

AFRICAN LABOUR PROBLEMS  
ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOLD MINES  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE STRIKE OF 1946.

DIGITISED

1-0 JUL 2012

DIGITISED

The copyright of this thesis is held by the  
University of Cape Town.  
Reproduction of the whole or any part  
may be made for study purposes only, and  
not for publication.

**A dissertation submitted for the degree of Master  
of Arts in the University of Cape Town.**

**by**

**Charles R. Diamond**

**November, 1969.**

The aim of this work has been to place the African Mine Strike of 1946 in historical perspective, by tracing through the years the results of the policy of the gold mining industry and the paternalism of the Government, and thus the causes of the strike. My task was aggravated by the fact that many of the principles in this story were either not in the country or could not see me. In addition, records of some particularly important court cases, as well as the files of such organisations as the Communist Party, have been destroyed.

My main debt is to Professor H.M. Robertson. His advice, encouragement, and assistance have always been invaluable.

I am also grateful to Dr. Francis Wilson who read the manuscript and made helpful suggestions.

I have profited by advice and help from other quarters: Senator W. Ballinger gave permission to use his private papers; Chris Inskip helped with statistical compilations; Miss Hazel Suchet selflessly typed the original draft from my often illegible handwriting, and finally Mr. Henry Kenney constructively criticised some of my original formulations.

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
1	Origins of the Colour Bar .....	1 ✓
2	Union and a Decade of Strife .....	20
3	The African Miners' Strike - 1920 .....	42
4	The Supply of African Labour .....	58 ✓
5	Two Decades of Experiment and Innovation, 1920-1940 .....	94
	Appendix: Percentile composition by origin of total African labour force on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1930-1941	
6	Lansdown Commission - some general remarks .....	114
7	African labour conditions: recruitment and contract, the black workers' obligations to the industry .....	127 ✓
8	African labour conditions: cash wages and wages in kind, the contractual liabilities of the industry ...	139
	Appendix A: Permanent Workers	
	Appendix B: Percentile histograms of rates per shift for all African employees on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1931 and 1943	
	Appendix C: Average cash wages per shift of African labour on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1930-1942	
9	African labour conditions: the migrant, his income and expenditure .....	166
10	African labour conditions: trade unions and the right to strike .....	184
	Appendix: Tribal Natives and Trade Unionism	
11	Nineteen hundred and forty-six .....	204
12	Plus ça change.....	226

For convenience, the following abbreviations have been used:

- |                 |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| T.C.M.          | - | Transvaal Chamber of Mines                    |
| G.P.C.          | - | Gold Producers' Committee                     |
| G.M.E.          | - | Government Mining Engineer                    |
| A.M.W.U.        | - | African Mine Workers' Union                   |
| S.A.J.E.        | - | South African Journal of Economics            |
| N.G.I. (1913)   | - | Native Grievances Inquiry of 1914             |
| L.G.M. (1920)   | - | Low Grade Mines Commission (Final) of 1920    |
| M.I.B. (1922)   | - | Mining Industry Board of 1922                 |
| N.E.C. (1930)   | - | Native Economic Commission of 1930-32         |
| W.N.W.C. (1943) | - | Witwatersrand Native Wages Commission of 1943 |
| N.L.C. (1947)   | - | Native Laws Commission of 1947                |

**"NATIVE LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA IS SO CHEAP THAT  
IT HAS COME TO BE LOOKED UPON AS A THING WHICH  
CAN BE USED EXTRAVAGANTLY"**

**A WITNESS BEFORE THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION OF 1914.**



A supply of black labour which would permit the profitable exploitation of the Witwatersrand gold mines has been of major importance ever since the discovery of the first gold deposits in the 1880's. The basic problem of the gold mines has been succinctly put by Professor Frankel:

"To develop the vast areas suspected of being gold-bearing, the Rand depended particularly on the supply of foreign capital on the one hand, and the supply of native labour on the other."<sup>(1)</sup>

The industrial employment of the African first gained momentum during the opening of the diamond diggings in the 1870's; it was the pattern of labour relations developed here which was later transplanted to the gold mines. It therefore follows that an understanding of labour conditions on the diamond fields would also further our understanding of developments on the gold mines.

During the early years on the diamond fields, the wage rates of the African labourer were very sensitive to fluctuations in the supply of and demand for labour.<sup>(2)</sup> Africans flocked to the mines, and by 1874 ten thousand blacks were employed in Kimberley. Supply still fluctuated considerably, with the result that wage rates rose steadily "from 10s. per month to 10s. per week, and sometimes, on an occasion of great shortage, to 30s. per week".<sup>(3)</sup> After 1882, however, wage-rates became more stable and, according to the Reports of the Inspectors of Mines, the most prevalent wage for the years 1882-1889 was 25s. per week (with free lodging but no food).<sup>(4)</sup>

Systematic recruiting was not considered necessary except during those temporary shortages of labour which occurred during a diamond rush.

---

(1) Frankel, S.H., Capital Investment in Africa, O.U.P., London, 1938, p. 86.

(2) Van der Horst, Sheila T., Native Labour in South Africa, O.U.P., Cape Town, 1942, p. 79.

(3) Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), Evidence, Cd 1897, Q3831 quoted by van der Horst, p. 77.

(4) Van der Horst, p. 80.

When it was resorted to, it was through 'touts' who acted as independent entrepreneurs in supplying African labour to a variety of employers, including those in occupations which had arisen out of the establishment of diamond mining in Griqualand West, not in actually digging for diamonds. Also, these early efforts at recruiting were not always successful as the Africans "often went without their wages", and "contractors also sometimes took advantage of the Natives' simplicity, and defrauded them or absconded, leaving them stranded and without passes."<sup>(1)</sup> According to Doxey, despite the compound system, the searching of Africans for stolen diamonds, and the competitive and rival demand for African labour after the discovery and development of gold mining, the De Beers Consolidated Company "has hardly ever had to recruit labour."<sup>(2)</sup>

The acute problems of the marketing and constant theft of diamonds were eliminated firstly by the amalgamation of the individual mines into mining companies,<sup>(3)</sup> which concentrated control of the industry and diamond output in the hands of a few men, and secondly by the creation of the closed compound system. The latter was explicitly a colour bar measure because it was applicable to blacks only.

Prior to the introduction of closed compounds, accommodation for the African labourer had been very makeshift and living conditions were poor, with a high death rate. Over half the labour force usually did not report for work at the beginning of each week following excessive drinking. Furthermore, the African was subjected to a thorough search each time he left the diggings.

---

(1) Robertson, H.M., "150 Years of Economic Contact between Black and White", South African Journal of Economics, Johannesburg, 1935, pp. 9 and 10.

(2) Doxey, G.V., The Industrial Colour Bar in South Africa, O.U.P., London, 1961, p. 35.

(3) Another reason for amalgamation was the increasing necessity to use capital intensive techniques of mining.

Closed compounds clearly altered the conditions of employment of the African. According to Reports of the Inspectors of Mines, the system mitigated the evils of excessive wine and the temptation of quick gains by selling stolen diamonds. The African labourer was now accommodated in a dormitory as soon as he signed up with the mining company, and left this temporary home only when his period of employment expired. The search the African underwent on his departure was far more thorough and effective than had been feasible under the previous practice of daily searches. Africans, according to the Inspector's Report of 1890, "after experience of the compound system, liked it, and, being enabled to save money instead of spending it to the benefit of low canteen-keepers, soon improved in physique and morale."<sup>(1)</sup> They showed "no universal dislike" of being accommodated in closed compounds. Doxey, in fact, lists the closed compound system as one of the reasons why De Beers has very rarely had to resort to recruiting.<sup>(2)</sup>

From the onset these compounds largely catered for unmarried men. All Africans employed on the Kimberley and De Beers mines were in closed compounds by 1888.<sup>(3)</sup> Although the majority of African labourers stayed at work by the end of the 1880's for from 9 to 18 months,<sup>(4)</sup> a permanent labour force was not encouraged as no provisions were made for the families of the married men.

Black and white did not have equal rights on the diamond diggings. There were various measures which prejudiced the position of the African, such as those which attempted to prevent him from being a claim holder and from selling diamonds. These laws were not always successfully enforced.

---

(1) Reports of Inspectors of Diamond Mines, G11, 1890, p. 21, quoted by van der Horst, p. 83.

(2) Doxey, p. 35.

(3) Report of the Inspectors of Diamond Mines, G22, 1889, pp. 6 and 10, quoted by van der Horst, p. 81.

(4) (Cape) Blue Book on Native Affairs, G5, 1886, p. 5 quoted by van der Horst, p. 84.

For example, for a short time, between October 1871 and July 1872, the African was permitted to register as a claim holder. However, he had been excluded from doing so before the annexation of Griqualand West by the Crown in 1871 as well as "prohibited from roaming about after nine o'clock in the evening, . . . . . not allowed to buy or sell diamonds, . . . . . not permitted to purchase intoxicating liquor without an order in writing from their employers." (1) He was again excluded seven months after the annexation because of the protests of the white diggers. Even so this law was not always observed, so that the Barkly West Inspector of Claims reported in 1887 that there were 1,150 registered diggers at the river diggings in 1886, of which 150 were 'natives'. (2) At this early stage, at least, restrictions on the basis of colour were not rigidly applied.

Because of the racial undertone of these measures and the fact that the skilled worker was invariably white and the unskilled black; writing in 1942 Sir Keith Hancock suggested that the industrial colour bar was initiated on the diamond diggings in Kimberley:

"The skilled white worker is a latecomer to South Africa. Before the mining age Cape Town was the most advanced urban centre, and most of the skilled work in Cape Town was in the hands of the Coloured people. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century numbers of skilled workers from overseas began to arrive. They brought with them their habits of trade-union combination; in 1881 the carpenters and joiners established in Cape Town a branch of their British union; other skilled workers followed this lead. The Cape unions made no attempt to establish a colour bar. The principle of free entry to the unions, with equal pay for equal work and equal chances of promotion for all races, was in 1913 written into the constitution of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. It has remained an accepted principle in Cape Town to this day."

---

(1) Theal, G., History of South Africa Since 1795, Vol. 5, 1908, p. 266, quoted by Doxey, p. 19.

(2) Report of the Inspector of Claims, Barkly West, G26, 1887, p. 12, quoted by van der Horst, p. 81.  
The term 'native' was used at this time to refer to all non-Europeans.

"In the mining industry of the north the contrary principle was adopted. This contrast cannot be explained by 'Afrikaner race prejudice' or the theory of human inequality which was asserted in the Voortrekker Republics. The colour bar in industry originated among British workers under the Union Jack. 'It was at the diamond fields that the gate to all but low paid and unskilled labour was slammed against the native in industry.' From the Kimberley diggings the colour bar was carried by English-speaking workers into the mining areas of the South African Republic. There, to be sure, the Afrikaner populations readily accepted it as conforming to the pre-ordained scheme of human relationships.

But it originated as a natural product of social and economic circumstances in Kimberley. Whereas in Cape Town immigrant British workers had met skilled Coloured craftsmen in an environment of urban civilization and legal equality, the British immigrants further north met 'raw' Natives under the rough conditions of the mining frontier."<sup>(1)</sup>

This view is contested by Professor H. M. Robertson who argues<sup>(2)</sup> that:

"attempts to introduce a colour bar at Kimberley precede the development of modern industry there. They date from the early primitive working by pick and shovel of small independent claims and were not attempts to reserve jobs, but to reserve rights. . . . . the ingredients of the Kimberly colour bar were essentially restrictions on property acquisition, residential rights and entrepreneurial rights, not class-of-job rights, and so they are in line with the general tradition in which white control over the bulk of the natural resources of South Africa grew up - not the initiation of a new sort of job reservation.

I would not deny that a de facto differentiation between (predominantly) white skilled jobs and (predominantly) non-white unskilled jobs grew up in Kimberley. Nor would I deny that ostensibly all-embracing regulations (e. g. stripping and search for illegal possession of diamonds) were imposed unequally on white and black . . . . . In early mining development (and indeed in much of early industrial development

---

(1) Hancock, Keith., Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Vol. II, Part II, Problems of Economic Policy, 1918-1939, London, O.U.P., 1942, pp. 39-40, quoted by H.M. Robertson, unpublished paper.

(2) Robertson, H.M., unpublished paper.

as well) the cleavage was between those who had skills (or the adaptability rapidly to acquire skills) and those who had not. And this distinction was not so much one between white and black as between immigrant and indigenous. It is true that it was between white immigrant and black indigen for the most part, because the indigenous whites did not come into the unskilled labour market for low-paid labour alongside blacks."

Whatever the pros and cons in this matter it remains true that it was in Kimberley that the foundations were laid for the introduction of the colour bar on the Witwatersrand. The privileges and prejudices of the European diamond diggers were transplanted to the gold mines and later given legislative sanction.

A Chamber of Mines was established in 1889 as an informal association of mine managers; the body immediately attempted to reduce African wage rates, establish a fixed scale of remuneration for black labour throughout the industry and increase the supply of unskilled blacks to the mines. The measures introduced were, however, only partially successful there being "temporary reductions" in wages as "when the supply of labour forthcoming at the agreed wage-rate fell short, competition between employers forced the wage rates up above the level."<sup>(1)</sup> An agreement not to pay above a certain maximum in order to reduce competition was reached but soon abandoned.<sup>(2)</sup> Twenty years later the setting of a maximum on African earnings so successfully curtailed the earning power of the African and inhibited competitiveness within the industry that the expedient of the 'maximum' was severely criticised by the Commissioner appointed to investigate African miners' grievances.<sup>(3)</sup>

The disproportion between the supply of and demand for African labourers at the going wage was so great that the Chamber formed the first labour organisation in 1893.<sup>(4)</sup> This organisation did not recruit

---

(1) Van der Horst, p. 130.

(2) Annual Report of the Chamber of Mines for 1892, p. 10, quoted by the Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), Cd 1896, p. 8.

(3) Native Grievances Inquiry, U.G.37 of 1914., Paras. 255-264.

(4) Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), p. 8.

labour but endeavoured to increase the supply to the mines by creating a favourable climate<sup>(1)</sup> for the individual recruiters. This arrangement did not prove satisfactory with the result that the Rand Native Labour Association was established in 1897 to act as a central recruiting organisation on behalf of all the companies associated with the Chamber.

The total number of African labourers employed on the gold mines rose rapidly and progressively during the decade before the Boer War. Average wage rates fluctuated, however, as new agreements to reduce wages were made, evaded, and made again. The figures below<sup>(2)</sup> refer to Witwatersrand gold companies only. In addition to cash wages, housing, food, hospital and medical attendance were provided free.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Africans Employed</u>	<u>Average Wages</u>
1889	15 to 17,000	60s.
1890	15,000	51s. 3d. (Ave. for 5 months) 44s. (Dec. Rate)
1891	14,000	48s. 8d.
1892	25,858	57s. 6d.
1893	29,500	58s. 10d.
1894	40,888	61s. 1d.
1895	50,648	63s. 6d.
1896	70,000	60s. 10d.
1897	70,000 <sup>(3)</sup>	48s. 7d.
1898	88,627	49s. 9d.
1899	96,704	49s. 9d.

Supply was said to be in excess of demand in March, 1896, and again in March, 1897.<sup>(4)</sup> For the rest of this period, the Chamber repeatedly complained of shortages.

- 
- (1) It spread information about conditions on the Rand and generally tried to improve these conditions.
  - (2) Evidence of the Chamber of Mines to the Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), Cd 1897, Exhibit No. 1.
  - (3) Up to 1897, payment was for four weeks - thereafter on completion of 30 working days.
  - (4) Chamber of Mines, Annual Report for 1897, p. 111 quoted by van der Horst, p. 138.

It is apparent, therefore, that the wages of black mine workers, were, from the outset influenced by monopsony power. By the turn of the century the pattern of wages with which we shall later become more familiar had been established - average wages did not fluctuate as much as in the 1890's and were strictly controlled despite shortfalls in the supply of unskilled labour at these rates and the dis-economies of scale resulting from restricted production.

Recruiting involved the mines in a considerable continuing investment which they obviously would not wish to undertake unless it brought greater savings on greater additional returns. It was wasteful to incur the expense where desertion was common. To check desertion and to spread the cost of recruiting over the full period of service it was essential to be able to enforce long-term contracts. Thus the mining authorities themselves pressed for the early pass laws of the South African Republic, which made the African subject to penal sanctions for desertion. The Chamber persuaded the Volksraad of the South African Republic to enact the first Pass Law in 1895. <sup>(1)</sup> Efficiently administered the pass system made the enforcement of long-term contracts practicable and recruiting an economic proposition. Mr. C.S. Goldman, giving evidence before the Industrial Commission of Enquiry of 1897, said:

"I may mention that the whole intention of the law is to have a hold on the native whom we have brought down, be it from the East Coast, South, or from the North, at considerable outlay to ourselves....." <sup>(2)</sup>

In practice the law was not effectively administered. Other laws, such as the Master and Servants Act, provided greater control over the movements of African labour by prohibiting strikes and providing a penal sanction for breach of contract. In so far as these measures discouraged the desertions, the attractiveness of recruiting was increased.

---

(1) Law No. 23 of 1895.

(2) Industrial Commission of Enquiry, (1897), p.110, quoted by van der Horst, p.133.

During the 'enforced holiday' of the Mine Managers in the Cape in 1900, it was decided to reorganise and extend the work of the existing Rand Native Labour Association. The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, Limited, (W.N.L.A.), was formed under the auspices of the Chamber of Mines "to derive the native labour supply for the mines and (do) away with the system of touting and speculating in native labour."<sup>(1)</sup> The organisation monopolised the recruiting of African labour, and thus prevented the mines from competing with one another and raising wages. In correspondence with the Colonial Office in 1901, Milner "formulated the view that mineowners were entitled to combine in order to depress the level of wages; while the Government was to ensure, and to enforce, labour contracts resulting from such combination of employers and disorganisation of employees. The formulation was hailed in the Colonial Office as 'a most excellent despatch' and excellent both in substance and in tone."<sup>(2)</sup> The activities of the W.N.L.A. were initially limited to Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), but later extended. A further recruiting organisation, the Native Recruiting Corporation, Limited, (N.R.C.), was formed in 1912 to recruit African labour throughout the four provinces of South Africa and the three adjacent High Commission Territories.

When war broke out in 1899, gold mining on the Witwatersrand was temporarily suspended and only maintenance work was carried on. The supply of black labour dwindled to 18,000 in 1901<sup>(3)</sup> and, although the supply increased after the Peace of Vereeniging, the total number was still well below the pre-war level. The acute shortage of unskilled

- 
- (1) Evidence of the Chamber of Mines to the Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), Appendix II, p. 909.
- (2) Colonial Office Archives, C.O. 291/30. 45779 Milner to Chamberlain, 6th December 1901; and notes by Lambert and Just, quoted by D.J.N. Denoon.  
"Capitalist Influence and the Transvaal Government during the Crown Colony Period, 1900-1906", The Historical Journal, London, XI (1968) p. 305.
- (3) Evidence of the Chamber of Mines to the Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), Exhibit No. 1.

labour was highlighted by the altered ratio of white to coloured employed on the Witwatersrand gold mines. In July 1899 the ratio had been 8.6 to 1, in June 1902 exactly half the pre-war ratio and in June 1903 and 1904 5.4 to 1. <sup>(1)</sup>

D.J.N. Denoon <sup>(2)</sup> has advanced several possible reasons for the post-war shortage of black labour. <sup>(3)</sup> During the war, wages were reduced to well below their pre-war level. Migrant labourers spread gloomy reports of conditions after the war and the African was able to choose employment on the railways, harbours or roads, as an alternative to that on the mines. Two-thirds of the labour supply usually came from Mozambique, and during this period difficulties were presented both by Portuguese diplomacy <sup>(4)</sup> and by African resistance to recruiting agencies. There were obstacles to opening up the rest of Africa to recruiters. The war had the effect of engendering in the African "a spirit of independence and apparent aggressiveness which was a new and regrettable feature in relations between black and white." <sup>(5)</sup>

The Transvaal Labour Commission of 1904 attempted to estimate the extent to which demand exceeded supply, and found that the labour requirements of the mining industry were in excess of the number employed by 129,000 labourers. <sup>(6)</sup> Causes of this labour scarcity, according to the Commission, were all related to the fact that the "African native tribes are,

---

(1) Annual Report of the Government Mining Engineer for the year ended 30.6.1907, p.7.

(2) Denoon, D.J.N., The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906, Journal of African History, London, 1967, pp.481-494.

(3) The W.N.L.A. simply stated that the African "returned home with considerable savings, bought wives and settled down."

(4) The Portuguese took advantage of the fact that the modus vivendi with the Transvaal had to be re-negotiated to insist on a larger share of railway traffic to the Rand.

(5) Views of Sir Godfrey Lagden, quoted by Denoon, op cit, p.488.

(6) Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), p.18, Para.39.

for the most part, pastoral or agricultural communities, who possess exceptional facilities for the regular and full supply of animal wants, and whose standards of economic needs are extremely low."<sup>(1)</sup>

A minority of two of the thirteen members of the Commission considered that the needs of the mining industry had been exaggerated. The existing shortage, according to the Minority Report, was "to a great extent, if not altogether, . . . . . the result of abnormal circumstances, some of which are direct consequences of the war; while for others such as the ill-advised reduction in wages carried out in 1900, the Chamber of Mines must be held directly responsible."<sup>(2)</sup>

The South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-1905 accepted the arguments of the Majority Report of the Transvaal Labour Commission but warned against attempting to increase the supply by raising wages. Any recommendation to this effect was 'quite out of place' as it would only attract labour at the expense of other industries and allow the men, because of increased earnings, to remain for longer periods at their homes before returning to work.<sup>(3)</sup> It was in this climate of opinion, therefore, that the basic working conditions of the African labourer evolved during the years of recovery.

During the early post-war years, the British Administration introduced a series of economic changes to overcome the acute shortage of African unskilled labour. Payment by result, re-enlistment bonuses and productivity incentives were adopted. Productivity and the supply of men available for work increased slowly but not enough, however, "to assuage the impatient demands of both the mine-owners and of Milner himself."<sup>(4)</sup> Whites were employed temporarily on unskilled work at 5s. per day. "The coincidence" of circumstances, a shortage of blacks and a large number of unemployed whites, "was the most unfortunate since. . . . . the industrial colour bar was ambiguous enough to make some advance of

---

(1) Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), p. 33, Para. 70.

(2) *ibid*, p. 59, Para. 62.

(3) South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905, Cape Town, Para. 378.

(4) Denoon, D.J.N., "The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906", *op cit*, p. 488.

African opportunities feasible."<sup>(1)</sup> The first mining regulations of the Transvaal Volksraad in 1893 prohibited Africans, Asians and Coloureds from performing blasting operations. Amendments in 1896 and 1897 permitted blasting by any person holding a blasting certificate, but excluded 'coloured persons' from other occupations. The possibilities, therefore, of using Africans on semi-skilled and responsible work which were available to the Chamber in 1904 were not taken advantage of and were lost in the controversy over the importation of Chinese labourers.

The expedient of using whites on unskilled work on the mines which was attempted as an experiment, but not universally adopted, was rejected on cost grounds. The mining industry, rather than employ more whites, desired to replace its white labour force with blacks who were more attractive because they were cheaper employees, without political power and bound by contracts that were enforceable by criminal sanction. Sources of additional labour in Central and Southern Africa were thought to be limited with the result that the importation of foreign non-whites was considered.

The proposal to import Chinese labourers to supplement the African supply of unskilled labour was finally agreed to by the Chamber in 1903. Although the Transvaal Government supported this decision, white public opinion had not been consulted and the Imperial Government insisted that it would only sanction importation if white opinion favoured the policy.<sup>(2)</sup>

Denoon writes:

"Since the Boers would almost certainly oppose a measure believed to be to the magnates' advantage, it was necessary to create a semblance of unanimity in the English-speaking white community. The task was by no means beyond the Chamber's abilities, but the necessity for haste led them to make elaborate concessions in detail to their white artisan opponents. These concessions involved restrictions upon the use of imported labour: confinement to compounds, compulsory repatriation at the termination of the three-year contract, and above all the prohibition of the

---

(1) Denoon, D.J.N., "The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906," op cit, p.489.

(2) Denoon, D.J.N., "Capitalist Influence and the Transvaal, 1900-1906", op cit, pp. 314, 315.

employment of Chinese in an enumerated list of capacities, which obviated the risk of their ever competing with skilled or semi-skilled whites. "(1)

The proposal for a statutory colour bar was, in fact, suggested by the mine-owners themselves. The Chamber only publicly committed itself to the policy of importation in December, 1903;<sup>(2)</sup> several months before, Sir George Farrar, President of the Chamber of Mines, had spoken to the white miners of Boksburg:<sup>(3)</sup>

"You in Boksburg are agitating against Indians coming into the country, and against them trading and holding land. I am absolutely at one with you. There are 50,000 free Indians in Natal today; they are creeping in daily. We see them on the mines, we see them everywhere. I consider it imperative that the Government should legislate against their coming here, and, therefore, I entirely supported and voted for the resolution<sup>(4)</sup> in the present form, which was eventually carried. It means that if Asiatic labourers unfortunately have to be brought into this country, they can only be brought in under Government control, and only as unskilled labourers, prohibited to trade, prohibited to hold land, or compete with any white man; and that they should be carefully indentured, and be repatriated at the termination of the period of their engagement to the country from whence they came. In fact, to make the rules more stringent, it is advocated that the date of the expiry of the indenture should terminate in

- 
- (1) Denoon, D.J.N., "The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906" op cit, pp. 489, 490.
  - (2) *ibid*, p. 491.
  - (3) Speech delivered at Driefontein by Sir George Farrar, President of the Chamber of Mines, on the 31st March, 1903, Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), pp. 70, 71, quoted by H.M. Robertson, unpublished paper.
  - (4) The resolution referred to was Resolution II on Immigration of the Bloemfontein Customs Convention in March, 1903: "That in the opinion of this Conference the permanent settlement in South Africa of Asiatic races would be injurious, and should not be permitted; but that if industrial development positively requires it, the introduction of unskilled labourers, under a system of Government control only, providing for the indenturing of such labourers and their repatriation at the termination of their indentures, should be permissible." Transvaal Labour Commission (1904), p. 70.

their own country. Now, you Boksburg gentlemen, who have been agitating so much against the introduction of the Asiatic, if you support this resolution, I think that legislation, if carried out in terms of this resolution, will meet all your objections, with which I have always been in entire agreement.

Now, I come to one of the most important parts of my speech, where I have to explain my views to the workmen on these mines, and also to all the workmen on the Rand. Now, I may ask, how have these fields been built up? What have been the conditions of labour? They have been these: White skilled labour at high wages has been employed in conjunction with unskilled coloured labour in the proportion approximately of one to eight. It is true that the wages of the skilled men have been high, and in my opinion they will always remain high, because the skilled labour we require ranks with the best quality in the world. Now, since the war we have been short of native labour, and owing to that shortage and in order to assist some of those who so gallantly fought in the war, a large amount of unskilled white labourers have been employed. This has been done as a temporary measure, with a view to assisting those, who are unskilled, to become skilled, and to find permanent employment. During the past six months there has been a great controversy on the question of unskilled white labour, and we have heard the usual cry of those who knowing nothing of this country come to teach us our business which has taken us years to learn. At first they tell us we must send all our natives on to the land, and use nothing but unskilled white labourers in their places. That would mean that only the richest mines on these fields would be able to work, even if the wages of the skilled workmen were reduced by one half. Then we have the cry: "You must see what black labour there is in the country, and make up with unskilled 'white labour'".

I think, as a temporary expedient a certain amount of unskilled white labour can be used, but it will not solve the great problem you have in front of you. Supposing for instance, unskilled white labour were to be largely used, it means that the price of your unskilled white labour is regulated by the price of your unskilled coloured labour, therefore, it means that we should have to find the cheapest class of unskilled white labour that would be prepared to compete. That means substituting labour, in other words, bringing it into this country from all the sources of Europe. What would be the inevitable result? Why, that this unskilled labour would very soon become skilled labour, and compete against you. For my part, I am absolutely against indentured cheap white labour. Many of you were here before the war, and bore the brunt of the very anxious times that we have been through, and I say that if white labourers are to come into this country, let them come in of their own accord. The whole country is open to the white man who wants to make this country his home, let him therefore come in, not subsidised, but

as a free agent, and compete in the open market for wages, which are always a question of supply and demand. You use today native coloured labour - and what are your special objections to bringing in unskilled Asiatic labour to make up the deficiency? They are these: that he might remain in the country, become a tradesman and compete against you, in which case you are afraid that you see Asiatic carpenters, fitters, etc., in fact Asiatics in all the branches of skilled trade. Now what is my answer to this? My answer is, that it is quite possible to bring in Asiatic labourers properly indentured, solely under Government control (for instance, take the Trinidad Ordinance), and at the end of their contract to return them or repatriate them to the country from whence they came, not letting a single man remain behind. They must come here absolutely as unskilled labourers only, and, therefore, in order that your position may be absolutely secure, I would guarantee never to consent to any legislation on this question unless the following restrictions are embodied in that legislation:-

No mining, trading, spirit, or other licence whatsoever shall be granted to any immigrant or to any other person on behalf of, or as agent or trustee for any immigrant, nor shall it be lawful for any immigrant to hold any land, buildings, or fixed property, *mijnpachts*, claims, or any right to minerals or precious stones either in his own name, or in the name of any other person on behalf of, or as agent or trustee for him, or be registered as a voter.

No immigrant shall be imported otherwise than as an unskilled labourer in this Colony, nor shall any immigrant be employed in, or undertake on his own behalf any work other than work ordinarily done by unskilled native labourers on mines in this Colony, and in particular and by way of enumeration, and not by way of limitation, no immigrant shall carry on any of the following trades or occupations - that is to say - carpenter, blacksmith, mason, electrician, bricklayer, fireman, amalgamator, assayer, miller, timberman, banksman, pumpman, platelayer, shipman, brickmaker, fitter, turner, or shopman generally, engine driver, wire-splitter and rigger, boilermaker, patternmaker, sampler (mine and cyanide), cyanide shiftman, gardener, stoper or miner, drill sharpener, machineman, pipeman, trammer (underground and surface), millwright, sorting or crushing station overseer, hawker, shopkeeper, general or special trader, nor shall any immigrant hold a blasting certificate, or be employed in any clerical work on a mine or elsewhere.

If such enactments become law, then I consider that your position could be rendered secure. Surely you do not imagine for a moment that I should be so blind as to advocate the possible eventual introduction of Asiatic labour, if such introduction did not absolutely secure

to the merchants, and to you miners, perfect immunity from competition, and absolute freedom from the danger that these labourers would settle in this country afterwards."

The opposition of the white artisans, and particularly the European Transvaal Miners' Association to the proposal to import unskilled Chinese was overcome by the suggested legislation preventing Chinese competition with whites for more highly paid work and by the bribing of anti-Chinese leaders to abandon their followers.<sup>(1)</sup> The Labour Importation Ordinance of 1904,<sup>(2)</sup> which permitted the importation of indentured Chinese labourers, established legal barriers<sup>(3)</sup> against the employment of Chinese in 55 occupations.

Both the scope and timing of the enactment were important. The legal restrictions went far beyond previous legislation and as van der Horst has observed, "the occupations designated in the schedule have continued to be claimed as belonging exclusively to Europeans."<sup>(4)</sup> Although not intended to be used against Africans, the effect of the measure was that the field of employment open to the black miner was permanently curtailed by the circumstances which prevailed in 1904. Denoon writes:

"The industrial colour bar was legally drawn so as to recognise the field actually occupied by white workers - with a generous margin added - as exclusively theirs. And it was given legal

- 
- (1) Denoon, D.J.N., "Capitalist Influence and the Transvaal, 1900-1906", op cit, p.316.
  - (2) Ordinance No. 17 of 1904.
  - (3) Apart from the colour bar restrictions, the treatment of Chinese labour left much to be desired and criticism seems to have been justified. According to Denoon, "The Chinese earned less than Africans and less than expected. During 1905 the average were 37s.7d. per month for Chinese and 51s.9d. for Africans" and "Confined to compounds socially, restricted to the least interesting and most arduous forms of work, and cheated of the wages they had been led to expect, it is hardly surprising that vice, perversion, drug-taking, compulsive gambling and occasional violence took place".  
Denoon, D.J.N., "The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906", op cit, pp.490-2.
  - (4) Van der Horst, p.172.

sanction at a time when such a delimitation allowed the white workers an unusually large realm, since they actually occupied an unusually large proportion of jobs, and the magnates were unusually weak. Had the line been drawn either in 1899 or in 1909, when the proportion of white workers was smaller, the number of reserved jobs would probably have been considerably smaller."<sup>(1)</sup>

In addition, the importation of the Chinese temporarily saturated the labour market and so undermined the bargaining position of the African labourer. Average monthly wages for unskilled work had been steadily increasing but began to decline shortly after the arrival of the Chinese.<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1907 the Labour Importation Ordinance was repealed. More than 63,000 Chinese had been imported. Their numerical importance having reached its height during 1907. The following table<sup>(3)</sup> shows the proportion of Chinese to other workers on the mines for the period 1904-1909:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Coloured</u>	<u>Chinese</u>
1904	13.6	76.8	9.6
1905	10.9	63.7	25.4
1906	10.3	74.3	15.4
1907	9.6	63.3	27.1
1908	9.7	79.2	11.1
1909	10.8	86.0	3.2

By the time the last Chinese labourer left the Transvaal in 1910, large numbers of African recruits were arriving at the Witwatersrand because of the collapse of the post-war boom and recession in other sectors of the economy.<sup>(4)</sup>

The grant of responsible government to the Transvaal in 1906 had been on condition that no more licences were to be issued for the importation of indentured Chinese labour. 1907 was a year of widespread unemployment

---

(1) Denoon, D.J.N., "The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906", op cit, p. 490.

