other "offences" against their employers". Jeeves A. "The Control of Migration Labour on the South African Gold Mines in the Era of Kruger and Milner". *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 2 no. 1. October 1975. So although I quote officials who were more inclined to take action, their conscientiousness was rare. The absence of related correspondence from

most other "controllers," indicates their lack of activity in this area.

46. For a brief survey of state-management collaboration over this period see Moroney, *S.Industrial Conflict* pp.32-39.
47. *Mining Industry Commission*, 1907 Minutes of Evidence, 29 October 1907 J.M. Makholte p.1442.
48. SNA 89/1361/09. Mavrogardate to Commissioner, Transvaal Police 23 April 1909.
49. SNA 89/1361/09. Pritchard to Windham September 1909.
50. SNA 53/701/05; SNA 53/699/05. Brownlee to Windham 7, 9th March 1905 also SNA 93/40/09 Record of assaults committed upon and hardships suffered by natives on mines and works, during November 1909.
51. SNA 53/701/05 Pietersen to Windham, 12th March 1905.
52. Native Grievances Enquiry Report 1913-1914 par. 501. p.67.

A Review of:

'LABOUR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL:
DEGRADATION OF WORK IN THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY' BY HARRY BRAVERMAN

by Jon Lewis

Braverman's book contains detailed analysis of the processes of mechanisation and deskilling and of the practice of 'scientific management'. These are seen as the inevitable corollary of a system of production guided only by the pursuit of profit. The consequences in terms of the quality of life of the majority of the people are devastating. The workplace is no longer a place of meaningful activity for the workers, whilst the goods they manufacture become increasingly debased and fail to fulfil the wider needs of the consumer.

However, Braverman is neither a luddite nor a romantic. He does not condemn modern industry and machines as such. Rather he attacks the use to which they have been put under a particular system of production. In fact, he shows that the process of deskilling, and the consequent degradation of work, has its origins in the pre-automation era. Automation and mechanisation have merely completed this process.

Part 1 (Labour and Management) deals with the division of labour and the imposition of scientific management:

1. The Division of Labour

Braverman distinguishes clearly here between a social division of labour and the technical division of labour (1), and indicates the pernicious consequences of the latter:

"While the social division of labour subdivides *society*, the detailed division of labour subdivides *humans*, and while the subdivision of society may enhance the individual and the species, the subdivision of the individual, when carried on without

regard to human capabilities and needs is a crime against the person and against humanity" (Braverman p73).

Historically, capitalist enterprise evolved on the basis of handicraft production. At this stage the labour process was dominated by the figure of the craftsman. However, by virtue of his knowledge of productive process and his pivotal position within the labour process, the craftsman represented a check upon the authority of the entrepreneur and his ability to reorganise the labour process in order to increase his profit. Thus the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed an unremitting struggle between capital and skilled labour for control over the labour process. Capital's victory was gained in part through the enforced subdivision of labour: i.e. through the fragmentation of the work of the craftsman, and the redistribution of tasks to 'detail' workers. This had three consequences:

- (a) it had involved a general increase in the productivity of labour. (2)
- (b) The destruction of the craftsman's all-round knowledge, and control of the labour process has swung the balance of power within the productive process further in favour of capital.
- (c) Finally, the division of labour cheapens the value of labour:

"That the master manufacturer, by dividing the work to be executed into different processes, each requiring different degrees of skill or of force, can purchase exactly that precise quantity of both which is necessary for each process, whereas, if the whole work were executed by one workman, that person must possess sufficient skill to perform the most difficult and sufficient strength to execute the most laborious, of the operations into which the art is divided." (3)

In other words:

"in a society based upon the purchase and sale of labour power, dividing the craft cheapens its individual parts. (Braverman p.80)

Braverman describes this process of deskilling in considerable detail within the traditional engineering industry (and in Part IV, within clerical work) - both areas where the author can claim considerable personal experience. Thus he witnessed the complete deskilling of his own trade, that of coppersmith.

This process did not proceed without considerable opposition from the skilled workers concerned. (4) In this regard Braverman shows that it is impossible to conceive of the establishment of modern industry in purely technical terms (ie. through the introduction of certain techniques and machines). Rather, it must be seen as the outcome of a continuing struggle on the part of capital to impose its control over every aspect of the labour process. It is in this light that one must interpret the imposition of 'scientific management' in the work place.

