

This paper has been mailed to a large number of individuals and organizations in South Africa.

# WORKERS' UNITY

Organ of the South African Congress of Trade Unions

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"An injury to one is an injury to all"

## Wiehahn Commission to change the job colour bar — but ...

# No new deal for black workers

In December 1977, 18 job reservation orders were cancelled in South Africa. In June 1978, the employers and the registered unions in the steel and engineering industry agreed to drop the "closed shop" which barred Africans from certain grades of work. Now it is being widely predicted that the **Wiehahn Commission** will recommend the ending of all job reservation laws and closed shop agreements on a racial basis.

Predictions vary as to what effect these changes will have. Black workers are well aware of all the less obvious but very effective obstacles which prevent all but a few from rising to skilled jobs. However, some writers are saying that, by 1990, there could be 1½ million blacks in South Africa employed as clerks, supervisors, managers and technicians — **more blacks in these jobs than whites!** We think that these figures are wrong, because they are based on a speed of economic growth which is now impossible, or at least extremely unlikely, in a capitalist South Africa.

**But the fact remains that the next few years will see a big increase in the number of black workers moving into skilled and "white collar" jobs. Many more blacks will also be found in the lower management positions.**

### Meaning

What does all this mean for workers? Can this mean that the present system in our country holds hope for us of a better life? Is it a "new pattern of industrial democracy" as the head of the engineering bosses in SEIFSA recently boas-

ted?

Black workers have always opposed and resisted job colour bars — and none of us will be sorry to see the last of these measures! But at the same time there are dangers here. "Reforms" are so rare in South Africa that we can expect a certain amount of confusion to arise in our ranks.

The bosses themselves — the very people who live by exploiting us — will not miss the opportunity of presenting themselves as "friends" of the black workers. That is why we must have clear answers for our fellow workers who want to know the reason for these changes and what they will really mean.

### Profits

In May, when the new steel and engineering "agreement" was being drawn up, "Workers' Unity" explained that the intention of the bosses was to use African workers more and more in skilled jobs — **but as cheap labour at low wages.** We said then that the policy of the bosses is not made for the benefit of the workers, but always for the benefit of their profits alone.

The same motive lies behind the changes which the **Wiehahn Commission** will recommend. This motive has two sides: the one is **economic**, the other is **political**.

Let us first look at the economic side. The world crisis of capitalism has brought about a sharp fall in profit levels in South Africa. To push up their profits again, the bosses use many methods. For example, they force workers to work longer hours without extra pay; they force workers to work harder; they force down our living

The report of the government's *Wiehahn Commission* is expected to appear soon. This report, and the government's actions as a result of it, will have important consequences for the workers' movement.

The *Wiehahn Commission* has been investigating two subjects, which are linked together. The first is the *job colour bar*, which the big employers have been pressing the government to lift. The second is to work out new methods for the government to control the *trade union movement*, and especially the organisations of African workers.

It is very important for workers to understand fully the readjustments in government policy which are being worked out by the *Wiehahn Commission*. We must prepare ourselves and our organisations for these changes, so that we are not fooled by the government's propaganda and so that we are ready with our own tactics to advance our struggle as conditions change.

The article which begins on this page explains why our oppressors are finding it necessary at this time to do away with legally-enforced *job reservation*. In the forthcoming issues of "Workers' Unity" we will write about the other aspect of the *Wiehahn Commission* — their expected proposals for dealing with trade unions.

standards through inflation or lower wages; or they raise the productivity of the workers through using more machinery.

All these methods mean greater exploitation for workers, because the bosses' profits come from the unpaid labour of the workers.

In South Africa, the mass of the black working people already live in dire poverty. Moreover, the great militancy of the oppressed workers and people over recent years makes it very difficult for the bosses simply to reduce wages, or make us work longer and harder for the same pay. **They are therefore turning more and more to the last method which we mentioned —**

**that of more machinery, or "mechanisation".**

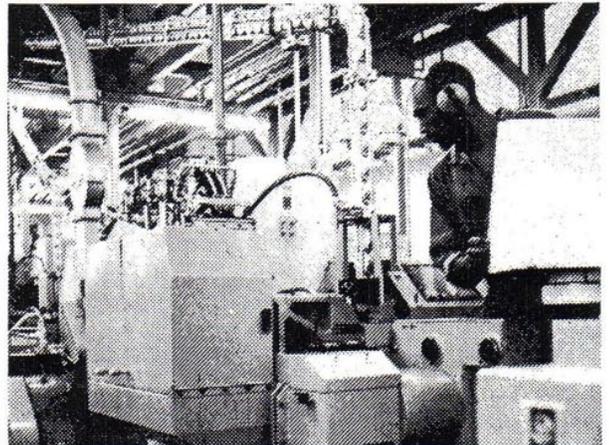
### Results

When more machinery is introduced in a capitalist economy, to raise the profits of the bosses, it acts against the workers in three main ways.