(2) *ibid*, p. 492.

(3) Doxey, p. 63.

(4) Van der Horst, p. 172.

and depression, but despite the colour bar and the subsequent return of these labourers to China, the opportunities for white employment increased. (1)

Notwithstanding the repatriation of the Chinese, the depression and poor white problem reinforced the growing demand for the reservation of more mine work for white labour. The Transvaal Indigency Commission of 1908 rejected such a policy as unfair, ineffective and 'repressive', while the Mining Industry Commission of 1907-8 regarded it as both practicable and desirable. As is evident from the concluding remarks of the Majority Report of the latter Commission, considerations of a much more far-reaching nature than the most economical operation of the gold mines were at the root of its recommendations:

"Whether the mass of coloured labour, actual and potential, in South Africa will encroach year by year upon the field of employment and the means of livelihood of white men, or whether the tide is to be turned so that white labour will enter into the entire field of industry in South Africa, and occupy it to a constantly increasing extent, is one issue. Upon this may be said to depend the other great issue, remote as it may appear to be today, namely, whether the vast expanses of South Africa, so eminently adapted to white occupation, shall be the home of a great white people or be the habitation and breeding place of masses of natives and other coloured people of mixed races, in all degrees of semi-barbarism and semi-civilisation." (2)

The Indigency Commission, on the other hand, supported its views on the following practical grounds:

"The white man's prejudice against 'Kaffir' work, his inefficiency as an unskilled labourer and the higher wage which he requires, have had the natural result that coloured labour inefficient though it is, is cheaper to the employer for unskilled work than white labour." (3)

- 
- (1) The number of Europeans working on the gold mines rose from 17,513 in 1906-1907 to 23,341 in 1909-1910.  
Annual Report of the Government Mining Engineer for 1909-1910, Table 2.
  - (2) Report of the Mining Industry Commission, 1907-1908, Pretoria, p.132.
  - (3) Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1906-1908, Cape Town, Para. 49, p.26. Unskilled labour was frequently referred to by witnesses as 'Kaffir's work'.

An added incentive for the advocates of a white labour policy was the ease with which Africans, as well as Chinese labourers, managed to keep the mines working during the strike of 1907,<sup>(1)</sup> without, for the most part, European supervision.

It was as a result of this strike that the Transvaal Prevention of Disputes Act of 1909 was passed.<sup>(2)</sup> The measure made any strike or lockout illegal until a month after the publication of the report of a Conciliation Board appointed to investigate the dispute, and compelled employers to give employees a month's notice before altering wages or conditions of labour.<sup>(3)</sup> The Act was not successfully enforced, however, a new Conciliation Act being passed in 1922.

The proposal to reserve a wide range of mining jobs was made repeatedly. The Mining Regulations Commission, which finally reported in 1910, on, inter alia, the protection of health and safety of miners, supported a white labour policy on the pretext of safeguarding the health of the men working on the mines. It stated that "where the safety of life and limbs is concerned only competent white men should be employed."<sup>(4)</sup> Draft legislation drawn up by the Commission incorporated this proposal and served as a model for the Mines and Works Act of 1911.

- 
- (1) The strike had begun as the result of a dispute over the number of rock drills each European should supervise.
  - (2) Act 20 (1909).
  - (3) Osborn, V.H., A Critical Survey of Trade Unionism in South Africa, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1931, p. 5.
  - (4) Final Report of the Mining Regulations Commission (1908), Pretoria, p. 274, Para. 247.



With Union, legislation which affected the labour market for black and white assumed a more definite trend. It has been argued that pre-Union legislation tended to discriminate against the employment of Europeans.<sup>(1)</sup> If this was, in fact, the case then two Acts passed in 1911 decreased the relative attraction of employing blacks as opposed to whites.

In the years immediately preceding Union, Africans had gradually begun to replace Europeans in semi-skilled work, such as drill-sharpening, because of the urgent need to reduce costs. Public opinion and trade union pressure both worked in favour of legislation safeguarding the monopoly of whites over skilled work on the mines, as well as halting the penetration of blacks into the alleged preserve of civilised men. The first Union Parliament thus passed the Mines and Works Act as well as the Native Labour Regulation Act, which consolidated the laws for the Union along the lines of those already in force in the Transvaal.

Although there was no mention of racial discrimination in the Mines and Works Act of 1911,<sup>(2)</sup> the law was administered as a statutory colour bar preventing coloured persons from occupying positions of responsibility on mines in the O.F.S. and the Transvaal.<sup>(3)</sup> In terms of this Act, the Minister of Mines, General Smuts, made regulations which gave the European miners a monopoly over 32 mining occupations.<sup>(4)</sup> This measure (as later amended) will be referred to repeatedly during the course of this study.

- 
- (1) See van der Horst, Sheila, T., "Some Effects of Industrial Legislation on the Market for Native Labour in South Africa", S.A.J.E., 1935, pp. 485-7.
  - (2) The Act dealt mainly with the protection of health and the safety of the employees, though its ramifications were very wide indeed.
  - (3) A petition presented to the House of Assembly in April 1914 by A. Jacobs and 1,623 other residents of the Transvaal stated that they were prevented from earning their living because of the colour bar regulations made in terms of the Mines and Works Act (1911).  
Printed Annexures, Votes and Proceedings, House of Assembly, 1914, Vol. IV, A-5, quoted by Ray Alexander and H.J. Simons, Job Reservation and the Trade Unions, Enterprise, 1959, p. 4.
  - (4) Final Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, U.G.34 of 1920, Para. 164, 165.

The 1911 Native Labour Regulation Act was enacted to regulate the recruiting, employment, accommodation, feeding and health conditions of the African labourer in the entire mining industry. Several features of the Act are significant. The Act provided for the control of recruiting, attempted to standardise contracts, and through salaried government officials tried to establish methods of ensuring that the African understood his contract and that he arrived safely on the Witwatersrand.

Since traders in the African territories also often functioned as recruiting agents, some control had to be exercised over them exerting pressure on customers to accept recruitment as a means of liquidating their debts. This was done by the insertion of provisions in the Act limiting advances to Africans.<sup>(1)</sup> Penal sanctions were applied to contractual obligations; and, according to Doxey, trade unions of African mine workers were consequently "seriously hampered if not wholly prevented."<sup>(2)</sup>

The Act was thus a 'mixed bag'. Sections which regulated recruiting, compounds, hospital services, compensation, feeding, and contracts were obviously to the African miners' benefit, but the penal sanctions inhibited strikes and thus organisation as well. This meant, of course, that the already hard pressed African mineworker was now legally debarred from competing on an equal footing with his white counterpart.

There was considerable industrial unrest on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand in the years which followed the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. This unrest had, indeed, already become apparent in the years since 1904, which had seen the Chinese labour experiment and the bitter reaction of white mineworkers against the more extensive employment of non-white labour. When strikes occurred, they were usually by white mineworkers whose aim was to reinforce the application and extension of the colour bar, in order to make secure a privileged position for themselves.

---

(1) In 1911 Advances were limited to £2 each. The law allowed this figure to vary, as in seasons of drought, to as high as £5.

(2) Doxey, p. 130. See in addition, pp. 129 and 131.

A trivial incident in May 1913 soon developed into a general strike embracing all classes of European mineworkers, with the result that by July about 20,000 men were involved. Demands had escalated to a general assurance that the colour bar on the mines would be maintained and that the white miner's trade unions would be recognised. Rioting broke out and police and troops were used to quell the disturbances. (1) A settlement was eventually reached with victory going to the strikers.

Violence was again resorted to in January 1914, with a strike spreading from the coal mines of Natal, to the gold mines of the Witwatersrand and culminating in a general strike. This time the Government was swift to act and was well prepared. Martial law was declared and the leaders of the strike deported. (2)

---

(1) The industrial unrest had a detrimental effect on the African labour supply and thus indirectly on the progress of the industry in the latter half of the year. The supply to the Witwatersrand gold mines increased gradually from 193,974 in December 1912 to 197,685 in June 1913. A great exodus took place in the latter part of the year so that the number employed in December 1913 was only 151,538.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines, Annual Report for 1913, p.Lix

(2) The Government's actions evoked considerable criticism and dispute especially as an Indemnity Act had to be passed to legalise the deportations. There was no doubt, however, as to the standpoint of the Chamber. Sir George Albu, in speaking to the Presidents' Address, said:

".....the Government was forewarned, and forearmed, and averted the greatest calamity that the world would, in my opinion, have ever seen. What a sight the town would have presented if the Government had not taken these strong measures. The horror of two hundred and fifty thousand natives let loose, in spite of all precaution, would have been too terrible. I think most of you have read "Dante's Inferno." Well, the horrors of "Dante's Inferno" would have paled before the horrors of what would have happened here in January had not the Government taken the strong measures it did."

T.C.M. (1913), pp. Lxxi and Lxxii.

After the successful strike by European miners in 1913, their African counterparts in four compounds refused to work without an increase of pay. During the European riots the African miners had been subjected to threats and actual violence. They had shown patience with the conditions they had worked and lived under for a long time. Although predominantly migrant labourers from a non-industrial background, with organisational ability undeveloped by experience, and constrained by inter-tribal jealousies, the African labourers went on strike and only returned to work after troops were called in. The rioting was soon put down and, it appears, as soon forgotten.

Although this industrial dispute failed to improve the conditions of employment of the African miners, it drew attention to their grievances. Mr. H.O. Buckle, Resident Magistrate of Johannesburg, was appointed sole commissioner in 1913 in order to ascertain the causes of disturbances amongst African mineworkers during 1913; and, in addition, to suggest possible remedies. <sup>(1)</sup>

The report of the inquiry gives considerable insight into the conditions of the African on the gold mines during the early years of Union. Their complaints and grievances were thoroughly and systematically canvassed and all aspects were dealt with. If the strike served no other purpose it helped to launch the investigation which highlighted the habit of regarding the African labourer as an interchangeable labour unit - a habit which may have had hidden economic as well as social costs.

Mr. Buckle's Report received an enthusiastic response from the Chamber of Mines. The President, Mr. E.A. Wallers, described it as "the most valuable document we have ever had to help us in studying this subject." With the exception of one Group, all the members of the Chamber agreed with the Report (apart from a "few comparatively unimportant exceptions") and therefore also the recommendations contained therein, many of which had already been implemented. <sup>(2)</sup> The Government

---

(1) The Commission reported in 1914 and was issued as U.G.37 of 1914.

(2) T.C.M.(1914), p. Lxi.

came to the conclusion that, as a result of:

"the present unsettled state of the country... the present time is not opportune to make alterations to or introduce innovations in connection with the conditions under which native labour is recruited within the Union."<sup>(1)</sup>

More than 50 years have now passed but apparently there has been no opportune time.

The more important recommendations concerning the colour bar and the extension of piecework payments have even today (1969) not been adopted. The Report is so illuminating and informative about conditions of African mine labour half a century ago, that it should be studied by everyone seriously interested in labour relations and their history. It is accordingly dealt with fully below.

The report has been considered in the order in which it was originally presented. Certain sections are touched on without elaboration. Others are dealt with in greater detail, since they appear to deal with issues which have persisted right up to the present day. Yet no attempt is made here to provide an exhaustive analysis of the extent to which the recommendations of the Commission were either adopted or ignored. Occasionally subsequent developments are commented on, but this is merely to illustrate some point relevant to Mr. Buckle's Report.

The complaints of the black mineworkers were divided into seven chapters dealing with working conditions, compound conditions, hospital treatment, pay, compensation, conditions of contract, and miscellaneous complaints.

---

(1) Letter from S.M. Pritchard, Director of Native Labour, on behalf of the Acting Minister of Native Affairs to the T.C.M. dated 30th November, 1914.  
T.C.M. (1914), p. 9.

Working conditions and complaints arising therefrom were the matters to which the Commission first turned its attention. Accidents, it was found, were mainly due either to negligence of the European mineworker or to the contravention of the Mining Regulations. The Commission's recommendation was "that there ought not to be (the) univeral option of a fine,"<sup>(1)</sup> which is laid down in Act 12 of 1911,<sup>(2)</sup> and that imprisonment is not too severe a penalty for serious negligence.<sup>(3)</sup>

This does not mean that the Commissioner accepted uncritically the necessity and desirability of every regulation which existed. In some cases their effectiveness as safety measures was jeopardised by their inconvenience. The Mining Regulation which required the inspection by a white miner of the working area as a safety precaution prior to the arrival of the black labourers was a case in point.<sup>(4)</sup> The problem was - as, indeed it still is today - that the native had to wait (on some mines for as long as two hours)<sup>(5)</sup> before the white miner descended to the working area and carried out his inspection. Full use could therefore not be made of the longer period spent underground by the African mineworkers.

Buckle found that the regulations were "habitually disregarded" and that, moreover, in some cases there was "no real attempt.....to enforce them." Convictions for contraventions were frequent on some of the mines,<sup>(6)</sup> and the Commissioner suggested that modification of the regulations might be needed to overcome the difficulties. He wrote, inter alia, that "if

---

(1) Report of the Native Grievances Inquiry 1913-14, U.G. 37-'14, Para. 23.

(2) Sections 16 and 17. There was the further qualification that the fine ought not to be so high that the accused could not possibly pay it, which made even heavy fines unlikely.

(3) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 23.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 25.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 30.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 25. Mr. Buckle quoted the case of the Crown Mines, where there were 21 convictions in one week and 41 in the following week.

selected bossboys were allowed to make the examination, these could be sent down first, and there would be little or no delay in letting the natives get to work. There is general, though not universal, agreement among mining men that no difficulty would be found in getting experienced natives who could be trusted to do this properly."<sup>(1)</sup> This proposal anticipated by half a century the experiment which was set afoot in twelve mines in 1964 by agreement with the Mineworkers' Union. This gave selected Africans the responsibility for declaring the working area safe before the arrival of the white miner.<sup>(2)</sup>

With regard to the influence of safety precautions on the supply of African labour, the Commissioner made the observation that "there is every probability that the mines will find the cost of any reasonable precautions against accidents well repaid by the increased popularity which will result from a reputation among the natives for scarcity of accidents", especially in the case of the "more advanced Cape Colony native."<sup>(3)</sup> This suggestion is in line with Adam Smith's thoughts on the influence of the net advantages and disadvantages of a given employment in determining the supply of labour to various occupations. For instance, Adam Smith argued, above-average danger must ordinarily be compensated with above-average remuneration.

Assaults underground were experienced on all the mines. The Commissioner judged that a certain number of these were "inevitable" when full consideration was given to the conditions of work; "these circumstances may perhaps be modified, but cannot be altogether removed."<sup>(4)</sup>

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 29.

(2) Although this experiment was welcomed by both the white miners and the blacks directly concerned, all of whom were enabled to increase their earnings, and by the mines which were able to save on working costs, it resulted in a crisis in the affairs of the mineworkers union and the experiment was ended through government intervention. The episode is treated in the unpublished Cambridge Ph. D. thesis (1967) by Dr. Francis Wilson entitled "Labour in the South African Gold Mines 1936-1965."

(3) N.G.I. Para. 32.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 33.

Other grievances with respect to working conditions ranged from the trivial to the important. Complaints about the provision of insufficient drills<sup>(1)</sup> and candles<sup>(2)</sup> were considered to have little or no substance. On the other hand, the hammerboys (who worked the jackhammer drills) complained that they were made to do "lashing", work which was not included in their contract, and that they received no pay for this part of their work. "Lashing" consists of cleaning the working place of the broken rock produced by a previous blast, and had to be completed before proceeding with the contractual work of boring holes for the next blast. The grievance even went beyond this. Hammerboys were paid at piece-work rates (so much for every inch drilled). Unless they drilled a certain number of inches, they were not paid at all for that shift, and could not count it as one of the number of shifts for which they were under contract to work during their current period of employment. Time spent on lashing therefore not only meant that a hammerboy had less time to spend on his piece-work task of drilling, but also that, if he had not completed the necessary minimum number of inches, he might receive "absolutely no equivalent in money" for "lashing for some hours and... drilling for several more."<sup>(3)</sup> It could also mean a prolongation of their period of service at the mine through cancelled shifts. An aggravating factor was the lack of uniformity, between one mine and another, in the amount of lashing expected of the hammerboys.<sup>(4)</sup>

To this variation from mine to mine may be ascribed the fact that the need to do lashing was not stipulated in the contract. This was not an oversight. The Commissioner, H.O. Buckle, quoted a circular issued by the Native Recruiting Corporation to Managers on 8th November, 1913, which, after stating that the Director of Native Labour had agreed to allow a maximum of two hours lashing to be done by hammerboys, proceeded:

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 97.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 101.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 65.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 80, 81, 82.

"It has always been considered inadvisable to insert a clause in the native contract having reference to the shovelling work required of natives employed on hand drilling, as it is feared that it may needlessly alarm them as to what they may be called upon to perform, and so adversely affect our recruiting operations."<sup>(1)</sup>

These practices were found by the Commission to be "a distinct grievance.....being wrong in principle.....and open to abuse."<sup>(2)</sup>

Compound conditions were investigated in some detail by the Commission. Complaints about insufficient food<sup>(3)</sup> and firing materials (coal and wood),<sup>(4)</sup> disturbances caused by police raids in search of illicit liquor,<sup>(5)</sup> and discontent over grievances which had not been redressed,<sup>(6)</sup> were considered to have little basis in fact. Generally it was found that the compounds met the conditions laid down by the Mining Regulations and the contracts of the Africans.

The Commission discussed the question of Married Quarters. "Many mines", it stated "have so-called married quarters, or locations, apart from the compound, for natives who have brought their wives with them."<sup>(7)</sup> These were not encouraged by the mines because they were "a source of liquor and other vice."<sup>(8)</sup> The Commission felt that this argument was generally well-grounded as many of the women were not the wives of the men with whom they lived but mere temporary concubines. It was suggested that, space permitting, a location "carefully superintended and

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 75.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 91.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 115.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 131.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 139.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 155.

(7) *ibid*, Para. 132.

(8) *ibid*, Para. 134.

reserved for reputable married natives"<sup>(1)</sup> be established. Even at this early stage consideration was thus being given to the provision of facilities for the stabilisation of a more permanent labour force.

The only significant recommendations which arose from complaints about hospital treatment concerned the compulsory employment of full-time medical officers,<sup>(2)</sup> and the maintenance by regulation of an established proportion between medical officers and patients.<sup>(3)</sup> Other grievances arose out of misunderstandings obviously due to the Africans' general ignorance of "modern" methods of medical treatment. This emerges from remarks made by the Commissioner in several places in his Report.

Buckle found complaints with respect to wages to be well-founded. Money wages in 1913, taking surface and underground work together, were lower than they had been in 1896.<sup>(4)</sup> In 1912 a new schedule agreed to by mines employing 80% of the total African mine labourers had quite recently resulted in a decrease in the average rates paid from 1s. 11.58d. per shift to 1s. 11.075d. per shift.<sup>(5)</sup>

It was the contention of the Economic Commission of 1914 that the productive powers of the African were being held in check by the device of the maximum average.<sup>(6)</sup> Buckle concluded that the maximum average clause was "unsound in principle"<sup>(7)</sup> as it penalised efficient work.<sup>(8)</sup>

The lack of promotion opportunities were next considered by the Commissioner. "The real grievance" it was found was "the colour bar",

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), p. 138.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 225.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 227.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 254.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 255.

(6) Report of the Economic Commission, U.G.12 of 1914., Para. 54.

(7) N.G.I. (1913), p.269.

(8) Further discussion on M.A. clause on pp. 73-80.

which blocks practically all.....opportunities of promotion."<sup>(1)</sup> Africans argued that they could do the same work as the white man and should therefore receive the same remuneration. Buckle clearly accepted this. He saw the colour bar as one of the most important grievances of the Africans, so much so that he expressed grave doubts as to the superior competence of the "white" men in the Transvaal and Free State who, according to the colour bar mining regulations, filled certain positions of responsibility irrespective of ability.<sup>(2)</sup>

The other complaints relating to pay mainly concerned the calculation of, the deduction from, and the method of payment, and were not regarded as very significant by the Commission.

Compensation payable to Africans was laid down in Act 15 of 1911.<sup>(3)</sup> For the permanent loss of his trade, if he could still do other work (partial incapacitation), an African was paid from £1 to £20. The African who was totally incapacitated received from £30 to £50 and in the case of death, dependants, if any, were given £10.<sup>(4)</sup>

It was complained that these provisions were inadequate. The Commission investigated whether they were really equivalent to the financial loss suffered and compared them with the compensation paid to Europeans in similar circumstances. It tried to ascertain whether, in cases of total incapacitation or death, they provided sufficient maintenance for dependants.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Commissioner found that "the compensation for injury given to the native labourer is not an equivalent for his probable loss; it is, except in the case of temporary sickness, markedly less than that provided for the

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 280.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 281.

(3) Native Labour Regulation Act. Compensation was not paid in respect of an injury to a black labourer which was due to his own serious and wilful misconduct. N.G.I. (1913), Para. 361.

(4) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 362.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 363.

European, regard being had to their respective earning power; and it is not, in the case of the Cape Colony natives, sufficient to support the dependants of a native killed at his work. In these circumstances, the complaints as to its inadequacy seems to me well founded. I do not see why natives should not be compensated on the same basis as Europeans, i. e. probable loss of earning power." (1)

While individual African compensation had been "markedly less than that provided for the European", the imbalance between the two in this respect had probably been even greater than the Commissioner was aware of due to the higher incidence of accidents among non-white workers. (2) This came about because the possibility and frequency of incapacitation appears to have been greatest among those employed below the surface, where the number of non-whites was relatively large. (3) The African, who filled all the unskilled classes of work, was employed underground in the ratio of 11.8 Africans to 1 European labourer, whereas, the overall ratio was 8 : 1.

The same levels of compensation as those mentioned above (4) were paid for miners' phthisis. The Commission believed that there was a possibility that many Africans suffering from this disease were not detected and therefore recommended that every African about to be repatriated home be examined for miners' phthisis by a Government medical officer. (5)

---

(1) N.G.I.(1913), Para. 384.

(2) In absolute numbers, the total of fatal accidents on the Transvaal gold mines in 1912 was 54 Whites and 805 Africans and other coloured persons. For all mines in the Transvaal it was 57 Whites and 871 Africans and other coloured persons. Non-fatal accidents (all Transvaal mines) numbered 295 White and 1,962 non-white victims. Transvaal Chamber of Mines Report (1912), quoted in Appendix F of the Economic Commission of 1914.

(3) On gold mines in the Transvaal the fatal accident rate per 1000 (all colours) in 1912 was 1.53 on the surface compared with 4.73 underground. Annual Report of the Mines Department for year ending 31st December, 1912, U.G. 40-1913, p. 111.

(4) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 386.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 389.

Further information about rights of compensation which were not widely known was to be disseminated among the Africans. <sup>(1)</sup>

It was not the general practice of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association to engage Africans for work on a particular mine. A certain number were engaged for specific mines. <sup>(2)</sup> Although this number was limited by Article 11 of the Articles of Association of the W.N.L.A. to 32½% of the total number engaged, <sup>(3)</sup> it was, in practice, raised by "the pressure of native opinion" to more than 50%. <sup>(4)</sup> The complaint therefore that the Africans' wishes with respect to their place of employment were not taken into account, <sup>(5)</sup> was not regarded as very important.

Africans were engaged for a period of not less than 90 shifts <sup>(6)</sup> i. e. between three and four months. As many overstayed their period of contract <sup>(7)</sup> and all piecework blacks were allowed a probationary period during which they were paid whether or not they accomplished their task, <sup>(8)</sup> the length of contract was not considered an unnecessary restriction by Buckle.

"The importance of the omission" of the amount of wages to be paid in the Native Recruiting Corporation contract was considered to be over-estimated by the African as "the rates of pay for the different classes of work are perfectly well-known to the natives generally." <sup>(9)</sup>

---

(1) N.G.I.(1913), Para. 400.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 406.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 408.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 412.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 404.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 420.

(7) *ibid*, Para. 423, 424, 425.

(8) *ibid*, Para. 429.

(9) *ibid*, Para. 437.

Suggestions about methods of releasing the African from his contract<sup>(1)</sup> and the alteration of the contract were made by the Commission.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Commission, in investigating the second part of its terms of reference, described the potential for unrest among mineworkers in the following way:

"There are normally about 200,000 native mine labourers on the Reef. They are all male, practically all adults and the large majority in the prime of life. They are scattered over 50 miles of country in blocks of from 1,000 to 5,000 in each compound. They can mobilise themselves in a few minutes, armed with such weapons as assegais, jumpers, axes, etc. A good many of them consider, whether rightly or wrongly, that they have grievances against the Europeans, and most of them are savages, whose only idea of reform is violence. All of them want more pay, and most of them are under the impression that the employment of force by European miners . . . . . resulted in the latter obtaining their demands. It is not necessary to emphasise the possibilities of mischief which are latent in such a condition of affairs."<sup>(3)</sup>

The so-called safeguards (i.e. the personal influence of the compound managers, the native respect for European authority as personified in the police, the inter-tribal jealousies)<sup>(4)</sup> against the breakdown of the moral restraints of the African, had all shown "unmistakable signs" of tending to break down.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Commission advocated that "an alarmist view" of the degree to which these safeguards had broken down and thus of the possibility of an outbreak by Africans in the compounds should be avoided.<sup>(6)</sup> It stated: "With ordinary care and good government, no question of hostilities between natives and Europeans should ever arise."<sup>(7)</sup>

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 431, 432.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 441.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 474.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 476.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 477.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 489.

(7) *ibid*, Para. 489.

As a matter of "prudence" the Commission thought that "serious provision for the possibility" of such an outbreak should be made.<sup>(1)</sup> Recommendations to achieve this ranged from the organisation of a dormant force (only for use in emergency) on every mine<sup>(2)</sup> to the construction of compounds which could be closed.<sup>(3)</sup> African intelligence departments should be organised<sup>(4)</sup> and compounds of any considerable size should always have a European on duty.<sup>(5)</sup> As intoxicating liquor supposedly provoked disturbances, it was also held that "it be made an offence in a compound manager that more than a negligible quantity of liquor be found in his compound."<sup>(6)</sup>

In deciding upon the advisability or otherwise of the principle of recruiting, the Commission decided that "it (was) desirable from every point of view that the native should work; and (that) there (was) therefore nothing improper in persuading him to do so."<sup>(7)</sup>

Recruiting, however, involved the mines in considerable expense and resulted in recruiters inducing Africans to contract by false representations or unfulfilled promises.<sup>(8)</sup> The Commission discussed the system at length and made detailed recommendations with regard to the curtailment of advances<sup>(9)</sup> and further suggested that the mines cease to pay capitation fees.<sup>(10)</sup>

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 489.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 492.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 501.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 504.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 507.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 521.

(7) *ibid*, Para. 542.

(8) *ibid*, Para. 545.

(9) This was to restrain traders in the African territories from encouraging Africans to get into debt and then bring pressure on them to accept employment on the mines, in order to recover the amount of the debt from the advances made by the N.R.C.

(10) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 667.

The outbreak of the Great War put a temporary end to serious industrial unrest in South Africa. It brought about an increase in industrial activity and naturally therefore in the demand for labour as well, while the sudden prosperity created by the tremendous demand for goods for war purposes enabled employers to concede demands for increased wages and improved working conditions. Their attitude was thus essentially conciliatory, as is well illustrated by the policy of the Chamber of Mines, which, in attempting to maintain maximum output, went to great lengths to avoid industrial unrest on the mines.

Although it had been prepared to face a strike over the issue of trade union recognition as late as 1913 and had consistently refused to recognise trade unions for over 10 years, <sup>(1)</sup> the Chamber had by 1915 changed its attitude, largely in response to General Smuts' appeal for support of the war effort. <sup>(2)</sup> Thus in 1915 the Chamber recognised the Trade Union movement for the first time.

From the beginning of the war, the colour bar had shown signs of breaking down. Specifically, it was not the formal but rather the customary colour bar upon which inroads were being made. Such inroads were not uniform, for on some mines certain kinds of work were performed by Europeans, whereas on other mines these same categories of work were carried out by Africans. However, in 1916 the South African Mine Workers' Union demanded that all semi-skilled work be reserved for whites and that all Coloured and African miners be discharged and their places filled by white men. The Chamber rejected these demands. Similar demands were made the following year with the same result. Eventually, however, in 1918, a compromise was reached when the Chamber of Mines and the S.A.M.U. agreed

---

(1) The earliest trade association formed was the Transvaal Miners' Association in 1902. V.H. Osborn, A Critical Survey of Trade Unionism in South Africa, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Witwatersrand University, 1931, p. 4.

(2) See Ould, C.R., General Smuts' Attitude to White Labour Disputes between 1907 and 1922, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Witwatersrand University, 1963, for a full discussion of Smuts' attitude in this regard.

that the status quo as existing on each mine with regard to the relative scope of employment of European and Coloured employees should be maintained, that is to say that no billets which are held by European workmen should be given to Coloured workmen and vice versa."<sup>(1)</sup>

This 'status quo' did not affect any new mine opened after 1st September, 1918, nor extensions of work in any of the existing mines.<sup>(2)</sup> It was a purely voluntary agreement, distinct and separate from the statutory colour bar. In so far as it prevented the advance of the African it constituted a legitimate grievance to the black worker on the mines.

The African miners were, however, concerned with more pressing issues during the early months of 1918. They claimed that their real incomes had declined as a result of the appreciable rise in the cost of living during the war years. Action was taken against the mine storekeepers in the form of a boycott of the trading stores. The boycott proved short-lived, however, for it was called off after the Government had promised to hold an inquiry into this grievance.

Mr. A.H. Stanford was urgently requested to act as Special Commissioner to investigate the boycott of the Rand storekeepers. He found "that the natives are now realising that the purchasing power of a sovereign only equals that of 10s. as before the war, and on some articles even less than 10s., and in the near future this may lead to a demand for increase of wages and possibly a strike if this is refused." Methods of trading were deemed "pernicious", for no fixed prices were charged, except for a few lines so that in many cases profits were exorbitant. Stanford issued a stern warning:

".....if existing conditions continue, I fear that a determined effort will be made by the mine boys to obtain increased pay. Such a thing is only mentioned in Johannesburg with bated breath, and even then in a whisper, as the consequences of such a demand might have serious results, but I am of opinion that it is an unwise

---

(1) T.C.M. (1918), pp. 122, 123.

(2) Report of the Mining Industry Board, U.G.39 of 1922, Para. 18.

policy to close one's eyes to a possibility of this nature. A careful perusal of the Native evidence shows a steady trend of thought in this direction, witnesses repeatedly stating that at the present cost of goods they cannot come out on the existing scale of wages."<sup>(1)</sup>

As a remedy for the discontent, Mr. Stanford proposed that prices be fixed and lists prominently displayed in the compounds.

The Cost of Living Commission already appointed was given the task of investigating the suggestion and, further, of examining the accounts of Mine storekeepers. The Commission found that "real competition exists", lower profits being made during the war period than before it.<sup>(2)</sup> The Commissioners could not agree on the question of fixing prices. The Chairman, Howard Pim, and another Commissioner, H.R. Eaton, did not concur with Stanford's recommendation, mainly because of the alleged impracticability of applying and enforcing such a fixed price. As a palliative they recommended a small Board of Reference who "either through their position and personality, are well known to, and trusted by the Natives, whose duty it should be to address them in their compounds, explain the war position to them and investigate any complaints as to overcharges that might be made."<sup>(3)</sup>

The Minority Report of Mr. Thomas Boydell on the other hand suggested that fixed prices were "essential if the present unrest is to be allayed and the goodwill and confidence of the boys secured" as the African miner had, unlike his white colleagues, not received any war bonuses or increases in pay to meet the higher prices which now prevailed.<sup>(4)</sup>

---

(1) Report of the Special Commissioner appointed to enquire into the Boycotting of Rand Storekeepers by Natives, U.G.4 of 1919, p. 3.