2. Scientific Management

This concept is popularly associated with the name of Frederick W. Taylor, and in fact, Braverman argues that Taylorian principles are still basic to management technique and production planning. Scientific management consists of more than stop-watches and speed-ups. It is, at root, an attempt to divest the workers of any responsibility for their labours, and to vest all control over the labour process in the hands of management:

"Taylor raised the concept of control to an entirely new plane when he asserted as an *absolute necessity for adequate management the dictation to the worker of the precise manner in which worker is to be performed.*" (Braverman p.90)

Taylor's method of imposing this minute degree of control was based on three principles:

First Principle- involves management in gathering knowledge which had traditionally been the preserve of the craftsman.

"This first principle we may call the

dissociation of the labour process from the skills of the workers. The labour process is to be rendered independent of craft tradition and the worker's knowledge. Henceforth it is to depend not at all upon the abilities of workers, but entirely upon the practices of management." (Braverman p.113)

Second Principle - involves a complete separation of the tasks of conception and execution:

"All possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centred in the planning or laying-out department.." (F.W. Taylor) (5)

Third Principle - involves " the use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labour process and its mode of execution." (Braverman p.119)

Management alone now has total knowledge of the labour process, which is communicated to the workers in the form of detailed instruction relevant only to their partial and isolated functions within the labour process.

These then, according to Braverman, remain the basic principles of management theory under a system of capitalist production. The later introduction of 'personnel management' theories has not changed this situation. Rather, personnel management remains peripheral to the organisation of production, and its chief function is to secure the cooperation (or at least the passive acceptance) of the workers in his own degradation.

In Part 11 ('Science and Mechanization') Braverman demonstrated the ability of capital to enforce Taylorian principles even more vigorously in the modern era of scientific and technical revolution.

"... in the first stage of capitalism the traditional work of the craftsman is subdivided into its constituent tasks and performed in series by a chain of detail workers, so that the process is little changed;

what has changed is the *organisation of labour* . But in the next stage, machinofacture, the instrument of labour is removed from the workers' hand and placed in the grip of a mechanism and the forces of nature are enlisted to supply power which, transmitted to the tool, acts upon the materials to yield the desired result; thus the change in the mode of production in this case comes from a change in the *instruments of labour*." (Braverman p.169)

Advances in scientific and technical knowledge have made possible increasing mechanization and the subordination of labour to machines. In the modern era, therefore, management has been able to extend its control over the labour process by virtue of its control and ownership of machines. The movements and functions of the developed machine are predetermined, and its speed regulated. Control over the labour process has, by this time, slipped away from the direct producer. However, this development is not inevitable, under a capitalist system of production.

"The capacity of humans to control the labour process through machinery is seized upon by management from the beginning of capitalism as the *prime means whereby production may be controlled not by the direct producer but by the owners and representatives of capital*." (Braverman p.193)

The consequences include the degradation of work for the worker, and a deterioration in the quality of products for the consumer.

Part III ('Monopoly Capital') consists of a brief discussion of the rise of the modern corporation and the role of the state in the era of monopoly capitalism.

Part IV ('The Growing Working-Class Occupations') analyses those 'non-productive' sectors of the advanced capitalist economy (ie. clerical, services and retail sectors) which have absorbed the large amounts of labour displaced from the 'productive' sectors, as a result of mechanization. Particularly fascinating is

the chapter dealing with clerical workers. Here Braverman maps the development of clerical work from its humble nineteenth century origins, when it was performed by the manager, a bookkeeper and a few clerical assistants. The tasks of this sector grew in proportion to the scale of production, and in order to facilitate the distribution of revenue between the different sectors of capital, each with their respective claims on the surplus. Today clerical work (which includes certain traditional aspects of management) involves a vast army of labour, with its own labour processes.

