



WORKERS' UNITY

Organ of the South African Congress of Trade Unions

Issue No. 7, January 1978



The people's reaction to the Bantustans. The burnt-out remains of the Legislative Assembly Building and official cars in BophuthaTswana after the students' attack in August 1976.

Bantustan "citizenship" fraud:

When a pass becomes a "passport"

The government's Bantustan scheme has now reached a particularly dangerous stage as far as the struggle of the workers is concerned. With the so-called "independence" of reserves like the Transkei and BophuthaTswana, almost seven million black South Africans have been stripped of their citizenship and forced to become "citizens" of these Bantustans.

This applies to Xhosa- and Tswana-speaking people irrespective of where they live. For example: well over half of the two million who have been declared BophuthaTswana "citizens" do not live in the Bantustan at all. For every worker in the Bantustan, three Tswana-speaking workers are permanently living in other parts of South Africa, mainly in the industrial areas.

Made foreigners by law

In time these citizenship laws will be applied to all Africans. Bantustan "citizenship" will mean that the majority of the people become *foreigners in their own country*.

How will this affect the African workers?

Firstly, The few remaining rights which some workers have to stay in the urban areas and live with their families, will be taken away. The *pass laws* and the *migrant labour system* will be *tightened up*.

It is an old trick of the regime to make life harder for the African workers while pretending to make an improvement. In 1952, when harsher pass laws than ever before were introduced, the government decided to call the pass book a "reference book". So the law was called the "Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act".

Today they claim to have "abolished the pass laws" all over again! What they are doing is changing the old *dompas* for a new Bantustan

"passport". The name changes, but the system remains the same. In fact it gets worse.

Undermining workers' unity

Secondly, Bantustan "citizenship" affects the African workers by making it more difficult for them to organise and by threatening to undermine their unity.

Workers will be forcibly separated on a "tribal" basis, not only in the Bantustans, but also in the industrial areas themselves. Segregation of living quarters already applies to the barracks and compounds for migrant workers. This will no doubt be stepped up (as is shown, for example, by the Alexandra removals).

We will probably also find in time to come that the jobs in each factory will be allocated to workers from one particular Bantustan only. When workers in a factory prove "troublesome" (for instance, by demanding higher wages), the government will threaten to allocate the jobs in the factory to another Bantustan. Rivalry between different groups of African workers will thus be encouraged.

Already strikes are met with mass dismissals and the *deportation* of the workers to the Bantustans. This is likely to become standard practice everywhere.

Trade Unions will almost certainly continue to be prohibited in the Bantustans, and the forms of worker representation which are allowed for Africans in the urban areas will increasingly be forced under the control of employers and government officials.

Black agents of the system

Thirdly, As a result of so-called "independence", the black "governments" of the Bantustans

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What is a Bantustan?

★ A Bantustan is like a paddock where the farmer keeps his oxen until he needs them for ploughing. The African workers are forced to wait in the Bantustans, like oxen of the bosses, until they are chosen for work in the cities.

★ The Bantustans make up 1/8 of the land of South Africa — yet our enemies call them "homelands" for 3/4 of the population. The land of the Bantustans is just enough to serve as prison camps for the African people. It was never intended that the mass of the people could live off the land in the reserves as independent farmers. In any case the new ruling cliques there are busy grabbing much of the land for themselves. The ordinary people will always be fully dependent on working in the mines and industries of South Africa.

★ A Bantustan is a dumping ground where the families of workers are kept and where sick, old or unemployed workers are sent when they are no longer of use to the employers. The Bantustans will never provide the social welfare, pensions or unemployment compensation which the people need. Poverty, hunger and disease will grow. Already a medical study has shown that nearly one third of all children in rural areas of the Transkei are dying of malnutrition before the age of two. Of course, the South African government and the employers will deny their responsi-

bility for this. They will say that these are "problems of underdevelopment" in the "independent African states" of Transkei, BophuthaTswana, and so on.

★ The Bantustans are intended to provide a place for a few black collaborators to grow rich and powerful — without disturbing the structure of white supremacy over the whole of South Africa. The rulers of the Bantustans are really compound superintendents; but they are now called "Presidents" and "Prime Ministers". The Bantustans are developing their "own" black armies, with the task of defending apartheid and capitalism in South Africa. They also have vicious vigilante squads, such as the notorious "Green Berets" who are terrorising the opposition in the Ciskei. And the whole world will be expected to stop protesting because blacks are being killed by other blacks.

★ By investing money in the Bantustans, the foreign capitalists will continue to invest in apartheid and make huge profits from the oppression and exploitation of black workers — while claiming that they no longer invest in South Africa itself. The black bosses of the Bantustans will be made junior partners in the industries which arise there, and act as loyal defenders of the profits of the apartheid

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When a pass becomes a "passport" ...