(2) The percentage of net profits on sales had dropped from 15% in 1914 to 10.6% in 1917.  
Report on investigation of accounts of Mine Storekeepers on the Witwatersrand and as to the Fixing of Prices of the Chief Articles of Native Trade in the Witwatersrand Area, U.G.4 of 1919, Para. 6.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 18.

(4) *ibid*, Minority Report.

He further recommended a reorganisation of the system along co-operative lines so that the Africans themselves would either participate in the profits of acquire their goods at prices which would cover the working expenses of the stores.

A representative set of accounts<sup>(1)</sup> was investigated and summarised as below:

	<u>1914</u>	<u>1915</u>	<u>1916</u>	<u>1917</u>
	£	£	£	£
Sales	232,000	335,000	376,000	463,000
Gross Profit	71,000	99,000	107,000	126,000
" % on Sales	30.7	29.7	28.4	27.2
Expenses	37,000	53,000	59,000	77,000
" % on Sales	15.7	15.8	15.8	16.6
Net Profit	35,000	46,000	47,000	49,000
" % on Sales	15.0	13.9	12.6	10.6

Gross profits had increased appreciably from £71,000 at the beginning of the period to £126,000 by 1917, but a significant part of this increase was absorbed by higher expenses - from £37,000 to £77,000. Unfortunately, no breakdown of the expense figures were given although extremely high rentals were mentioned, £4,000 to £8,000 being the usual price for a stand and goodwill,<sup>(2)</sup> and increments in salaries. Net profits, although showing a steady upward trend from £35,000 in 1914 to £49,000 in 1917, did not increase more rapidly because of the changes in remuneration paid to the landholders, leaseholders and merchants themselves. This aspect should surely have received more attention. While all sections of the community connected with the mine stores had improved their conditions by the end of the war, the material situation of the African miners was decidedly inferior to that of 1914. The magnitude of the added burden which the African had to bear by 1918 is illustrated by the price increases over 1914 for those commodities which he frequently purchased. Blankets had increased in price by 100 per cent., shirts by 25 per cent., lustre rugs by 150 per cent., knives by 100 per cent., etc.<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) Report on investigation of accounts of Mine Storekeepers on the Witwatersrand and as to the Fixing of Prices of the Chief Articles of Native Trade in the Witwatersrand Area, U.G.4 of 1919, Para. 6. (Figures to the nearest £1,000).

(2) Report of the Special Commissioner appointed to enquire into the Boycotting of Rand Storekeepers by Natives, Final Report, p. 3.

(3) Report on investigation of accounts. . . . ., op cit, Para. 13.

After the boycott of mine trading stores in February 1918 and disturbances at the Smit Street Municipal Compound in May, African miners at the Crown Mines, Ferreira Mine and Robinson Deep Mine Compounds went on strike early in July. All the men had, however, returned to work and conditions had returned to normal by July 3rd after the Director of Native Labour had read a message to the African miners from the Prime Minister which promised an inquiry into the whole matter. (1)

A deputation representing the African workers on the Witwatersrand presented a list of alleged grievances to General Botha, with the result that a Commissioner, Mr. J.B. Moffat, was duly appointed to inquire into the unrest amongst Africans employed by the Johannesburg Municipality and the Mines. Many of the matters discussed did not affect mine workers to any extent and therefore do not concern us.

The Commissioner's dictum showed a profound insight into the forces behind the colour bar. He said:

"The existence of the regulations is, however, not the real bar to the employment of natives on skilled or semi-skilled work. The real power behind the throne in this matter is the white worker, who objects strongly to anything approaching encroachment by black labour on what he regards as his own particular preserve.

Apart from the employments from which natives are debarred by the regulations there is a good deal of semi-skilled work which natives are competent to do, but owing to the opposition of white workers in the Transvaal natives cannot be employed on it." (2)

These remarks are significant for it does not appear that the situation on the mines has changed appreciably.

- 
- (1) Department of Mines and Industries, Annual Report of the Government Mining Engineer for the year ended 31st December, 1918, U.G.38 of 1919, p.103.
  - (2) Report of the Commissioner appointed to enquire into the causes of the Native Disturbances in Johannesburg, Govt. Notice 1184, 4.9.1918., p.386.

From the early years of mining on the Witwatersrand, the affairs of the coal mines in the area, as well as in the surroundings, were handled by the same Chamber which dealt with the operation of the gold mines.

Towards the end of 1918, there was a strike on the collieries of the Witbank area which is of special significance for our particular theme. We shall see that in the main the major grievances which sparked off the strikes of African miners were never rectified. Attention was only given very minor matters peripheral to the real cause of the strike.

The African colliery workers' grievances were concerned with the period of contract. Seventy per cent of those employed were engaged by the W.N.L.A. to work for one year found that some collieries interpreted it to mean 360 shifts whereas legally, under the Native Regulations, the "year" was interpreted to mean 313 shifts worked. The main complaint was the system under which most coal mines closed down for indefinite times each month. This was largely due to difficulties of storing coal and the result was that the African worker was only credited with the fraction of time actually worked. Only when the fractions amounted to a full shift was the African credited with a day off his contract. The system prevented the African miners from completing their year's contract in less than 18 months, some taking even longer than two years. (1)

The result of the strike was that the period of legal contract was henceforth more closely adhered to, for the Native Affairs Department now took more stringent measures to enforce its observation. The Inspector of Mines was moved to remark that "the marvel is that it should have survived so long."

It was in February, 1919, that in the words of the President of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, Sir Evelyn A. Wallers, "there was, for the first time, a native strike in the true sense of the word." He drew a contrast between previous occasions when Africans on the mines had

---

(1) G.M.E., (1918), p.110.

refused to work, with the strike which broke out in February. Before, there had been riots (although this was not really so in 1918), but now there was "an absolutely peaceful cessation of work." Once again the cause was the increased cost of living. According to Sir Evelyn the burden of increased costs fell not on the Africans but on the employers as the men were provided with free food and lodgings. He did however, concede that the African's burden was greater as far as his dependants were concerned.

Closely connected with this grievance about the rise in the cost of living were the limitations on Africans being employed on higher classes of work. The Chamber had "no intention of trying to abolish the colour bar so long as that barrier is upheld by the great majority of Europeans resident upon the Witwatersrand. But the maintenance of that barrier constitutes an injustice; and public opinion always, sooner or later, discovers and denounces injustice."<sup>(1)</sup> The Chamber was optimistic, if nothing else.

A peaceful strike required organisation, a fact which was obviously realised by Sir Lionel Phillips, who in seconding the adoption of Sir Evelyn Wallers' address, spoke of the "advancing intelligence and education" of the African. The strike showed "how much they have advanced." While "not advocating any sweeping changes", he proposed a gradual relaxation of the colour bar.<sup>(2)</sup>

---

(1) T.C.M., (1919), p. 69.

(2) *ibid*, pp. 80, 81.



Strikes of European miners have frequently been avoided on the gold mines of South Africa because the Chamber of Mines and white workers were able to reach a compromise before there was resort to the ultimate deterrent.<sup>(1)</sup> On other occasions the industry has not been so fortunate. In this regard, the most significant white strike occurred in March, 1922, when, for a few days, the Witwatersrand experienced a bloody revolt which has had lasting effects on the memories and actions of men connected with the industry. Although the white miners were defeated, their leaders arrested and prosecuted, they continued to make demands which would have passed unheeded in any country but South Africa. Although they lost the battle, in fact, they won the war.

In contrast there has apparently been no compromise between the Chamber and the African mineworkers on any major issue, yet they have very rarely organised strikes, mainly because the organisation of trade unions for black workers was prevented. Thus, although it would appear that they have had ample cause, indeed, permanent cause, for dissatisfaction, the major strikes since the discovery of gold involving the black labourers on the mines number three, 1913, 1920 and 1946.

Very little attention has been paid to the strike of 1920, although as an indicator of dissatisfaction, it was comparable with the strike of 1946.

It began on the Cason Mine on the East Rand in the early hours of Tuesday morning, 17th February, 1920, and soon spread to other properties.<sup>(2)</sup> Five thousand Africans on the East Rand Proprietary Mine were reported the next evening to be on strike, "and reports from further afield indicate that the disaffection is spreading." This was an understatement. On Thursday it spread to the West Rand, 33,000 Africans being involved.<sup>(3)</sup> By Friday,

---

(1) For example the Importation Ordinance of 1904 (see p.16) and the status quo agreement of 1918 (see p.36).

(2) Star, 18.2.1920.

(3) Star, 19.2.1920.

there were as many as 40,000 strikers while nine mines were affected. The Government obviously regarded the situation as serious. Police and South African Mounted Riflemen were brought to Johannesburg and sent to the mines. The Prime Minister, General Smuts, also came to Johannesburg and spent Friday morning in conference with Colonel S. Pritchard (Director of Native Labour), Mr. H.O. Buckle (President of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines), Colonel Douglas (Police), Sir Evelyn Wallers (Past President of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines) and others described as "representative men."<sup>(1)</sup> No statement was issued after this meeting.

The strike reached its peak on Saturday when the number of mines reported affected had increased to eleven and the number on strike to 42,000.<sup>(2)</sup>

Sunday is the traditional day for meetings among the African people, as for workers everywhere. A meeting was thus convened on Sunday, 22nd February, by the Transvaal Native Congress<sup>(3)</sup> to discuss the strike action of the African mineworkers. About 2,500 Africans, mostly house and shop "boys", and also a few representatives from the mines attended. The police and S.A.M.R. arrived in force but did not interfere with the proceedings. The meeting expressed its "heartfelt sympathy with the mineworkers in their struggle for increased wages, and hopes that they will be firm in their demands for more money." This expression of solidarity was not unexpected. A subsequent resolution urged the mineworkers who had actually ceased work "to do nothing which might lead to violence."<sup>(4)</sup> If the presence of armed military men is considered, this was a victory for moderation.

---

(1) Rand Daily Mail, 21.2.1920.

(2) Star, 21.2.1920.

(3) The forerunner of the African National Congress (ANC).

(4) Rand Daily Mail, 23.2.1920.

The strike now became a "see-saw" affair, with some miners resuming work but others ceasing. By Tuesday there was "a more optimistic feeling in official circles"<sup>(1)</sup> and by Wednesday a large number had returned to work.

Violence of some kind was ultimately to be expected. The African mineworkers maintained their attitude of passive resistance despite being confined to their compounds and repeatedly searched for weapons. Troops of police and S.A.M.R. had from the beginning surrounded the compounds on strike, arresting strike leaders and protecting strike breakers. These actions antagonised and provoked the black miners. A local Johannesburg newspaper,<sup>(2)</sup> in fact, drew attention to their patience and self-restraint:

"The strikers on the whole have been quiet and amenable to discipline - probably much more so than the European strikers in similar circumstances. European strikers have their own way of dealing with "scabs" or "blacklegs" or with anyone who dares to oppose the will of the Strike Committee; it is not the way of peace or of the law, but the State stands aside. Whatever may be said in favour of the principle of protecting men who are willing to work, in practice this is never done during a European strike in Johannesburg. Why? Because police interference would at once result in bloodshed, and loss of lives would create a deep feeling of resentment and consternation throughout the country. It is futile, and savouring of hypocrisy, to profess angry surprise when the imitative black worker follows the example of the white."

According to press reports, something in the nature of a pitched battle occurred in the compound of the Village Deep on Wednesday, 25th, when police entered for the reported reason of protecting those workers who wished to work. "The natives rushed at the police, and it was then necessary to open fire in self-defence." Several rounds were fired and finally bayonets used.<sup>(3)</sup> About a dozen policemen and members of the

---

(1) Star, 24.2.1920.

(2) Star, 26.2.1920.

(3) Perhaps the experience at the City Deep influenced the miners reaction at the Village Deep. There the police, having entered the compound to protect the "boys" willing to work, took advantage of the opportunity to use a little "gentle stimulus" with the result that the Africans agreed en masse to go down.

South African Mounted Riflemen were injured and about 35 Africans wounded. (1)  
The three fatalities were all on the side of the Africans. (2)

Similar riots and bloodshed were avoided on other compounds. At the Modder B police charged the Africans in order to get them to lay down their arms. Resort was not taken either to rifle-fire or bayonet. Police persuasion at the Turf Mine compound succeeded in getting the Africans to lay down their sticks, etc. Demonstrations of force by the S.A.M.R. along the West Rand and in the suburbs of Krugersdorp and Roodepoort proved effective in bringing about a peaceable return to work. (3)

Strong police action at the Village Deep might have dissuaded miners on other compounds from considering resistance to the police or may have served to harden their resolve. The reported African "attack" on the police was without a doubt uncharacteristic of the action of the strikers. They may have reached the end of their tether and have been provoked by more aggressive police action. Reinforcements of the police and S.A.M.R. were constantly being sent to the Witwatersrand for the purpose of breaking the strike. When it became evident that the Africans were in an uncompromising mood, as it must have been when they refused to open the compound gates, the police and S.A.M.R. could have kept a watching brief outside without forcing an entry. No damage was being done to compound property and action could legitimately have been taken had the Africans broken out. Yet "severe measures" were resorted to, as "with so many raw and excitable

---

(1) Star, 25.2.1920.

(2) A Native Congress meeting at Vrededorp on Sunday, 29th, to decide on the advisability of the houseboys going on strike ended in a blood-bath and eight African miners and one European policeman were killed. 46 Africans were detained in hospital. The police had charged with batons and, according to the report, European bystanders had used firearms. There had been no disturbances at the two previous meetings of the Congress held during the strike period. Indirectly, therefore, the strike claimed many more than three lives.  
Star, 1.3.1920.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 26.2.1920.

tribesmen on the Reef the authorities cannot possibly allow attacks on the police to go unanswered. "<sup>(1)</sup> There was in all likelihood a strong possibility that the reported motives of the police, in entering the compound, were misinterpreted by the strikers who may have believed that they were to be forced to resume work. "<sup>(2)</sup>

A pamphlet was issued by the International Socialist League on the Tuesday. An appeal to white workers not to "scab" on the African, was denounced by the Star as being of "sinister significance." In order "that the public throughout South Africa may be warned of what is going on and of the true character of the propagandist influences at work among natives on the Reef", the Star published the full document. "<sup>(3)</sup>

Edward Roux describes this Don't Scab leaflet as "magnificent" and a "moving appeal." This it might well have been. To Socialists the "dodger" rang with sincerity and was based on the Marxist doctrine that the interests of all workers are fundamentally one. Most of the workers were not inclined towards socialism, however, and the "appeal fell upon deaf ears." Roux<sup>(4)</sup> suggests that:

"A realist, one not obsessed with Marxist doctrine, might have pointed out that the white miners earned ten times as much as the blacks, that many of them employed black servants in their homes, that a victory of the black miners would have increased the desire of the mineowners to reduce the status of the white miners, since any increase in black wages would have to be met either by a reduction in white wages, or by a reduction in profits. Such was the reality of the situation which the white workers, consciously or not, understood very well."

- 
- (1) Rand Daily Mail, 26.2.1920.  
The "Star" commented that the riot was a "very regrettable occurrence" and called for an "official enquiry into the circumstances."  
Star, 26.2.1920.
  - (2) Rand Daily Mail, 26.2.1920.  
Motion at Vrededorp meeting of Native Congress held on Wednesday, 25th February, stated that the police had resorted to firearms and force to drive the African miners to work.
  - (3) Star, 24.2.1920.
  - (4) Roux, Edward, Time Longer than Rope, Wisconsin University Press, Second Edition, London, 1966, pp.133, 134.

White mineworkers had, already, soon after the outbreak of the strike, initiated discussions with the Mine Managements on the possibility of "carrying on". When the management realised that the strike might last for some time, even though it involved additional expense, consent was given to the Europeans to do the Africans' work. It was hoped that the African would thus be induced to work by the example of the European managing without him. "The action of the men is due to a desire to get things going, and set an example to the native."<sup>(1)</sup> This "spectacle"<sup>(2)</sup> of white men doing unskilled work had not been seen on the gold mines since 1905.

The Executive of the Mine Workers' Union met at the end of the strike and passed resolutions upholding the colour bar and recommending their members "to carry on operations on the mines as usual in case of native strikes on the mines, sectional or general, provided it is the wish of the management."<sup>(3)</sup>

The strike was now rapidly petering out and by Saturday, 28th February, all the labourers were back at work. It had lasted for eleven days and the approximate number of Africans who went on strike was 71,000 which was approximately 37% of the total African labour force employed on the Witwatersrand gold mines during 1920.<sup>(4)</sup> The largest number of men on strike at any one time was, as stated above, approximately 42,000. At one stage eleven mines were affected. Throughout the period nearly 9,000 Europeans were affected as certain mines came to a standstill as a result of the strike. They did not, however, suffer any loss in wages and salaries as they were paid throughout the duration of the strike.

---

(1) Star, 23.2.1920.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 25.2.1920.

(3) Star, 28.2.1920.

(4) Number of Africans employed on gold mines by members of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association on the last day of February 1920 - 185,185.

The African mineworkers were supplied with their food rations throughout the strike but lost the sum of £20,575 in wages. Their return to work was unconditional. <sup>(1)</sup>

The "presence" of the police and S.A.M.R. in the surrounding areas of the compounds from the early days of the strike has already been mentioned. They took up their positions in close proximity to the compounds where African miners were involved, and as early as Friday, 20th, had charged a group from the City Deep with batons in order to drive them back to the compound. There appears to have been very little provocation for these acts of intimidation as the African had shown no sign of resorting to violence.

Further direct action was taken against the leaders of the African strikers on the mines. An African from the Crown Mine who went from room to room telling the men not to go underground was fined £10 or two months. <sup>(2)</sup> Africans from the Simmer East were also fined with the alternative of imprisonment with hard labour for refusing to work. <sup>(3)</sup> In some cases the magistrate gave the African miners the choice of returning to work or of being sentenced. A magistrate, Mr. Bovill, told an African miner "if you can't work for money you can go and work for nothing for six months." <sup>(4)</sup> 250 Africans from the Randfontein Central who were escorted to the Charge Office on the last day of the strike chose to work. <sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) Statistics in a letter from W. Gemmill, Actuary and Labour Adviser, T.C.M. to the Inspector of White Labour, Johannesburg of 26th March, 1920 reproduced in the T.C.M. (1920), p. 91.

(2) Star, 23.2.1920.

(3) ibid, 27.2.1920.

(4) ibid, 10.3.1920.

(5) Rand Daily Mail, 28.2.1920.

The Chamber<sup>(1)</sup> recognised that the strike was not a riot but "a regular strike organised on the European model, obviously by persons who are acquainted with European practice in such matters." The African did not have free access to the mine compounds before the strike and once it had begun the compounds affected had been "closed" and surrounded by armed men. Yet on all mines the future of the mine had not been impaired as the pump "boys" had continued to work throughout the strike. Pickets had been organised on mines where the turnout of strikers had fallen short of 100 per cent. Moreover, until the disturbances at the Village Deep on the 25th, the behaviour of the African miners had been peaceful with only occasional trouble - and then between black and black. The so-called "raw and excitable tribesmen" had maintained a disciplined and effective withdrawal of their labour in order to draw attention to their grievances.

Three main grievances underlay the strike. Firstly, because of the steady increase in the cost of living, the African demanded higher wages<sup>(2)</sup> as he was no longer able to send the desired financial assistance<sup>(3)</sup> to his family at home. Then, coupled with this was the dissatisfaction with the colour bar, and finally the discontent with the trading methods of the mine storekeepers.

---

(1) Star, 21.2.1920.

This was supported by the Native Affairs Department, which stated that "a marked degree of organisation exists, as also does considerable cohesion among the different native tribes, with the exception, perhaps, of the British Basuto, who in certain cases have held aloof. The strikers have adopted modern methods, including a system of picketing which has been sufficiently complete to prevent numerous peaceably inclined and satisfied natives from going to work."  
Rand Daily Mail, 20.2.1920.

(2) An increase in pay for mine Africans took effect on the 31st January. It varied from property to property and was reported to bring average earnings to 2s. 3d. per shift for underground and 2s. per shift for surface work. In addition, efficiency bonuses were introduced.  
Star, 18.2.1920.

(3) The need to do this was accentuated by the droughts in the Native Territories.

The demands for a new minimum wage were largely uncoordinated and varied from 3s. to 10s. per day.<sup>(1)</sup> One of the major reasons for the African coming to the mines was not merely to improve his own material position but to support those dependants he had left behind. Increased costs may not have affected his own levels of consumption, but there was then invariably less for those relatives he had to support.

The Chamber<sup>(2)</sup> quoted Moffat's dictum, as follows:

"The native's standard of subsistence at his home, excepting the comparatively few who have adopted European style of living, is not seriously affected by the war. The only respect in which he is affected to any extent is by the rise in cost of clothing. This is an inconvenience that everyone has to put up with and cannot be regarded as a real hardship. Most people have to be satisfied with fewer clothes, and there is no reason why the native should not do the same."<sup>(3)</sup>

The Africans' own experience, however, may well have suggested reasons to them for they might have been unable to manage with fewer clothes as they already had too few - a logical supposition as the supply of food was inadequate. In his Presidential Address, Mr. H.O. Buckle<sup>(4)</sup> stated that scurvy, caused by dietary deficiency, was "unusually" prevalent during 1920. He attributed this directly to the "unsatisfactory conditions of food supply in the Transkei." At the height of the strike a "public man" made the following interesting observation:

---

(1) Star, 18.2.1920, 21.2.1920.

(2) T.C.M.(1920), p. 89.

(3) Mr. J.B. Moffat (then Chief Magistrate of the Transkei) was appointed by the Government to enquire into the causes which led to the partial cessation of the Municipal Sanitary Services at Johannesburg in June, 1918.

(4) T.C.M.(1920), p. 69.

Mr. Buckle was the Commissioner who wrote the Native Grievances Inquiry Report of 1914.

"If there was plenty of food to be obtained in the native locations, the matter would probably be more serious, as the natives would not at all mind going home for a while.<sup>(1)</sup> But we know what the position there is. There is a shortage of food, so I don't think the natives will go home, and that the whole trouble will soon die down."<sup>(2)</sup>

As recently as 31st January there had been an increase of pay for African miners which, though varying from property to property, had brought the average of underground wages to 2s. 3d. per shift, and surface wages to 2s. per shift. A bonus system had been authorised by the Chamber in December 1919, whereby all underground Africans who had completed or might complete 180 shifts on a mine were paid, in addition to wages, a bonus of 5s. per month.<sup>(3)</sup> The total amount involved was approximately £650,000 per annum to the industry.<sup>(4)</sup>

As the Chamber considered the position with regard to the cost of living "not very materially altered" since the Moffat Report, and as the average rate of pay had recently been increased, it was decided to refuse to make any further advances in African rates of pay.<sup>(5)</sup>

The second demand by the strikers concerned the colour bar. They demanded recognition of their ability to carry out efficiently more responsible work than they had hitherto been allowed to do. They asserted that they were being wastefully used as the system in force put a premium on inefficiency.<sup>(6)</sup>

---

(1) After a day or two the African Mine Workers who persisted in refusing to resume work were threatened with repatriation.  
Star, 19.2.1920.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 24.2.1920.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 20.2.1920.

(4) T.C.M. (1920), p. 89.

(5) *ibid.*

(6) Star, 20.2.1920.

The Star commented that "because he is unorganised and comparatively undeveloped in mind and method, or because of arbitrary restrictions such as the colour regulations in the Transvaal and Free State, he is deprived of the full benefit of his industry."  
26.2.1920.

It was pointed out, however, with much tendentiousness, that a relaxation of the colour bar would only have affected a small number of semi-skilled Africans.<sup>(1)</sup> This would no doubt have been the immediate effect. Yet in the long run the removal of the colour bar would have improved the conditions of the total African mine labouring force as increasing numbers of Africans acquired skills and experience and as it would not have been necessary to pay skilled and semi-skilled miners a scarcity wage.

The removal of the colour bar, moreover, was not a prerogative of the Chamber of Mines. Efforts had been made, and were again to be made only 10 months later, to effect a relaxation of restrictions maintained by custom, public opinion and the pressure of the white trade unions.

The last cause of the strike, which was inseparably connected with the demand for higher wages because of the increased cost of living, was the discontent with the trading methods of Reef storekeepers. The practice of boycotting the stores had gone on for some weeks before the strike, but was more rigorously enforced during the strike.<sup>(2)</sup>

It may be pointed out that this was not the first time the African miners had boycotted the stores. There had been a previous boycott in 1918 but it had apparently been ineffectual as compared with 1920.

---

(1) Star, 21.2.1920. Statement by the Chamber.  
T.C.M. (1920), p. 89.

"There seems to be an impression in some quarters that the removal of the colour bar would meet the natives' grievances, but it should be clearly understood that the removal of the colour bar, even if it were possible, in opposition to the wishes of the great bulk of the European population of the Witwatersrand, would advantage only the comparatively small number of skilled or semi-skilled natives; to the great mass it would make no difference whatever."

(2) Star, 18.2.1920.

Subsequent to the strike, trading stores where the African was able to obtain clothes and other necessaries "at reasonable prices" were opened by the mining authorities on the unproclaimed lands near the mines. The result of this new policy of the industry was "an appreciable reduction in prices by native traders generally." This statement by the Chambers' President<sup>(1)</sup> appears to bear out the contention of the African miners that they were being unfairly treated and perhaps exploited, for as the private enterprise Mine Trading Stores, despite reduced mark-ups and turnover, continued to operate it could be concluded that prior to the new policy they had been making abnormally high profits.

The African mine strike of 1920 thus ended with few positive results. Mine trading was put on a sounder and more equitable basis which served to alleviate the rising cost of living, but, at the same time, the African was told that he had recently received an increment in wages and thus should not expect a further increase. The Chamber insisted on viewing any increase as "an additional expense to the Industry," purposely or not, treating a change in wages as an increase in the fixed cost of production.<sup>(2)</sup>

---

(1) T.C.M.(1920), p. 68.

Initially the Chamber had instituted a Mine Trading Scheme whereby the African was able to make his purchases at cost price at stores in the compounds themselves. However, Reef Traders appealed successfully to the Supreme Court against this system and these stores had to be closed.

(2) T.C.M.(1920), p. 89.

The Chamber estimated that the additional expense to the industry of meeting the minimum demands of 3s. per shift would mean an "additional expense to the Industry of over eight million pounds per annum, . . . . the additional wages would mean that twenty-three mines, employing 9680 Europeans and 75,176 natives would be unable to continue. When the premium disappears, as it must do sooner or later, only eight of the mines could pay the increased wages; and these would be entirely unable to carry alone the burden of phthisis compensation and water charges; in short, the whole mining industry would be rendered unpayable."

Possible productivity increases and changes in the organisation,<sup>(1)</sup> in order to utilise more fully the African labourer, were not taken account of. In addition, the Chambers' calculations ignored the fact that the rise in the cost of production after the war years were due in part to the shortage of black labour<sup>(2)</sup> which restricted the scale of operations and caused a corresponding decrease in profits.

According to the Low Grade Mines Commission,<sup>(3)</sup> the mining industry resisted the upward movement of black wages as a means of increasing its supply because it was believed that the only effect of this would have been an increase in the general level of African wages throughout the economy, because of the reaction of employers. The supply of African labour to the mines would thus have remained constant but at a higher wage rate. At this time the wage rates prevailing in the Witwatersrand did, in fact, tend to become the standard for other centres.<sup>(4)</sup> Wage rates for the African thus did not necessarily correspond to his marginal product but were set at the lowest possible rate.<sup>(5)</sup>

- 
- (1) The industry, was, admittedly, restricted in its ability to employ Africans in skilled or semi-skilled jobs prescribed by the colour bar, both formal and informal, and would, according to the Low Grade Mines Commission, have willingly and very readily employed blacks in jobs reserved for whites because of the benefits which would have redounded to the industry as a result of relatively lower black wages.
  - (2) L.G.M.C.(1920), Para. 15.  
Standing charges, being approximately constant, had to be borne by a smaller tonnage. The Commission estimated that the supply of African labour available at prevailing wage rates in 1920 was only 70% of that required for the full working of the industry.
  - (3) L.G.M.C.(1920), Para. 130.
  - (4) Report of the Economic and Wage Commission, U.G.14 of 1926, Para. 140, 141.
  - (5) The Star of 21. 2. 1920 warned: "The employer will have to make up his mind to pay his labour what it is worth, and not an arbitrary wage which puts a premium on inefficiency and slackness and offers the willing and intelligent worker little encouragement and little opportunity of advancement. "

Upon this the Commission commented:

"Although the conditions under which natives are employed are continually being improved, as for example in such a large industry as mining on the Witwatersrand, it is clear that the well-being of the native in its full sense is not sufficiently considered by the white population of South Africa in the conditions under which they are employed. The chief consideration is the profit and convenience of the European, and the native is beginning to feel and to say, with considerable justice on his side, that he is being exploited. The sooner such a feeling is eradicated the better it will be for all concerned." (1)

In addition, the industry contended that it could not "afford any substantial increase."<sup>(2)</sup> It was able to "afford" increases in the scale of pay of its European employees as well as substantial improvements in their condition of employment as well as other "privileges"<sup>(3)</sup> for whites. This difference in attitude by the Chamber is undoubtedly directly attributable to the inferior bargaining position of the black worker.

The Chamber was already by 1920 developing a unique approach to strikes by blacks. Although the problem was complex, their approach was simple, to say the least. The African, "indispensable" to the development of the industry,<sup>(4)</sup> was bludgeoned back to work, his leaders arrested, his pickets broken, and if all this failed, threatened with repatriation back to the reserves if he would not return to work.<sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) L.G.M.C.(1920), op cit, Para.137.

(2) L.G.M.C.(1920), op cit, Para.130.

(3) For example, the European miners were paid in full during the African Mine Strike of 1920. The African did not receive similar treatment, however, for during a "white strike" he was not paid as the Industry could not risk attempting to maintain production for to do so was to transgress the sacred colour bar.

(4) L.G.M.C.(1920), Para.132.

(5) The Star commented that: "A state of affairs, in which a worker remains at his job under economic compulsion and with a strong and growing sense of grievance, is undesirable from every point of view". 20.2.1920.

The effects of this ultimate threat were spelt out by the Star:<sup>(1)</sup>  
"If sent back to his own home he would almost at once have to look for work, and in most cases he would have to be satisfied with a lower wage and less satisfactory labour conditions than those prevailing on the Witwatersrand."

The attempt to restore a state of industrial peace or at least of truce was not made through the civilised method of negotiation but by intimidation and police force. During the early stages of the 1920 strike, Mr. Taberer and other "representative men" visited the compounds and spoke to the men. The leaders of the strike were not consulted nor did the Chamber subsequently attempt to establish negotiating machinery. They refused to accept that the African was able to take part in any sort of Trade Union activity. The Chamber did, however, take one positive step to prevent future industrial unrest among its African workers. The Government was requested to maintain a larger police force in the vicinity of the Witwatersrand.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Chamber set the tone of its actions by its phraseology. When the whites went on strike, as they so frequently did, the industry spoke of the European "strike". The African who demanded more pay, however, was an "agitator"<sup>(3)</sup> who sought to bring down the Government by causing "unrest" amongst his fellows. Even if the whites were not regarded as paragons of virtue, nevertheless they remained industrial workers.

---

(1) Star, 21.2.1920.

(2) T.C.M.(1920), p.90.

It claimed that "if protection had been forthcoming, strikes would have been prevented."

(3) The Star pointed out that: "Owing to the greatly diminished purchasing power of the money he earns, he is proportionately less able to provide for his dependants and to satisfy his wants. The desire for higher wages, therefore, is part of a universal movement - the normal expression of economic needs - and is easily explicable on grounds other than those of the sinister influence of 'agitators'." 23.2.1920.

A short while before the 1920 strike the European miners on the Witwatersrand balloted in favour of striking in the event of their demands not being met. These were, in part, granted by the Chamber.<sup>(1)</sup> The 1913 African mineworkers strike had also followed a successful strike by European miners.

The black strikes of 1913 and 1920 thus followed closely successful white industrial upheavals.<sup>(2)</sup> While the Europeans, however, constantly gained the ends for which they struck it was not so with the Africans. They also went on strike, but did not come close to achieving similar success. The "see-saw" pattern of the 1920 strike, some men going back to work as new men went on strike, suggests deficiencies in organisation, although the mere fact that 40,000 men were involved at one time means that organisation was far from rudimentary.