Firstly, it usually results in **more unemployment**. The bosses use the machines to **replace workers**.

Secondly, it means that more and more of the skilled jobs are done by machines. Most of the workers in production become semi-skilled **machine-operators**; they are robbed of their initiative and are

*continued on page 2*



This is a can making machine at Metal Box's Rosslyn plant near Pretoria. It can make 150 million cans a year. The bosses in South Africa are turning more and more to advanced machinery in order to increase their profits.

## No new deal for black workers...

*continued from front page*

forced to become like robots on a production-line, under the direct control of the management.

Thirdly, with mechanisation the factories grow larger and more difficult for the factory-owner to control. So the whole bureaucracy of managers at the top, and supervisors, administrators, technicians and clerks lower down, is further developed to carry out this task.

Putting all this together, we can see the effect of the bosses' policy of mechanisation on the basis of the profit system: **For a few workers** — promotion into supervisory and white-collar jobs. **For most workers** — either permanent unemployment or the oppression of boring, low-paid work on the production-line, dominated all the time by bosses and supervisors.

### Apartheid

In South Africa in the past, the burden both of unemployment and of unskilled and semi-skilled labour has fallen mainly on **black workers**. The supervisory, white collar and technical jobs have gone mainly to whites, who have used their bargaining power and political influence under apartheid to extend their privileges.

But for some years now, as the use of machinery has increased rapidly, the bosses have needed more clerks, supervisors and so on than they can find whites to employ in these jobs. That explains why the bosses have continued to complain about "shortages of certain types of labour" at a time when 2 million black workers are unemployed!

The bosses know that, if they are to rescue themselves and their profit system from the economic crisis by mechanising industry on an even larger scale than before, they will have to be allowed to employ blacks in all jobs without restriction.

The government's **Wiehahn Commission** has been set up to work out what changes in the law are needed to smooth the way for this mechanisation policy of the capitalists — by doing away with legally-enforced job reservation

and racially exclusive "closed shops".

So to summarise — the first reason that changes are being made now to the job colour bar is that the bosses need to increase their profits. These changes are part of a process aimed at increasing the mechanisation of production, which must inevitably under capitalism also involve further unemployment and the increased domination of the bosses over the production workers. It is only a small proportion of our people who will receive any benefit from these "reforms".

### Political

We said earlier that the second reason that these changes are being made now is **political**.

The advancing struggles of the oppressed people in the whole of Southern Africa have clearly threatened the position of the capitalists in South Africa. This has led them to realise that they cannot expect to maintain their rule over us for very much longer solely on the basis of support from other white groups in South Africa.

They now know that if they are to continue as the ruling class in the future, they will have to obtain some support from within the black population. What they are desperately hoping is that the removal of some of the most glaring racist barriers to "upward movement" by blacks, will help to maintain "stability" by enlarging what they call the "black middle class".

These are the aims which the ruling class is trying to achieve in South Africa through the relaxation of job colour bars at this time. None of these aims has anything in common with the interests of the mass of the working people.

We will of course welcome the removal of any job colour bar which actually takes place. **Indeed, since it is above all mass struggle which has made it necessary for the ruling class to make these changes we can claim them as a limited victory.**

### Conflicts

It is quite possible that the actual changes in the job colour bar, when they are put into practice, will lead to conflicts between the bosses and



*Under capitalism, mechanisation means more unemployment.*

## Whatever changes the bosses or the regime may choose to make in their own policies, we must never sacrifice in the slightest the independence of the workers' organisations

the white wage earners, who see the changes as a threat to their privileged position. We must be on our guard and warn our fellow workers against all attempts by the bosses to **present themselves as the champions and defenders of equality for blacks against white privilege.**

As workers we can put our trust only in **our own organised strength.** Our enemies are never more dangerous than when they proclaim to us their "goodwill". Whatever changes the bosses or the regime may choose to make in their own policies, we must never sacrifice in the slightest **the independence of the workers' organisations.**

At the same time we must be prepared for every change in course by our rulers, every retreat, every weakness, every crack that may appear in their ranks — and use the opportunity to mobilise our fellow workers and step up our demands.