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are becoming fully involved in administering the pass laws and the whole South African system of labour control.

A recent agreement between Vorster and the "Chief Ministers" of Ciskei, Lebowa and Bophutha-Tswana states that "travel documents" (that is, *passes*) will be issued by the "homeland governments" to all blacks over the age of 16 entering "white areas".

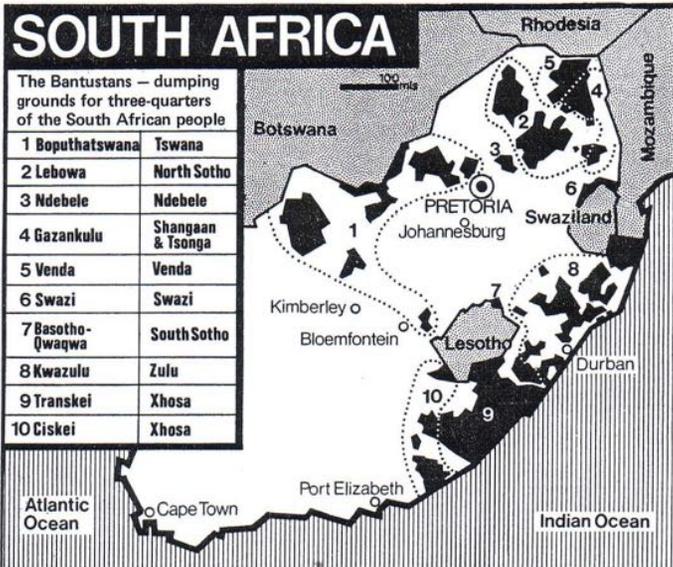
The agreement states clearly that, just as now, African workers will only be able to come to the cities if they have been "requisitioned as labourers" or "called in" by a previous employer. On top of this, the worker will have to register with the Bantu Administration Board and apply for a permit to work. This, of course, will be stamped in the worker's "passport", just as it is stamped in his pass today.

Workers without permits or who do not register with the Bantu Board, will be "in the white area illegally" and "will be dealt with accordingly".

Same system, but worse

In other words, under a new name, we have the exact same system of pass laws and migrant labour which has led in the past to an average of about 600,000 Africans being arrested per year. The system which makes African workers mere "labour units", savagely exploited, living their entire lives under the absolute control of the bosses and the government.

But now the black "governments" of the Bantustans themselves will be involved in enforcing this system. The apartheid regime



will excuse the system by saying it has been agreed with "independent black states". Workers will be told to direct their complaints to their "own governments".

In the face of the Bantustan menace, all politically conscious workers have a very important task: *To constantly point out to our fellow workers who the real enemy is.*

The struggle

No amount of puppet "independence" for Bantustans, no amount of changes in the "citizenship" of our people, can change our determination to win our freedom throughout the whole of South Africa. To do that we will have to destroy not only the Bantustan system, but the whole system which oppresses and exploits us.

Our struggle is to overthrow the apartheid regime and the power of the bosses, which lies at the root of all our suffering.



Part of the crowd which gathered in Dar es Salaam on 6th November to pay tribute to Vuyisile Mini, Wilson Khayinga and Sinakile Mkaba, who were hanged by the South African regime on that day in 1964.

Soweto students led the dedication ceremony, singing freedom songs and relating the murder of these SACTU martyrs and the many other heroes of the liberation movement who have fallen victims in the struggle.

Besides ANC and SACTU members, officials of NUTA (the Tanzanian trade union organisation), delegations from the Patriotic Front and from SWAPO, and representatives from many foreign embassies attended.

"Workers' Unity" is intended for workers and trade unionists both in South Africa and abroad. To continue producing this and other publications, SACTU urgently needs financial support. Readers outside South Africa are asked to send donations to SACTU's London Office at 49 Rathbone Street, W1A 4NL

What is a Bantustan?...

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system and its imperialist backers.

★ The Bantustans are the method of the apartheid regime for encouraging the development of backward, "tribal nationalism" among Africans. The aim of this is the age-old policy of divide and rule. Not only have the racists divided whites and blacks; they are now devoting their efforts to dividing blacks and blacks.

★ The Bantustans are a method used by the government to defeat the growing power of the black workers. Only workers' unity can defeat the aims of our enemies. Only the united struggle of the working people can bring down the Bantustan system and bring full liberation to one united South Africa.

SACTU anniversary

5th March 1978 will be the 23rd anniversary of the founding of SACTU. We call on our supporters in all countries to mark this occasion by meeting to protest against the brutality of the apartheid regime; by remembering all the workers and trade unionists who have given their lives in the struggle in South Africa; and by demanding the release of all trade union and political prisoners there from detention and banning.