Furthermore, in the twentieth century, clerical workers have been subject to the same processes of deskilling, and to the same time and motion studies as their fellow-workers on the factory floor. Where the factory worker is tied to the machine, the office worker is now increasingly tied to his desks. The mental aspect of 'mental labour', for the majority of clerical workers has become increasingly fictional: "The progressive elimination of thought from the work of the office worker thus takes the form, at first, of reducing mental labour to a repetitious performance of the same small set of instructions" (Braverman p.319)

Neither has the computerization of office work done anything to alter these developments. The popular mythology of white-coated computer boffins has given way to the repetitive reality of the key punch operator. Necessary training and the level of wages are commensurate with the 'operative' nature of this work. This leads Braverman to conclude that the middle class ideology of 'white collar' or 'salaried' work is wearing thin. The major characteristics of clerical and productive labour are becoming indistinguishable:

- (a) the deskilling and fragmentation of work.
- (b) the application of scientific management.
- (c) the subordination to machines.
- (d) both forms of labour are increasingly drawn from the same social strata.

(e) similar educational background, and wage levels.

These thoughts are developed further in the last section of the book: Part V ('The Working Class'). Analysing the middle strata, and the distinction between productive and unproductive labour, Braverman shows that:

"... while unproductive labour has declined outside the grasp of capital it has increased within its ambit." (Braverman p.415)

Thus what distinguished the 'new' middle class (petit bourgeoisie) from the 'old', is that it exists within the capitalist process of production, and hence is increasingly subject to capitalist reorganisation of the labour process.

Braverman is aware of the distinctions between productive and unproductive labour (ie. the latter does not produce surplus value, and is paid out of revenue). Yet he concludes:

".. despite these distinctions the two masses of labour are not otherwise in striking contrast and need not be counterposed to each other. They form a continuous mass of employment which.. has everything in common." (Braverman p.423)

The final chapter in the book ('A Final Note on Skill') returns to the more general problem of defining 'skill'. This term is often used in a vague and undifferentiated way in order to demonstrate the conventional wisdom that mechanisation has actually involved an increase in the 'average skill'. In fact of course, a process of *polarization* has taken place:

"The mass of workers gain nothing from the fact that the decline in their command over the labour process is more than compensated for by the increasing command on the part of managers and engineers." (Braverman p.425)

Similarly, the term 'semi-skilled' has been used to mask the decline in the content of work which has taken place in the twentieth century. Official statistics show a marked decline in the proportion of unskilled labourers, which is matched by a corresponding increase in the proportion of semi-skilled operations. In fact, these categories are completely arbitrary. Thus any job, no matter how simple and repetitive, which brings the worker into contact with machines is classified as semi-skilled. Thus, for example, teamsters, before, World War I were defined as 'unskilled', whilst lorry drivers in the post-war period are classified as semi-skilled:

"But there is certainly little reason to suppose that the ability to drive a motor vehicle is more demanding requires longer training or habitation time, and thus represents a higher or intrinsically more rewarding skill than the ability to manage a team of horses."
(Braverman p.430)

Finally, it has already been shown that assumed difference in skill and educational requirement between 'white collar' and 'blue collar' workers are increasingly illusory.

Some Comments:

Braverman's analysis promotes a number of further questions. In the first place, his critique of notions of 'semi-skill' raises the more general problem of defining skill. Braverman does not really deal systematically with this problem, and it seems, at times, that his analysis is dominated by the romanticised figure of the skilled worker. Recent work would indicate that there is not such a great difference between the skilled worker and other categories of manual worker, in terms of job content.(6) Of course, it can be argued that this merely proves Braverman's thesis, and shows the extent to which deskilling has taken place. Nevertheless, deskilling has been with us for as long as industrial capitalism, with the result that the category of 'craftsman' or 'skilled worker' (which Braverman tends to treat as unproblematic) has become increasingly artificial. The continued evidence of this category reflects not the objective skill

content of a job, but the conditions of class struggle in certain industries where groups of workers retain some degree of purchase over the labour process. Where possible workers have retained craft organisation and ideology, even though the craft itself may have all but disappeared, in order to protect wage differentials and to retain some degree of control over the content and nature of their jobs.

As a related point, Braverman might have analysed in more detail the crucial difference between the handicraft worker under the first phase of capitalism (manufacture), and the position of the skilled worker during the second phase (that of machinofacture). (7)

The strength of Braverman's thesis lives in his ability to analyse the technical details of a labour process. But this may also be the source of a limitation in the book. The technical details are not always analysed against the wider set of ideological, as well as economic, content. Such an analysis might conclude that the fusion of clerical and productive labour remains problematic.