### Total

What is the sum total of the changes which the **Wiehahn Commission** will recommend? **Changes in the way that the system of exploitation and oppression is organised, nothing more!**

The scrapping of legal job reser-

vation — wonderful though it may sound — will not lift the real burden which we suffer under the system of apartheid and capitalism. We shall still be without land and jobs, food and housing, and a decent education for our children. We shall still suffer the pass laws, the police raids, the bulldozers, the loss of citizenship and the denial of our political rights.

At precisely the same time that these "reforms" are being worked out by the **Wiehahn Commission**, the general oppression, brutality and poverty suffered by the mass of our people is increasing. **From this there is only one way out: to organise and prepare our forces for the overthrow of the apartheid regime and the complete elimination of oppression and exploitation from South Africa.**

## Caution

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



*The next few years will see more blacks moving into skilled and "white collar" jobs, and also into lower management positions. This man is an "industrial relations officer" for Roberts Construction.*

# White workers threaten to strike

In April last year, it was estimated that inflation had eaten into the salaries of white employees on the railways by about 25%. The railway unions put in for wage increases, and the President of the Artisan Staff Association of the SAR & H, Mr. J. Zurich, said at the time: "We shall lodge wage demands for increases of at least 20% with the Minister of Transport in June (1977) and if the answer is negative, there's going to be trouble".

In May 1977, six hundred railway workers of the Durban branch of the Association demanded across-the-board increases of R100 per month. The Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth branches took votes of no confidence in the Minister of Transport. The wage settlement finally made was considerably lower than the 20% demanded by the Association.

Now these same white employees are once more threatening strike action.

Mr. J. Zurich, who represents about 22,000 artisans and technicians in the railways administration, says it has become almost

impossible to ward off a strike. "The situation has become explosive and most of the men now favour strike action despite the fact that I have warned them about the illegality of it". Most divisional councils of the ASA have passed resolutions saying that the men have no confidence in the regime's Minister of Transport, Louwrens Muller.

The mood is the same among the South African Airways engineers. Mr. J. Visser, President of the SAA Engineering Association, said that it was "purely a matter of time" before his men downed tools. "They are no longer able to make ends meet on the inadequate wages paid by SAA. They firmly believe that their demands for a 45 hour working week and a 25% wage increase are fully justified. We have explained to them that a strike is illegal because we have been classified as an essential service".

One member of the union mentioned the possibility of grounding SAA aircraft over Christmas. "There is no way that the aircraft can fly without our constant attention" he said.

# 160 sacked for striking at Eveready

Three hundred black women workers at the British-owned Eveready electrical company's Port Elizabeth factory walked out on strike at the end of October, to back up their demand for trade union recognition and better pay and conditions.

Their existing starting rate is a mere 55 cents an hour, which is below the headline.

The women are demanding that the management must negotiate with their union, the Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers' Union, but the managing director of Eveready says the firm will not recognise the union.

Commenting on this refusal, a spokesman for the union told the press that the EEC "code of conduct" for companies operating in South Africa was not worth the paper it was written on.

The management's response to



"Boycott these products!" say Eveready workers in Port Elizabeth.

the strike has been to dismiss 160 of the strikers.

Now the union is asking its international affiliates, the International Metal Workers' Federation and the International Federation of Chemical and Energy workers, for help. The union leaders have also called for a national and international boycott of all Eveready products following the dismissal of the strikers.

# Union recognition dispute — Employers demand "no politics"

The employers in South Africa are always looking for new tricks to prevent the growth of independent trade unions for black workers which can fully represent their interests. Where the pressure for trade union recognition has become too strong for management to refuse recognition altogether, they are trying to turn the unions into dummies which cannot fight for their members' interests.

This has been shown very clearly by the management at Glacier Bearings, a South African subsidiary of Associated Engineering in Britain, in its dispute with the Metal and Allied Workers Union in Durban.