Multi-national companies block trade unions

European-based multi-national companies continue to block the development of African trade unions in South Africa, victimising workers' leaders and refusing to recognise the unions of the workers' choice.

★ Smith & Nephew still refuse to recognise the National Union of Textile Workers, an unregistered union to which the majority of black workers at Smith & Nephew belong. The management are now trying to enforce a "works council" for in-factory bargaining, which workers have boycotted. The NUTW claims that management at Smith & Nephew have used pressure to get workers to accept the council, and when faced with the refusal of workers to put forward candidates for the council, they placed the names on the ballot papers themselves.

When members of the council wanted to resign in the face of the workers' overwhelming rejection of the council, Smith & Nephew told them they would "just have to stay and represent the minority".

Meanwhile, workers in Britain have taken up the call of the black workers at Smith & Nephew in Pinetown. The General and Municipal Workers' Union, the Association of Technical, Managerial and Supervisory Staff and the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, have formed a committee to co-ordinate action on the issue. The International Textile Workers' Federation and the ICTU also support the struggle of Smith & Nephew workers.

★ United Transport Holdings, subsidiary of the British-based British Electric Traction, is refusing to recognise the Transport and Allied Workers' Union, which has members at a number of UTH companies. At African Bus Services, for example, 75% of the African workers are members of the TAWU. The works committee there has called on management to recognise the union, and has been ignored.

Two years ago recognition was refused at UTH's Vaal Transport Company. In October last year, the General Secretary of the TAWU was summoned to see management, and while there, the Security Police arrived, interrogated him and confiscated his membership lists.

(According to information released by the British government, in December 1976, 55 juveniles and 116 trainees employed at UTH companies were paid below the "Poverty Datum Line". This is based on information supplied by the company itself.)

★ The Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union alleges that Unilever is victimising its members. Last year, a union shop steward, who was also a member of the liaison committee, was dismissed after a union request for access to company premises to enroll members had been turned down. Unilever claims the man was dismissed for bad time-keeping and attendance!

Sydney harbour workers ban S.A. ship

In a letter to SACTU, the acting Secretary of the Firemen and Deckhands' Union of New South Wales, Australia, reports:

"In line with the policy of WFTU and the above Union, I have to advise that the South African Flag Vessel 'Safocan Auckland' was refused tug crews and linesmen in the port of Sydney from 16th to 30th September, 1977. This action resulted in the ship being unable to depart."

The union took this action to support the struggle of the people of South Africa "against the terror and oppression of apartheid."

A meeting of Linesmen and Tug crews at Sydney harbour decided to withhold services from the ship "until satisfactory answers are received" from the South African government to specific questions about recent deaths in detention. The workers demanded to know the truth about the deaths of Steve Biko and workers' leader Lawrence Ndzanga, and also to be told why Rita Ndzanga was refused permission to attend her husband's funeral. "What is she guilty of under the fascist law known as the Terrorism Act?" they asked.

A deputation from the union, together with the Seamen's Union of Australia and the Sydney Waterside Workers put these questions to South African diplomats, but received unsatisfactory answers. The unions eventually allowed the ship to sail "on condition that the next port of call would be Melbourne, where another ban was placed on her."

Similar action was taken against the "Safocan Westerland" from 15th to 19th November, and once again against the "Safocan Auckland" from 23rd to 26th December when the ship returned to Sydney. This time the unions acted in protest against the decision of the Biko inquest.

This action by our comrades in Australia is a fine example of international workers' solidarity. Bold efforts like this by workers in every country can make the *Week of Action* in March an outstanding success.

Caution

Readers in South Africa should take care not to be found with "Workers' Unity" in their possession, as it is banned.

Nightwatchmen get R21.46 for 84-hr. week

The wages of security guards have recently been increased in terms of the Watch Patrol Services Determination. The new wages, which affect some 25,000 guards, start at a minimum of R21,46 (R93 per month) for an 84-hour week. In November, they will get a further increase of R10 per month.

Working conditions in the flourishing security business are appalling — workers complain contin-

ually of long hours, forced overtime, low wages, dismissals without notice, retrenchment of long-standing workers without long service bonuses, lack of pensions, and the refusal of some employers to grant holidays. The employers get away with this because the workers are defenceless. Because of the type of work they do — a handful of men on each site, coming together with other workers only on pay-day — it

is difficult for the workers to meet and discuss their complaints, or to organize to do something about them. Any attempt at organization is met with instant dismissal.

Even employers in security companies are sceptical that the new wage determination will be properly enforced. The old determination was widely ignored by employers trying to undercut each other by paying very low wages.