Although the African strikers in 1913 and 1920 were determined men and were convinced of the justice of their claims, they failed - for the simple reason that the Chamber had public support in its use of armed men and the Africans themselves were prevented from legally organising and from legally withdrawing their labour in protest against their conditions of employment.

---

(1) Star, 20.2.1920.

(2) The Star suggested that "In so far as the native mineworker has become organised and is inclined to push forward unreasonable demands the responsibility rests not with International Socialist eccentrics, but with those who, during the past few years have been giving the native an object lesson in the use and abuse of the strike weapon."  
23.2.1920.

THE SUPPLY OF AFRICAN LABOUR.

The only time the gold mining industry of the Witwatersrand did not experience its usual chronic shortage of African labour during the early years of Union was from the end of 1915 to mid-1916 when supply ranged from approximately 98 per cent to 100 per cent of all underground requirements.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus with the exception of 1915 and 1916, the President of the Chamber of Mines conspicuously complained of the industry's difficulties in meeting its full complement needs of black labour.

The reasons advanced for the exceptional state of affairs in 1915/1916 were threefold. Not having yet returned to full production after the uncertainty following the outbreak of war, the diamond mines were employing only a small proportion of the number of blacks needed during normal times.<sup>(2)</sup> The African miners who normally sought employment at Kimberley therefore went to the Witwatersrand instead and many ended up on the gold mines. The drought in many parts of the country and the resultant bad harvest increased the overall supply of African labour to the economy as tribesmen were forced to find employment in order to support themselves and their families. Again many went to the gold mines. It was finally suggested that "the economic condition of the native at his home constitutes the greatest incentive to him to leave his family and proceed to industrial centres in search of work." The African was gradually changing and was fast becoming "an ever-increasing and reliable asset in the labour market", being influenced over the years by the fact that he was fed, housed and medically cared for while on the mines and because he had become accustomed to purchasing and consuming commodities which had formerly been considered luxuries.<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) T.C.M. (1915), p. Lvii.

(2) There were only 9,325 men employed on the diamond fields in 1915; 55,000 fewer than the 1913 peak level.  
Katzen, p. 73.

(3) T.C.M. (1915), pp. Lviii, Lix.

Thus when the industry was able to work at its most profitable level, at the point of full production, without the limitation resulting from an insufficient supply of African labour it was only because of outside factors and not because of any action, direct or indirect, taken by the Chamber of Mines itself. The suggested causes of the increased supply of black labour to the mining industry - favourable competitive conditions within the economy, adverse weather conditions, and the change in the attitude of the African labourer to employment generally - were not endogenous to the industry. The first was recognised as being transient and a result of the war. Climate is always a variable factor while the third stated cause, if correct, was merely a fortunate by-product of the process of industrialisation.

The central theme throughout the present discussion is the mining industry's problem of obtaining an adequate supply of African labour. The following complement figures show the extent of the problem:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Percentage of Complement*</u>
31.12.1910	71.30
31.12.1911	65.52
31.12.1912	84.28
31.12.1913	65.63
31.12.1914	72.79
31.12.1915	98.83
31.12.1916	82.97
31.12.1917	72.62
31.12.1918	61.07
30. 6.1919**	69.70
31.12.1920	68.30
31.12.1921	78.13

\* The complement of a mine is the number of Africans required to run the mine at its full capacity. It refers in this case to underground work. It should be noted that these figures may have been inflated.

\*\* No figure for 31st December available.

Source: 1910-1919 T.C.M. (1919) p.223.  
1920 T.C.M. (1920) p. 67.  
1921 T.C.M. (1921) p. 76.

Mines forced to work below full production, because of an inadequate supply of black labour, had to bear fixed charges (administration, supervision,

pumping, etc.) which were more or less constant regardless of the rock crushed. Working cost per ton was increased and a higher grade of ore became necessary if the mine was to continue.

The severe shortage of black labour raises the inevitable question of what measures the industry took to bring its demand for and the supply of black labour into equilibrium.

The actions of the Chamber were apparently dictated by the belief that the supply of African labour within the borders of the country was inadequate. In 1919 a conservative estimate was that the shortage amounted to more than a quarter million men for that year. A statement<sup>(1)</sup> by "a Departmental Committee of the Union Government" was quoted as evidence of the truth of the "shortage contention":

"Natives are proceeding to work in very large numbers, but with the enormous growth of industries throughout the Union many are able to obtain employment without proceeding very far afield.

In the consideration of the problem of labour supply, it must be borne in mind that the native population outnumbered the European by only five to one. Every European household employees from one to half-a-dozen, hotels and farms employ from half-a-dozen to a score, the larger estates and the ever-increasing industries account for their quota, merchants, traders and municipal bodies absorb a very large number, while alluvial diggings, railways, harbours and mines between them employ many hundreds of thousands, in addition to which a proportion are employed in agriculture and otherwise on their own account - many others necessarily remaining at home and attending to domestic affairs and the care of livestock.

If due weight be given to these facts, it will be realised that the time has been reached when there is not sufficient labour to go round."

The estimates by the Chamber were made on the assumption that the African was "mainly a pastoral and agricultural people" and that a proportion of the able-bodied men therefore necessarily had to stay at home. This

---

(1) T.C.M., (1919), p. 89.

Letter by Mr. D. Christopherson, Vice President for 1920-21, to the Press quoted after the Presidents' Address.

assumption was part of the belief that the supply of African labour to the gold mining industry was unresponsive to wage changes. It was stated that the "tendency of the native is to be an agriculturist, who reluctantly offers himself or one of his family as an industrial worker for just so long as the hut tax can be earned, and expects the industrial demand to expand to give him work when his crops are bad. He cares nothing if industries pine for want of labour when his crops and home-brewed drink are plentiful." (1)

According to the Chamber, therefore, the supply of black labour was both inadequate in quantity and virtually inelastic with respect to wages, or indeed negatively elastic. Within limits, the supply of African labour was regarded as being an inverse function of the level of wages. On the basis of these contentions an increasing supply could not be achieved by the usual expedience of offering higher wages because of the alleged desire of the African to maintain his tribal links and only work in the industrial sectors of the economy for a certain proportion of each year.

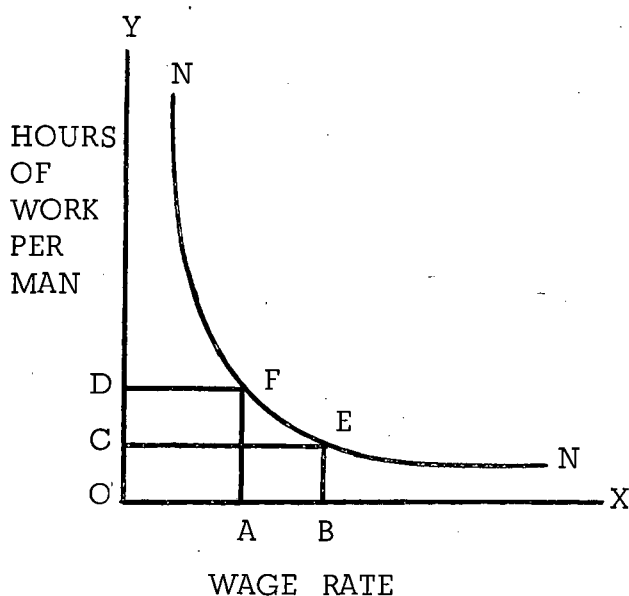
In 1904, Sir Godfrey Lagden, at that time Commissioner for Native Affairs in the Transvaal, had given evidence that before the war of 1899-1902, "30s. per month was more or less a standard wage throughout South Africa for good workmen and for young men, less: and the native had to work from six to nine months to realise what he wanted for the year. Now, at the present time, it is almost an exception to find natives working anywhere for less than £3 per month. This is the result, it has reduced the volume of labour one-half or perhaps more..... The actual volume of labour in circulation has been most materially reduced by the high rate of wage..... because the native can, in half the time he used to work, earn, what he used to earn in a much longer time, to satisfy his wants." (2)

---

(1) T.C.M. (1911), p.Lxxi.

(2) Reports of the Transvaal Labour Commission, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, (Cd. 1897) (1904), Q. 1705.

The situation described by Lagden is represented in diagrammatic form below: <sup>(1)</sup>



NN which measures the number of hours worked in response to wage offers is drawn as a rectangular hyperbola.

Any combination of hours of work and wage rate would equal 'target wage'.

At wage rate of OA, labourer will offer OD hours of work in order to earn 'target amount'.

Increase in wage rate to OB (increase of AB) will result in target labourer only seeking employment for OC hours of work (decrease of CD).

OAFD = target wage  
OBEC = target wage

While an increase in wage rates would tend to draw more men out of the subsistence sector; this increase would also mean that those who were already in wage employment would work shorter periods of time since their targets were more attainable at the higher rates. Elliot Berg suggests that

"The potential migrant labourer balances the benefits to be obtained from income-earning outside against the inconvenience of a given spell in wage employment. He decides to migrate when, given the rate of wages and his "leisure" - income preference function, the anticipated satisfactions from his net expected income exceed the costs to him of migrating, "costs" being defined as sacrificed "leisure". Since the villager usually has non-wage sources of money income (i. e. marketed portions of village output) his decision to migrate and the length of time he will stay in employment depends also on the level of his village income and the effort-price of income in wage employment as compared with the effort-price of income in alternative income-earning pursuits." <sup>(2)</sup>

In modern parlance, the normal condition could be a backward-sloping supply curve of African labour as per capita earnings increased.

(1) This diagram was first brought to my attention by Mr. I. Hume.

(2) Berg, Elliot, "Backward Sloping Labour Supply Functions in Dual Economies - The Africa Case". Quarterly Journal of Economics, 1961, p. 473.

It is difficult to predict a priori the aggregate supply curve of labour since it depends on the net outcome of two contrary changes that may operate following a wage change: changes in the number of labourers in wage employment and changes in the average time each man spends at work.

In 1904, one Barberton mine manager suggested a change of the slope of the African labour supply curve would occur round some "optimal" wage-rate: "If I paid a low wage he would not come, and if I pay a high wage I drive him away as soon as he has the money he requires."<sup>(1)</sup> This idea was given a monetary scale by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick:

"I do not think £1 per month would be enough (to elicit an adequate supply of African labour), that is why I objected to it myself, but I think round about the 40s. level is the right wage.....and that the increase to 60s. was not only unnecessary and useless, but it is mischievous.... if they get £3 per month, they may spend a little bit more than if they got £2 per month, but they will certainly work a shorter period....."<sup>(2)</sup>

Around the turn of the century, indeed, experiments were resorted to which involved a cut in African mine wages before and another at the beginning of the South African War, followed by increases in wages after the War. Evidence of the effects of these changes is somewhat equivocal;<sup>(3)</sup> the observations just quoted from Sir Percy Fitzpatrick reflect this. He stated, indeed, that: "There is much conflict of opinion as to what actually was the effect produced by the different rates of wage, varying from 30s. to 45s.", but beyond that range, there was, he said, "No doubt about the last rise in wages from 45s. to 60s. It entirely failed in its object. Such extravagant rates not only failed to bring about the desired result, but actually defeated it by enabling the native to satisfy his ambition in the shortest space of time. It is no permanent solution of the question

---

(1) Transvaal Labour Commission loc cit. (Cd. 1897) 1904, Q. 11, 649.

(2) *ibid*, Q. 2653.

(3) See pp. 10 and 11.

that the mines should have outbid the other industries of the country or draw out immediately for a few months an additional number of natives, who would otherwise and in the ordinary course work for a longer period or periods at some future time. It profits nothing to rob either our neighbours or the future ..... Cheap labour ..... has been the basis of South African calculation. It fixes the limit of development, and determines the pace ..... "(1)

Elliot Berg is rather more dogmatic in interpreting the evidence of the effects of the wage cut. He argues that "the aggregate supply of (African) labour showed itself not only positively related to the rate of wages, but quite elastic in response to wage cuts". The effect was "the most severe labour shortage in the history of the gold industry, which was not unrelated to the companies' wage policy". (2)

The experience of the Premier Diamond Mine in the years before the Native Grievances Inquiry would not support belief in a backward-sloping supply curve. The managing director, Mr. P. Ross Frames, testified before the Dominions Royal Commission in March 1914. In answer to a question whether in recent years the mine had found any difficulty in maintaining its full complement of labourers, he said: "At one time we were lulled into a rather false state of security in regard to recruiting, and there was also a cut in the contract price paid to these boys. Then we had to busy ourselves in getting the boys, but when we brought back the leading price we found no difficulty....." Individual responses varied. He found "some eager to work and earn money, and others who are not - just like the white men", but, in general he agreed that "an increase in remuneration to the native acts as a powerful stimulus to recruiting". To a question in these terms he replied, "Yes, - he is very much like the white man in that respect." (3)

---

(1) *ibid*, Q. 2620.

(2) Berg, p. 489.

(3) Royal Commission on the National Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions: Evidence taken in . . . . South Africa in 1914, Part II (Cd. 7707), 1914, Qq. 1035-36, 1079.

The finding that the theory of the backward sloping supply curve of labour did not have validity resulted from empirical study on this subject undertaken by Simon Rottenberg on the Island of Antigua (in the West Indies).<sup>(1)</sup> No similar study has been undertaken in South Africa. However, Leo Katzen in "Gold and the South African Economy" states that an important characteristic of the wages of African miners' has been its extreme stability.<sup>(2)</sup> He quotes S.H. Frankel's dictum,<sup>(3)</sup> as follows: "Nothing has changed so little in South Africa as the black man's rate of pay". During certain periods, wage-increases lagged far behind the increase in the retail prices of commodities. For example "between 1914 and 1920 wages rose by only 10 per cent compared with a rise in retail prices of 55 per cent over the same period".<sup>(4)</sup>

If the supply curve of black labour to the gold mines had, in fact, been backward sloping then the result of this stability of money wages and decline in real wages ought to have been a steady increase in the aggregate supply of African labour to the mines. But Katzen did not detect a steady increase in this aggregate supply. He found, however, that the rigidity of wages led to a shortage of labour in a period of price-increases and that African labour was attracted to other fields where price competition for its services was stronger.<sup>(5)</sup> Other extraneous factors were of importance - including, it is true, harvest conditions; but also population growth, the processes of urbanisation, strikes by European miners, and cyclical movements in other branches of employment.<sup>(6)</sup> He might have added the risk of accidents

- 
- (1) Rottenberg, Simon, "Income and Leisure in an Underdeveloped Economy". Journal of Political Economy, 1952, p.101.
- (2) Katzen, Leo, Gold and the South African Economy, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1964, p.22.
- (3) Frankel, S.H., Capital Investment in Africa, op cit, quoted by Katzen, p. 22.
- (4) Katzen, p.23.
- (5) *ibid*, p.27.
- (6) *ibid*, pps. 27,28.

and their effect upon earnings, both immediate and long run. <sup>(1)</sup>

There has, moreover, been a more than proportionate increase in the supply of black labour to secondary industry in which African wages have been increased more rapidly than in mining. <sup>(2)</sup> African labour has followed the possibility of higher wages.

Harold G. Vatter admits the possibility of a backward-sloping supply curve for labour in a primitive economy where the working population lacks a sense of continuous industrial discipline and the experience of money income and of consumption as a more or less continuous flow. He doubts whether this is typical - if, indeed, it ever was - of countries emerging from economic underdevelopment today; and his argument might suggest that the influence which would most rapidly have eliminated the phenomenon from the South African labour market (if it existed) would have been the salutary experience of regular employment at wages which would have increased as the labour force grew more efficient. In societies removed from the primitive, he argued, three influences would render the actual existence of backward-sloping supply curves most unlikely. The demonstration effect would increasingly induce emulation of the spending habits of those in receipt of higher incomes. Similar influences would

---

(1) The Native Grievances Inquiry suggested that there would be a positive relationship between a decrease in the incidence of accidents (and thus an increase in earning potential), and the supply of labour. Buckle thus indirectly lent support to the assumption that the labour supply curve to the gold mines was responsive to expectations of real earnings, i. e. forward sloping.

N.G.I. (1913), Para. 32.

Africans were paid by the shift and contracted for a certain number of shifts. Mineworkers were aware that if they did not work owing to injury, they were neither paid nor was that day counted as one towards the completion of the contract.

(2) Between 1915 and 1965 the number of non-whites employed on the gold mines rose from approximately 206,000 to approximately 386,000. In the same period, manufacturing industry increased its employment of non-white labour by eight-fold (from approximately 88,000 to approximately 628,000). Union Statistics for Fifty Years 1910-1960, compiled by the Bureau of Census and Statistics, Pretoria. Statistical Year Book 1966, compiled by the Bureau of Statistics, Pretoria.

affect the marginal propensity to save, whilst leisure at a low level of income is not of itself necessarily especially pleasurable. "Leisure ... is not particularly wanted without wealth". He concludes that in a wealthy community backward-sloping supply curves for labour will exist only at the point where they are "not operationally significant". Most workers even yet do not have the opportunity of obtaining earnings within the ranges in which the backward-sloping effect is likely to be encountered. Even in a poorer community in which the demonstration effect is able to operate powerfully, the backward-sloping curve is seen as a rather unreal case. (1)

It was to increase its supply of African labour that the Chamber of Mines formed the Native Recruiting Corporation in 1912 to operate in the Union and the territories of Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland. (2)

By 1919, when the Robins on Group finally joined the Corporation, a virtual monopoly of recruiting in British South Africa was achieved. (3) The ever-increasing cost of recruiting and the abuses of the independent recruiting system were alleviated by the centralisation and organisation ensuing on the formation of the Corporation. In his annual address for 1912 the President spoke of

"The cut-throat competition obtaining in the past, which continually increased the cost of our native labour, and the running after the native, which had a rather demoralising effect on him, had been practically put an end to; the mine contractor, who for a long time past has been universally recognised as a great evil, has been to a considerable extent eliminated already, and I have no doubt that within a comparatively short period conditions as regards costs must materially benefit from the combination - in fact there are signs thereof already." (4)

The Native Recruiting Corporation, as well as putting an end to the cut-throat competition within the Industry, also further reinforced the

---

(1) Vatter, Harold G., "On the folklore of the Backward Sloping Supply Curve". Industry and Labour Relations Review, 1961, p. 580.

(2) T.C.M. (1912), p. ixv.

(3) Van der Horst, p. 193.

(4) T.C.M. (1912), p. ixvii.

industry's monopsonistic position within the economy. However, the industry suffered a considerable setback in 1913<sup>(1)</sup> with respect to its supply of African labour when the Union Government prohibited the further recruitment of labour from North of Latitude 22° South. It did so not on grounds of public policy, but for humanitarian reasons, arising from the unduly high mortality rate amongst these men.<sup>(2)</sup> This had a marked effect on the labour position within the industry as almost 20,000 men,<sup>(3)</sup> more than 11 per cent of the total African labour force in the service of members of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association,<sup>(4)</sup> had been imported from those areas in 1911. In addition, the W.N.L.A. was precluded from recruiting within the Protectorate of British Nyasaland from July, 1912. Approximately 2,000 Nyasas had been employed on mines and works at the end of 1911.<sup>(5)</sup> } Despite the shortage of labour within the Protectorate itself, the Imperial Government was prepared to issue travel passes to those wishing to proceed to the Witwatersrand of their own accord,<sup>(6)</sup> so that this supply of African labour was not entirely lost to the gold-mining industry. The number employed on mines and works from this source varied from approximately 900 to as little as 400 during the 1920's. The question of recruiting from North of Latitude 22° South and from Nyasaland had been under discussion for some years so that the N.R.C. may have been formed in response not only to the needs mentioned above but also the possible curtailment of the future supply through the W.N.L.A.

---

(1) T.C.M. (1913), p. xLi.

(2) Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, para. 53.

(3) T.C.M. (1912), p. xiii.

(4) T.C.M. (1911), p. xi.

Members of the Association included the Coal, Diamond and Tin Mines as well as the Lime Works. In 1911 the gold mines employed approximately 178,000 men out of a total of approximately 196,000 employed by all the members of the Association.

See T.C.M. (1912), p. xxxix.

(5) T.C.M. (1912), p. xLii.

(6) T.C.M. (1910), p. xLii.

The formation of the N.R.C. increased the supply of labour i. e. the quantity of labour offered at given wage rates (including allowances in kind). More efficient use of a given labour supply, however, could, in effect, be equal to an increase in that supply. Improved labour productivity is determined by a complex of factors such as technical progress, improvement in workers' qualifications, experience, better work organisation, improved living standards and material incentives in the form of wages. Wages act as an inducement to work; a change in wages may affect the labourers' willingness to work more or less intensively or for longer or shorter periods of time. The wage an employer "is prepared to pay - the price he is prepared to give - depends on the amount of work the amount of the commodity bought - he expects to receive in return. Other things being equal, a more efficient workman offers more 'work' than a less efficient; and he receives higher wages in consequence."<sup>(1)</sup>

The amount of work a man does is determined partly by ability, and partly by choice, by his relative demands for income and leisure, which in turn depend on what he receives for his labour. The substitutability and complementarity of income and leisure for the African miner have been discussed above. The African, moreover, was restricted in the category of work and thus the amount of work he did by the formal and inform colour bars.

The importance of wage rates as components of actual payments may vary. The African miners on the South African gold mines received food, housing accommodation, and medical and hospital treatment, in addition to cash wages. Adjustments to the cash wage by taking into account these factors are therefore necessary.<sup>(2)</sup>

---

(1) Hicks, J.R., The Theory of Wages, Second Edition, MacMillan & Co., London, 1963, p. 89.

(2) See next page.

As we have seen, Buckle found the complaints of African miners in 1913 about wages to be well-founded. Average money wages in 1913 were lower than they had been in 1896; <sup>(1)</sup> there had moreover been a decrease in the average rates paid from 1s. 11.58d. per shift in 1912 to 1s. 11.073d. per shift in 1913. <sup>(2)</sup> The average wage decreased slightly during the War, but from 1918 there was an increase. Over this whole period wage rates actually varied very little.

Average Earnings per shift of all African Miners on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines 1911 - 1921

	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>
1911	1	11.3
1912	1	11.6
1913	1	11.0
1914	1	11.7
1915	1	11.4
1916	1	11.1
1917	1	11.1
1918	1	11.5
1919	2	0.3
1920	2	2.5
1921	2	2.1
	2	3

Sources: Figures for 1911 to 1919, L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 193.  
 Figure for 1920, G.M.E. (1921), p. 29.  
 First figure for 1921, M.I.B. (1922), Para. 168.  
 Second figure for 1921, G.M.E. (1922), p. 16.  
 \* The bonus of 5s. per month has not been included.

---

Footnote (2) from previous page: In 1911, the cost of food, housing and compound expenses, pass fees etc. for each black worker amounted to a little over 9d. per shift. \* By 1921 the provision of free quarters and food cost the mines 14d. per shift for each worker\*\* (13d. in 1920, 10.7d. in 1919). Average cost of recruiting, however, had decreased (comparing 1915 with 1922, when practically the same number were recruited by the N.R.C., the cost was 83s. 10d. per African in the former year as compared with 62s. 7d. in the latter). \*\*\* The total fixed cost of employing an African worker had therefore increased by far less than the difference between 14d. and 9d.

\* T.C.M., (1911), p. Lxxii.

\*\* G.M.E., (1922), p. 17.

\*\*\* M.I.B., (1922), Para. 92.

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 254.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 255.

During this period, and especially since the outbreak of war, there had been a significant and continuous rise in prices. Using 1913 as the base year, the wholesale price index of South African goods had increased to 192.4<sup>(1)</sup> and that of All Goods to 223 by 1920.<sup>(2)</sup> For the same period, 1913 - 1920, retail prices rose by 55 per cent.<sup>(3)</sup> These indices do not, however, accurately reflect the depreciated value of African miners' earnings. At best, the price index is a rough measure of the value of money since it only tells us that a certain percentage change has taken place in the power of money to buy a certain fixed assortment of goods in certain fixed proportions.

The assortment of goods and the weight attached to each good to denote its proportionate importance in expenditure had different degrees of importance for Europeans and Africans, depending on their respective spending habits. There is, therefore, no index available specifically for the black miner. Commodities generally purchased by them had shown a marked increase in price during the war years<sup>(4)</sup> but our knowledge of their purchasing habits, quantity and combination purchased in the average year, is still very incomplete.

- 
- (1) Source: Official Year books of the Union of South Africa, quoted by Katzen, p. 74.
- (2) Source: Schumann, C.G.W., The World Depression. South Africa and the Gold Standard, Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1932, p. 27. quoted by Katzen, p. 24.
- (3) Katzen, p. 23.  
This increase of 55 per cent should be compared to the increase of 10 per cent in average African miners' wages. Retail Price Index reflects changes in the price of food, fuel, light and rent.
- (4) See p.38.

The Chamber<sup>(1)</sup> alleged that the African miners' expenditure on "necessary clothing is small". Being otherwise cared for whilst in the employ of members of the Chamber, the value of his earnings was affected only by the change in the prices of the clothing he bought.

An idea of the "necessary clothing" may be gauged by the needs, agreed to by both the Union and Portuguese Governments, of a black Portuguese miner. Before the war a "sufficient" outfit - two cotton blankets, a shirt or sweater and a loin cloth - cost 18s. while the same articles cost 38s. by 1918. As he required a minimum of two sets of this outfit each year, the additional expense to the Portuguese African was, by 1918, forty shillings over pre-war prices. The cost of living increase over the war years, which the Chamber conceded, was thus more than 100 per cent. During the same period there had been a marginal decrease in average earnings.

In addition, underground miners required boots which were made available to them at cost price.<sup>(2)</sup> By 1918 a single pair cost 20s. as compared with 12s. 6d. before the war - on the assumption again of a minimum of two sets, the price increase to the African underground worker over the pre-war years was 120 per cent.

The Chamber was even more unsympathetic to the hardships, caused by war-time inflation, of the black miners' dependents. Apart from the increased prices of clothing, the family were allegedly in much the same position in 1918 as in 1914 - the increased costs of mealie-meal and other foodstuffs were balanced by the increased prices received for the cattle and other produce of the rural areas.<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) T.C.M. (1918), pp. 90, 91.

Statement by E.A. Wallers, President, to the Commissioner appointed to enquire into the unrest amongst Africans employed by the Johannesburg Municipality and by the Mines.

(2) This practice of issuing boots and leggings as an advance against wages was first suggested by the Government.

T.C.M. (1910), p. 28.

(3) The Chamber explicitly assumed no "landless" African mineworkers.

It was contended that "in the territories, as in the towns, the increase in cost complained of by the native is not an increase (except in the case of clothing) in the cost of indispensable articles making up his cost of living, but in the price of luxuries". The African miner had "a very considerable margin of wages as compared with the wages necessary to enable him and his family to live in their ordinary condition".

On the basis of this argument, the Chamber considered itself justified in refusing its black workers' demands for increased wages. Further grounds were that the industry could not afford an increase (a number of mines would be forced out of production) and that the African miner received higher wages than his fellows employed on comparable work in industry.

Piecework enables changes in the supply of labour to be reflected directly and rapidly in the wages earned. If wages are paid on a piecework instead of a time-rate basis - in proportion to the "pieces" done or "by results" - a special inducement will be given to the worker to increase the speed at which he works in order that he may earn more in a given time. Thus a system of labour remuneration which differentiates between one worker and another in respect of the effort each exerts, tends to stimulate higher labour productivity. By directly linking workers' wages with the results of their work, the qualifications of employees as well as the intensity of the individual workers' efforts may be improved.

In 1913, pay on a piecework basis as a proportion of total black wages varied from 66 per cent in some mines to as low as 13.8 per cent in others, the average being only 33.7 per cent per mine. <sup>(1)</sup>

The principal obstacle, however, to the extension of the piecework system was the "maximum-average" provision in the Native Recruiting Corporation's schedule of pay rates. For example, the maximum average for the numerically most important category of African labourer <sup>(2)</sup> was fixed

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Annexure 15.

(2) Those employed on tramping and shovelling.

at 2s.3d. per shift in 1913, that is, fixed so that the average pay of that class of black labourer did not exceed 2s.3d. per shift.<sup>(1)</sup> To enforce this system fines were levied on those mines where the "maximum average" paid was above the scheduled rate.

The purpose of the clause setting a maximum average was to prevent mines outbidding each other for the available supply of African labour.<sup>(2)</sup> It was introduced in order to safeguard the interests of low grade mines, to prevent "one mine attracting piecework labour to the detriment of another, by practically paying higher rates of wages than the latter, and thus competing unfairly for a fuller supply of natives".<sup>(3)</sup>

The rationale was that if the wages of certain classes of labourers were paid on a piecework basis, other classes, whose output could not readily be measured, (so that a piece-rate was impracticable) would find themselves at an increasing disadvantage compared with those whose work could be remunerated by piece-rates, e. g. hammerboys whose output could be measured in inches drilled. Those paid on time-rates would be dissatisfied without daily remuneration equivalent to that earned by fellow labourers on piecework. Should their requests for time-wages roughly on a parity with piece-rate earnings be met, the general labour cost structure of the mines would be pushed up. This would imperil the future of certain of the low grade mines.

It would appear that many mines were dissatisfied with the clause as it prevented them from making maximum utilisation of their labour force. There were cases where mines had made severe cuts in piecework rates solely in order to keep within this clause.<sup>(4)</sup>

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 263, Annexure 12 and 13.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 269.

(3) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 207.

(4) N.G.I. (1913), Paras. 263, 265, 266.

It was the contention of the Economic Commission of 1914 that the productive powers of the African miner were "being held in check . . . . by the device of the maximum average".<sup>(1)</sup> The Native Grievances Inquiry of 1913 concluded that the maximum average clause was "unsound in principle"<sup>(2)</sup> as it penalised efficient work. As a compromise solution, Buckle suggested that the maximum average clause be replaced by an agreed maximum per ton,<sup>(3)</sup> a change which, in effect, would have given more scope for rational utilisation of labour and would have meant that "the only limit on the native's earnings would be his own efficiency".<sup>(4)</sup>

The strictures of the Commissioner seemed to be justified and his views were supported by the Economic Commission of 1914 (above) and the Dominions Royal Commission of 1914. In the latter<sup>(5)</sup> it is stated:

"The object of the arrangement is to prevent undue competition between the various groups and to obviate the possibility of the richer mines attracting an unfair proportion of the available supply of natives. But the arrangement framed to prevent one mine out-bidding another is made at the expense of the black worker and restricts the daily wage which a skilful or industrious native is able to earn by his toil. Although his individual performance may entitle him to a higher daily amount, this is not paid him by the mine manager if its payment would involve the mine in an infringement of the "maximum average" rule and expose it, consequently, to a heavy fine. It is obvious that a complicated clause of this kind cannot be understood by the individual worker whose pay is thus curtailed, and it is not, moreover, in accordance with the understanding at the time of recruitment, which is that the native shall be paid according to his capacity. The native thus considers himself as being defrauded of a just reward and regards the curtailment as a breach of contract".

---

(1) Economic Commission of 1914, Para. 54.

(2) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 269.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 270.

"Each mine should be free to pay its boys whatever it liked, provided that it did not thereby increase its present cost per ton for each class of work. "

(4) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 271.

(5) Dominions Royal Commission of 1914, (Cd 7505 of 1914). Third Interim Report of the Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions, Paras. 62, 63.