MAWU has demanded recognition from management on the basis that over half of the African workers support the union. Management disputes this, and says that the workers support the management-dominated liaison committee. Just who is telling the truth is revealed by the fact that six out of the seven worker representatives on the liaison committee demanded recognition of the union, and when this was refused, boycotted the committee meetings!

Because of the pressure from the workers, management seemed to back down a little. They put forward a number of conditions for recognition of MAWU, including that the union should not become

involved in politics! How can any union representing the oppressed workers of South Africa truly fight for the interests of its members, either on the factory floor or elsewhere, and remain "non-political"?

Of course the bosses, who are always so quick to say that the workers should not be involved in politics, are themselves fully involved in the politics of oppression in South Africa. They have political parties to represent their interests, to which they give vast sums of money, and for whom they vote for Parliament.

The workers in Britain, where Glacier Bearings is based, would certainly never accept union recognition on the basis of "no politics". In fact, the parent company of Glacier Bearings in Britain has been forced to recognise unions which play an active part in politics. e.g. the constitution of the 1.4 million strong Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers calls for "transference of industry from private ownership to socialist co-operative ownership for the common welfare of the people".

In addition, Glacier management in South Africa has said that the union must apply to the liaison committee for recognition! In this way, the management hopes to get round the demand for trade union recognition and at the same time strengthen the liaison committee.

# Board officials burn homes in dawn raid

In a 5 a.m. raid on "squatters" at Buffalo and Parkside Flats, East London, at the beginning of October, officials from the Eastern Cape Administration Board burnt hundreds of homes to the ground and arrested a number of the inhabitants.

An official from the ECAB said that the raids were conducted mainly "on shacks near refuse dumps built with cardboard cartons". He claimed that they were a health hazard. As if to give a humane face to these vicious raids, the official claimed that "only shacks which contained no possessions were set alight" and "the occupants had been given time to pack their belongings". Not so for Mrs. E. Ngobe, however, whose

pet animals were burned to death in the flames.

"Squatter" camps in the Cape are being regarded by the apartheid regime as a trial of strength. These camps present the rulers of South Africa with stark evidence of the crisis of the apartheid regime. The "squatter" camps represent unemployment, homelessness and above all, defiant resistance. The government has to remove them at all costs, and try and bury the crisis in the reserves. But the people in the camps also see this as a test of strength, and the more their homes are flattened and they are pushed on, the more determined they become to assert their right to live in the urban areas.



"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 38 Graham Street, London N1 8JX

# Monopolies dominate S.A.

In past issues of "Workers' Unity" we have reported on conditions in several different industries in South Africa. In this article we are going to look at the way some companies are involved in production in a number of industries at the same time.

The Anglo American Corporation, headed by Oppenheimer, provides a good example of this. When people talk about Anglo American they usually think of a gold mining company. While it is true that Anglo American owns many more gold mines than any other company in our country, it is also involved in a number of other industries as well.

For instance, it has diamond, coal, copper and platinum mines. It is involved in the production of iron and steel, chemicals and explosives, mine drills and equipment, machinery, food and beverages, fibres and textiles, timber and wood products, paper and the assembly of motor cars. It is involved in various kinds of construction work, and in property, banking and insurance.

## Companies

To carry on these many activities, Anglo American has formed a number of different companies. They all have different names, so it is often difficult to know which companies are owned by Anglo American.

Some of the more important ones are: De Beers Consolidated, Highveld Steel and Vanadium, AE&CI, Boart and Hard Metals, SA Nylon Spinners, Barlow Rand and Bruynzeel Plywoods. Anglo American also owns the LTA construction company and is a part-owner of big banks like Barclays and Standard. It owns many newspapers like Post, The Star, Rand Daily Mail, Cape Times, Cape Argus, Natal Mercury and most of the Sunday papers.

Workers employed in any of these companies are in fact working for Anglo American. In all, Anglo American owns more than 600 different companies. Many of these are among the richest in South Africa. In 1974 three of the biggest Anglo American companies (De Beers, Charter Consolidated and the AAC itself) together made after-tax profits of R307 million. In the same year, a mere three of Anglo American's many industrial companies (Barlow Rand, LTA and AE&CI) together employed 88,000 workers.

## Capitalism

This situation, in which one company manages to control so many others, is not at all unusual in capitalist countries. In the United States of America, for example, 500 companies between them produce 2/3 of all the goods sold there. Those companies also employ over 3/4 of the country's labour force and take 80% of all the profits.