WHY THEY FORMED THE URBAN FOUNDATION

Bosses fear revolution

Every now and then the liberal English press in South Africa lets out a choice bit of the truth about the big-business interests which it represents. Perhaps the Editor of the Johannesburg *Star* was carried away by the New Year festivities when he allowed this one to slip past his pencil and into print — an article about the Urban Foundation (*Star* airmail weekly, 31/12/77).

The Urban Foundation was formed a little more than a year ago, financed by the big capitalists (people like Oppenheimer) to the tune of R13 million, and headed by the former Cape judge Steyn. This is what the *Star* has to say about its aims:

"Not much in the way of idealism went into the making of the Urban Foundation.

Conditions in the black townships have always been bad without most of the country's big business-

men, or the little ones either, feeling called upon to do anything about it.

Then came Soweto and its aftermath and presto — the cream of the business community gathered earnestly in a five-star hotel to discuss ways and means of bettering the lot of the urban black.

They had heard, however distantly, the rumblings of revolution and sensed danger to the country's economy and to their profits.

The Urban Foundation then is an investment in self-interest. It is designed to help keep the country stable so that businessmen can preserve and extend their businesses."

A shock for the bosses!

What shocked big business when it "first dipped a tentative toe into the boiling pot" of Soweto, was the discovery that the black people are "angry and alienated by months of violence; many of them sympathetic to socialist or marxist ideals and bitterly opposed to the Government and all established power — including business power."

But having thus far let the cat out of the bag, the writer of the *Star's* article tries to pull it in again by the tail! The article ends without any explanation of *how* the Urban Foundation is working to stem the tide of revolution in South Africa.

In reality, the Urban Foundation is carrying out an idea which has become very popular among the big employers over the past 18 months. They have decided that they desperately need to cultivate a business class among the blacks, people with

"a stake in the capitalist system", to defend the whole South African system of exploitation against the struggle of the black workers.

The real purpose

The Urban Foundation *claims* to be working to improve the lot of "urban blacks" in general. In practice its main purpose is to promote the development of a black elite in order to control the workers. In another item in the *Star* weekly, it is reported that the Urban Foundation has "set aside R50,000 to the first significant effort by private enterprise to create black entrepreneurs in an urban township. The money is to be the starting finance for prospective builders being trained by the foundation as part of a R150,000 home improvement scheme."

The poverty, slum conditions and hunger which is the lot of the mass of black South Africans is the result of the oppression and exploitation of the working people. Only by crushing apartheid, by ending the rule of the bosses, and by restoring the wealth of our country to the people, will we be able together to overcome these conditions.

Basic needs

Even to provide decent housing, electricity, sewerage and transport for all the people would cost thousands of millions of rand. Against this, the pathetic sums of the Urban Foundation will merely advance the position of a chosen few — while aiming to *deceive* the many.

What big business has so "generously" donated to the Urban Foundation is merely a tiny part of the profits they have made from paying starvation wages to the black workers. What they have stolen from the workers as unpaid labour, they now hand out as "charity" from white businessmen to black businessmen.

The bosses who put money into the Urban Foundation wanted "a quick and obvious return on their investment," says the *Star*. But to their misfortune they found: *"Gaining credibility with blacks was, and is, the most difficult task faced by the foundation."*

Experience has taught our people to beware of the bosses when they come to us with "gifts" and sweet talk — just as much as when they come with armed policemen.



The "Black Businessman of the Year" receives his prize of an all-expenses-paid tour of the United States of America. But while white capitalists are trying to promote black capitalists to join in exploitation, bulldozers are smashing down the homes of thousands of black workers at places like Modderdam and Unibel.



"No more Land Rovers for apartheid!"

The shop stewards at British Leyland's Rover plant at Solihull, England, have published an excellent broadsheet demanding an end to Leyland's involvement in South Africa.

They state: "Over the past five years British Leyland has made five times as much profit from each of its workers in South Africa as it has from its workers in Britain. The question is: How is this possible?"

Oppressed under apartheid

The broadsheet explains in detail how black workers in South Africa are oppressed under apartheid, and how this enables companies like Leyland to squeeze high profits out of them.

It gives 1974 wage figures for Leyland in South Africa, showing the discrimination against African workers. While a semi-skilled white worker earned R247 a month, a semi-skilled African earned less than R90. While some Africans were doing skilled work, no Africans were paid at skilled rates.

The broadsheet goes on to describe how British Leyland actively perpetuates the exploitative conditions in South Africa.

"1) It has consistently refused to recognise the black Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) which has had branches (unofficially) in Leyland plants in South Africa since 1973. In that year 95% of black workers at the Mobeni plant had joined the union. Last year British Leyland moved truck production out of this plant in an obvious retaliation against the workers there.