The maximum average clause was revised in February, 1914, and again in October, 1918. The maximum average for tramping and shovelling on piecework up to the 31st January, 1914, had been 2s.3d., irrespective of the percentage employed on such work. From 1st February, 1914, it became permissible to pay the men as much as 2s.9d. according to a sliding scale based on the percentage of all the blacks employed on tramping and lashing. The smaller the percentage, the higher was the permitted maximum average per shift. <sup>(1)</sup>

The amendment of 1918 established provisos before a mine became liable to a penalty for paying a black worker in excess of the rate prescribed in the schedule. The mine was only liable if the rate laid down was "on average exceeded during any two consecutive months". Even in such an event the mine was still not automatically fined. Representations about the details of underground work could be made to a Committee of the N.R.C., which would decide on the action, if any, which should be taken. <sup>(2)</sup>

These discretionary powers granted to members of the Native Recruiting Corporation changed the clause, according to the Low Grade Mines Commission, so that "it is not open to the same serious objections as were previously directed against it". <sup>(3)</sup>

Turning to the possible repercussions on the industry of the abolition of the maximum average clause, one may conjecture that if the form of remuneration had been tied to productivity increases with no limitation on the earnings of the African, then the efficient, better-trained and experienced African would have earned more without an increase in the average black wage costs to the mines. For example, direct costs per inch drilled would not be higher because the assumption is that above average output would be rewarded at the same average rates. We have assumed that the supply of labour would not have become regressive had the maximum average clause been abolished. However, this assumption

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 203.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 205.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 208.

is not essential. If the maximum average clause had been relaxed and the form of remuneration as outlined above adopted (tying increases in wages to increased productivity), then the African who, was, in fact, a target worker would spend less time on the mines achieving his income "target". Although the "target worker" might spend less time on the mines, the total work completed-by-him-would not have decreased due to the fact that productivity had increased. Moreover, if he spent less time performing productive services as great as those previously performed over a longer period, the mines would have saved a certain fraction of food and shelter costs, and in spreading the interest charges on the now more intensively used machinery over a larger output. <sup>(1)</sup>

The opportunity of higher wages on the mines would have tended to increase the quantity of labour supplied at the expense of secondary industry and of the diamond mines (decreasing differential) and tended, at the same time, to decrease the costs of recruiting. <sup>(2)</sup> Part, at least, of this decrease in recruiting costs could have been passed on to the African in the form of higher real wages. In addition, increased productivity per head would

---

(1) This, indeed, is consonant with the evidence of Maurice S. Evans before the Dominions Royal Commission. Evans gave somewhat equivocal answers to questions whether the ease with which supplies of African labour were maintained at Kimberley, where higher piece-wages prevailed, belied the backward-sloping supply curve, and in the end spoke up for higher wages not having the same effect of inducing effort on the part of an African, as on that of a white man. Nevertheless he insisted that African labour was used wastefully. If the maximum average were removed, and "that labour was used to better advantage, I think they could do with fewer boys and the native labour would be more efficient."

Dominions Royal Commission, loc cit., Part 11 (Cd. 7707), (1914), Qq. 708-720.

(2) The amount spent by the Witwatersrand gold mines on recruiting during the year ended 30th September, 1913, amounted to + £600,000, which is between 5d. and 6d. per shift worked. The expenditure of the Premier Diamond Mining Corporation came to much less (3½d per shift), this economy probably being the result of the greater opportunity afforded the capable worker of earning according to his value. Report of the Economic Commission, (1914), Para. 51.

would have reduced the total labour requirements for a given output. <sup>(1)</sup>

It is true that certain classes of work on the mines, by their very nature, could not have been paid for on a piecework basis. The aim of not creating an excessive differential between the earnings of labourers who had to be employed on a time-rate basis and those paid piece-rates, in favour of the pieceworkers, could have been achieved by setting piece-rates lower than productivity rates, and, as opportunity offered, bringing time-rate earnings more closely into line by providing increases out of the residue. <sup>(2)</sup> In this way, the wages of all classes of African labourers could have risen with increasing productivity, at no cost to the mines beyond what was covered by the increase in productivity. <sup>(3)</sup> This would not have interfered with the centralised recruiting of African labour through the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and the Native Recruiting Corporation. A more extensive system of payment by results could have been quite compatible with the maintenance of what has been described

- 
- (1) The evidence of S.A.M. Pritchard, at that time Director of Native Labour, before the Dominions Royal Commission confirms this: "I believe that if the contract or piece-rate system were to be extended the mining industry would have immeasurably better results from the native labour force than they have today. There can be no doubt that the efficiency of the native labourer has increased of recent years, but there is plenty of room yet for improvement. If the opportunity is given to them, their efficiency will further improve and the mining industry will be enabled to rely upon a much more contented and efficient force of native labour, with the probable result that they will be able to do with less labourers than they employ in normal times". Loc. cit, Part 11 (Cd. 7707), (1914), Qq 2483.
  - (2) This might, in fact, tend to nullify the abolition of restrictions on piecework rates because the incentive to additional labour might not be high enough. If this is so then no harm is done although it is difficult to imagine circumstances where no advantage would be taken of the incentive to greater effort, however, small that incentive might be. See example of Nourse Mines, N.G.I. (1913), Para. 265, and Crown Mines, N.G.I. (1913), Para. 266.
  - (3) The Director of Native Labour made a suggestion along similar lines to the Mining Industry Board of 1922, (Para. 154):  
"The extension of piecework and devising of means whereby natives working in gangs may share with their European supervisor in any bonus earned by the gang, no restrictions being placed on the earnings of a native".

as the monopsony of the mines in respect of African labour. What is more, should the supply of labour have, in fact, proved to be non-elastic, then the quota system<sup>(1)</sup> could have been applied to ensure that the low-grade mines did not suffer from a relative labour shortage, without necessitating the maximum average system to protect them against the competition of the better-situated mines where it would have been easier to achieve higher piece-rate earnings.

Since the fixed cost of employing each African formed a high proportion of the total cost, it was much in the interests of the mines to secure maximum productivity from them. On the average, the cost of recruiting,<sup>(2)</sup> as estimated by the Economic Commission of 1914, was "between 5d. and 6d. per shift worked".<sup>(3)</sup> Cost of providing food amounted to approximately 8d. per shift.<sup>(4)</sup> Food costs plus recruiting costs therefore were approximately 1s. 1.5d. per shift per African worker. The statistics available in 1913 did not permit the calculation of the costs of housing an African mineworker, nor of the fixed capital charges, costs of supervision underground, administrative expenses and so on. Neglecting these important components, the variable (wage) cost, which in 1913 averaged

- 
- (1) Under the centralised system of recruiting African labour for the mines, a quota system had been adopted for distributing the available supplies of African labour.  
See N.G.I. (1913), Para. 405.
  - (2) Not all the African miners were recruited. During the year in question, of the 244,343 blacks engaged for service, 95,140 were voluntary workers, i.e. "natives who presented themselves at the mines for employment, and who were not enlisted through any agent".  
N.G.I. (1913), Para. 526.
  - (3) Although Africans recruited by the N.R.C. (57,109 in 1913), worked for an average of 171 shifts (N.G.I. Para. 534) while those recruited by the W.N.L.A. (42,680 in 1913) were contracted for one year (313 shifts vide Para. 528, N.G.I.) so that their recruiting costs were spread over a larger number of shifts than the N.R.C. Africans, the figure of approximately 5½c. per shift (Report of the Economic Commission of 1914, op cit., Para. 51) appears to be an average for all Africans employed on the mines whether they were recruited or voluntary workers.
  - (4) An African labourer fed for 6 weeks full-time work i.e. 30 shifts, costs the mine about £1.  
N.G.I. (1913), Para. 350.

ls. 11.075d. per shift, <sup>(1)</sup> was not more than about 63% of the total. If these other elements of cost were included, it is clear that fixed costs would emerge of equal importance, if not more important, than the direct wage-costs of black labour.

The Native Grievances Inquiry ventured that an increase in the use of piecework pay as a proportion of total pay would probably increase the average wages of the African labourers without any ensuing "cost" per inch drilled to the Mine Companies. <sup>(2)</sup> This hesitation to be more categorical suggests a rather cautious approach as the three experiments which the Report quoted, where mines had substituted piecework for day's pay, were all favourable. In all the cases, the mines were "satisfied that they (were) getting value for money". <sup>(3)</sup> A spokesman for the Native Recruiting Corporation, Mr. Taberer, suggested to the Economic Commission of 1914 that the African be paid "wherever possible according to his capacity". He said: "I think the mine natives on day's pay do not, naturally, over-exert themselves, provided they do sufficient to justify its being marked on their tickets. This is about all you can get out of them. If you pay them according to their capacity, I think you will get very much better work out of them, and therefore you will be able to do with fewer natives". <sup>(4)</sup>

This suggestion was supported by the Departmental Committee on Underground Mining Contracts of 1917, and by the Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920. "An extension of the piecework system" the former Commission stated, "would tend to more fully develop the capabilities of the natives and promote greater contentment amongst them" <sup>(5)</sup> The Low

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 255.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 259, "Probably....."

(3) *ibid*, Para. 260, 261, 262.

(4) Report of the Economic Commission (1914), Para. 54.

(5) Departmental Committee on Underground Mining Contracts of 1917, Para. 110, quoted by L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 200.

Grade Mines Commission recommended the extension of the piecework system - "efficiency would be improved and the effect of a shortage of native labour reduced".<sup>(1)</sup>

The conditions of production under which the incentive effect of piecework-remuneration produces maximum labour productivity are twofold.<sup>(2)</sup>

The first is the "existence of quantitative output indexes which correctly show labour input by the workers". Such an index may exist for "production workers" and not for "auxiliary workers", however, in so far as increases in productivity depend on the co-operation of large teams",<sup>(3)</sup> the relevant piecework rate measurement is the group rather than the individual. And the second is that there be "a practical possibility of higher output by the workers with the particular machinery and technology applied" without conflicting with the interests of production. For where "the worker has attained the planned productivity or output and he cannot exceed it because of the specific conditions of work, there is no longer any reason for stimulating a rise in output".

As we have seen the African miner on the South African gold mines fulfilled both these requirements.

The African who came to the gold mines was a migrant labourer who returned home after a certain period of work. The provision of married quarters was limited in number and available only to those black workers, such as clerks, mine police and other semi-skilled men, whom the mines did not want to lose. The employment of migrant labourers, however,

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 199.

(2) Kapustin, E.I., Wages as an Important Condition for the Growth of Labour Productivity in the U.S.S.R., pp. 288 and 289 in Labour Productivity, edited by John T. Dunlop and Vasili P. Diatchenko, McGraw Hill, 1964.

(3) Maksimilian Pohorille, "Productivity and the System of Labour Remuneration", pp. 223 and 225, in Labour Productivity, edited by John T. Dunlop and Vasili P. Diatchenko, McGraw Hill, 1964.

involved a cost which the industry recognised as early as 1911. The Executive Committee Report of that year spoke of the "process of continued replacement" of the unskilled labour force and of "the factor of the training of raw recruits which means an increase in the working costs necessitated by the employment of a greater number of natives than would be necessary if more permanent conditions of employment prevailed. In addition to this drawback there is the greater risk of accidents through the training of novices at the work, and the extra cost involved in the prevention of accidents".<sup>(1)</sup> The mines did not, however, encourage married quarters,<sup>(2)</sup> despite the advantages of a permanent and stable labour force, because they were "a source of liquor and other vices".<sup>(3)</sup> It is unlikely that the government of the day would have opposed an extension of the system of married quarters.<sup>(4)</sup> The industry, therefore, because of its reluctance to experiment, lost the opportunity (which it was in the later years denied on grounds of policy) of stabilising its labour force.

The supply of labour is not merely the number of men available for work at a given wage rate during any given period, but, more accurately, is measured by the amount of work these men will be able to achieve. The productivity of labour, which is not unrelated to the duration of time spent continuously at work, is a factor of prime importance in determining the supply to an industry.

As we have seen, the gold mining industry recognised the truth of this argument. Although it appeared to have made little effort to encourage the

---

(1) T.C.M. (1911), p. XLii.

(2) By 1930 only some 1,500 out of nearly 200,000 Africans employed on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand were accommodated in the married quarters.

Native Economic Commission of 1930, Typescript of Evidence, p. 9123, quoted by Sheila van der Horst, "Some Effects of Industrial Legislation on the Market for Native Labour in South Africa", S.A.J.E., 1935.

(3) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 134.

(4) Under the provisions of the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, the sanction of the Native Affairs Department was required for the erection of compounds.

stabilising of its African labour force by providing facilities (married quarters) for the men to become permanently resident on the Witwatersrand, the industry saw the value of employing men of experience. In pursuit of this goal the industry adopted a "graduated" scale in December, 1919, to induce African miners to remain longer at work and to shorten their period of absence at home. Every African who continued to work after having completed 180 shifts received a bonus of 5s. per month; the bonus was continued if he returned to work after an absence from work of not more than four months.

Another factor which influences the productivity of labour is the extent to which capital is combined with labour. Any productivity increases resulting from a change in this combination should be partially attributed to the co-operation of other factors of production; nevertheless, an increase in the input of capital per labour unit would improve the productivity of labour and thus indirectly decrease the demand for this labour. Hicks states: "If capital increases, or technical knowledge improves, the direct benefits of this improvement will be increased by an indirect effect through the efficiency of labour".<sup>(1)</sup>

The advent of the rock drill meant that with a far smaller number of Africans employed in breaking rock, not only was more broken than with the same number of men formerly working on hammers, but the adoption of labour-saving methods also tended to overcome the difficulty of the shortage of black labour.<sup>(2)</sup> Two machine-boys were reported to break as much ground as 12 hammerboys<sup>(3)</sup> so that the large increase in the number of rock drills in use, from 3,587 at the end of 1910 to 4,596 at the end of 1911, an increase of approximately 28 per cent in one year,<sup>(4)</sup> must have considerably eased the supply problems of the gold mining industry.

---

(1) Hicks, p. 96.

(2) T.C.M. (1913), p. Lvii.

(3) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 257.

In addition, as hammerboys averaged 2s. 4d. per shift in 1913 as against 2s. 0. 5d. per shift by machine-boys in that year, the rock drill also effected a big reduction in underground working costs.

(4) T.C.M. (1911), p. Lxxiii.

A considerable proportion of the time spent underground by the African labour force was (and still is) not fully utilised. Under the Mining Regulations, the working area had to be "examined and made safe" by a white ganger before the black labourer could begin work. Again, at the conclusion of the shift the black miner had to cease work in sufficient time to allow charging and blasting by the white workmen. This was aggravated by the fact that the African descended underground before the European, and, in addition, only came up after him. <sup>(1)</sup> These regulations, being "habitually disregarded", were the cause, on some mines, of frequent convictions. <sup>(2)</sup> It is evident that these Mining Regulations were in urgent need of amendment. Full use was not made of the long period spent underground by the time-rate worker - several hours more than were necessary for the shift to be marked on his ticket. The piece-rater's problem was more complex. Paid by the result, the wasted time waiting for the white ganger to arrive and carry out his inspection severely restricted his earning capacity. The pieceworker, such as the hammerboy, was not paid unless he completed a certain minimum work and the shift was not included towards the completion of his contract unless he had been paid for it. The delay in being allowed to work could, therefore, not only cost the pieceworker the opportunity of increased pay, but could result in him receiving no pay at all for working for several hours and having, consequently, to prolong his period of service on the Witwatersrand.

The hours of work underground "at the face" for the European workmen were limited by the Mines and Works Act of 1911. By 1917, the white miners finally succeeded in obtaining an amendment to the Mining Regulations to restrict their working time to a 48-hour week,—"bank-to-bank", with a short shift on Saturdays. <sup>(3)</sup> This curtailment in the hours of work of the white

---

(1) Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, Para. 32.

(2) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 25.

(3) T.C.M. (1917), p. 45.

Also, according to the Low Grade Mines Commission, on Sundays there was a short shift as well as on Saturdays. Bank to bank included the time occupied going to the working place from the surface of the mine, and returning from the working place to the surface.

supervisor aggravated the problem and accentuated the need for a re-arrangement of underground work as the effective working time of the African was "estimated to amount to no more than an average of about 5 hours", <sup>(1)</sup> although he frequently spent as much as ten hours underground. <sup>(2)</sup>

To this end the Low Grade Mines Commission recommended that the "existing Mining Regulations and the methods of working should be altered so that a larger proportion of the time spent underground by natives could be rendered available for work". <sup>(3)</sup> This "would help considerably to counterbalance the shortage" of African labour and "enable them to earn higher wages..... without in any way increasing the time spent underground by the natives". <sup>(4)</sup> The Regulations were subsequently amended <sup>(5)</sup> to permit "natives to enter their working places prior to the arrival of the white miner, who has charge of them, provided these places have been previously examined and made safe by another competent miner". <sup>(6)</sup> This was usually done on the night or early morning shift.

The level of compensation is indirectly an aspect of remuneration for work and in an industry such as mining, where deaths and accidents are frequent, it is a very real variable. Buckle investigated the African claims that their rates were insufficient and found, indeed, that complaints as to their inadequacy were well-founded. He said: "I do not see why natives should not be compensated on the same basis as Europeans, i. e. probable loss of earning power". <sup>(7)</sup> An African miner permanently unable

---

(1) Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, Para. 32.

(2) M.I.B. (1922), Para. 108.

(3) Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, Para. 33.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 36.

(5) The regulations were promulgated in July and further amended in November, 1921.  
See G.M.E. (1922), p. 49 for the full amended regulations.

(6) M.I.B. (1922), Para. 108.  
The amendments to Regulations 102 and 106 also increased the number of places which one "competent miner" could deal with by providing that, unless he deemed it necessary, his African assistants could continue their work without his actual presence.

(7) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 384.

to resume work which was the same or similar to that which he was engaged upon at the time of the accident or illness received from £1 to £20. <sup>(1)</sup>

The Chambers' defence for this disparity between black and white levels of compensation was that the Africans "are unskilled labourers, and when prevented from underground employment are not debarred from any unskilled occupation, especially farming, to which they are accustomed". <sup>(2)</sup>

Total incapacitation, that is permanent inability to perform any class of work, entitled the African miner to receive from £30 to £50. If a miner died because of an accident not due to his own "serious and wilful misconduct" or because of illness, his dependants received from £30 to £50. This sum had been increased by £10 by the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1914 and was the only change in levels of compensation which followed the severe criticism of the Native Grievances Inquiry Commission.

A possible argument for these disproportionate rates of compensation for total incapacitation and death paid to Africans may have been that the kinship system and the social obligations it defined differed from that of the urbanised European. In time of incapacity or old age, the African was more fortunate than the European in that he and his family were ensured collective support through tribal custom, while the European generally would have to fend for himself.

Despite this mitigating influence of the extended family structure of tribal life, it would have been in the interests of the mines to rectify the disproportionate rates of compensation paid to its black workers to compensate them more generously on the basis of their probable loss of

---

(1) Compensation to be paid Africans was laid down in Act 15 of 1911. See N.G.I. (1913), Para. 362. Also T.C.M. (1918), p. 93.

(2) T.C.M. (1916), p. 69.

earning power. Improved rates of compensation could have made mine employment more "attractive".<sup>(1)</sup>

Even on the assumption of the backward sloping supply curve of labour (as well as of a normal supply curve) the low scales of accident compensation might well have been a factor which tended to keep down the supply of African labour. Indeed this tendency could have applied especially in the case of the target worker who might have felt that he would be prevented from achieving his target because of an accident or illness.

We have seen that the industry did not always act in its own best interests with respect to increasing this supply as it was not consistent in taking every opportunity of improving the productivity of its black workers. Mechanical devices were developed specifically for this purpose, yet other avenues stabilising the labour force and the use of incentives (extending the piece-rate system) - were not fully explored. In many respects the Chamber's actions served to depress its supply of African labour.

It is evidence to the Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920, the Chamber suggested<sup>(2)</sup> two methods for increasing the supply of black labour to the industry:

"(1) The elimination to some extent of the present restrictions imposed by regulation, and by agreement and custom arising therefrom, which together comprise the "colour bar", on the employment of natives on those classes of work at present largely monopolised by Europeans.

---

(1) Efforts to reduce the death rate were made in order to improve the image of the mines. On the gold mines of the Witwatersrand, the fatal accident rate per 1,000 for whites was 3.59 in 1910 and 1.87 in 1921. For coloureds the rate was 4.29 in 1910 and 2.33 in 1921. This gradual downward tendency must have had some effect on the supply of both black and white to the mines.  
G.M.E. (1922), p. 29.

(2) T.C.M. (1919), p. 223.

- (2) The removal of the prohibition of the entry into the Union of natives from north of Latitude 22° south."

The second proposal mentioned above had been made frequently for some years. <sup>(1)</sup> The history of the embargo derives from the years prior to 1909, when small numbers of Africans had come to the Witwatersrand from the areas in question. In 1909, the W.N.L.A. opened recruiting offices in the tropical areas of Nyasaland, British Central Africa, Mozambique, Quilimane and Tete so that the numbers increased, the largest number on the Rand at any time being 23,785. In 1913 it was discovered that the death rate of tropical Africans from pneumonia and similar diseases was unusually high so that the Union and Portuguese Governments prohibited the entry into the Union of further "tropicals".

High mortality was apparently the only reason for this restriction. However, the vaccine discovered by Dr. F.S. Lister "and the great efficiency in reducing the pneumonia rate amongst mine natives, <sup>(2)</sup> as well as the considerable improvement of hygienic conditions of natives in recent years..... convinced the Chamber that it is most unlikely that the rates of mortality which previously prevailed would be found still to prevail." <sup>(3)</sup> The Chamber suggested that the Government should allow the importation of over 15,000 "tropicals" for work on the Rand.

The Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920 <sup>(4)</sup> unanimously recommended the temporary modification of the prohibition of the employment of blacks from the north of Latitude 22° south. <sup>(5)</sup> Lister's vaccine and the advance

---

(1) See T.C.M. (1917), p. 67.

(2) The mortality from pneumonia had decreased from about 13 per 1,000 in 1910 to 2.04 per 1,000 in 1920.  
T.C.M. (1920), pp. 68 and 69.

(3) T.C.M. (1919), p. 226.

(4) Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, Para. 45.

(5) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 126.

The recommendation was "dependent on the condition that the native labour obtainable in the Union should be used to the greatest advantage by utilising more fully the time spent underground by them, and by the extension of the piecework principle wherever practicable".

in general hygienic conditions had entirely altered the problem so that the Commission suggested the importation of about 5,000 tropical Africans as an "experimental batch" so as to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the effects of the drug. <sup>(1)</sup> Permission might be granted for the introduction of a larger number if the results of the experiment were satisfactory.

With regard to the first proposal (i. e. the partial elimination of the colour bar), it was suggested that with the removal of restrictions, the Union African would more readily come to the mines for work and would perform his work more efficiently because of improved opportunities to advance in status and earning power.

The Chamber did not recommend the complete elimination of the colour bar, for to do so was not "within the bounds of practical politics". Attention should be given instead to those directions where increased scope of employment for the black workers would not "seriously or even detrimentally" effect the whites.

In fact, the Chamber only went so far as to recognise that there "are employed on the mines a certain proportion of natives who, by reason of their long mining experience, character and ability, could be much more usefully employed than they are at present, were it not for the restrictions referred to". <sup>(2)</sup> Its suggestions were limited to ways of giving these "more expert natives" increased opportunities of exercising authority and responsibility, mainly in the capacity of authorised assistants to white supervisors. In this way the Chamber hoped to increase its supply and improve the efficiency of its black workers.

It would have been unwise to give the impression that, if permitted, the Chamber was in favour of a general supplanting of white labour by black. This would have had severe repercussions on the industry and would have antagonised the white miners into refusing co-operation on

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 56.

(2) T.C.M. (1919), p. 224.

the limited proposals put forward. Thus, the proposal to relax the colour bar and not abolish it, was probably what was most practicable and not what was desired by the industry.

Custom, public opinion and trade unions were "at least as powerful" as the Mining Regulations in maintaining the colour bar.<sup>(1)</sup> That the industry had a healthy respect for these forces is evident from the Chamber's statement to the Moffat Commission<sup>(2)</sup> that "much more important than the Government Mining Regulations is the force of custom. Public opinion is not prepared to see the substitution of coloured or native workers for white skilled and semi-skilled workers, and any attempt to employ the non-white workman in mining work at present occupied by white men would cause a strike of the white employees on the mines, who would be supported by the great bulk of the white population of the Witwatersrand".

The Chamber did apparently believe, however, that very few Africans were capable of skilled or semi-skilled work. In refusing the demands of the black strikers of 1920 for the removal of the colour bar, the Chamber warned<sup>(3)</sup> that "it should be clearly understood that the removal of the colour bar, even if it were possible, in opposition to the wishes of the great bulk of the European population of the Witwatersrand, would advantage only the comparatively small number of skilled or semi-skilled natives; to the great mass it would make no difference whatever".

There was, admittedly, a divergence of opinion amongst mine managers as to the advantages of employing Africans on certain semi-skilled work. In August, 1917, before the introduction of the status quo agreement, only 73 coloured men (25 on the surface and 48 underground) were employed in sharpening drills.<sup>(4)</sup> When the status quo restrictions were terminated

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 165.

(2) T.C.M. (1918), p. 92.

(3) T.C.M. (1920), p. 89.

(4) T.C.M. (1918), p. 92.

Africans were included under coloured men.

by the Chamber after the European strike of March, 1921, many of the managers adhered to their previous practice of employing whites even though they were now able to employ blacks.<sup>(1)</sup> Nevertheless, by March, 1922, over 500 white men had been replaced by blacks and, of this number, 157 were employed as drill sharpeners on the surface and none underground. It was estimated that a further 100 whites would be displaced<sup>(2)</sup> when the industry was again in "ordinary working order". This apparent disparity in the number of Africans employed on drill-sharpening - 157 after restrictions were lifted for one year, and only 73 (48 underground) before the restrictions had been imposed - may be attributed to the joint pressures of public opinion and custom.

The quantitative comparative importance of the legal and non-legal forces maintaining the colour bar have been estimated by the Low Grade Mines Commission. By 1919, 7,057 persons were employed in 32 occupations prescribed by the Regulations for white men. In addition, as a result of custom, public opinion and trade union pressure, another 19 semi-skilled occupations (in which 4,020 persons were employed) were also effectively reserved for whites.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Commissions of the day did not equivocate in their views on the colour bar. The views of the Native Grievances Inquiry of 1913 have already been quoted.<sup>(4)</sup> The Economic Commission of 1914 was of the "opinion that there should be no legal barriers to prevent natives, or others of the non-white population, from engaging in any work above the grade of unskilled".<sup>(5)</sup> Similarly, the Low Grade Mines Commission held "that the legal restriction now in force should be abolished", as

---

(1) M.I.B. (1922), Para. 22.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 21.

(3) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 164, 165.

(4) See pp. 29 and 30.

(5) Report of the Economic Commission (1914), Para. 57.

"From the point of view of abstract justice as between man and man there is nothing to be said in their favour".<sup>(1)</sup> And finally the Mining Industry Board of 1922<sup>(2)</sup> said:

"There would, in our opinion, however, be no justification for closing to natives of the Union the door to the semi-skilled occupations which, as already pointed out, are the only ones in which there is any likelihood of their being able to compete with white labour. They are already shut out by the colour bar regulations from certain occupations, and we cannot recommend that any further statutory restrictions should be placed upon them. We agree with the views expressed by the Relief and Grants-in-Aid Commission of 1916, paragraph 73, that -

'such artificial methods will do more harm than good. So far from remedying the evil they aggravate it. They encourage the white man to rely upon artificial aids rather than on his own resources. They also interfere with those economic principles on which alone a true and lasting solution of the problem must depend'. "

After the status quo agreement was terminated in 1921, the Mining Industry Board concluded that "its abolition after the strike was fully justified"<sup>(3)</sup> because "many of the Europeans, who were employed at the end of 1921, were redundant, and others were inefficient."<sup>(4)</sup> Its basic approach<sup>(5)</sup> was, indeed, that much of the semi-skilled work could "be done almost, if not quite as efficiently, by the native, so that, in view of the great disparity in the wage, there will necessarily be a strong inducement on the part of my managers to make use of black rather than of white labour."

Between 1914 and 1918 the figures for 44 mines show that while the average number of black and white employed had increased by approximately the same percentage, the total remuneration to whites had increased by 24.5 per cent and of blacks by only 1.4 per cent. Also, the additional

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 178.

(2) M.I.B. (1922), Para. 30.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 32.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 46.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 23.

expenses incurred in employing Africans - recruiting, feeding, hospital charges, etc.-had only increased marginally (1.1 per cent).<sup>(1)</sup> A comparison of the cost structure between 1914 and 1920 is even more illuminating. While the share of stores of the total costs had remained approximately the same, African and coloured wages had decreased their share from 23.5 per cent in 1914 to 19.0 per cent in 1920 and European salaries and wages had increased by a similar proportion, from 31.5 per cent in 1914 to 35.9 per cent in 1920. Over this period African wages had increased by 12 per cent as against the 58 per cent increase in European wages.<sup>(2)</sup> In addition, the white miner collected an impressive amount of side benefits.<sup>(3)</sup>

The increased wage bill was not at the expense of dividends which showed remarkably little fluctuation over the period 1912 to 1920 in spite of the industry's heavy war burden.<sup>(4)</sup> Only for three years, 1917 to 1919, were total dividends below £7 million and only during 1918 below £6 million. For four of the remaining 6 years, dividends were £8 million or over.<sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) T.C.M. (1919), p. 233.

(2) T.C.M. (1921), p. 151.

(3) Additional privileges ranged from a paid holiday of at least two weeks per annum to the establishment of an 8 hour day. Special war allowances which were consolidated into an addition of 8s. per day were only decreased during 1921 to 4s. per day.

(4) From 1914 to 1918 the industry paid a special war levy, increased prices for mine supplies and charges for the realisation of the gold mined as well as war bonuses to certain European miners and allowances to workers on active service so that its burden of costs for these years amounted to approximately £16,500,000.

(5) G.M.E. (1921), Para. 86.



By the time the Nationalist - Labour Pact Government took office in 1924, labour relations on the Witwatersrand gold mines had jelled into the pattern we are familiar with today. Important recommendations by Government-appointed Commissions which had been aimed at ameliorating the position of the so-called Low Grade Mines (and indirectly the conditions of employment of the black worker) had, with one notable exception, been ignored. Even this exception, namely an amendment of the Mining Regulations, to enable underground work to commence before the arrival of the white miner, became the first term of reference of the Mining Regulations Commission, appointed within a few months of the new Government's coming into power. The second term of reference, the ratio between European and African employees, was also a matter which had been discussed by previous Commissions. The Mining Regulations Commission's views were diametrically opposed to those of the Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920 and the Mining Industry Board of 1922. The 1925 Commission recommended a return to the strict underground conditions before the Regulations were relaxed, and the re-enactment of the colour bar regulations by amending the Mines and Works Act of 1911. (1) Both these important recommendations were acted upon. In respect of the implementation of its recommendations, therefore, the Mining Regulations Commission of 1925 differed from its predecessors.

The Low Grade Mines Commission was appointed in June, 1919, to report upon the position of the marginal gold mines of the Witwatersrand, the effect of the possible closing-down of these mines and the increased utilisation of the available African labour force. It reported that, since it had been appointed, the position of the low grade mines had been materially altered by the restoration of a practically free market for gold bullion, (2)

---

(1) Regulations made in terms of the Act had been declared ultra vires in 1923.

(2) During World War I gold was sold at 85s. to the Bank of England. In July, 1919, a new arrangement was made under which the gold output was sold on the best possible market in London.

which, together with the depreciation in the value of the South African pound, had resulted in gold being sold at such a substantial premium that most of the formerly marginal low grade mines were now able to mine at a considerable profit. If the premium on gold had not come into effect, it was estimated that 25 mines would have worked at a loss or at a working profit of 2s. per ton or less during the three months September to November, 1919.<sup>(1)</sup> From an employment and expenditure point of view these comprised more than half the industry.

As a result of the war there had been a great rise in the costs of production, due mainly to an increase in the price of stores and materials, and higher European salaries and wages. The "chronic shortage of native labour"<sup>(2)</sup> - the number available being estimated at only 70 per cent of that required for the full working of all the mines<sup>(3)</sup> - meant that the industry was unable to operate at full capacity. These factors had all contributed to the crisis within the industry and the calling of the Commission. Although the urgency for remedial measures had largely disappeared, the Commission's recommendations were made on the assumption that when the price of gold returned to normal the position of the low grade mines would be worse than they were prior to the appointment of the Commission.

In pursuance of this goal the Commission recommended,<sup>(4)</sup> inter alia, the abolition of the legal colour bar, the re-arrangement of underground

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 11.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 70.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 15.

(4) The Commissioners were very critical of the treatment of the black worker in South Africa, and their recommendations were primarily aimed at providing increased opportunities for their self-improvement. "It is clear", they wrote, "that the well-being of the native in its fullest sense is not sufficiently considered by the white population of South Africa in the conditions under which they are employed. The chief consideration is the profit and convenience of the European, and the native is beginning to feel and to say, with considerable justice on his side, that he is being exploited." L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 137.

work in order to increase the effective working time of the African miner, the temporary employment, as an experiment, of Africans from North of Latitude 22° South, the extension of the piece-work system in work performed by Africans and the shortening of the African contract period. (1)

The only recommendation acted upon was for the re-arrangement of underground work, when certain amendments were made to the Mining Regulations in November, 1921. Although the legal colour bar was declared ultra vires in 1923 this was not at the instigation of the Government but as a result of the actions of a Mine Manager. (2)

The amendments to the Mining Regulations which increased the effective working time of Africans underground were, furthermore, enacted only after the difficulties foreseen by the Low Grade Mines Commission had become a reality. The price of gold had dropped (from 130s. in February, 1920, to 95s. per ounce in December, 1921), while working costs (3) had continued to rise.