In a sense Braverman's work is incomplete. The workers' resistance to the degradation of work in recent years, it has been argued, is forcing capital to retreat. (8) Efforts towards 'job enrichment' 'Responsible Autonomy', and 'workers' participation remain ambiguous, and in the hands of management become tools of cooption. Nevertheless, these measures do benefit workers, and the potential of the 'workers' control' movement has yet to be fully appreciated. (9)

Finally, it will be asked what relevance all this has for South Africa. Although Braverman draws mainly on the British and American experience, the processes he analyses are common to all capitalist economies.

Historically, Braverman's thesis certainly helps us to understand what lay behind the dramatic struggles of white skilled workers at the beginning of the century. (The protective practices of white pseudo-skilled workers since World War II are however a different matter)

As regards more general questions about the nature and meaning of work, it remains for these to be answered by those who at present experience the degradation of work.

- (1) a fundamental distinction which has been ignored by certain schools of sociology-eg. in E. Durkheim: 'The Division of Labour in Society'.
- (2) for the kinds of reasons Adam Smith, dealt with in 'The Wealth of Nations'.
- (3) quoted from Charles Bobbage 'On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures (1832) 1963 edition pp.175-6.
- (4) see for example: James Hilton, 'The First Shop Steward's Movement'.
- (5) F.W. Taylor - 'Shop Management' in 'Scientific Management' pp.98-99.
- (6) 'Labour Process' Conference, London School of Economics 1977.
- (7) This is fully discussed in: G. Steadman Jones: 'England's First Proletariat' NLR No. 90 (1975).
- (8) A. Friedman: 'Industry and Labour' (1977)
M. Bosquet 'The Prison Factory' in SALB Vol 3 No 8.
- (9) Braverman himself does not think much of the present form that workers' control takes.
Footnote p.445-6.

A Review of:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AFRICAN WORKING CLASS
 (Edited by R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen)

by Mike Humphrey & Alan Hireh

As with all books consisting of papers presented at a conference by different writers with different interests, ideas and ideologies, this collection is one of uneven quality and usefulness. Nevertheless, its place as a milestone, or turning point in the ongoing debate about the nature/role of the working class in Africa must not be ignored. That some of its ideas and predictions have turned out wrong or inadequate says more about the dynamic nature of the debate than about the books usefulness as an introduction to this debate.

The fact that the conference it was based on occurred in 1973 in many ways determined the issues it was predominantly concerned with. In the first place, it was an attempt to finally destroy the dominant notion of the 1950s and most of the 1960s that African worker organizations were predominantly extensions of African nationalist movements. This had first been systematically questioned by Berg and Butler(1) whose study, while steeped in Cold War ideology, provides the starting point of many of the contributors in this collection. Secondly, most contributors were concerned to show that the notion that the African working class constitutes a labour aristocracy (a notion first developed by Frans Fanon(2) and later more systematically developed by G. Arrighi and J.S. Saul(3) was incorrect.

Since 1973 there have been two major events which have altered the nature of the debate about the working class, its possibilities and its relationship to the other classes in African Society. The first was the 1974 Portuguese Coup. This has fundamentally altered the balance of forces in both central and southern Africa, and has made the possibilities for fundamental

change in these regions that much greater. The second event, or series of events, has been the publishing of four books by Nicos Poulantzas.(4) These books, and the reactions to them of various critics, have fundamentally altered the debate about the nature of the capitalist (and peripheral capitalist or "post-colonial") state and its relationship to the various classes found in capitalist (and peripheral capitalist) social formations.

The first section of the book is entitled the "Initial Stirrings of Working Class Consciousness". Unfortunately, the obvious influence that the "Berg and Butler Thesis" has had on these contributors (with the notable exception of Stichter's contribution), has resulted in them being primarily concerned with showing that Trade Unions grew out of the work situation and were not founded to further the aims of nationalist parties. While this is important in itself, it tends to equate the development of working class consciousness with the development of Trade Unions. The awareness of this danger is what makes the Stichter piece the best in the section.

The first articles, by Shora Stichter, examines "The Formation of the Working Class in Kenya". In this article Stichter is concerned to show that worker consciousness before 1947 developed in three broad stages. She sees three different working class responses which correspond to the different stages of the entrenchment of capitalist relations within the Kenyan social formation.