We need to ask: how is it possible for a few companies to grow so

The report of a government Commission of Inquiry into monopolies in South Africa shows the extent to which the South African economy is dominated by a small number of giant companies.

For example the three largest cigarette companies produce 98% of all cigarettes made in South Africa. Here are some other examples:—

Industry	Percentage of total output produced by the three biggest firms in the industry
Blankets	78.8%
Tyres and tubes	85.8%
Sheet & plateglass	96.7%
Instant breakfast foods	90.2%
Soap and candles	80.5%
Engines and turbines	99%
Electric bulbs	91.3%

(These figures apply to the years 1971-2)

strong? What brings this about?

We know that capitalism grows through the wealth which the workers produce. But although workers produce all the wealth in our society, they do not control that wealth — they receive wages instead! It is the bosses — those who own the

factories to get bigger and bigger is a built-in law of development under the capitalist system. It has brought about the change from competitive capitalism, where many small companies exist side by side, to monopoly capitalism where a few large companies dominate the whole economy.

This has been taking place rapidly in South Africa. We can see it clearly in the history of the Anglo American Corporation.

This company began mining gold in the Transvaal in 1917. Like other mining companies, it paid the workers who produced the gold very low wages. But its mines were richer and used more machinery than mines owned by other companies, so it made larger profits than they did. Soon it started buying up smaller and weaker companies.

In this way it gained control over diamond mines in Namibia, Angola and South Africa. It bought copper mines in Zambia and coal mines in Rhodesia. It bought more gold mines in our own country, especially in the Orange Free State. By 1950 it was the richest mining company in South Africa. After that it bought up all sorts of other companies in other branches of industry.

Anglo American grew so large and rich by swallowing up hundreds of smaller companies. Today it owns companies in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique,

Angola, Rhodesia, Zambia, Tanzania and Zaire, as well as in more distant parts of the world like Britain, Europe, Australia and North and South America.

## Workers

What does the rise of giant monopolies like Anglo American mean for the workers? And in particular, what does it mean for the workers' struggle against capitalism?

Firstly, it means a threat to workers' jobs. It is no accident that the growth of Anglo American and monopoly capitalism in our country is accompanied by rising unemployment. When giant firms like Anglo American take over smaller companies, they almost always change the way production is organised. Having more capital under their control, the monopolies are able to lower their costs and raise their profits by buying the most advanced machinery to take over some of the work which workers were doing before.

Machinery, which could benefit everybody by making work lighter, hours shorter and pay higher, is made into an enemy of the people under capitalism — because the bosses are always out to increase profits by getting rid of "superfluous" workers. Monopolies speed up this process. Monopoly capitalism means more profits for the bosses and more unemployment for the workers.

Secondly, monopoly capitalism means that control over the economy, on which our lives depend, passes into the hands of fewer and fewer individuals. They are the real masters of society and they rule us to suit their profits. The welfare of the people as a whole, whether we have jobs or not, whether we have homes or not, whether our children are fed or starve, are matters of little importance to these capitalists.

If they show concern about our welfare at all, it is only because they fear a revolution. That is why workers should not be confused when the monopolies put on a "human face", and use a small part of their profits to set up "charitable" organisations like the Urban



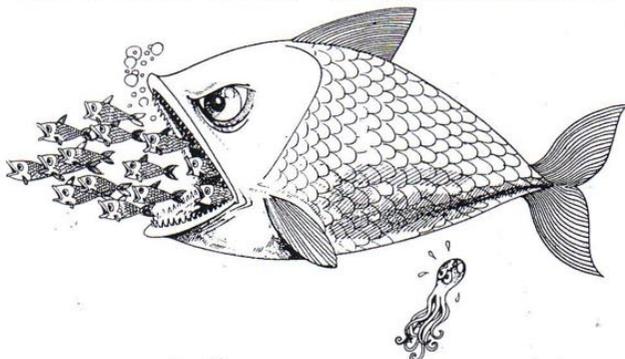
Anglo American's Oppenheimer — biggest boss of them all.

factories in which we are employed — who take the wealth and benefit from it. It is because workers throughout the capitalist world are exploited and oppressed in this way that we are always struggling against capitalism.