The Chamber of Mines nevertheless claimed that, while the amendments to the Mining Regulations had brought some relief, it was essential to modify the status quo agreement of 1918 (4) in order to prevent marginal mines from closing down. Negotiations between the South African Industrial Federation (representing the European mine workers) and the Chamber of Mines failed. The white miners went on strike, beginning in January, 1922, and ending on 17th March, 1922.

---

(1) L.G.M.C. (1920), Para. 232.

(2) The point at issue in the test case was the refusal of Hildick-Smith, underground manager at Crown Mines, to dismiss an efficient African driver engaged on rock haulage.

(3) Working costs which averaged 17s. 11d. per ton for all mines in 1913 had increased to 25s. 8d. for 1920 and 1921.  
M.I.B. (1922), Para. 6.

(4) See pp. 35, 36.

After the collapse of the strike the amended regulations were implemented and the status quo agreement abolished. According to the Low Grade Ore Commission of 1930, the results of this reorganisation were an increase in the scale of operations (from 23,437,196 ton milled in 1921 to 26,765,126 in 1923), the mining of lower grade ore (reduced from an average 6.762 pennyweights per ton in 1921 to 6.651 in 1923) and a considerable reduction in costs (working costs per ton milled in 1921 were 25s.8d., in 1923, 20s.). The average number of whites employed decreased from 20,825 in 1921 to 17,666 in 1923.<sup>(1)</sup>

The strike and the way the strike had been suppressed caused considerable bitterness amongst the white mineworkers on the Witwatersrand. In order to placate those who felt that the European miner was being unfairly treated, the Government appointed yet another Commission in April, 1922.

The Mining Industry Board of 1922 was charged, inter alia, with an investigation into all aspects of the abolished status quo agreement of 1918 and the desirability of regulating the ratio of white to black labour on the gold mines. The Board's views on the 1918 agreement were unequivocal. Its abolition had been "fully justified"<sup>(2)</sup> as it dispensed with "redundant and inefficient men."<sup>(3)</sup> Similarly, the Board did not see its way clear to recommending the establishment of a legal ratio between the white and black miner.<sup>(4)</sup>

In addition, although it made no suggestions as to how economies could be affected, the Board reiterated certain of the Low Grade Mines Commission's recommendations for the promotion of efficiency, such as the extension of piecework amongst African labourers.<sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) The figures were for the large mines of the Witwatersrand (excluding Sub-Nigel). The number of white employees was exclusive of medical officers.

Report of the Low Grade Ore Commission, U.G.16 of 1932, Para.9.

(2) M.I.B. (1922), Para.32.

(3) *ibid*, Para.24.

(4) *ibid*, Para.48

(5) *ibid*, Para.153.

Another suggestion on similar lines was that the bonus for long service, first introduced in 1919, should be substantially increased. The Board stated: "Men of experience are of more value to the industry than raw hands, and should be remunerated accordingly."<sup>(1)</sup> The bonus, however, was not increased, but, on the contrary, from 1st January, 1924, onward, became more difficult to earn as it was made payable only after the completion of 270 shifts, instead of 180 as before.

This was in keeping with the decision to institute nine month contracts for all recruited black labour from the Union and Basutoland, even though the Low Grade Mines Commission had explicitly recommended a shortening of the contract period. The longer contract ironed out seasonal fluctuations in the labour supply and meant a reduction in the average cost of obtaining labour. The saving in 1924 as a result of this change was £103,000 - a reduction in recruiting cost of 22 per cent. The costs of recruiting by the Native Recruiting Corporation had, in fact, been progressively and considerably reduced during the ten years of its existence. Comparing 1915 with 1922, when approximately the same number of Africans were recruited, the cost was 83s. 10d. per man in the former year as compared with 62s. 7d. in the latter.<sup>(2)</sup>

This re-organisation was undertaken with a view to reducing the costs of mining gold, and the full benefit of this lowering of costs per head per African recruit by more than 30 per cent was not apparently passed on to the black miner. His share was comparatively modest. Over the same period his average cash earnings per shift had risen by approximately 14 per cent (from 1s. 11. 4d. to 2s. 2. 2d.), an increase which was not excessive when the rise in the cost of living and possible productivity improvements were taken into account.

As we have seen it is difficult to quantify changes in productivity. However, in its evidence to the Economic and Wages Commission of 1925,

---

(1) M.I.B. (1922), Para. 169.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 92.

the Chamber did cite improvements in productivity on one mine<sup>(1)</sup> and suggested, moreover, that this was not an isolated instance.

On the Simmer and Jack Mines<sup>(2)</sup> the results for September, October and November, 1924, compared with those of the corresponding months of 1921, showed an increase in the tons milled per European underground, of 42.8 per cent; and per African underground, of 19.2 per cent. Working costs per ton milled had furthermore been reduced by nearly 33 per cent.

The reasons given for this "startling" improvement - the Company having converted a working loss, excluding the premium on gold, of over £90,000 for the year ended 30th June, 1921, to a working profit, excluding the premium on gold, of a similar amount for the year ended 30th June, 1925<sup>(3)</sup> - were the introduction of the "overlapping shift"; the increased efficiency in the use of jack hammers; the amendments to the Mining Regulations already discussed; and the general reorganisation and rationalisation of underground work.

The "overlapping shift",<sup>(4)</sup> introduced in late 1922, would, according to the Manager of the Simmer and Jack Mines, have been opposed by the European Miners' Union before the strike. Its main advantages were that it eliminated the night shift and made possible a working time which continued uninterrupted for 13.3/4 hours.

- 
- (1) Evidence of the Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to the Economic and Wage Commission, 1925, Statement No. 5, Para. 4 and Annexure "A".
  - (2) The Simmer and Jack Mines were apparently chosen because the number of whites employed underground on these mines decreased by 1 per cent between 1921 and 1924 (from 273 to 270), while the percentage decrease for the industry over the same period was 12 per cent (from 9,376 to 8,285).
  - (3) If the gold premium for 1921 (£212,000) and 1925 (£48,000) were taken into account, the Company's total profits increased from 119,000 in 1921 to £139,000 in 1925.
  - (4) The shifts worked were from 6 a.m. to 2.15 p.m., bank to bank, and from 11.30 a.m. to 7.45 p.m., bank to bank.

With the same type of jack hammer and steel as were used in 1921, but working in narrower stopes, i. e. stopes producing 14 tons per fathom broken as compared with 19 tons in 1921, the tons broken per jack hammer shift had increased by 242 per cent from 1921 to 1924. This marked change was thus mainly attributable to productivity improvements of both black and white miners.

The general reorganisation of work, together with the effective extension of the black miners' working-time underground, <sup>(1)</sup> also contributed to the improved stoping figures for jack hammers. The Chamber of Mines attached "great importance" to the amendments as they extended the hours available to the African labourer for actual drilling by up to 40 per cent. <sup>(2)</sup>

The discussion above of the effect of change brought about on the Simmer and Jack Mines between 1921 and 1924 would seem to prove the contention of the Chamber of Mines that they were long overdue. However, the spirit of innovation, which had begun to filter down to the African labourer, was not to be allowed to continue.

The Pact Government which assumed office in June, 1924, did not waste time in honouring its election promises. A Commission was appointed in November, 1924, to inquire into the effect on the accident rate and health conditions of the Amended Mining Regulations dealing with the supervision of underground working places, as well as into the respective spheres of work of white and black.

In its Report, the Mining Regulations Commission summarised the essential differences between Regulation 106 and the amendment, Regulation 102, introduced in November, 1921, as follows:

".....whereas the former required the ganger or miner in charge of a gang of natives previously to commencing work himself to examine and make safe the working-place before admitting his

---

(1) The direct result of the Amendments to Regulation 102.

(2) T.C.M. (1924), p. 55.

natives to it, the latter allows any competent person other than such ganger or miner to examine, make safe and admit the native to, the working-place before the latter's arrival, and ..... though under the old regulation the work of making safe was required to be done under the ganger's or miner's direct supervision, which was interpreted to mean in his actual presence, the existing one permits the ganger or miner if he thinks such work does not require his personal attention to leave his natives to do it, in one place, while he himself may be working in another. "(1)

On the basis of statistics for fatal and general accidents on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines for 1913-1924, the Commission concluded that "the recent tendency to entrust natives with work formerly confined to European workers (had) had an adverse effect upon safety conditions." (2) There was the qualification, however, that the statistics could "easily be overestimated as a means of accurately gauging safety conditions upon the mines." (3) Despite this important reservation, the Commissioners favoured the amendment of the existing Regulations in order to ensure greater safety for the workers. (4)

It was argued that at about the same time as the introduction of the Amended Regulations in November, 1921, there had been "a startling break in the downward tendency" (5) of the accident death rate. As is evident from the following table quoted by the Commission, (6) the fatal accident rate per 1000 persons on the Witwatersrand gold mines did decline gradually until 1921 and then began to rise:

- 
- (1) Report of the Mining Regulations Commission, U.G.36 of 1925, Para. 6.
  - (2) *ibid*, Para. 59.
  - (3) *ibid*, Para. 60.
  - (4) *ibid*, Para. 10.
  - (5) *ibid*, Para. 8.
  - (6) Report of the Government Mining Engineer for 1923, quoted by the Mining Regulations Commission, *op cit*, Para. 59. The year 1922, during which mining operations were largely disorganised owing to the strike, was left out of consideration.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Fatal Accidents per 1,000</u>	<u>Total Accidents per 1,000</u>
1913	3.81	11.08
1914	3.22	10.55
1915	3.17	10.41
1916	3.16	10.19
1917	2.64	9.89
1918	2.55	9.94
1919	2.43	11.89
1920	2.45	13.60
1921	2.28	23.21
1923	2.59	16.94
1924	2.63	18.08

Although the fatal accident rate per 1,000 persons had increased by 13.1 per cent between 1921 and 1923, and again by 1.1 per cent between 1923 and 1924, the causal relationship between the amended regulations and the accident death rate was not conclusively proved. The figures above were apparently for the "coloured" workers only. The total accident death rate for all workers, black and white, on the Transvaal gold mines for the 1920's is given below:<sup>(1)</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total death rate per 1,000 per annum</u>
1920	4.06
1921	4.05
1923	4.54
1924	4.11
1925	4.02
1926	3.95
1927	5.10
1928	3.85
1929	4.32
1930	3.91

This table shows a sharp increase (13 per cent) in the rate from 1921 to 1923, then a gradual decrease from 1924 until 1926. Between 1926 and 1927 the rate shot up by 30 per cent. After 1927 there was no discernible trend and the rate fluctuated. Indeed the fluctuations in the death rate over this whole period were so great that it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion about their causes.

---

(1) T.C.M. (1931), p.122.

The fact that the total accident rate had, furthermore, shown a significant and prolonged tendency to rise since 1919 could hardly be attributed to the Regulations which were amended in November 1921, and adopted only after the strike of 1922. The argument, therefore, that the employment of Africans in work formerly reserved for Europeans had an adverse effect upon safety and health conditions was both specious and flimsy. (1)

Just as evidence about inadequate enforcement was difficult to substantiate, similarly there is a lack of evidence that more rigorous enforcement followed the Report. There is, however, a prima facie case that there was, in fact, some tightening of the Regulations, for there was once more a controversy in 1943 about the need to relax them and extend the scope of African employment. (2)

As a result of the reorganisation of employment upon the mines after the 1922 strike, European workers were eliminated at the expense of Africans. According to the Chamber of Mines, this was because of the improved efficiency of machines and the discharge of "redundant and inefficient men." (3) The total number of European men employed decreased from 20,542 in 1921 to 17,357 in 1923. (4) Africans employed increased from 170,365 to 176,180, while the tons milled rose from 23 million to 27 million over the same period. The decline in the number of European employees, however, was seen as a "deliberate policy" of favouring "cheap coloured

- 
- (1) The lowest accident rate did not correspond with the highest ratio of white to black nor was the reverse true. It is impossible, therefore, to say with any certainty what the causes were of the increase in the accident rate since 1921.
  - (2) Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission, U.G.21 of 1944, discussed above. Also see Evidence of African Mine Workers' Union, Friends of Africa.
  - (3) Mining Regulations Commission (1925), Para.91.
  - (4) The ratio of blacks to whites employed had increased from 8.3 : 1 in 1921 to 10.1 : 1 in 1923. During 1924, however, the number of whites employed increased markedly so that the ratio was 9.7 : 1. The ratio had fluctuated over the years and had been as high as 9.1 : 1 in 1916.

labour", <sup>(1)</sup> as the Commissioners were "unable to conclude either that the Europeans in question had become redundant or that their dismissal was justified." <sup>(2)</sup>

The African had displaced the European in certain semi-skilled occupations because of his "almost phenomenal advance in efficiency during recent years" and "the enormous economic advantages the former (possesses) over the latter." <sup>(3)</sup> These "advantages" were the compound system, the sanction of criminal prosecution on desertion, the lower level of compensation for injuries and phthisis, the ability to live on a far lower wage than that required by the European, etc. <sup>(4)</sup>

To avoid ".....the elimination.....of the European worker from the entire range of mining occupations," <sup>(5)</sup> the Mining Regulations Commission recommended the re-enactment of the legal colour bar by the amendment of the Mines and Works Act of 1911. <sup>(6)</sup> This would affect safety conditions and also "(counteract) the force of the economic advantages.....enjoyed by the native". <sup>(7)</sup>

There was disagreement as to whether the Chamber of Mines had, in fact, taken advantage of the Hildick-Smith judgement. The Mining Regulations Commission was sceptical of the Chamber's "avowed intentions" not to encroach upon the colour bar. "We have very little doubt", they wrote, "that the vast majority of such employers will in the absence of legislative prohibition, continue their policy of replacing European by native workers, whenever economic considerations appear to call for such substitution and those of health and safety are not glaringly opposed to it." <sup>(8)</sup>

---

(1) Mining Regulations Commission (1925), Para. 98.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 97.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 115.

It is surely strange that disabilities should be referred to as "advantages".

(4) Mining Regulations Commission (1925), Paras. 100-103.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 119.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 127.

(7) *ibid*, Para. 129.

(8) Mining Regulations Commission (1925), Para. 123.

Yet the ultra vires decision, according to the Economic and Wage Commission of 1925, "had not made any significant difference in the actual practice of the mines. Changes in the ratio of Europeans to natives in employment have taken place, but these have been due to a reorganisation of work which the colour bar regulations would not have prevented."<sup>(1)</sup> The views of the Native Economic Commission of 1930-32 were even more emphatic: "The force of custom was sufficiently strong to prevent any change in the existing position after that judgement."<sup>(2)</sup>

In spite of the contrary advice of former Commissions, the Mines and Works Act was duly amended along the lines recommended by the latest Commission, by the Mines and Works Amendment Act No. 25 of 1926. It stated that the Governor General could, by way of regulation, restrict the issue of certificates of competency in any province or area. Africans and Asians<sup>(3)</sup> were excluded from those entitled to certificates. The full scope of the Act is summarised<sup>(4)</sup> by the Native Economic Commission of 1930-32:

"This Act authorises the Government to make regulations providing that certificates of competency in the occupations of mine managers, mine overseers, mine surveyors, mechanical engineers, engine drivers, miners entitled to blast, and of such other classes of persons employed in, at, or about mines, works and machinery as the Governor-General may from time to time deem it expedient to require to be in possession of certificates of competency, shall be granted to the following classes of persons only: (a) Europeans, (b) persons in the Cape known as Cape Coloured or Cape Malay; (c) persons in the other Provinces who, if they were in the Cape would be regarded as either Cape Coloured or Cape Malays; (d) the people known as Mauritius Creoles, or St. Helena persons, or their descendants born in the Union. The Act also provides that regulations under any other paragraph of section 4 of the main Act of 1911 may restrict particular work to, and in connection therewith impose duties and responsibilities upon, the classes of persons mentioned above, and may apportion particular work as between those

---

(1) Economic and Wage Commission (1925), Para. 211.

(2) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 843.

(3) The term "colour bar" is a misnomer as competent Cape Coloureds, Cape Malays, Mauritian Creoles and persons from St. Helena are included.

(4) N.E.C. (1930), Paras. 838, 839.

classes and other persons and may require such proof of efficiency as may be prescribed.

The occupations covered by section 4 of the main Act are mines, works, buildings, roads, railways and other structures and enclosures on or above the surface of the ground. The term "works" include mechanical, metallurgical, reduction, dressing, petroleum, salt, drug making, lime, and pottery works; sugar, flour, and saw mills, and any places where machinery is erected or used, and dams, reservoirs, and other appliances for conserving water or for producing or transmitting energy, or for transporting water or material over the same, with the exception of dams or reservoirs outside proclaimed fields and used solely for agricultural purposes or for a public service. "

The Regulations made in terms of this Act were one of the major issues discussed by the Low Grade Ores Commission of 1930. The Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines proposed that the policy determined by the Mining Regulations be reversed so that the number of European underground workers should in future be kept "as low a figure as is consistent with the safe conduct of mining operations."<sup>(1)</sup> The Committee alleged that African underground labourers, who returned home for long periods, did not contract silicosis to the same extent as the European workers.<sup>(2)</sup> Its proposal was justified both on humanitarian and cost grounds. The Gold Producers' Committee estimated the effect of the re-organisation that would be possible underground on two mines if the Regulations were relaxed and the scope of African employment extended - the number of whites underground would have been reduced by 44 per cent in one case and 50 per cent in the other.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Mines and Works Act had thus been amended in 1926 partly on the pretext of safeguarding the European miner from accidents. The Regulations were promulgated for reasons of social policy, being measures to prevent accidents, leading to invalidity and premature deaths, by restricting the issue of certificates to competent miners. The Gold Producers' Committee was now advocating a relaxation of the measures, again for similar reasons;

---

(1) Low Grade Ore Commission (1930), Para. 90.

(2) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 833.

(3) Low Grade Ore Commission (1930), p. 54.

i. e. to reduce the incidence of invalidity and premature death consequent upon exposure to the constant hazard of underground employment upon the gold mines, viz. silicosis and its sequelae.

The issues at stake were summed up in the following statements made in evidence before the Commission:

"In reply to the contention that the Regulations referred to (Mines and Works Regulations) hamper freedom or organisation by imposing a colour bar, we admit that if the Mines are to be run purely in the interest of profit taking without any national consideration, it would be well to accede to the Chamber of Mines' desire and remove the words 'scheduled person' from the Regulations. If on the other hand it is considered that the Chamber of Mines represents interests which work national property on licence under conditions carefully devised to protect the white civilisation of South Africa then it would be well to retain the words 'scheduled person' in the Regulations." (1)

The latter argument was not accepted; and the Commission aided with the Chamber in recommending that the Mines and Works Regulations be amended "in such a manner as will permit trained natives to perform such operations underground as they are capable of performing without detrimentally affecting the safety and health of all underground employees." (2) As with all the other Commissions which had favoured the relaxation of the legal colour bar, the Low Grade Ore Commission might, for all practical purposes, never have discussed the issue.

Nothing had as yet been done to implement the recommendation of the Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920 that the embargo upon the importation of blacks from North of latitude 22° South should be removed. Since the Commission's Report, moreover, the problem of supply had become more acute.

---

(1) Evidence of Mr. R. Tennant, General Secretary, S.A.A. Engine Drivers' and Fireman's Association quoted by Donald R. Reich. Low Grade Ore Commission (1930), pp. 91, 92.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 104.

An analysis of the African labour employed on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand shows a regular seasonal movement. <sup>(1)</sup> Portuguese Africans, <sup>(2)</sup> recruited for a comparatively lengthy period, served as a steadying factor. The average period of service of Portuguese men was approximately 18 months, while the period of service of the other Africans was approximately 8 months. In addition, the East Coast miner was numerically of considerable importance to the industry. Approximately 45 per cent of the black labour force of the Transvaal mining industry for the years 1920-22 <sup>(3)</sup> came from the East Coast.

During 1923, the industry restricted its engagement of Portuguese labour on representations by the Union Government. This was to provide employment for the Cape Colony Africans temporarily out of work because of the depression in that area, and also, apparently, to increase European employment by diminishing the black labour supply. At the beginning of February, 1924, recruiting was temporarily suspended in Portuguese East Africa, <sup>(4)</sup> but was continued again in 1926, the industry only being allowed to employ those engaged by the W. N. L. A.—The supply was again limited by the provisions of the Mozambique Convention of 1928. Under that convention, the maximum number of men from Portuguese East Africa North of latitude 22° South that could be employed by the gold and coal mines of the Transvaal was reduced from 107,000, employed before the convention came into force, to 100,000 on 31st December, 1929, and by reductions of 5,000 each year, to 80,000 by 31st December, 1933. <sup>(5)</sup>

- 
- (1) Low supply in December which rose and reached a peak around April.
  - (2) South of latitude 22° South.
  - (3) T.C.M. (1922), p.79.
  - (4) Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Labour Resources of the Union, An. 89 of 1931, Para. 37.
  - (5) Interim Report of the Low Grade Ore Commission, U.G. 16 of 32, Para. 24. The Convention was revised in 1934, an additional 10,000 men being consented to in 1935. In 1940 the maximum was raised to 100,000, the minimum remaining at 65,000 as in the Convention.

The Chamber claimed compensation by asking for relief from other restrictions for the disadvantages imposed by the Convention, on the grounds that there was no prospect of the mines maintaining a labour force from the Union and Protectorates large enough to make good the loss in Portuguese workers. In 1931, the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Labour Resources of the Union found, in fact, a distinct shortage, mainly of a seasonal nature, in mining areas. The analogy of a reservoir with an "outlet at a certain level" was used. This level was variable and could be temporarily raised or lowered according to the seasons. "A larger total outflow (could) only be procured by permanently lowering the position of the outlets.....the stimulation of the desire on the part of the tribal natives for more of the material benefits of civilization will have the effect of permanently lowering the level of the outflow and thus increasing and stabilising the labour supplies."<sup>(1)</sup> The analogy led to the conclusion that the detribalised African would not work for longer spells if offered higher wages. Wages did not act as an inducement in the usual sense to the African. "Leisure (was) .....a real constituent of welfare and he only (broke) away therefrom when it (was) essential to earn money."<sup>(2)</sup>

With these views of the Inter-Departmental Committee before them, the Low Grade Ore Commission of the same year discussed the Chamber's renewed proposal for the removal of the restrictions on the employment of the so-called "tropicals". Although the supply of African labour was "ample"<sup>(3)</sup> at that time, the position was only temporary. It was primarily due to the general economic depression which reduced the scope of employment for Africans with other employers, to an influx of applicants for employment out of the reserves, due to the realisation by Africans of poor prices for

---

(1) Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Labour Resources of the Union, op cit, Para. 80.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 52.

(3) The President said that the industry had been "embarassed by its abundance."  
T.C.M. (1931), p. 38.

their produce by those who might otherwise have stuck to agriculture, as well as to the improved organisation, and thus recruiting, of the Native Recruiting Corporation.

Recruiting had taken place in Nyasaland as early as 1903 but had been suspended owing to the high mortality rates at the end of January, 1906. During that year it was decided that the men who wished to proceed to work independently should be assisted. After August, 1906, the W.N.L.A. was allowed to operate in Portuguese East Africa, North of latitude  $22^{\circ}$  South. However, the mortality returns for these men were so high during 1911 and 1912<sup>(1)</sup> that recruiting in those areas was stopped under the provisions of the Immigrants Registration Act of 1913.

Since then there had been such important medical advances that the Low Grade Ore Commission of 1930 supported the views of both the Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920 and the Mining Industry Board of 1922 that the restrictions on the mines employing Africans from North of latitude  $22^{\circ}$  South should be removed.<sup>(2)</sup> The maximum number to be employed was determined by the recruits lost through the application of the Mozambique Convention, i. e. a maximum of 5,000 during 1931, 10,000 during 1932, 15,000 during 1933, and 20,000 thereafter.<sup>(3)</sup> It was recommended that permission to the gold mines to employ men from these areas be granted on condition that special health precautions were taken and that the men be allotted primarily to the marginal mines.

Soon after the Low Grade Ore Commission reported the recurrent recommendations vis-a-vis the employment of "tropicals" were given

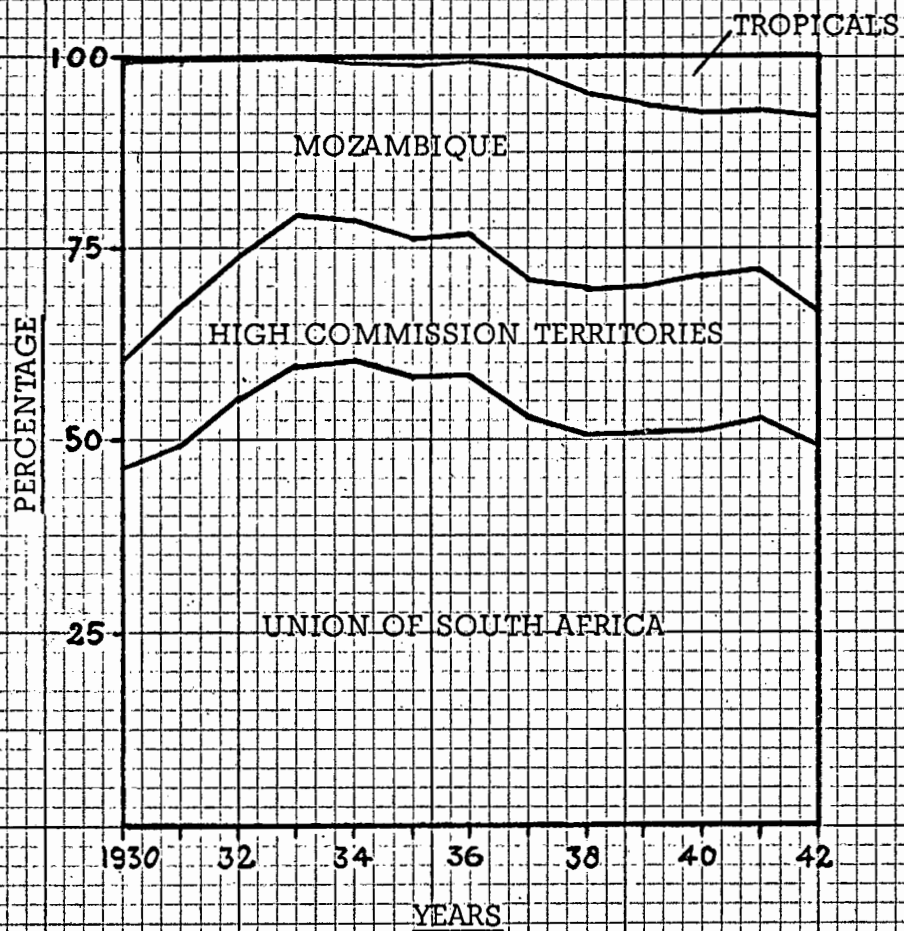
- 
- (1) Death rates per thousand per annum for "tropical" Africans were 64.8 and 47.6 in 1911 and 1912 respectively. Amongst "non-tropicals" the corresponding rates were 23.0 and 19.9 for 1911 and 1912 respectively. Interim Report of the Low Grade Ore Commission, op cit, Para. 34.
- (2) *ibid*, Para. 39.
- (3) *ibid*, Para. 45.

Government approval. In November, 1933, the Government gave authority for the employment of an experimental batch of 2,000 Africans from North of latitude 22° South.<sup>(1)</sup> The experiment<sup>(2)</sup> was judged to be "very satisfactory..... the Tropical Native (who was) unaccustomed to industrial life would a priori be expected to be much more prone to disease as well as accidents..... results (were) up to any reasonable expectation."<sup>(3)</sup> By 1935 the maximum was increased to 5,000. As the accompanying chart indicates, the supply to the industry increased progressively especially from 1937 onwards, largely due to declines in the disease and death rates<sup>(4)</sup> and to improved hygienic conditions.<sup>(5)</sup> The only subsequent limitations placed on recruiting were those imposed by the authorities in the relevant areas themselves.<sup>(6)</sup>

- 
- (1) Employment of these men began in January, 1934.
  - (2) The mortality for all respiratory diseases during the course of the year long experiment was 6.14 per 1,000 for Bechuana "Tropicals", 5.29 per 1,000 for Rhodesian "Tropicals", 3.24 per 1,000 for Bechuana "Non-Tropicals" and 3.54 per 1,000 for East Coast Africans. The death rate per thousand was 14.74, 10.58, 10.92 and 9.26 for the above groups respectively.  
T.C.M. (1935), p. 25.
  - (3) T.C.M. (1935), p. 56.
  - (4) For example, the disease death rate during 1939 amongst all "tropical" Africans was 5.27 per 1,000 per annum as compared with 8.60 in 1938. This decrease was largely accounted for by the reduction in the pneumonia death rate from 3.41 per 1,000 per annum during 1938 to 1.00 per 1,000 per annum for the following year.  
T.C.M. (1939), p. 22.
  - (5) The treatment of Nyasa Africans on the mines was referred to in enthusiastic terms by J.C. Abraham, Senior Provincial Commissioner, Nyasaland. He wrote: ".....no expense is spared, and whatever science can do is being done, to ensure the maximum degree of health for tropical natives employed by the Rand Mines Group, which employs all the Nyasaland natives engaged under the experiment."  
Report on Nyasaland Natives in the Union of South Africa and in Southern Rhodesia by J.C. Abraham, 1937, Para. 16.
  - (6) See Chapter 7.

By 1940 the number employed from North of latitude 22° South was nearly 23,000, accounting for over 6 per cent of the total African labour on the gold mines during that year. However, by then the new Mozambique Convention of 1934 permitted the employment of up to 100,000 men from Portuguese East Africa. Originally recruiting of "tropicals" had been advocated in order to compensate for a decline in the availability of Africans from the East Coast. The industry thus had approximately the same number of East Coast blacks that came forward in 1930, as well as a considerable number of "tropicals".

The policy of allowing recruiting in areas North of latitude 22° South, therefore, made available a larger supply of African labour to the gold mining industry than was originally intended. Instead of resorting to wage increases to add to its total supply of black workers, the mining industry was able to expand its sources of recruitment and so rely on its old standby, "cheap native labour".



PERCENTILE COMPOSITION BY ORIGIN OF TOTAL AFRICAN LABOUR FORCE ON WITWATERSRAND GOLD MINES, 1931-1941.

DERIVED FROM:

Evidence of the Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission, U.G. 21 of 1944, Statement No. 2, Para. 3.

**APPENDIX**

**Percentile composition by origin of total  
African labour force on the Witwatersrand  
gold mines, 1930 - 1941.**

LANDOWN COMMISSION - SOME  
GENERAL REMARKS.

The Lansdown<sup>(1)</sup> Commission was not formed as a result of the Union Government's spontaneous desire to improve conditions of the black workers on the mines, but was rather its response to demands by the African miners and by other organisations which took a special interest in African affairs. Whilst the Government might have preferred to shelve domestic issues to concentrate upon the war effort, the smooth running of the gold mining industry formed an important part of this effort and the efficiency of its black labour force could have been imperilled by a too marked deterioration in real wages under wartime conditions just as surely as the industry could have been injured by too steep a rise in labour costs.

An organisation claiming to represent the Transvaal African Congress<sup>(2)</sup> and calling itself the "Committee to Organise African Mineworkers" approached the Government towards the end of 1941. Two significant categories of African workers - the mineworkers and agricultural labourers - had been excluded from the provisions of the cost of living allowance<sup>(3)</sup> and the organisation now requested the Government to extend its provisions to the former group.<sup>(4)</sup>

This request was not, however, successful. Indeed, there is no record of the Government's reply, or, in fact, if a reply of any substance had been sent. The Committee, under the title of the "African Mine Workers' Union", subsequently requested the Minister of Labour, Mr. W.B. Madeley,

---

(1) Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission on the Remuneration and Conditions of Employment of Natives on Witwatersrand Gold Mines and Regulation and Conditions of Employment of Natives at Transvaal undertakings of Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company, Limited, U.G. 21 of 1944.

(2) A forerunner of the African National Congress (A.N.C.)

(3) Promulgated under War Measure No. 28.