The first stage (1895 to 1919) corresponds to the period of initial colonial penetration when the primary concern of the colonial authorities was the creation of a labour supply. This labour supply was created by a whole series of measures (taxations, forced labour, land expropriation, etc.) and evoked a particular response which took the form of resistance to the system itself. The resistance manifested itself in three forms: tribal (military uprisings and resistance) religious (milinarianism) and individual (desertion, go-slows and sabotage).

The second stage (1920 to 1939) corresponds to the period of the consolidation and expansion of settler agriculture and the further development of the infrastructure. During this period resistance began to manifest itself within the capitalist system/sector itself. Due to increased population pressure in the Africa reserves most workers were forced to work for at least 6 months a year in the capitalist sector. During this stage protest took the form of small strikes and other collective actions as well as the, by them, well tested individual responses - desertions, go slows, avoidance of bad employers, etc. These latter forms of resistance were becoming increasingly difficult due to the introduction, and increasingly successful enforcements, of a pass system.

The third stage (1939-1947) was one in which the workforce was more fully proletarianized. This was a period of accelerated and more general strike action, and culminated in the emergence of a general workers union (which was soon crushed). Worker organization during this period was largely along racial lines, and this period saw the beginnings of the linking of wage demands with demands for racial equality. As is to be expected, the skilled and semi-skilled workers were the first to organise themselves into unions, but by the end of the period most workers were represented by the general workers union.

The second article, by John Iliffe, analyses "The Creation of Group Consciousness Among the Dockworkers of Dar-es-Salaam 1929-1950." In this article Iliffe is concerned to show that Trade Unions are not the political extensions of nationalist movements, rather they often (as in his case study) predate the development of nationalist movements and usually grow out of the work situation itself. He sees this consciousness developing in three stages which corresponds to three major dock strikes.

The first strike was in 1939 and it lasted for 8 days. The strike failed because it was only the easily replaced casual labourers who participated. The casual workers were striking for better pay and working

conditions. The second strike lasted for 12 days and occurred in 1943. This was during the war when inflation had seriously cut into the wages of especially the permanent workers with their fixed salaries. The casual labourers were less affected because the increased number of ships visiting the port meant that they had more work than usual. The strike was led by the skilled and semi-skilled labour force. It was broken when wartime measures banning strikes were invoked.

Iliffe believes that this taught the workers that they could only succeed if they had a union. However, this is questionable - firstly because the strike was not broken due to a lack of leadership or unity, but rather because of the extraordinary measures which the authorities could rely on due to the war. Secondly, if Iliffe is correct then why was there no attempt on the part of the workers (until after the next strike) to form a union?

The third strike occurred in 1947 and reached the proportions of a general strike. For the dockers it lasted 10 days and resulted in them becoming the best paid segment of the Tanzanian working class. However, these gains were largely due to the head of the commission of enquiry who was concerned to channel discontent into manageable areas. In line with this he suggested that the workers form a union. (Note: this initiative did not come from the workers "who had learnt from previous strikes." Also, it shows how trade unions are perceived as control mechanisms by the authorities).

The Third article in this section is by Arthur Turner and discusses "The Growth of Railway Unionism in the Rhodesias 1944-1955". As with Iliffe, Turner is concerned to show that the Railway Union grew out of the workplace and was not formed by political parties. Again this article is limited to seeing working class action only in terms of the effects it had on the formation of unions.

Turner shows that solidarity within the ranks of the railway workers was possible because of the link the

railway provided between the various compounds, and their isolation from other non-railway workers. The Railway Africa Workers Union was the product of the interaction between two Africa labour organizations two governments and the Rhodesia Railways Company.

Briefly, what happened was that the Northern Rhodesian government (acting on directions from London) encouraged the development of a railway trade union in its territory - it was formed in 1950. However, the Southern Rhodesia government, in alliance with the Railway Company, took the opposite approach to labour relations and so was concerned to prevent the spread of Africa unions to their territory. Here a staff association had been formed in 1944 for black railway workers - this association had no bargaining rights.

The company tried various methods of destroying the Northern trade union, but these all failed and the union grew increasingly stronger. It began cooperating with the Southern association which led to fears within the company that the union would radicalise the South. Therefore they decided to raise the Association to the level of a full union in the belief that they would always be able to control any southern organization. These two unions then united to form the RAWN which the company was forced to recognise in 1955. All this was brought about as a result of concerted action (which often involved strike action or the threat of it) on the part of the two Africa labour organizations and the friendly nature of the Northern Rhodesian government.