"2) It has decided — despite world opposition to apartheid — to continue to expand its South African operations.

"3) It continues to supply the South African Defence Force and Police with military vehicles, including land-rovers, armoured personnel carriers and trucks.

Anti-union outlook

"This ruthless trampling over the workforce of Leyland in South Africa exposes the real anti-union outlook of our management," the Rover shop stewards continue. "It shows just what sort of wages and conditions Leyland workers in this country would suffer, and how management would treat us, if it were not for the strength of our trade union organisation which we have built up over the years."

The broadsheet explains why it is important to British workers that their African brothers should be strongly organised. "Trade Unionists have realised that their strength in one factory can be undermined by the bosses playing on the weakness of workers in another factory and dividing them against each other. That is why we

work hand in hand with other Leyland workers throughout Britain. Now that we can see how the bosses play us off against workers in other countries — threatening to close down plants here and shift investment abroad — we must unite internationally for our mutual benefit."

Call for action

The broadsheet calls for British Leyland workers to support the forthcoming International Week of Action by blacking all goods to South Africa. It demands the immediate recognition by British Leyland management of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, as the

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Land Rovers in South Africa. This picture shows the harsh reality of British Leyland's involvement in apartheid.

Here is part of a poem written by a pupil in a Mozambique school. The poem has been printed by the Rover shop stewards in their broadsheet on South Africa.

"We are decolonizing the Land Rover!"

No more is it the car of the collector of taxes —
 We have decolonized it!
 Now there is no terror when it enters a village
 For the Land Rover no longer belongs to the colonial
 policeman or soldier ...
 Once it was the sure ally of the exploiter's whip —
 But now we have decolonized it!
 Through the mud and the sand
 Its power and its four wheels
 Will guarantee a safe arrival at the most distant
 machambas,
 And at the Peasants' co-operatives.

With our products
 We buy the fuel it consumes,
 With our intelligence
 We mend any breakdowns that happen,
 With our struggle
 We make a friend of this enemy —
 We are the decolonizers!
 We are liberating the Land Rover
 And now it is independent at last! ...

The Rover shop stewards add: "In Mozambique the Land Rover is now a vehicle used for its proper purpose — to assist in the development of production, agriculture and to improve the working and living conditions of the Mozambique workers."

The hands of the workers who made you
 Are equal to the hands of the workers of our land —
 Those English hands which forged you
 Know that one day they will help to make their own
 Revolution,
 And raise the clenched fist of their solidarity! ...

We are decolonizing a weapon of the enemy!
 We are decolonizing the Land Rover!

Those four wheels and the powerful motor,
 That cab with its control dials
 That shape of the chase that was once linked with fear
 Now doesn't make the people run away!
 Men, women and children of the countryside
 Make signals to the driver,
 Ask for lifts —
 We are decolonizing the Land Rover!
 And the people don't run away anymore.

Leyland manoeuvres against MAWU

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union is continuing its struggle for recognition at Leyland plants in South Africa. At the Elandfontein plant near Johannesburg, where Leyland has for many years held out against pressure from the workers to have their own union, attempts are now afoot to try and obstruct the MAWU by organising workers into a "parallel" union.

Leyland approached Ronnie Webb, secretary of the registered Motor Industry Combined Workers' Union (and President of TUCSA) and asked him to help "organise" the Leyland African workers. Webb has formed the unregistered Motor Industry Workers' Union, and has the assistance of the personnel department at Leyland in handing out trade union membership forms!

Leyland tried this tactic once before, with the United Auto and Rubber Workers' Union, but it failed when this union decided that as MAWU was already organising there, they would not interfere.

Despite Webb's claims to the contrary, if he succeeds it will mean that his registered union will

completely dominate the unregistered union, which is the pattern of all "parallel" unions. Webb's own union has apparently admitted to practising racial discrimination against the very African workers whom he is now seeking to "organise"! It has enforced the industrial colour bar against African workers in the motor industry, refusing to allow them into certain skilled jobs.

As we have explained in "Workers' Unity" before, the whole "parallel union" strategy is used by the registered unions to protect their members' jobs and wages by controlling African workers and holding them back. This control, of course, suits the employers down to the ground!

The only way forward for the trade union movement in South Africa lies through the building of powerful independent unions, based on the mass of the workers (the African workers) and aiming through struggle to unite all workers irrespective of race. That is why independent unions like MAWU should be supported.

Workers in the S.A. motor industry

Part 1

When there is an economic crisis in capitalist countries, such as there is today, the workers in the motor industry are among the first to suffer. The general fall in living standards and the fact that businesses cut back on their expenses, means that the number of new motor vehicles sold each year falls sharply. As a result, production is cut back and large numbers of workers in the industry are at once thrown out of work, and the rest placed on short-time.