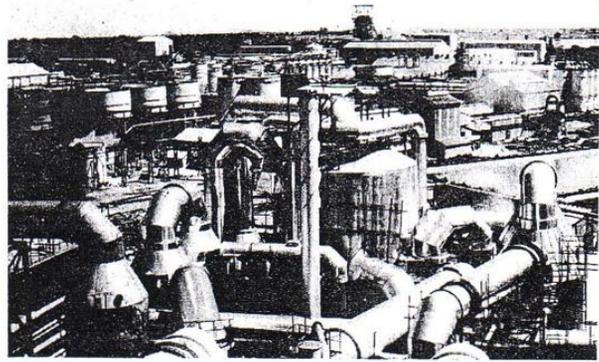
As capitalism grows, it gradually undergoes important changes. In earlier times, there were many separate small companies each employing only a few workers. Some of these companies, however, were stronger than others in that they used more machinery, employed more workers and produced more goods than the rest. As a result they made higher profits, which meant they were able to grow faster than the weaker ones. Very soon these bigger companies were able to grow at the expense of the smaller ones by taking them over and making the workers of these smaller companies work for them. Sometimes the big companies simply close the small ones down.

## A law

This tendency of some compa-



Anglo American grew so large and rich by swallowing up hundreds of smaller companies.



Anglo American's sulphuric acid plant at President Brand gold mine, near Welkom

### Monopolies...

Foundation as a propaganda exercise for the "free enterprise system".

### Strikes

Thirdly, monopoly capitalism means that the bosses are well organised and better able to defeat the workers in a single factory or company. For instance, if workers in a small company called a strike, the company would soon run out of money and either have to close down or give in to the workers. But if workers in only one Anglo American company went on strike, Anglo American as a whole would not be seriously affected. The bosses in the company where the strike took place could rely on the profits being produced by workers in Anglo American's other companies to help them break the strike.

To overcome these problems, workers need to be organised in many factories, in many different companies, and across the different industries. This is the only way that workers can fight effectively against the threat of losing their jobs and against the strength of the bosses under monopoly capitalism. As we saw in September 1976, when workers are organised and strike together in their tens and hundreds of thousands, then the bosses are paralysed.

Of course the bosses will use every means to prevent organisation of this kind. The state — the executive committee of the ruling class; the repressive power which the bosses have developed to protect themselves from the workers — acts to crush effective organisation by the workers. At the same time, it tries to encourage a type of "representation" for African workers in the factories which is specifically limited to one plant or one firm.

An example of this is the government's scheme of liaison and workers committees, and we shall soon see new schemes with a similar purpose as a result of the Wichahn Commission.

### Trade unions

African workers have long fought for independent trade unions, and we must continue to build (both in secret and where possible in the open) organisations

which are able to unite large numbers of workers in different factories and companies together. We should demand an end to all government restrictions on workers' organisations.

We must make no mistake that the bosses of giant companies like Anglo American work very closely with, and are supported by, the government — even though we sometimes read in the newspapers about arguments between them. The government needs big companies like Anglo American because they control so much money and because they can make more money faster than smaller companies.

All capitalists need the government to protect them and their system from the workers. In the case of Anglo American, for example, we have seen many times how they have called the police to shoot workers who have gone on strike on the mines.

### Stronger

While monopoly capitalism makes the workers more dependant on a few highly organised bosses in the big companies like Anglo American, we must remember that it also leads to the workers as a whole becoming stronger and the ruling class becoming weaker.

The development of capitalism takes away the land from the people and throws them into wage labour. It squeezes the middle classes, taking away their businesses and workshops, and either ruins them or turns them into salaried staff of the big companies. It reduces year by year the number of big capitalists who own the banks, mines, industries and farms, until they are a mere handful of the population. It gathers the workers together in their thousands in giant factories, in mines and on big plantations. It creates the conditions for the workers to organise themselves into a powerful force and lead all the suffering people against the small minority of exploiters.

No matter how huge a company may become under monopoly capitalism, that company depends on workers to produce its wealth. It can never escape that fact. That is why it is only the working class, united and organised, which has the strength to smash the power of these giant companies and transfer the wealth of our country to the people as a whole.

## Jobless Cape workers — A struggle to survive

The terrible conditions of unemployed workers in the Cape is described in a recent report by journalists of the Cape Argus.