(4) Evidence of African Mine Workers' Union to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "B".  
Letter to the Prime Minister, Field Marshall J.C. Smuts, of 12th September, 1941 signed by G. Radebe (Chairman) and A. Msitshana (Hon. Secretary).

on the 9th January, 1943, to order the Wage Board to investigate the Mining Industry. <sup>(1)</sup>

The activities of the Wage Board, constituted under the Wage Act, No. 44 of 1937, had had a substantial effect on the wage levels of unskilled workers within the Union. In terms of Section 2(2) of the Act, farm labourers, domestic servants in private households, and Government employees (including the Provincial Administration and Railway Service), were excluded from its operation and consequently from any of the wage determinations. <sup>(2)</sup> Thus under Section 4(1)(a) an investigation into the conditions of African Mine Workers and a wage determination for the industry did fall within the scope of the Wage Board. Shortly afterwards, on the 17th February, 1943, the Government appointed the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission. <sup>(3)</sup>

In addition to the African Mine Workers' Union, several representative bodies had agitated for an improvement in the conditions of service of mine labourers. The men themselves had shown signs of losing patience with the prevailing conditions - unrest was being experienced on several mines. The strike of 500 underground workers which broke out on 1st January, 1943, on the Langlaagte Estates gold mine was symptomatic of the general feeling of dissatisfaction. The strike lasted nine days.

---

(1) Evidence of A.M.W.U. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "C". Letter to the Minister of Labour, Mr. W.B. Madeley, of 9th January, 1943, signed by James Majoro (Hon. Organiser/Secretary). The advantage of a Wage Board enquiry was that the Wage Act made provision for the appointment of a representative of the workers' trade union to the Board.

(2) There were certain further exceptions of a minor character under this section.

(3) The Minister had replied to the request of 9th January on the 18th of the same month to the effect that "he was keeping the matter in mind".

Evidence of A.M.W.U. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "G". Letter to the Resident Director, New Consolidated Goldfields Ltd., from Col. A.E. Trigger, Manager, Mines Police Department reporting on a meeting of the African Mine Workers' Union held on 7th February, 1943.

All 500 were arrested and 48 later sentenced for contraventions of War Measure 145. <sup>(1)</sup>

At the announcement of the Government's proposal to appoint a Native Mine Wage Commission, several bodies urged that the personnel should include a person capable of understanding and speaking authoritatively on the relevant issues from the point of view of those workers involved.

The South African Trades and Labour Council was, however, approached to nominate a representative and their nominee, Mr. A.A. Moore, President of the Council, was appointed to the Commission. Mr. Justice Lansdown, Judge President of the Eastern District Local Division of the Supreme Court was appointed chairman, the additional members being Mr. H.P. Smit (Controller and Auditor-General), Mr. H.S.H. Donald (Government Mining Engineer) and Mr. H.G. Scott (acting President of the Native Appeal Court for the Cape and the Free State). <sup>(2)</sup>

Moore was anathema to the African miners' cause, <sup>(3)</sup> for in addition to being head of the Trades and Labour Council, a body not always sympathetic to African labourers, he was Secretary of the Reduction Workers' Union. This Union was closely allied to the South African Mine Workers' Union whose avowed policy was the maintenance of the colour bar. Telegrams and letters which pointed out the inequity of appointing a representative of the European workers to the Commission and granting no representation to the African workers elicited no change

---

(1) Cape Argus, 13.1.1943., 15.1.1943.

Rand Daily Mail, 16.1.1943.

See also reports of strikes on Luipaardsvlei (Rand Daily Mail, 5.1.1943), and Nourse-Mines (Rand Daily Mail, 23.1.1943).

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 18.2.1943.

(3) See Evidence of Native Representative Council (p.2.), African Mine Workers' Union (pp.1 & 2), Society of Friends of African (pp.2 & 3), to W.N.W.C. (1943).

in the personnel.<sup>(1)</sup> Smuts replied that the inquiry was to be as "judicial and impartial as possible". "It is true", he wrote, "that a prominent member of the Transvaal Trade and Labour Council has been included, but that was in fulfilment of an old standing undertaking by me, and this particular representative has also been selected for broad national rather than sectional reasons".<sup>(2)</sup>

It may be assumed that Moore was influenced by the policy of his Union and that his appointment was a concession to a vested interest. It would be difficult indeed to classify him as "impartial". A wholly "impartial" enquiry might have been more successfully undertaken by a commission consisting solely of disinterested persons - i.e. representatives of neither employers nor employees should have sat upon the Commission itself, but should have been given every opportunity to present their arguments before it. However, since General Smuts seemed to have been obliged to appoint a representative of one vested interest, it would have been logical for a representative of the African labourers themselves - whose conditions were the Commission's major concern - also to have been appointed.

Mr. Justice Lansdown, however, commenting on the omission of an African representative, said that Mr. Scott "had devoted a lifetime to the welfare of the African people, and he himself (Lansdown) had had much experience of their problems."<sup>(3)</sup>

- 
- (1) Telegrams of 13.2.1943 from Majoro (Secretary) African Mine Workers' Union, Makabene (Chairman) and Gosani (Secretary) Council of non-European Trade Unions, and Scheepers and Sacks, members of the South African Trades and Labour Council.  
Letter of 15.2.1943 from Mrs. M. Ballinger.  
Ballinger Papers.
- (2) Letter of 19.2.1943 from J. Smuts to Senator Malcomess.  
Ballinger Papers.
- (3) Star, 9.7.1943.

Briefly, the Commission made an exhaustive analysis into the arguments for and against an increase in the wages of black mine workers. (1) In so far as it provides a considerable amount of factual information in respect of these men, the report is an important document. It was, however, guilty of special pleading in several important places and again, in others, of adding weight to long standing misconceptions. The justification for the preceding statement will emerge from the following discussion.

In pursuance of its mandate to enquire into and report on the economic requirements of the African labourers, the Commission investigated conditions in the Native Reserves and the extent to which these areas were able to supplement earnings of the mine worker. Any recommendations to be made were to take account of their effect upon the Mining Industry and country generally, as well as upon the extent and conditions of employment of whites and non-whites, again both in Gold Mining and in other industries throughout the Union. (2)

The Commission's terms of reference were thus in themselves significant. Although African conditions and wages were to be investigated, the interests of the industry and more specifically the white labourers, were never below the surface.

- 
- (1) The Commission concerned itself with the African mine labourers employed by members of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand (which was interpreted to include all gold mines eastwards as far as Nigel and westward as far as Klerksdorp). The total number of Africans employed on the non-Chamber mines was small relative to the total black labour force on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand (only approx. 2 per cent), and although the policies and practices of these non-Chamber mines were influenced by the Chamber there were significant differences. For example, the non-Chamber mines did not recruit but employed the men who presented themselves at the compound gates.
  - (2) Thus the extremely wide field which the Commission was required to cover under its terms of reference was far wider than that usually entrusted to a Wage Board enquiry - the form requested by the African Mine Workers' Union.

This bias was further reinforced by the Commission's first conclusion that it was in "complete agreement" with the view "that the true interests of the Union demand the prolongation of the life of the gold mines by all reasonable means".<sup>(1)</sup> The importance of the industry as a source of purchasing power - both for external payments and for the maintenance of the income level - was undoubtedly very great. For the calendar year 1942, eighty per cent of expenditure on stores and equipment (total of £30,200,000) was on articles of South African origin or manufacture.<sup>(2)</sup> Wages and salaries, both for whites and blacks, accounted for a further £33,100,000 out of the total working costs for 1942 of £70,800,000.<sup>(3)</sup> By 1942 less than 50 per cent of total dividends (£16,900,000) went outside the Union.<sup>(4)</sup> The income generated by the industry was therefore considerable and it is likely that the multiplier-accelerator effect referred to by the Commission had a very significant effect on the economy at large. In his book, Capital Investment in Africa, Prof. S.H. Frankel has suggested that about a half of the Union's population owed their livelihood, either directly or indirectly, to the gold mining industry.<sup>(5)</sup>

The State was recognised as "the senior beneficiary from the industry". Mainly through taxation, gold realisation charges and the Government share of lease mines, the industry contributed nearly £28 million in the calendar year 1942 to the State Revenues.<sup>(6)</sup> Other indirect contributions, such as personal tax on shareholders, miners and others earning a part or the whole of their incomes from the gold mines, must have greatly expanded the total benefit to State funds.<sup>(7)</sup>

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 11.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 14.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 12.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 15.

(5) Frankel, p. 76.

(6) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 12.

(7) Frankel, *op cit*, p. 115.

In view of the above, it was often assumed that the interests of the mining industry coincided with the interests of the country as a whole. To act against the industry in 1943 and reduce its life was to slow down the expansion of all sectors of the economy and adversely affect total employment and national income. In short, this was equivalent to undermining the well-being and prosperity of the country.

This implied that the industry would continue indefinitely to play a major role and that the part it did play was automatically beneficial because it had been the mainspring of industrial development in the Union. Neither of these assumptions is however necessarily true.

The gold mines were in 1943, and still are, a wasting asset. The Social and Economic Planning Council in its Report on the industry said: "The long-term problem arises from the fact that all the payable gold ore of the Union must, at some future date, be worked out, and that before that date the exhaustion of the ore will entail a drastic reduction in the activity of the industry".<sup>(1)</sup> The Lansdown Commission indeed referred to an estimate which indicated that there would be a very marked decline in tonnage milled between 1950 and 1965.<sup>(2)</sup> The Government Mining Engineer also estimated that on the basis of the prevailing cost and revenue conditions prevailing in 1947, the total tonnage milled would remain fairly static until the early 1960's and thereafter would decrease rapidly.<sup>(3)</sup>

This fact itself suggests a conflict between the interests of the gold mines and the interests of the community, since the gold mining industry might (from the community's point of view) be tempted to utilise

- 
- (1) Social and Economic Planning Council, Report No. 11, Economic Aspects of the gold mining industry. U.G. 32 of 1948, Para. 17.
  - (2) Industrial and Agricultural Requirements Commission, October 1941, Third Interim Report, Para. 151 quoted by W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 24.
  - (3) Social and Economic Planning Council, op cit, Para. 19 and Chart IV, p. 17.

resources for the rapid profitable exploitation of a wasting asset, which might with greater long-run advantage have been devoted to the creation of more lasting sources of income. This is not a clear-cut question to which positive answers can easily be given. Yet, despite the general coincidence between the interests of the gold mining industry and those of the community as a whole, it cannot be assumed that they completely coincide.

The possible effects of wage increases on the gold mining industry which were usually considered relevant were costs to the industry in relation to the scale of its operations and its anticipated profits. There were (and, of course, still are) additional costs, both private and social, which are also incurred.

There are certain collective social services which should be provided by the community in its own interests and which are usually met by the state out of its revenues collected from the community. The community cannot escape the social costs by refusing to meet the monetary costs of these services. If, for example, the community allows urban areas to develop without providing public health services it pays the cost in disease and the physical and moral deterioration of a portion of its population. The community must either collectively meet the expense of ameliorating the conditions or allow its poorer members to bear the consequences of not doing so; and part of the cost of this spreads throughout the community.

Some social costs can, however, be most effectively met by the community through collective services but there are others which are most effectively dealt with by the industry itself. Clearly, however, there were many social costs incurred by the gold mining industry of South Africa which were neither met by the industry nor by the community. The most striking of these was the cost of employing African migrant labour at low wage rates. (1) The deterioration of the reserves and the

---

(1) See Social and Economic Planning Council, Report No. 9, The Native Reserves and their place in the Economy of the Union of South Africa, U.G.32 of 1946, Paras. 98, 101-103.

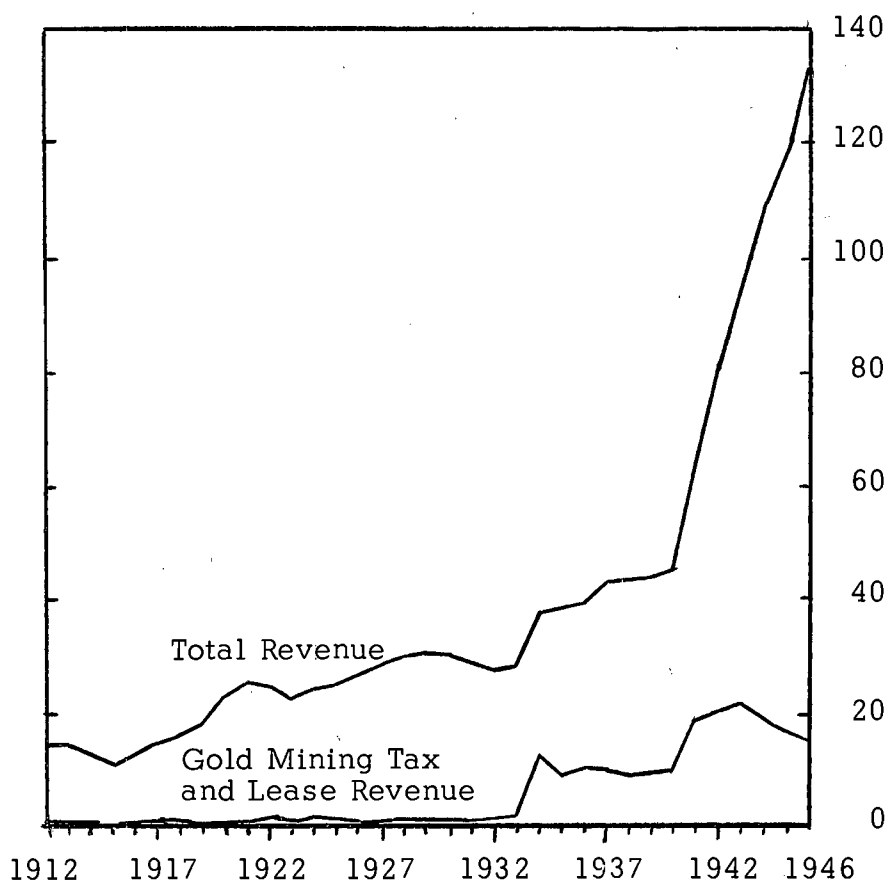
virtual destruction of the African mine workers' family life were manifestations of such costs, which were in the first instance borne by the workers themselves. The mining industry had a relatively short-period interest in labour, as the effect of the migratory labour system was very largely to depress the value of one of the Union's most important economic resources in order to exploit another. We will later discuss the migrant labour system and the reserves in greater detail.

The volume of employment offered by the gold mines did not necessarily benefit the community as a whole. Employment at a low wage level was in the interests of the mines, but it did follow that it was not of net benefit to other industries. It was often assumed that no alternative forms of employment would exist if wage increases in the mines were to occur and the volume of employment to fall. However, this neglected the possible effects of an increased standard of living, and consequent shift in effective demand, amongst many Africans. The interests of secondary industry and of the community could thus have been to raise the standards of living of the African miners by raising wages even though this might have had an "employment effect" on the gold mining industry.<sup>(1)</sup> In addition, it was during the period under discussion that total employment of all races in secondary industry overtook the gold industry.<sup>(2)</sup>

The tendency for gold mining to become relatively less important within the South African economy was, in fact, clearly discernible during the 1940's.

- 
- (1) This is assuming no increases in productivity or relaxation of the colour bar.
  - (2) For example secondary industry (all manufacturing industries) employed nearly four times as many Europeans (166,000 to the average of 42,000 in the service of the large gold mines) and as many non-Europeans (323,000 to 321,000 on the gold mines) as gold mining in 1944-45.  
Twenty-Eighth Industrial Census, Press Release, quoted by the S.E.P.C., Report No. 11, op cit, Para. 6.

£ Million



Gold Mining Taxation and Lease Revenue Credited to Revenue Account, and Total Union Revenue, for Financial years ended 31st March, 1912-1946. (1)

As can be seen from the chart, the contributions of the industry were of major importance to the public revenues of the Union. However, although its contribution had increased markedly over the years because of discriminatory taxation, it had declined in relation to the total revenue of the Union. This was particularly evident after 1940.

(1) S.E.P.C., Report No. 11, U.G. of 48, Para. 11.

This does not include licences and mynpacht dues, supertax paid by shareholders, non-resident shareholders tax, pass fees, etc., as well as lease revenues since 1938 (credited to the Loan Account) and gold realisation charges (also credited to the Loan Account). A breakdown of the total government revenue from the gold mines is given as Appendix "D", W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 47.

See also The Outlook for Gold Mining, Gold Producers' Committee, Transvaal and Orange Free State Chamber of Mines, p. 30, for a graph showing the sources of State Revenue from 1936-1965.

Similarly, with respect to the gold mines and national income, the percentage of the total national income attributed to all mining remained greater than that of manufacturing until 1942. Gold, with the exception of the depression years, 1925-1931, and 1937-1938 contributed a greater percentage to national income than manufacturing. The watershed was again in 1942-1943 when the gold mining industry's share of national income was 14.9 per cent and that of manufacturing 19.4 per cent. (1)

The Lansdown Commission could thus have referred to several key indicators which showed that despite the continuing growth of the gold mining industry, its position in relation to other sectors of the economy was declining. However, the Commission readily accepted the views of earlier Commissions, such as the Industrial and Agricultural Requirements Commissions, (2) which said:

"Since the gold mines are of the utmost importance to the National economy - both for the maintenance of the income level and for making overseas payments - the desirability of postponing the inevitable exhaustion of the industry for as long as possible is self-evident".

Although the industry was, as Prof. de Kiewiet has suggested, the fly-wheel of the economy, by accepting the principle of prolonging its life by "all reasonable means", (3) the Commissioners adopted an objective which might not have been justified - no effort being made to measure the opportunity costs of doing so.

- 
- (1) Frankel, S.H., assisted by Herzfeld, H., "An Analysis of the Growth of the National Income of the Union in the Period of Prosperity before the War," S.A.J.E., June 1944, Appendix B.
  - (2) Industrial and Agricultural Requirements Commission, October 1941, Third Interim Report, Para. 240.
  - (3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 11.

It was, for example, only certain costs that were considered when the Commission stated that:

"having regard to the circumstances of the Witwatersrand gold mining industry, the migratory system of peasant labour must continue. Any other policy must bring about a catastrophic dislocation of the industry and consequent prejudice to the whole economic structure of the Union".

The cost to the African miner, his family life and "homelands",<sup>(1)</sup> were admittedly seen as matters demanding attention. The migrant labour system could continue if

".....the combined income of those labourers from wages and their Reserve production should provide them and their families with a proper livelihood, not only for the period during which the man is at work on the mines, but for such a period of stay in the Reserves as will enable him to maintain his tribal association, keep in reasonable touch with his family, preserve his health, and retain an adequate control of the interests of his allotment."<sup>(2)</sup>

The Commission, therefore, recognised that this was indeed a problem, but apparently it was not one that concerned the mining industry.

The Chambers' policy with respect to African labour was outlined by the Gold Producers' Committee in evidence to the Commission:

"The basis of the employment of native labour by the mines is in complete accord with the balanced South African Native Policy laid down practically unanimously by Parliament after thorough investigation and discussion in 1936/37, and embodied in legislation (in particular the Native Trust and Land Act, 1936, and the 1937 amendment to the Urban Areas

---

(1) Raising the wages of mine labourers would "improve the condition of the families in the Reserves. In itself, however, it would do nothing to save the land of the Reserves from destruction, for it would leave the old men, women, and children to continue their disastrous use of the soil and the veld".

Evidence of South African Institute of Race Relations of 9.7.1943, to W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 35.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 211.

Act) and re-affirmed by the Minister of Native Affairs in the House of Assembly on 26th February, 1943. In brief, that policy is the enlargement and planned development and improvement of the Native Reserves, and the concurrent restriction on the number of natives permitted in the towns, coupled with the proper housing of those so permitted. . . . . The ability of the mines to maintain their native labour force by means of tribal natives from the Reserves at rates of pay which are adequate for this migratory class of native but inadequate in practice for the detribalised urban native is a fundamental factor in the economy of the Gold Mining Industry."<sup>(1)</sup>

More succinctly stated, "the Gold Mining Industry has been rendered possible on its existing scale by the ability to obtain an effective unskilled native labour force from the Reserves at ruling rates of pay".<sup>(2)</sup> Less euphemistically, however, "ruling rates of pay" meant low rates of pay.

Our central theme is, however, an assessment of African labour conditions on the gold mines so that, in the following chapters, we will more fully discuss them as they were in 1943 when Lansdown and his fellow Commissioners met. Relevant information from other Commissions, as well as additional authorities, are included. It is clear from the foregoing policy statement of the Chamber that it is not only the conditions of the African while on the mines which are to be discussed, but also the position in the reserves and the African's opportunities for bringing about improvements.

---

(1) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 33, Para. 9.

(2) *ibid*, p. 32, Para. 8.

**AFRICAN LABOUR CONDITIONS : RECRUITMENT  
AND CONTRACT, THE BLACK WORKERS'  
OBLIGATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY.**

The Lansdown Commission unequivocally accepted the Chambers' policy "to employ cheap native labour"<sup>(1)</sup> and noted that the Witwatersrand had been fortunate in securing "native peasants who have been prepared to come to the Witwatersrand for periods of labour at comparatively low rates of wages".<sup>(2)</sup> The only criterion advanced for this view was that the policy was "in general accordance with the native policy of the country".<sup>(3)</sup> Great "economic pressure" was the reason given for the African offering his labour to work underground at a cash wage of 2s. per shift.<sup>(4)</sup>

Cash wages in the gold mining industry were not competitive with those in other departments of unskilled labour. A complete analysis of the factors which affected the supply of African labour for the mines would involve an account both of the Native Policy of the Union and of other territories, as well as a description of the economic and social conditions in those areas from which the supply of labour was being drawn. We will begin by discussing the recruiting system, for the supply which was forthcoming to the industry must in part be attributed to the provision of advances and the efficiency of recruiting.

The importance of recruiting to the gold mining industry was very great.<sup>(5)</sup> As we have seen, the *raison d'etre* for the Chamber's formation was to depress the level of African wages by providing the required labour force and thus to eliminate competition between the mines.

The two organisations which had been established, the W.N.L.A. and the N.R.C., operated under the same directorate and management.

---

(1) W.N.W.C.(1943), Para. 67.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 70.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 72.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 73.

(5) See W.N.W.C.(1943), Paras. 41-62, 308-310.  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C.(1943), pp. 70, 71.

Their geographical spheres of influence differed, the N.R.C. recruiting within the Union and High Commission Territories, <sup>(1)</sup> the W.N.L.A. outside these areas. <sup>(2)</sup> On the Witwatersrand all matters relating to the care of the worker other than when on the mine, such as medical examination, reception and repatriation fell under the ambit of the W.N.L.A. Supervision of conditions on the mines themselves was carried out by the N.R.C. Thus, these sub-committees of the Chamber, within the restrictions of the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911 and the regulations of the Governments outside South Africa, controlled the life of the African miner.

Recruiting by the W.N.L.A. was subject in all cases to special conventions or permits. The Governments of the Union and Portugal from time to time revised the quota of East Coast Africans who could be employed on the gold and coal mines of the Witwatersrand. <sup>(3)</sup> In 1940 the maximum number was raised to 100,000, the minimum remaining at 65,000. Similarly, the number of "tropicals" that could be engaged by the W.N.L.A. was greatly restricted by the Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland Governments. Nyasaland only permitted the annual recruitment of 8,500 and Northern Rhodesia of 3,500. <sup>(4)</sup>

The recruiting of African labour in areas outside the Union was not the monopoly of the W.N.L.A., with the exception of Mozambique. Nyasaland, for example, granted permission to the London and Blantyre Company during 1935 to engage up to 2,000 men for employment outside

---

(1) Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland.

(2) Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi).

(3) See N.E.C. (1930), Para. 809. The supply was regulated on the basis of the Transvaal guaranteeing a fixed percentage of traffic through the port of Lourenço Marques.

Duffy, James, Portugal in Africa, Penguin African Library, 1963., p. 137.

(4) W.N.W.C. (1943), Paras. 52, 53.

the Territory. <sup>(1)</sup> However, the total number recruited for work outside the mines was small relative to the efforts of the W.N.L.A. The Africans from the territories in which the W.N.L.A. operated, who were in possession of passports on the Witwatersrand on 31st December, 1931, numbered over 74,000 on the mines and only 4,738 in other employ. <sup>(2)</sup> This gives an indication <sup>(3)</sup> of the relative importance of non-mine recruiting.

The rates of pay of labourers employed by the W.N.L.A. were exactly the same as those applying to Union Africans. The former, however, had to contract for an initial period of twelve months with an option of renewing their contract for a further six months. There was also provision for compulsory deferred pay <sup>(4)</sup> and compulsory repatriation. As it was to the advantage of the mines to maintain the system whereby the labourer could theoretically obtain a subsidiary means of subsistence and prevent him from becoming a permanent resident upon the Witwatersrand, the contract between the W.N.L.A. and recruits from Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and Portuguese East Africa, provided that certain specified amounts could be deducted from the worker's pay to provide for the cost of his return fare to his home at the conclusion of his service. Thus all the men recruited by the W.N.L.A. paid the cost of their return transport from the mines. <sup>(5)</sup> Free transport to Johannesburg was provided for "tropicals" from Northern Bechuanaland, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

---

(1) Report on Nyasaland Natives in the Union of South Africa and in Southern Rhodesia by J.C. Abraham, Esq., 1937, Para. 14.

(2) N.E.C., (1930), p. 175, Para. 17.

(3) There may have been many Africans employed in commerce and industry who had voluntarily gone to the Witwatersrand and who were not in possession of a valid passport. In addition, the W.N.L.A. was prohibited at this time from recruiting "tropicals", only 72 being listed as possessing passports and working on the mines while 333 were otherwise employed.

(4) In the case of the Portuguese African it was equal to one-half of his earnings after his first nine months at work.

(5) Except those who were found medically fit on arrival at labour centres or who had met with an accident, repatriation was then at the expense of the employers.

Apart from the outward boat and railway fares in Mozambique itself, the cost of transport to the mines was deducted from the pay of the East Coast labourer. In addition to this burden the Portuguese miner paid a fee of 10s. per annum to the Mozambique Government.<sup>(1)</sup> In other tropical areas, the African paid his own travelling expenses.<sup>(2)</sup>

The biggest disadvantage suffered by the W.N.L.A. recruit was that, according to the terms of his contract, he could be sent to any of the mines-affiliated to the Chamber and had to accept any work allocated to him.<sup>(3)</sup> In this respect the recruits of the Native Recruiting Corporation had a considerable advantage. Under the Assisted Voluntary System (AVS) which had been introduced in 1928, the worker obtained from a depot of the Corporation an advance to meet the cost of his rail fare and his food,<sup>(4)</sup> which he had to refund from his first earnings. This scheme saved the African interest upon the railway fare or the advance. Formerly the African who wished to go to the mines without being recruited had, if he could not pay his own fare, to obtain an advance against his wages for his fare from the local trader, who usually charged usurious rates of interest. In practice, however, the AVS miner was in turn refunded the advance if he worked 270 shifts underground on any one mine. The AVS worker had to register for service with one or other of the Chambers' companies within 30 days of the agreement. He was, however, free to choose his own mine and to select his period of employment, subject to the mine agreeing to accept his services and the conditions on the contract. The

- 
- (1) A fee of £1. 14s. 6d. per African per annum was paid by the mines to the Mozambique Government.
  - (2) See Reply by Minister of Mines to a question in the House of Assembly on 19. 2. 1943.
  - (3) Thirtytwo and a half per cent were permitted, in terms of the W.N.L.A. statutes, to choose their mine, although, in terms of the contract, they had to accept any work given them. See W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 47.
  - (4) The usual amount, according to the Native Economic Commission of 1932, was £2 in addition to the railway fare. It may be assumed that as the maximum advance to recruited workers was £3 in 1943, the A.V.S. worker could receive a similar sum. The amount was subject to amendments under the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911.

minimum duration of contract varied, according to the mine, from a month to not less than a three months', four months' or six months' period. <sup>(1)</sup>

Personal freedom of movement and choice of employer were combined in the contract of the non-recruited worker. In this respect the contract was healthy and desirable. <sup>(2)</sup>

Union and High Commission Territory Africans <sup>(3)</sup> could also be recruited under the contract system of recruitment. Under this system the potential miners presented themselves to the nearest representative of the NRC (a trader <sup>(4)</sup> in many cases) or at the NRC recruiting office. If found medically fit and in agreement with the terms of the contract, they were taken to the office of the magistrate or other attesting officer for attestation of their contracts in terms of section 12 of the Native

- 
- (1) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 802. Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 12, Para. 3(b).
  - (2) The scheme was well-known and popular especially amongst the workers of the Transkeian Territories and the Ciskei, whereas 32 per cent of the total arrivals in Johannesburg from these areas in 1931 were A.V.S. recruits, the percentage in 1942 was 49.2 W.N.W.C., Para. 46. See N.E.C. (1930), Annexure 21, for the initial effect of the introduction of the A.V.S.
  - (3) Within the restrictions of the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, and its regulations, recruiting for other industries than gold-mining could, and, in fact, did take place in these areas.
  - (4) The trader-recruiter received a capitation fee of 24s. for each accepted contract labourer he sent to the industry, and, in addition, he could advance up to £3 to each African miner, the amount being recovered from deductions from his pay. This system of advances may have encouraged some Africans to resort to the contract system rather than to the A.V.S. as it allowed them to get into debt. As the number of trader-recruiters had diminished from 602 in 1912 to 373 in 1942, the frequency of this abuse occurring must similarly have diminished. The increasing popularity of the A.V. System must have had a similar effect. In addition, the N.R.C. encouraged the use of this method of recruiting as it avoided the payment of capitation fees. W.N.W.C. (1943), Paras. 44, 56.

Labour Regulation Act, No. 15 of 1911, and the regulations thereunder. The essential difference between this system and the A.V.S. was that the African labourer was assigned by the recruiting authority to a particular mine, his own choice being granted only "where possible". (1)

As in the case of the AVS recruit, the contract worker's transport expenses to Johannesburg were charged to the industry provided the contract was for more than 270 shifts. (2) If the contract was for less, the amount was recovered from the labourer.

The NRC recruit was repatriated at his own expense, both under the Assisted Voluntary System or the Contract System. (3) Travelling expenses differed at different places - the average in respect of the Transkei or its neighbourhood was £2. 10s. 0d. (4)

Apart from the two systems already discussed, viz. the Assisted Voluntary System and the Contract System, African miners from the Union and High Commission Territories were employed by the "local engagement" method. When an African had completed his initial contract on one mine and wished to transfer to another it constituted a "local engagement". (5) During 1942 such contracts numbered 38,351, 19 per cent of the total Union and High Commission Territory Africans employed. Of this total, contracted miners employed for the same year were 81,808 (40 per cent) and A.V.S. workers numbered 79,212 (38 per cent). In addition 6,267 (3 per cent of the total) made their way unassisted to the mines during 1942 to do mainly surface work. (6)

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 50. This usually applied to "specials" i.e. men who had worked on a mine and asked to go back there. Those who could not be "accommodated" in this way were sent to mines which, through bad conditions, had been unable to attract their own labour.

(2) Equivalent to 10½ months.

(3) Again with the exception of the medically unfit and victims of accidents.

(4) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 49.

(5) A contract was again entered into between the mine and the African miner.

(6) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 12, Para. 3.

Africans employed by the gold mining industry, whether from the Union and High Commission Territories or "foreign" labourers, were bound by a contract of service which had certain common features.

They were required to work on every working day<sup>(1)</sup> and could also be called upon to do Sunday work.<sup>(2)</sup> The African could not exercise a choice between day or night work, piece-work or day's pay, but had to accept any work given him and accept the wage paid by that mine for that class of work. Previous experience was thus not necessarily taken into account.

As the preceding discussion on recruiting indicates, arrangements for paying the costs of the African miners' journey to the mines varied between automatic payment for certain "foreign" labourers to payment on completion of a specified minimum number of shifts. Similarly, advances were only made available to certain recruits under the conditions mentioned above. Where applicable therefore, travelling costs and advances were automatically deducted from the worker's wage.

All the African labourers, except High Commission Territory workers, paid for their own repatriation. They were assisted in paying their return fares by the employers who deducted the cost of the fare in instalments from their wages and bought the ticket. The only exceptions were those found medically unfit on arrival at the labour centre or who had met with an accident and were not in a fit condition to resume work. In such circumstances, and at the recommendation of the Mine Medical Officer, they were repatriated at the expense of the mine. The men from the High Commission Territories formed a category of their own and made their own arrangements for their return journey.

---

(1) Only Christmas Day and Good Friday were paid holidays.  
W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 372.

(2) Only work permitted under Section 6 of the Mines and Works Act of 1911 (as amended) could be performed on the mines on Sundays.

Representations urging the Government to ratify the Convention on the Regulation of Contracts for Employment of Indigenous Workers, 1939, were frequently made in evidence before the Lansdown Commission.