Thousands laid off

In South Africa during 1976, the motor industry employers threw out no less than 15% of their workforce, and the dismissals have continued right through 1977. Vehicle manufacturers alone had dismissed 8000 workers by August last year. In addition, nearly 5 million hours of employment were taken away from the workers through short-time.

It is not only the workers assembling vehicles who are affected. Around the motor industry has grown a tyre industry, a component part industry, steel foundries, and a huge motor trade. Many thousands of workers have lost their jobs in recent years in these sectors as well. Most of the workers laid off have no hope of finding other jobs, and no unemployment benefits or social security to rely on.

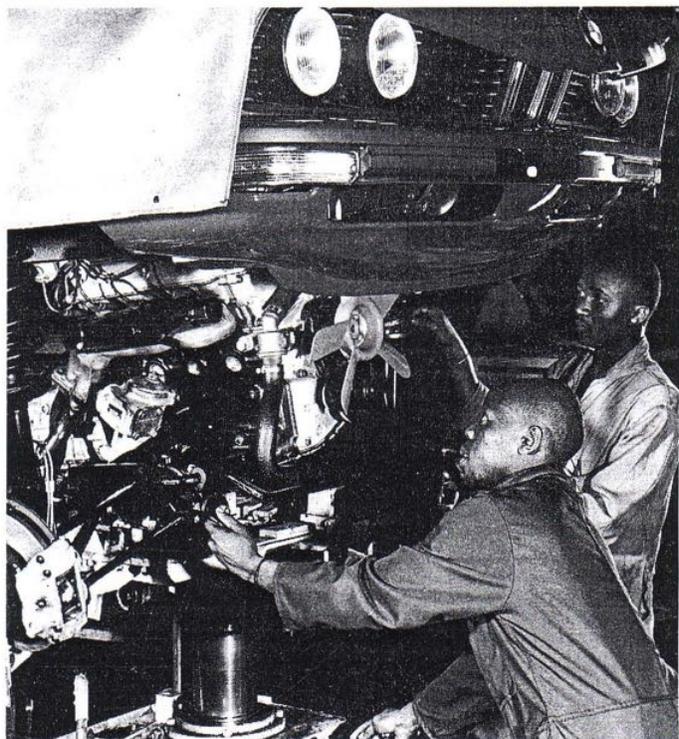
While the capitalist economy swings out of control from boom to slump, from fast growth to stagnation, the workers find themselves pushed about from pillar to post. At one time they are taken on by factories desperate for new labourers, at another they are laid off in large numbers.

Ups and downs

The motor industry is one of the least stable of all industries under capitalism. Car sales in South Africa rose from 139,223 in 1967 to 201,854 in 1970, and then plunged to 175,884 the following year. Then sales rose again quickly to a record 229,031 in 1975 — only to fall again in 1976 to 185,132, and in 1977 to 165,000. Of course the number of workers employed rose and fell sharply at the same time.

All these ups and downs have nothing to do with the real needs of the people for cars and other vehicles. They are governed by economic "laws" of a system whose sole purpose is to put money in the pockets of the factory-owners and financiers. As one of the top bosses of General Motors in America once remarked: "We are not in business to make cars; we are in business to make profits."

One of the results of this madness is that luxury cars for the rich, like Mercedes and BMWs, are increasing their share of the market in South Africa, while the working people find that the buses are



Workers at BMW's Rosslyn plant installing an engine into a finished car body.

becoming ever more crowded and the fares are always going up.

Labour cheap

It was to make profits that the motor companies came to South Africa. The first was the Ford factory established in Port Elizabeth in 1924. It was followed in 1926 by General Motors. One of the reasons why they chose PE was because it was at the time a centre of unemployed poor whites. These workers were unorganised, desperate for work and forced to accept low wages, which is just what the bosses wanted!

Later, after the Second World War, when white workers had established themselves in a privileged position and were collaborating with the bosses against black workers, the new motor factories were established instead at Cape Town and Durban. There the employers could exploit the growing numbers of Coloured and Indian unemployed.

Since the 1960s, however, the motor companies have aimed in particular at employing African workers, whose wages are the lowest as a result of the oppression of apartheid. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the newest motor assembly plants have been set up in places like the Rosslyn "border" area, Silverton, Babelegi and East London.

Big profits

It is only with the economic crisis that the motor industry in South Africa has made a loss. Up till now it has reaped big profits. In 1970, for example, Leyland's profits in South Africa were higher than the

the minimum rate was raised from 40 cents to 56 cents per hour, and the other rates by similar proportions.