The fourth and final article in this section is by Christopher Allen and is entitled "Union - Party Relationship in Francophone West Africa: a critique of 'Teleguidage' Interpretations." While this article supports Berg and Butler's argument that unions did not result from the initiatives of political parties, it is very critical of Berg and Butler's methodology. He sees two main flaws in their argument: firstly, he is critical of their equation of unions with their leaders. Secondly, he criticises their narrow definition of a) politics which they equate with party activities, and b) the relationship of unions with political parties. Apart from these main criticisms,

he also criticises them for a number of less serious faults in their argument. He is much less kind to the earlier studies of this relationship which Berg and Butler also criticise.

Allen examines two events in French West Africa labour history - the 1947-8 rail strike and the formation of the CGTA in 1955-6. The rail strike is the longest in Africa history (lasting 60 days). The conventional view is that the strike was part of the strategy of the French Communist Party which called strikes in both France and the empire in response to the expulsion of the Communist ministers from the government in 1947. However, this strike is more convincingly explained if it is seen as the result of internal demands and pressures. This was especially the demand for the abolition of job reservation and the inclusion of all railway workers in one union. These demands, and negotiations over them, had been going on for months before the ministers were expelled. The length of the strike seems to suggest that it had widespread local support as without this the workers would have starved and thus be forced back to work. This could not be sustained if the length of the strike was based on what was expedient for groups in France.

The formation of the CGTA is conventionally seen as the result of 3 factors: the pressure from political parties for union autonomy from the metropolitan CGT; the active support of the colonial authorities; and the growth of nationalist sentiment. While this view is partially correct, Allen feels that it lacks explanatory power.

Links with organizations require elaboration and proof while the growth of nationalist sentiment itself has to be explained. Rather, this event must be seen to be the result of several forces acting at different levels of union membership. These include: long-standing resentment of European interference in unions; the growing demands for trade union unity; growing scepticism; and growing mass repugnance for continuing French rule.

The second part of the book is titled "Contemporary Working Class Organization". The papers included here concentrate on the organisational dimensions of current worker action and, in particular, seeks to identify the obstacles to, what the editors call, "genuine worker organization". Nowhere do they define precisely what is meant by "genuine" and the criteria they establish in their introduction to this section are somewhat arbitrary and ahistorical. Their standards for genuineness clearly derive from the mythology of trade unionism in advanced capitalist society. Their fundamental criterion is democracy and the ultimate "check" on Union leadership is the ability of members to withdraw financial support.

The first paper, by Paul Lubeck, examines "Union, Workers and Consciousness in Kano, Nigeria". This paper, the most useful of the three in this section, goes beyond the limitations of the introduction as it attempts to situate the problems of worker organization in Kano in their specific political and economic context. The structure of industry in Kano, predominantly light manufacturing, controlled by local competitive capital. These industries less capitalised and technologically advanced than the Multi-National corporations which dominate the Kenyan economy, for broadly known reasons operate at a lower than average rate of profit. In these circumstances management is particularly hostile to the development of unionism.

Having established the context Lubeck first examines Unions set up by political parties. These unions were almost universally unsuccessful as the organisers were generally professional politicians whose interests were too far removed from those of the workers they were attempting to organise. He then examines three examples of unions established mainly on the initiative of the workers themselves. Here one of his most interesting findings is managements widespread attempts, usually successful, to install supervisors and white collar workers as union leaders. In these cases the inevitable outcome was an unrepresentative union which "deteriorated into a management sanctioned extortion agency."

After discussing his survey of worker attitudes which indicates worker scepticism towards existing unions though they feel unions are necessary, Lubeck examines various strike committees, organised at grass roots level. He concludes that workers are capable of organising viable worker unions but they are prevented from doing so by the factors mentioned above as well as others such as fear of reprisals from management and the low level of education of the workers. Ethnic conflicts were notable for their complete absence in these strike committees.

The second paper, by Dorothy Temy, also looks at Unionism in Nigeria, this time in Zaria, where local capital is dominant as in Kano. Her paper concentrates of the establishment of patron - client relations within industries - where senior black personel are able to affect the selection of employees. She concludes that these relationships have a tendency to hinder the development of industrial unionism.