In the early morning, African workers desperate for work line Vanguard Drive near Langa, waiting to be picked up by builders, shop owners and other employers searching for cheap casual labour. Hundreds of African workers living in Cape Town "illegally" in terms of the pass laws spend each day dodging labour inspectors, searching for work in a desperate struggle to stay alive. Most are paid between R1 and R3 for their work, which ranges from gardening to removing builder's rubble.

The men stand at the side of the road every morning, sometimes throughout the day, waiting for a job. Most of the men say they can afford to eat only bread, and some said they rummaged through refuse from Epping market for a meal.

At night they sleep in the bush or under a tree alongside the road, both in summer and winter, with only the clothes they are wearing, and sometimes a blanket. Said one of the men: "You don't worry about the weather — you are too busy worrying about having no money and nowhere else to sleep."

The men are constantly harassed by BAAB officials and face fines, imprisonment and deportation to the reserves. About half of the African population in the Cape Peninsula is there "illegally". Hundreds of men live in the bush between Bonteheuvel and Langa — others sleep near the city rubbish dump, where they look for food and clothing. Others sleep outside in the open squares of hostels and barracks in the townships. They are afraid to sleep inside because of the frequent pass raids.

## Worker dies of arsenic poisoning

Mr. John Mafatle, aged 19, a worker at Impala Platinum Limited, died of arsenic poisoning after having been exposed to arsine gas at work.

The facts surrounding the death of Mr. Mafatle and the illness of two other workers who had been working in the same section of the refinery came to light at the inquest hearing held in the Johannesburg Magistrates' Court on 3rd October 1978. The chief scientist of Impala Platinum gave evidence that ingots containing arsenic had been used in production. The Magistrate at the Inquest found that Mr. Mafatle died "accidentally" and that "nobody was to blame for his death".

In a capitalist society where the interests of the bosses are geared to the making of profits, the interests of the workers' health and safety are of little concern. Adequate safety precautions at Impala Platinum may reduce the bosses'

profits slightly, but they would save the lives of those like 19 year old John Mafatle.



Mine shaft at Impala Platinum.

## Wage Board sets starvation rates

New minimum wage rates for unskilled workers have been recommended by the government-appointed Wage Board, for the Western Cape. They are as follows:

Men (over 18 years)	R23,00 per week
after one year	R24,50 " "
Men (under 18 years)	R17,30 " "
after one year	R18,40 " "
Women	R18,40 " "
after one year	R19,60 " "

These wage rates are starvation

wages. Even conservative academics estimate that the minimum wage for an African family of six to basically survive is about R35 per week.

These wages are less than half of the minimum wage of R50 per week which SACTU is demanding for all workers. R50 per week is the absolute minimum required by all workers as a first step in relieving the mass of the working people from poverty and starvation.

# "I am a 'migrant worker' . . ."



I am a "migrant worker" in Cape Town. I come from Tsolo, and my relatives and my wife and family still live there. I have been working away from home like this almost all my life, and now that I am nearly 50 years old, I wonder how much longer I will be able to do the heavy work in the quarries.

When I can no longer come to Cape Town I do not know what we will do, for our small piece of land is not enough to support us, and there is no pension for people like me.

## Barracks

Although I am a married man, head of a family, I find myself living in "bachelor quarters" as they call the barracks. I have never enjoyed a proper family life, and my children have had to grow up hardly knowing their father. I can visit home only for about one month each year, and my family have never been allowed to join me in town.

I shall never forget my first experiences as a worker in town. I first went to work in Cape Town when I was 14 years old. My mother was unable to pay for my school fees any longer, so I had to go to Cape Town to earn my fees.

Arriving in Cape Town for the first time was a frightening experience. There was no-one to meet me, but fortunately I knew people in what is now called Langa, so I went there. I joined a group of men from my village, who were living in the "bachelor quarters" in Langa. These grown and dignified men, all with wives and families, are forced to live as bachelors for most of their working lives.

## Shelves

There were no beds in the compound — only three shelves along the wall. I had to sleep on the floor. Cooking was done on a primus stove in the middle of the floor.

I had no pass, so could not find work in Cape Town legally. I went to the pass office, though, and met a green-grocer, who offered to

employ me illegally at his shop in Koeberg. I was soon to discover why he didn't mind me not having a pass — it meant he had me completely under his thumb.