In 1974, Ford raised its minimum to 56 cents per hour (i.e. approximately R96.88 per month). In 1973, Leyland reported that its minimum wage for Africans in Durban was R82.90 per month. It said the average for its African workers was only R83.30, which shows how few were earning significantly more than the minimum.

Based on the breadline

Today the major motor companies claim that they base their wage rates for Africans on the so-called Poverty Datum Line (i.e. the breadline) for their area, and do not pay below this. This is supposed to be a huge concession to the workers!

In practice, actually, the "Poverty Datum Line" is a deception. This impressive-sounding name actually means the bare minimum that the bosses can pay the workers, if the workers and their families are not to starve to death! Yet the fact of paying PDL wages is used by the employers in South Africa to prove how "progressive" they are.

What is more, the various PDL figures bear no relation to the demands of the workers. They are merely calculations by "experts" (often paid by the big employers) who claim they know what the African workers need. In fact, there are nowadays so many different "PDLs" for the employers in each area to choose from, that the motor companies have little difficulty in finding one low enough to suit them — and make good publicity for themselves overseas at the same time.

Volkswagen, for instance, claimed that in 1974 the so-called "Household Subsistence Level" (a figure supposedly well above the "PDL") for a worker plus four dependants, was a mere R67 per month!

Poverty wages

In 1974, Volkswagen claimed to be paying the following average hourly rates to Africans:

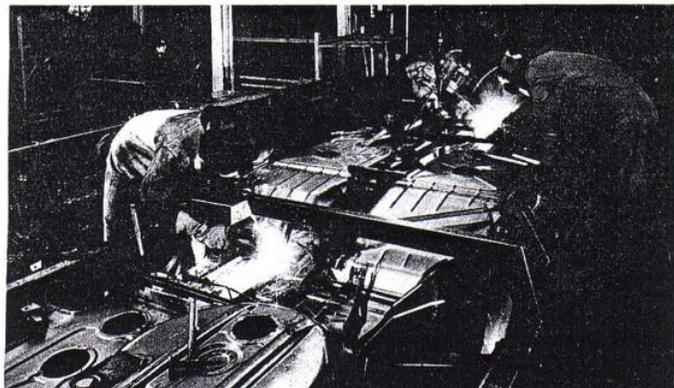
Grade 1	48c*	Grade 5	67c
Grade 2	48c	Grade 6	74c
Grade 3	54c	Grade 7	85c
Grade 4	59c		

The majority of Africans were employed in Grades 1 and 2. Only twelve were in Grade 7, and the highest-paid African earned 97 cents per hour. Assuming a forty-hour week, the monthly wage of the lowest grades was R83.04. In 1975

Discrimination

For all the clever words and names that the employers might use, serious discrimination against black workers in the motor industry is maintained today. Take, for example, the wage differences.

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Black welders at work on the under-carriage of a vehicle.

*R1 = approximately \$1.15

SACTU visits U.S. trade unionists

A SACTU representative has, for the first time ever, made a tour of the USA. During September and October last year, Zola Zembe, SACTU NEC member, toured the United States meeting trade unionists and others, and addressing three major trade union conferences (one with more than two thousand delegates present).

Zola was invited to the USA initially to address the United Electrical Workers' annual convention in New York. Both here and elsewhere the response to his call for solidarity with the oppressed workers of South Africa, and an end to collaboration with apartheid, was warm and enthusiastic.

Zola visited Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee and Boston as well as New York. He met with national trade union leaders, local branches and rank-and-file workers, taking to each and every one of them his call for support. As a result of this visit, a basis for developing solidarity between workers in America and workers in South Africa has been laid.

Black workers and trade unionists were especially responsive to what Zola had to say, as they themselves suffer racial discrimination in many ways. For instance, black workers in America suffer more from unemployment, poor housing, inadequate social amenities, etc., than any other workers.

Many US trade unions and solidarity organisations have shown that they are ready to give practical support to the struggle against racism and exploitation in South Africa. Already, plans are underway for a SACTU support group in Boston and possibly Los Angeles; a SACTU fund-raising event is being organised in Chicago; and material contributions have been received from eight trade unions and other organisations.



Zola Zembe of SACTU addressing the Convention of the United Electrical and Machine Workers of America in New York.

Motor industry...

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In 1972/3 the total wage bill paid to white workers in the motor industry was R161 million. The total paid to black workers was R58 million. *Yet the white workers made up no more than one quarter of the total work-force.* At present the average wage of white workers in manufacturing as a whole is roughly five times higher than that of Africans.

The colour bar in industry keeps black workers (particularly Africans) out of skilled jobs. This discrimination is enforced through "gentlemen's agreements" between the white skilled workers' unions and the employers. But it is also backed up by job reservation, or the threat of job reservation, imposed by the government.