Ukandi G. Damachi's paper on "The Internal Dynamics of Trade Unions in Shama" is the final paper in this section. In it he examines, from an organisational perspective, the structure of Ghanaian Unionism from the Ghanaian Trade Union Congress to the individual workers perspective. Unlike the previous two papers he almost completely ignores the necessity to situate his analysis in its historical conjuncture. Nevertheless, for those who are interested in the facts and figures of worker organization in Ghana in 1972 this paper is quite useful.

Of course apart from what I have mentioned above all three groups discuss the relationship between the unions and both the state, and international trade union congresses. The general conclusion is that the state in Africa can very seldom be relied upon to work in the interests of the working class, and that the activities off the "internationals" where generally detrimental to the development of viable democratic worker organizations.

The third part of the book is concerned with "Contemporary Working Class Action". The articles in this section are predominantly concerned with the debate about whether the working class in Africa constitutes a labour aristocracy or not. Surprisingly enough the case study on South Africa and Namibia ignores this question though these countries are the only ones in Africa where this debate is relevant, as here a labour aristocracy (the white working class) clearly exists. The case studies by Peace and Jeffries address themselves specially to this notion to show that empirically it has no value. Saul in his contribution reconsiders the thesis and finds that most criticisms of it are valid and so he too comes to reject it. Bienefield's study of the Tanzanian working class - while not addressing itself to the labour aristocracy debate directly - shows that this notion cannot be applied to this class which quite clearly sees its interest as opposed to those of international capital and their local lackeys.

The first article in this section is by Kane-Berman, Lever and Schlemmer and consists of "Case-Studies in Africa Labour Action in South Africa and Namibia". This study concentrates on the 1973 Natal strikes (with a brief discussion on the strikes which directly preceded them) and the 1971-72 Ovambo strikes in Namibia. While accepting that both of these represent the first major signs of widespread black resistance to Apartheid since the early '60s, the authors state that they are not prepared to say whether this will in the future be channelled (and so co-opted) by the authorities or whether it will eventually result in a revolutionary overthrow of the whole system. Because of this, this article has not become dated by the events of the past few years (Portuguese Coup, Angola, Soweto, etc.) and still is a useful source of information about the strikes it deals with.

The authors believe that the 1969 and 1972 Durban dockworkers strikes & the 1972 Putco bus drivers strike provided the examples for the widespread strikes that occurred in Natal in 1973. The authors believe that the fact that the workers were all Zulu migrants who

lived together in hostels and received almost identical low wages is what accounts for the strike's rapid spread once one group had gone out on strike. The example of these strikes inspired some workers in other parts of S.A, (especially the Rand) to also go on strike for higher wages.

In December 1971 Ovambo migrants in Windhoek went on strike against the recruiting system, their poor living conditions and starvation wages. Nearly all of them were forcefully repatriated to northern Namibia. The outcome of the strike was that the recruiting organization SWANLA was discontinued while the system itself was continued. The destruction of SWANLA meant that the so-called Ovambo authorities were forced to more directly play their role as the agents and the lackeys of Apartheid. It also meant that the recruiting system has not run as smoothly as it did before.

The second article in this section is by M.A. Bienefield and is entitled "Socialist Development and the Workers in Tanzania". In this study Bienefield is concerned with the history of working class action and trade unions in Tanzania.

He starts his study with the close relationship that the TFL had with TANU in the period of the struggle for "independence". This relationship broke down after "independence" when Nyerere started putting pressure of them to limit their wage demands in the interests of "national development". This split the TFL into two groups, one prepared to cooperate with the government and one which sought to put the interest of the workers first. In 1964 the conflict between this latter group and the government ended with the crushing of the army revolt (which the union was rumored to be supporting) and the banning of the TFL. It was replaced by a party dominated organization called NUTA which was able to buy off workers discontent for a while by arranging social security benefits for workers and higher wages. However by 1965 the workers were becoming increasingly discontented and so work committees were set up which could supposedly review managements decisions.

These committees were easily manipulated by managements and so did not end the discontent. By the next year the failure of Tanzania's "development plan" had become blatantly obvious.

In response to this the Arusha Declaration was made at the end of 1967. This called for a narrowing of the income gap between the urban and rural workers as well as the nationalization of many industries and banks. From then on most of the urban working class worked for the state. Now that the state had a direct interest in production the workers were to provide the mechanism for this increased control. These policies did little to end worker discontent.