He made me sleep at the back of the shop. I was woken at 3 a. m. each morning to go to the market. I would then reload the purchased vegetables on to three trucks, which were then driven through the white suburbs, selling the vegetables. I went to bed at 10 p. m. For a 114-hour week, I was paid £2.10s each week in wages.

## Bribe

After a year, I decided I wanted to go home to complete my schooling. I asked the green-grocer to obtain a pass for me. He went with me to the pass office in Langa, and had to bribe the labour officials before they would give me a pass. This meant that for the first time, I was in Cape Town legally.

This was very important, because all the time that I was in Cape Town illegally I was completely dependant on the employer. I couldn't demand higher wages, or he would have sacked me, and I had no certainty of getting another job. He paid me whatever he liked.

I couldn't complain about ill-treatment, or go to the police. When the labour inspectors came round to the shop to check on illegal workers, I was made to disappear like a rabbit leaping into a hole.

## Dompas

After 18 months, I returned home to school. I left my pass with a friend who didn't have one. The dompas in those days did not carry a photograph, which is why I could do this. This meant that he could find work legally, and I could accumulate time on my pass, so as to qualify for permission to live permanently in Cape Town.

Migrant workers from the Ciskei always had an easier time than their brothers coming from the Transkei. The pass laws were rigidly applied to the Transkei chaps. They were recruited through agencies, and were then brought on 3rd class trains to Cape Town. These trains were just like goods trains, and they took as long to get to Cape Town — one week.

When they got to Cape Town, these workers were driven, like

cattle going through a dipping tank. They were stripped naked, their clothes disinfected, their bodies sprayed, and a "certificate of health" issued. When they got to Langa or elsewhere, this certificate had to be produced.

When I finished Standard 6, I returned to Cape Town and got my pass back from the chap who was using it. I found a job as a labourer on the Railways, and it was while I was doing this job that I first came into contact with SACTU and the ANC.

## Comparison

I get very angry when I think of the way black migrants in South Africa are treated in comparison to the skilled white workers who are recruited from Britain and elsewhere overseas.

These workers are given free air tickets to South Africa, they are met at the airport and taken to fancy hotels until they are in their jobs and have bought houses.

They are given loans to buy houses and all the comforts of living, and they employ blacks like me to clean their houses and watch their children. They get fat wages and have trade union rights. After a certain time they can qualify for South African citizenship and full political rights.

In fact, the government is now pressurising these workers to become South African citizens to fight in the army. This they do while at the same time stripping black people of South Africa of their citizenship rights under the Bantustan scheme. We are now called "foreigners" in our own country!

## Criminal

The criminal migrant labour system was invented by the mining companies, and their vast profits have been gained at a very high cost to African workers and their families. The hated pass laws, too, were first introduced by the mining companies.

These two horrible policies, migrant labour and pass laws, which blight the lives of our people, are the foundations on which the whole capitalist economy of South Africa rests. When we gain our freedom, and take back the control of our country and its riches, I hope no-one talks of "compensating" these bosses.



"Bachelor quarters" in Cape Town.

# Police called to sit-down strike

On 28th September 1978, police reinforcements were called to Cleremont, Durban, where 200 workers working on the Kwadabeka housing scheme had downed tools and staged a sit-down protest for higher wages. About 30 policemen were sent to the site. Workers were told to return to work the following day and put their grievances to their liaison committee, which would then discuss the wage claim with the employer, the Port Natal Administration Board.



# Strikers bring Indumeni Coal Mine to a halt

On Tuesday 12th September 1978, police were alerted when about 300 miners refused to go underground at the No. 2 shaft at Indumeni Coal Mine near Dundee. The miners, who were complaining about working conditions, demanded to see the mine manager who was in Johannesburg.

The following day, workers moved to No. 1 shaft to stop the morning shift from going down. As a result, about 800 workers stopped work and the mine came to a complete standstill.

The mine manager flew back from Johannesburg immediately and sent two mine policemen to arrange a meeting with the workers. So great was the anger of the workers that these two policemen were beaten up. Discussions were eventually held about bonuses being paid to certain categories of workers. Some workers were not satisfied with the outcome of the discussions, and demanded that their contracts be terminated.

Although Anglo American Corporation [the owner of the mine] described the work stoppage as a "minor incident", the police remained on close standby throughout the dispute.