Changes in job reservation

Job reservation has been eased in the motor industry over the years as many white workers have moved out of skilled jobs on the factory floor into supervisory and technical positions. In some factories, Coloured workers in particular have been allowed to take on skilled work. There are no whites on the factory floor at Leyland's Blackheath plant, for example.

In general, however, the racial stratification of the work-force in the industry remains. The motor companies claim loudly that they are anxious to promote Africans as quickly as possible into skilled jobs. They pretend this is because they are "against discrimination". In reality, however, they simply want to replace expensive (white) labour with cheap (black) labour. They have no intention of paying black skilled workers the same wages as whites.

At present, for example, African workers in the motor industry are often allowed to do skilled work alongside white workers — *but continue to be paid semi-skilled wages.* To cover this up, the African worker's job will be called by a different name.

(Anthony Thomas's recent television film on South Africa showed an example of this at Leyland — an African mechanic being described as a "repair shop assistant" so that he does not receive a mechanic's wages.)

"Rate for the job"

This sort of arrangement allows the motor companies to claim overseas that they are paying "the rate for the job" regardless of race! As international pressure against economic links with South Africa is stepped up, we will find the big companies becoming extremely clever at disguising the reality of their deeds in South Africa behind all sorts of fancy labels.

(This article will be continued in the next issue of "Workers' Unity", when we will look at the importance of the motor industry in South Africa's industrial development; the significance of the "local content" programme; the motor firms' links with the government and military forces; the employers' plans for the future; and the struggle of the black motor workers to gain trade union rights and recognition.)

'No more Land Rovers!' ...

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representative of black workers in its plants.

It calls for an end to all investment in South Africa, noting that this is the demand "which has been put forward by South African workers through their national organisation, the South African Congress of Trade Unions." A number of other specific demands are stated, including an end to all arms sales to South Africa and "the establishment of increased contact with black workers and fellow trade unionists through direct links with shop stewards in Britain and South Africa, in conjunction with SACTU."

Solidarity against apartheid

The Rover shop stewards end their broadsheet with this call:

"Leyland workers, do not allow the products of your labour to be used against your brothers and sisters in South Africa to maim and kill them!

"Support the struggle waged by your brothers and sisters in South Africa against apartheid, oppression and exploitation!

"SANCTIONS AGAINST CAPITAL! SOLIDARITY WITH LABOUR! NO MORE LEYLAND VEHICLES FOR APARTHEID!"

Polaroid forced out

Polaroid workers in America have won a long and hard-fought struggle: they have forced the Polaroid employers to discontinue supplying cameras, film, sunglasses, etc., to South Africa.

In 1971 Polaroid workers in the USA got management to agree that no Polaroid equipment would be supplied to the government in South Africa. Previously, Polaroid filming equipment was being used for reference book [pass book] photographs. Frank & Hirsch (Polaroid's distributor in South Africa) agreed to keep to this commitment.

But in fact they continued to supply the Bantu Affairs Department and the South African

Defence Force, using special invoices and delivery vans, and a phoney address. But they slipped up, and an employee of Frank & Hirsch photocopied an invoice showing beyond doubt that the agreement made with the Polaroid workers was being ignored.

This information was sent to the USA. It was subsequently discovered that at least 17 other sales of equipment to government departments had taken place between 1975 and 1977.

Polaroid, whose sales in South Africa were worth R3.4 million each year, is the first American company to withdraw from South Africa under pressure from workers demanding an end to apartheid.

Letter to the Editor

"Workers' Unity" has received a letter from Arnold Selby, who was General Secretary of the Textile Workers' Industrial Union (SA), was banned in South Africa, and now lives in the GDR.

He points out that, in our article about textile workers in the last issue, we omitted to deal with a number of important strikes which took place during the 1950s.

He writes that, at that time, the TWIU and the African Textile Workers' Industrial Union co-operated very closely. "Between 1951 and 1953 the African union led many strikes in both urban and rural areas like Ladysmith and Standerton." Hardly a month passed without the union being on the spot somewhere, leading a strike.

At the Good Hope Textile factory at Kingwilliamstown, there was a five weeks long bitter strike in September 1952. "Over three hundred workers were arrested and defiantly refused to pay bail, preferring to remain in prison until their case was heard." Also, some great strikes took place at Amato Textile Mills at Benoni. "And it is certainly necessary to record the strike there in 1955 (I think it was that year) in which scores of workers were injured in a militarised style police baton charge and hundreds of strikers endorsed out of Benoni."

We thank comrade Selby for his encouraging and informative letter. Unfortunately the limits of space always compel us to leave out a lot of important details from our articles, but we appreciate receiving contributions from readers and hearing their views and criticisms.