In response to the growing antagonism between the workers and managers Nyerere published the Presidential Circular number 1 which called for the establishment of worker councils to ensure greater worker participation in the decisions of management. In 1971 a more significant document, the ZANU Guidelines was published. It called on workers to solve their own problems and participate more actively in management decisions. This resulted in the loss of 45 000 man-days. Most of these strikes (which included lockouts and worker takeovers of factories) were in protest over arrogant managers, arbitrary dismissals, etc. The state tolerated these actions for a while but then bowed to the pressure of international capital and local managers and moved in to crush the workers (often brutally). Since 1972 strikes for wage increases also became common but nothing on the scale of the 1972 strikes occurred since.

This study clearly shows that the Tanzanian working class is no longer a labour aristocracy. It is interesting to note that Arrighi and Saul relied largely on material from this region for their systematic exposition of the labour aristocracy thesis.

The next two articles in this section: "Populist Tendencies in the Ghanaian Trade Union Movement" by Richard Jeffries and "The Lagos Proletariat; Labour Aristocrats or Populist Militants?" by Adrian Peace are basically concerned with the same issue and so they will be discussed together. Both these articles are concerned to show that strike action in both Sekondi-Takoradi in Ghana

and Lagos in Nigeria show that the working class is not a labour aristocracy.

It more often provides the voice and has the support of the rest of the oppressed urban population. In both cases wage discrepancies between the working class and teachers, civil servant and businessmen are much more marked than discrepancies between them and the other dominated classes.

Jeffries examines the railway and harbour strike that occurred at Sekondi - Takoradi in September 1961. This strike lasted for 17 days and was a response to the July budget. While this budget would only directly affect skilled workers, the strike got widespread support from the semi-skilled and unskilled workers as well as the urban poor, the market women and petty traders. This widespread support can be explained in terms of the redistribution network which meant that the market women, unemployed fathers or brothers and petty traders had a direct interest in the level of workers wages as they too were dependent on them. This strike showed that this group could in no way be seen as a labour aristocracy.

Similarly, Peace's study of the proletariat in Lagos shows how here too the redistributive network was operative. He shows that workers mainly aspired to become petty entrepreneurs and not members of the dominant classes. This former group consists of petty traders, transporters and contractors who are their own bosses but have not left the environment which they grew up in.

They retain the respect of the other urban poor groups because this is necessary for their own survival due to their dependence upon these groups for contracts etc.

As with the Ghanaian example, the working class is looked on as the defender of the interest of the other groups that are dependent on them (due to the redistributive Network). Peace sees them as "populist militants" because of this, and therefore shows that they cannot be seen as labour aristocrats.

The last article in this section is by Saul and provides in effect, a post-script to this debate. It is called

"The 'Labour Aristocracy' Thesis Reconsidered" and will hopefully put an end to this debate once and for all.

Saul states in this article that while this notion seemed to explain various issues at the time he first used it (with Arrighi in 1968), as things have turned out it had proved to be a complete misnomer and a mystificatory concept.

In 1968 this term seemed to be able to explain such things as the acceptance of "independence" by the working class and the absence of any threat by them to the status-quo. Also, because it was only the fully proletarianised workers and the sub-elites and elites that operated entirely within the capitalist sector, it seemed that all three groups could most easily be bought off by international capital.

However, subsequent developments have shown this concept to be a misnomer. The elites and sub-elites have increasingly exploited their privileged positions of power to enrich and entrench themselves. International capital has proven to be unwilling or unable to maintain the high wages of the working class and the differences and contradiction between them and the elites have become increasingly apparent and pervasive. Various working class actions have shown them to be allies of other oppressed groups rather than "junior partners" in an alliance with international capital.

In conclusion, this book represents a milestone in the debate about the working class in Africa. It lays to rest most of the misconceptions of past statements about this class and while a number of its conclusions have proved to be misdirected, simplistic or even wrong, it is nevertheless essential reading for anyone who wants a comprehensive introduction to this subject.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 essay in Political Parties and National Intergration in Tropical Africa by Coleman and Rosberg (eds.).
- 2 The Wretched of the Earth.
- 3 Essays in the Political Economy of Africa.
- 4 Political Power and Social Classes (1973) Fascism and Dictatorship (1974) Classes in Contemporary Capitalism (1975) and The Crisis of the Dictatorships (1976).