Article 13 of the Convention stipulated that workers brought to the place of employment by the employer should have the right to be repatriated at the latter's expense on the termination of the contract by the expiry of the period of service, by reason of either the employer or employee (sickness or accident) being unable to fulfil the contract, by agreement between the parties or by "the application of either of the parties, unless the competent authority otherwise decides." The competent authority (Union Government) could, in terms of Article 14, exempt the employer from liability for repatriation expenses in certain defined circumstances. If the contract had been terminated for any other reason than sickness or because of an accident which prevented the worker from resuming work after treatment, the employer could be exempted if the rates of wages made allowance for the payment of repatriation expenses by the worker and the worker possessed the necessary funds through a system of deferred pay. (1)

The Chamber of Mines was strongly opposed to the Union's ratification of the Convention as it was doubtful whether they could have claimed exemption from its terms under Article 14. Indeed, the Native Economic Commission of 1930 estimated that the travelling expenses for the two journeys of labourers from the Transkei in 1931 represented as much as 15 to 20 per cent of their total cash earnings. (2)

Under the contract the Africans were required to live in the "quarters" provided for them by the mines. In the great majority of cases, they were bachelor quarters known as compounds and akin to army barracks.

---

(1) Copy of the Convention.

(2) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 830.

The contract was for a minimum period of engagement measured in shifts. The "shift" for the day's pay men meant "work for an unbroken period of time according to the full working hours of (the) Mine, as authorised by law, for the work on which the Native is employed".

When used with respect to piece work, a "shift" meant:

"the minimum work as fixed by (the) Mine or by (the) Agreement for the class of work on which the Native is employed. No Native employed on piece work other than hand drilling will be entitled to cease work before the expiration of the working hours of (the) Mine. . . . . No Native employed on hand drilling shall be entitled to cease work before the expiration of the working hours of (the) Mine unless he shall have performed the shovelling work called for in (the) Contract, and in addition have completed 42 inches of drilling as directed. . . . . Any shift during which a Native employed on hand drilling fails to do sufficient shovelling (not exceeding two hours) to clear the face after the preceding blast, and in addition to drill 24 inches, shall be deemed to be an incompleated shift, and shall not count towards the period of contract." (1)

For the daily paid workers, payment for any work was conditional on what, according to the accepted standard of the mine at which they were employed, was regarded as a full day's work. Less time spent underground meant that the worker received neither wage nor recognition of a shift towards the fulfillment of his contract. The piece-worker had to have completed a certain minimum amount of work in order to be paid and have the shift counted against his period of service. According to the general regulations of the N.R.C. contract, (2) the minimum requirements for the African employed on hand drilling, for example, were the clearing of the stope face after the preceding blast (this shovelling not to exceed two hours) and the drilling of 24 inches.

---

(1) Contract form of the Native Recruiting Corporation, Limited.  
(2) This applied to all the Companies represented by the NRC except the Van Ryn Gold Mines Estate, Ltd. whose minimum for hand drillers was 30 inches. Presumably no shovelling was required from hand drillers on this mine.

In terms of his contract, the African had to work for the requisite number of hours laid down by law irrespective of whether he was on day's pay or piece work. Shifts began at various times in the early morning and ended at corresponding times in the afternoon. The maximum number of work-hours permitted was 48 hours per week, excluding the time occupied in going to and from the place of work. <sup>(1)</sup>

Several African miners <sup>(2)</sup> complained that they wasted time both waiting at the shaftheads to be taken down the mine to their work and then underground for the European miners to arrive. <sup>(3)</sup> They also complained of considerable delays in the afternoons in being taken to the surface. <sup>(4)</sup> In addition, it was suggested that the time spent walking from the compound should also be considered as part of the working day.

The African miner undoubtedly spent more than 8 hours in carrying out his specific task. Estimates varied greatly. For example the African Mine Workers Union calculated that the miner on the Robinson Deep spent approximately  $9\frac{1}{2}$  hours from the time he left the shafthead until he returned again to the surface. "Altogether the miner probably (spent) 12 to 13 hours on some mines", if the time walking to and from the shafthead was included. <sup>(5)</sup>

- 
- (1) The hours of work underground are governed by Section (9), sub-section 2, of the Mines and Works Act, 1911.
  - (2) This affected day's pay men and piece-workers especially because the piece-worker (except those employed as hand-drillers who had shovelled for 2 hours and drilled 42") had to remain underground until the end of the "working day" even though he might have completed his work. More than 75 per cent of the total African labour force was employed underground. Surface workers followed the same shifts as the Europeans they assisted, which were "as a general rule not more than 48 hours per week".
  - (3) In terms of the Mining Regulations, work could not be commenced until the stope face had been examined by a European miner.
  - (4) This has been dealt with more fully on pp.25, 26.
  - (5) Evidence of the African Mine Workers Union to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.34.

Similar complaints about time-wasting had been made to the Native Grievances Inquiry of 1913/14. Mr. H.O. Buckle, the sole Commissioner, suggested improvements that could avoid the long hours and waiting around underground. <sup>(1)</sup> Apparently little had been done in this respect, for even as the Lansdown Commission was in session, workers resorted to "drastic action" <sup>(2)</sup> and exposed themselves to prosecution to highlight the length, of their working day.



On the Rand Leases Mine at Roodepoort, 350 African miners who finished their shifts at 1 p.m. had to wait underground for the cages until 4.30 p.m. <sup>(3)</sup> They then refused, and at 5.30 p.m. again refused, to enter the cages because of the delay which had taken place in providing this transport, notwithstanding the fact that blasting operations had begun about 4 p.m. They claimed that the delay had occurred on many occasions in the past. The workers only came to the surface after the compound manager had agreed to meet them there. Police arrested 339 when they were brought up, twenty-two of them later being charged and sentenced for breaches of the Mining Regulations. <sup>(4)</sup>

Lansdown and his fellow Commissioners thought the delays inevitable, "having regard to the work which must be done at the shafts and the limited capacity of the cages". <sup>(5)</sup> This was contrary both to the spirit of the Mining Regulations and what, presumably, the African labourer understood on being recruited. Although they recognised that the delays were thus a real grievance, the Commissioners only recommended that "all reasonable efforts should be made for the curtailment of these delays." <sup>(6)</sup>

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Para. 53-64.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 374.

(3) The winding gear to lift the cages was "otherwise employed".  
W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 374.

(4) Inkululeko, 18.9.43.  
21 were fined £10 or 2 months, suspended for 12 months. Remaining miner was fined £2 or 21 days, two-thirds suspended for 3 months.

(5) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 374.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 375.

The recruit was presented with a set form of contract which he could refuse or accept but not amend in any way. Once signed he could not cancel the contract nor amend it and was liable to prosecution for a criminal offence if he left the mine before completing his period of service. However, when the mine was unable to provide<sup>(1)</sup> the African work because of causes "beyond the control of the employer", the African miner had to be content, in terms of the contract, to receive a wage which was only guaranteed to be not less than half that which he formerly received<sup>(2)</sup> and to do "any class of work underground or surface irrespective of the class of work he was engaged for." If the "cause" persisted for 30 days, either the miner or the employer could cancel the contract.<sup>(3)</sup> Causes beyond the control of the employer were widely interpreted to include an "act of God, vis. major, flooding, fire, strike of workmen, accidents to mine or to plant".<sup>(4)</sup> This clause discriminated in favour of the employers as the mine owners were able to substitute new terms of employment on very subjective grounds.

- 
- (1) The term used was "prevented from furnishing work".
  - (2) To be "calculated on the average pay earned during the preceding three months or during such shorter period as the Natives may have worked prior to the cessation of work". Each day, however, was to be calculated as a completed shift.
  - (3) This cancellation provision was not included in the W.N.L.A. contract.
  - (4) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.13. The writer, too, finds the phraseology puzzling.

**AFRICAN LABOUR CONDITIONS: CASH  
WAGES AND WAGES IN KIND, THE  
CONTRACTUAL LIABILITIES OF THE  
INDUSTRY.**

The contractual obligations of the African miners to the mining company which employed them were many and varied. On pain of committing a criminal offence if he broke the contract, the labourer contracted to accept work of varying remuneration, living accommodation and hours all within the discretion of the mine management. Although the African was faced with a charge brought by the State if he failed to comply with any management decisions or orders made in terms of his contract, the European who contracted to work on the mines entered into a private agreement with the mine which, when broken by either side, became a matter for the civil courts. <sup>(1)</sup>

The representative of the recruiting organisation who signed the contract, in turn, involved the mining company which employed the labourer in certain obligations. The company undertook to pay the rates of wages set out in the contract and to provide free of charge, the prescribed rations, quarters and medical and hospital attention for the duration of the contract. We shall deal with each of these in turn.

---

(1) The rationale for this was as follows:

"It would be impossible to control native labourers in the employ of European masters, or to rely on them for satisfactory fulfilment of labour contracts, but for the deterrent provisions included in the various laws with special application to natives. The average native labourer would be totally unaffected by civil process, as judgement against him could not be enforced. He has no property to attach, and his circumstances would defeat any attempt to mulct him in damages. On the other hand, while the native is unconscious of the stigma which is the main deterrent in the conviction and imprisonment of Europeans, the forced labour, the discipline, and the loss of wages serve to convince him of wrongdoing and to demonstrate the unprofitableness of any failure, without lawful clause, to observe the terms of his labour agreement. The differentiation between white and black in the prescribed procedure in cases of breach of contract is essential; for the law, to be effective, must provide such deterrents as the native mind is able to appreciate."

Evidence of the Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to the Economic and Wage Commission, (1925), Statement No. 3, pp. 1 and 2.

Rates of pay of African miners varied according to the work allocated to them. The worker who was paid by the day received a minimum rate per shift, while the piece worker who failed to complete the required work received no pay for that shift at all. The average earnings of all African miners, moreover, were controlled by the Native Recruiting Corporation through the mechanism of the "Maximum Average Clause".

The N.R.C. was empowered in terms of its Articles of Association to "fix the wages to be paid by members for each class of work to be done by native labourers in their employ and from time to time revise and alter the wages so fixed".<sup>(1)</sup> This was necessary in view of the Corporation's function of controlling the distribution of all labour employed by itself and the W.N.L.A. To achieve an equitable distribution the Corporation considered it necessary to maintain equal opportunity of earnings on all mines, for the mines which offered the greater earning facilities would tend to draw to them more than their share of recruited labour.

In pursuance of this aim the N.R.C. introduced the maximum average clause into its wage schedules. We have already discussed this provision in some detail<sup>(2)</sup> and will confine ourselves now to the situation in 1943.

By this year<sup>(3)</sup> the provision controlled the average earnings of all African labour and was no longer confined to the specific control of piece work. The maximum average for underground workers was not to exceed 2s. 3d. per shift, while the average rate of pay of surface labourers could be increased to 2s. per shift.<sup>(4)</sup> In addition to the above, each Mine Manager had a fixed sum at his disposal to enable him to grant bonuses to individuals or gangs of workers as a reward for efficiency. Each mine

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 113.

(2) See pp. 74-80.

(3) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 115.

(4) First Aid Bonuses, wages of unscheduled classes of labour and Shaft sinking workers were excluded from the calculations.

calculated this sum every month:

"by taking five per cent. of its total native labour complement and translating the resulting figure into pounds sterling; e.g. a mine having an underground complement of 4,000 natives and a surface complement of 1,000 natives would have £250 per month at the disposal of the Manager for distribution in bonuses to his efficient natives, both underground and surface".<sup>(1)</sup>

In effect, what this all amounted to was that the maximum average for all workers was 2s.3.3/4d. per shift in 1943.<sup>(2)</sup> The effectiveness of the control is measured by the fact that the N.R.C. was able to report in 1943 that it had never been necessary to penalise a mine for paying an average rate which exceeded the given limit.<sup>(3)</sup>

A minimum rate of pay of 1s. 8d. per shift for "adult" African underground day's pay workers was laid down for the first time in June, 1926. Before that date no definite minimum rate was officially in force, although the minimum in practice was 1s. 6d. The minimum of 1s. 8d. per shift continued until January, 1928, when a minimum shift pay of 1s. 10d. on the completion of 90 shifts underground was laid down. In 1936 the number of completed shifts necessary to make the miner eligible for the minimum of 1s. 10d. was decreased to 60 shifts.<sup>(4)</sup> In addition, day's

---

(1) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 115.

(2) Mr. W. Gemmill in evidence to the Commission.  
W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 80.

(3) "Thus control provided that a mine should become liable to a penalty if the average rate of earnings of its native labourers on piece-work exceeded a given limit, but at the same time it was provided that if a mine became liable to a penalty, it could submit to the Corporation details of the price or prices which were paid and particulars regarding the results which had been accomplished on piece-work and on day's pay on that mine for consideration by an Advisory Committee who would recommend to the Board of the Corporation the action that should be taken".  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 114.

(4) Trammers who had completed 60 shifts underground were paid 2s. per shift.

pay labourers who had completed 120 shifts underground were paid a minimum of 2s. per shift. <sup>(1)</sup> In January, 1943, the minimum rate of payment for surface labour was fixed at 1s. 9d. per shift, and the minimum rate for underground labour at 2s. per shift. <sup>(2)</sup>

As it turned out, these minimum rates were applicable to a considerable number of workers. Of 227,000 men employed underground on 17th February, 1943, 108,000 (48 per cent) were listed as receiving the minimum of 2s. per shift. Despite the smaller numbers employed on the surface on that day, the proportion earning the minimum (or below) was less than that of the underground workers. Only 37 per cent (27,063) of 73,265 surface workers earned 1s. 9d. or less. Nearly 5,000 (16 per cent) were listed as receiving less than 1s. 9d. per shift. <sup>(3)</sup> This may be accounted for by the provision in the W.N.L.A. contract whereby every African engaged under the agreement had to work on the surface during his first twenty-six days of employment at mine surface rates of pay with a minimum of 1s. per day. <sup>(4)</sup> If found medically fit on the completion of this acclimatization period, the W.N.L.A. recruit would then be used for underground work at the 2s. minimum.

- 
- (1) They had to have actually worked underground at any time for 120 shifts.
  - (2) There was provision in the NRC contract for a probation period of 14 shifts at a minimum of 1s. 8d. per shift for those men engaged on hammer work for the first time during their contracts. This provision appears to have been of little importance because of the 107 "hammer boys" employed on 17th February, 1943, none earned less than 2s. while only five earned the minimum underground wage of 2s. per shift.  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "C" to Statement No. 1.
  - (3) Derived from the Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "C" to Statement No. 1.
  - (4) W.N.L.A. contract form.

The African miner was not always rewarded for long service and efficiency.<sup>(1)</sup> Every case was considered on its own merits. This had not always been so. A system of bonuses for long service had been introduced towards the end of 1919 but was apparently discontinued around 1936.<sup>(2)</sup> According to the Lansdown Commission, many deserving cases were overlooked "through the inadvertence or indifference of a ganger and the reticence of the labourer"<sup>(3)</sup> as it was the duty of the European ganger, either of his own accord or at the prompting of the black miner, to recommend an increment. Re-employment provisions were more equitable in that length of service and efficiency were taken into account. If the African was being paid at a rate above the minimum on the completion of his contract, he would be re-employed at the same rate if he returned to his old mine, within twelve months in the case of "tropicals", eight months in the case of Portuguese miners and six months in all other cases.<sup>(4)</sup>

The changes in the minimum rate of pay which had taken place over the years and the introduction and subsequent abolition of bonuses for long service had no significant effect on the average cash wage of the black miner. During the period when the bonus system had operated in

- 
- (1) There was an indirect inducement to the AVS worker to prolong his stay on the mines. If he worked underground for a continuous period of 270 shifts he was refunded his inward rail fare.
  - (2) When the scheme was first introduced in December, 1919, a bonus of 5s. per month was paid to each African who continued to work after having completed 180 shifts. The bonus was continued if he returned to work after an absence of up to 4 months. By 1930 the bonus was only paid to the miner who had continuously completed 270 shifts. The East Coast labourer had to return within 6 months, the "British South African" within 4 months, to be paid the additional 2d. per shift (5s. per month) when he resumed work if he had been getting it before he left.  
N.E.C. (1930), Para. 817.
  - (3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 269.
  - (4) *ibid*, Para. 86.

one form or another, i.e. from 1919 to 1936, average cash wages decreased from 2s. 2. 5d.<sup>(1)</sup> to 2s. 1. 5d.<sup>(2)</sup> Also during this period the minimum rate for underground work increased by 22 per cent (for the miner who completed 60 shifts, from 1s. 6d. to 1s. 10d.) up to 33. 1/3 per cent (on completion of 120 shifts,<sup>(3)</sup> from 1s. 6d. to 2s.). It was only by January, 1943, however, when the minimum rate for underground labour was increased to 2s. per shift, irrespective of the number of shifts already completed, that the average cash earnings for all African miners<sup>(4)</sup> surpassed the levels of 1920 and 1925,<sup>(5)</sup> when the minimum rate had been 25 per cent lower.<sup>(6)</sup>

The increases in the African miner's minimum rates of pay were offset by regulating the relative proportion receiving higher rates.

The Chamber's explanation for the static condition of average black earnings was that the African miner had not shown an increase in productivity over the years. A Chamber spokesman, in fact, went so far as to assert that "the native labourer underground as an individual was no more efficient than he was 30 years ago".<sup>(7)</sup> As can be seen from the chart

---

(1) G.M.E. (1921), p. 29.

(2) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "B" to Statement No. 1.

(3) The number who qualified for the bonus must have been large as the average length of service of the African miner in 1931 was already more than 280 shifts.  
N.E.C. (1930), Para. 815.

(4) The average figure for 1942 had been 2s. 2. 5d. and that for January, 1943, 2s. 3d.  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "B" to Statement No. 1.

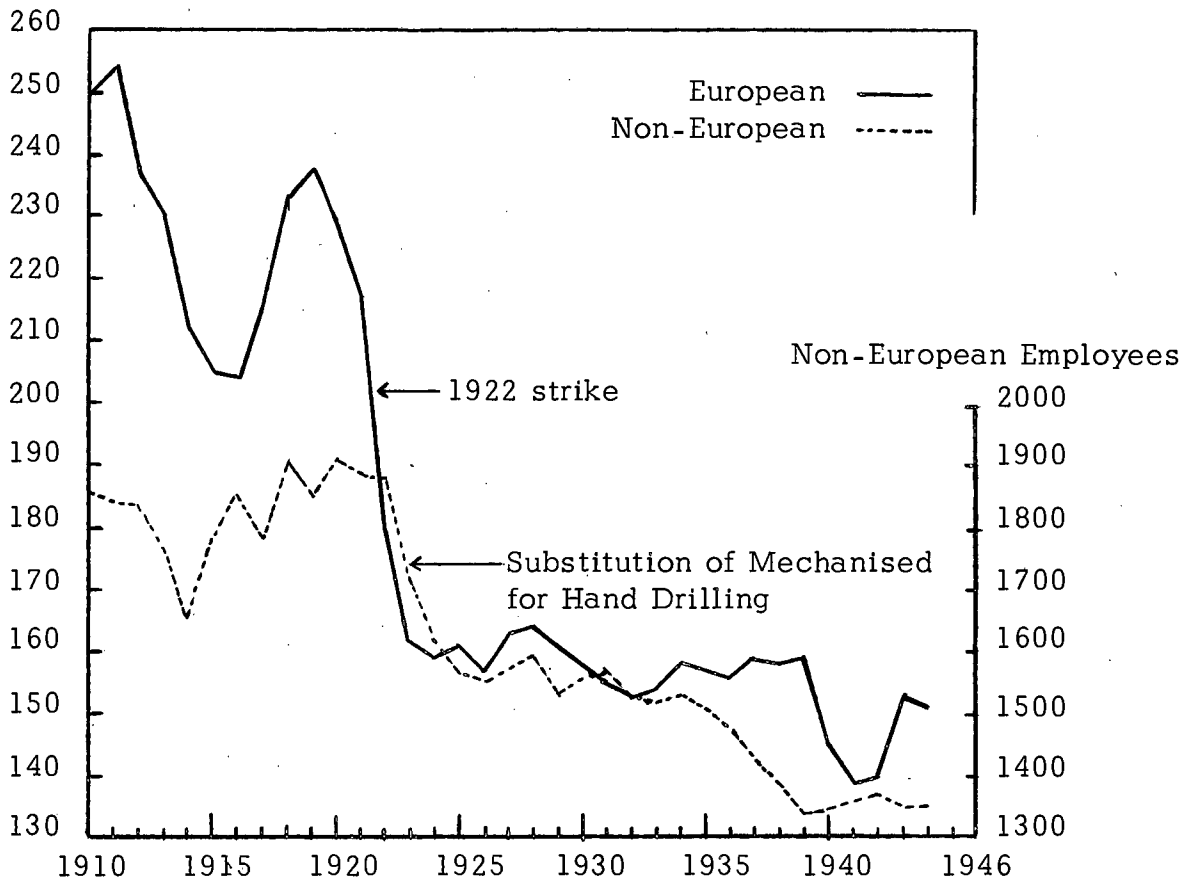
(5) For 1930, 2s. 2. 5d. and for 1925, 2s. 2. 8d.  
Figure for 1925 from Economic and Wage Commission (1925), op cit. Para. 351, p. 183.

(6) From 2s. in 1943 to 1s. 6d. up to 1926.

(7) Mr. G.H. Beattie (President in 1936 and 1939, Vice President in 1934, 35, 38, 41, 42 and 44) in evidence before the Lansdown Commission.  
Star, 26. 8. 1943.

below, the African and Coloured labour force had "apparently" become more productive. The Chamber, however, attributed this "apparent improvement" to the "introduction and greatly extended use of mechanisation".<sup>(1)</sup> The extent of mechanisation is well illustrated by the fact that the quantity of electrical energy used by the gold mines per African employee increased by 175 per cent between 1920 and 1945.<sup>(2)</sup>

European Employees



Employees at work per 1000 tons hoisted per day, Large Producing Gold Mines, 1910-1944.

Source:

Social and Economic Planning Council, Report No. 11, p. 30.

(1) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 29.

(2) Dr. Bernard Price to a special Meeting of the Chamber, 25.10.1946. Rand Daily Mail, 26.10.1946.

Thus despite the difficulties of overcoming "the continuously increasing depth of mining, higher rock temperatures, necessity for greatly increased support of working, decrease in stoping width and increased distances over which ore is transported", <sup>(1)</sup> which all worked against an increase in the tonnage produced, the African had become more productive, which, according to the Chamber, was entirely due to advances in methods of mining. <sup>(2)</sup> It is extremely difficult to verify the Chamber's contentions about the efficiency of the individual African miner as the apparent increase in productivity of just less than 40 per cent between 1920 and 1945 may have been due solely to the increased use of capital equipment or partly to the above and partly to the increasing proficiency of the African miner.

During the early years of gold mining most of the African labourers had not been to the Witwatersrand before and had only stayed there for comparatively short periods. This position gradually changed. By 1943 the majority of Africans had been there previously, <sup>(3)</sup> while the average length of stay at any one time of the majority of the Union men, for example, was now nearly 14 months. <sup>(4)</sup> Increasing familiarity with the industrial process usually leads to greater efficiency. As we shall see from our subsequent discussion of migrant labour, there is a strong presumption that this was so on the gold mines.

Since Buckle's Report in 1914, the question of piece work payment had always been a contentious issue amongst African mineworkers. Despite the agitation for greater reliance on payment by results, the average number of black workers employed on piece work declined from

- 
- (1) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.28.
  - (2) Machine drills replaced hand drillers, development of jack-hammers and mechanical scrapers.
  - (3) During the period 1930 to 1942 only 10.84% of African miners engaged from the Cape Province were "new boys". Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure to Statement No. 4.
  - (4) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure to Statement No. 4.

33.7 per cent in 1913<sup>(1)</sup> to 14.2 per cent in 1943.<sup>(2)</sup>

Average earnings of pieceworkers in 1943, as in 1913/14, were significantly higher than those of day's pay labourers. A good test was to compare the men engaged on shovelling and tramping. Whereas the day's pay men engaged on this work earned 2s. 2d. per shift, the pieceworkers employed on shovelling and tramping averaged 2s. 4. 7d.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Chamber's explanation for limiting the opportunity of the African miner to be paid according to his "productivity", was that the nature of the work carried out by the individual African labourer made it "impracticable" in almost all occupations to pay by result. European underground workers engaged in supervising the work of these miners were, however, encouraged "to make the best use of the equipment and native labour placed in their charge" by the offer of "a reward, the amount of which (was) dependent on the results achieved".<sup>(4)</sup> In view of this it is not clear why a similar system could not have been adopted for the African miner, who must surely have been as responsive to pecuniary incentives as his European counterpart.

The black workers on piecework in 1943 were mainly machine drillers<sup>(5)</sup> and a small proportion of the men engaged on shovelling and tramping. This latter group had declined markedly over the years from 19.42 per cent in 1931, to 13.95 per cent in 1935, and to 9.52 per cent in 1943.<sup>(6)</sup> Again the Chamber's rationale was not entirely convincing. Conditions in certain sections of a mine might favour piecework for shovelling and tramping, while in other sections it was "impossible" to apply the same system. The other factors which allegedly inhibited the further adoption of the piecework system for shovelling and tramping, viz., the difficulty of

---

(1) N.G.I. (1913), Annexure 15, p. 116.

(2) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 28.

(3) *ibid*

(4) *ibid*, p. 24.

(5) Approximately 80 per cent of a total of more than 41,000.

(6) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 27.

assessing a fair price and the possibility of pieceworkers both concentrating on easily handled rock and underfilling trucks, <sup>(1)</sup> would appear to have been as applicable to the men engaged on piecework as to those working on the basis of a day's pay.

The Chamber frequently, and very proudly, referred to the expensive research undertaken to facilitate the economic use of its African labour force. To this end competitions for improving the design of the rock-drill were organised, as well as investigations into the size and shape of the shovel. However, in spite of all its expertise, the Chamber could not (or, possibly, would not) devise a method of paying the African labourers in terms of results. Or perhaps the individual mines and groups which constituted the Chamber, by accepting the principle of non-competitiveness, as embodied in the maximum average provision, tacitly accepted that the number of highly paid workers should be strictly limited.

In the Report of the Native Economic Commission of 1930, the cost of providing each black miner with free food, quarters and hospital treatment was calculated for a number of mines, but not for the industry as a whole. The feeding and hospital costs were equivalent to 3.85d. and 1.04d. respectively for each African per shift worked. All other costs to the mines of employing an African labourer, with the exception of the capital cost of compound and hospital buildings, were included under "other costs". These amounted to 5.42d. per employee, the total being 10.31d. per shift worked by each African. <sup>(2)</sup>

Comparable figures for 1942 for all the gold mines of the Witwatersrand, members of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, were 5.28d., 1.15d. and 6.97d. for food, hospital treatment and "other costs" respectively.

---

(1) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 27.

(2) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 820.

The total thus amounted 13.4d. As in 1930, the capital cost of compound and hospital buildings was excluded from the above. This was estimated in 1942 to be .94d. per shift per man. <sup>(1)</sup>

Both in 1930 and 1942 the category "other costs" accounted for more than 50 per cent of the cost of "wages in kind" incurred by each mine in employing an African miner. The breakdown below of the 1942 <sup>(2)</sup> estimate shows that an exceedingly wide range of expenses was included under this head:-

(a) Salaries and wages of compound staff .....	1.06d.
(b) Preparation of foodstuffs (including wages) .....	0.31d.
(c) Fees to N.R.C. and W.N.L.A. (1939 figure plus present rail fare allowance) .....	2.05d.
(d) Sundry costs - irrecoverable rail fares and advances, repatriation fees, etc. ....	0.08d.
(e) Passport and registration fees to Union and Portuguese Governments and the various Governments of the Tropical Areas .....	1.26d.
(f) W.N.L.A. Hospital - Lazaretto and other charges ....	0.03d.
(g) Maintenance of compound and hospital buildings ....	0.47d.
(h) Fees to local authorities for sanitation, assessment rates, etc. ....	0.26d.
(i) Entertainment, education and religion .....	0.04d.
(j) Miners' Phthisis Compensation and Accident Premiums	0.45d.
(k) Clothing and boots .....	0.36d.
(l) Fuel, water and light .....	0.53d.
(m) Fire insurance .....	0.01d.
(n) Other expenditure .....	0.06d.

Several items do not appear to merit inclusion. The fees to the recruiting agencies (c), and the passport and repatriation fees (e), for example, were clearly recruiting costs and not expenditure which benefited the African miner. The Chamber included them on the grounds that "a portion of these

---

(1) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), unpublished document.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 91.

charges are fairly to be looked at as an advantage to the Native because ..... his facilities and experience for obtaining employment independently of a reputable recruiting organisation are limited".<sup>(1)</sup> However, the Chamber's Statistician did, in fact, concede when questioned before the Lansdown Commission,<sup>(2)</sup> that some of the items were not chargeable as benefits to the black miners.

Part of the mines' remuneration for labour consisted of free quarters, which, for the overwhelming majority of the men, were in "compounds". The essential feature of the compound system was that it involved separation of the inmates from their families for the period of their contract. With the exception of less than 1 per cent of the total black labour force employed on the gold mines during 1943, the men were not encouraged to bring their wives with them, even though 55 per cent of them were married.

The compound system of housing the African worker originated on the diamond mines of Kimberley, in order to prevent diamond smuggling by confining the labourer to the compound for the total length of his service. The gold mining industry subsequently took over the system although this rationale for its use was never applicable. In fact, on the Witwatersrand gold mines, the African worker was allowed to leave the compound from time to time, as on an occasional week-end.

The Chamber defended its use of migratory labour and compounds on both financial and moral grounds. The usual "prohibitive cost" argument was that the capital and additional running costs of stabilising, say, only 23 per cent of the African labour force - the proportion of married Union men employed - would have severely limited the scope of operation of the industry. Mines would have had to close down and the result would have been unemployment amongst many black workers. The moral justification for separating a married man from his family was

---

(1) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 820.

As these items were included in 1942, the rationale given in 1930 was presumably still applicable.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 91.

that the compounds protected the African against an over-hasty uprooting from his own background and from being precipitated into the strange and foreign standards and conventions of a cultural system of which he had little understanding. "The advantage of the compound system", according to an official of the Chamber, "is that it gradually accustoms the primitive tribal native to the European way of life, while allowing him to retain the best in his own culture."<sup>(1)</sup> It was presumably a coincidence that this preservation of the African's "own culture" about which the Chamber expressed such concern also meant the continued existence of the Reserves, which provided the industry with a pretext for continuing to pay low wages on the grounds that the African could always return to the land.

As in the case of feeding and health requirements, the housing conditions of Africans on the mines were governed by the provisions of the Native Labour Regulation Act, 1911, and were controlled by the Director of Native Labour for the Union.

Housing conditions varied with the age of the individual compound, the newer compounds being superior primarily with respect to the number of men allocated to each room. We have little information here except what was given in the "additional" evidence by the Chamber<sup>(2)</sup> on conditions on the Simmer and Jack Mines. Rooms to accommodate 80

---

(1) Star, 27.6.1947.

(2) After the African Mine Workers' Union had given evidence to the Lansdown Commission, the Chamber attempted to rebutt some of the more specific allegations made in the workers' memorandum. The reason for doing so was to dispel the impression left by the document, which, "if taken at its face value, might lead to the conclusion that all was not right with the Gold Mining Industry of the Witwatersrand in regard to the control and handling of its Native labour force". This was indeed a subject on which the Chamber seemed hypersensitive.

workers<sup>(1)</sup> measured 40 feet by 32 feet, up to 40 men were housed in a room 25 feet square, while the rooms housing 20 men measured 17.3/4 feet by 21.3/4 feet.<sup>(2)</sup> These room size/number of men ratios were probably above average. There was usually a stove with a pipe going up to the roof in the centre of the room. Coal provided by the authorities gave both warmth and cooking facilities, while a shelf for the miners' possessions ran around round the room above the sleeping bunks. However, no lockers or cupboards of any sort were provided. There were washing and toilet facilities, but they were usually some distance from these large concrete rooms. Three to seven thousand Africans were usually housed in each compound.<sup>(3)</sup>

The bunks or sleeping places were constructed of concrete<sup>(4)</sup> and the sleeper was completely separated from his neighbour either by lying parallel to the wall on two tier bunks or by concrete partitions. Concrete was used instead of wood because of its superiority from a sanitary and health point of view.<sup>(5)</sup> Vermin were kept down as the bunks were easily hosed and the incidence of pneumonia was found to be less in compounds where the men slept on partitioned-off concrete bunks.

---

(1) As far as possible men of different tribes did not share a room ostensibly because inter-tribal warfare was to be prevented. This may have been true. However, there was also the possibility that this was part of a policy of "divide and rule" which perpetuated tribal differences and was inimical to united action by African miners.

Buckle implicitly recognised this when he listed as one of three safeguards against disturbances emanating from the mine compounds the inter-tribal jealousies "which have always rendered it possible, in the last resort, to protect Europeans by utilising one tribe against another."

N.G.I., (1913), Para. 476.

(2) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 127.

(3) Orenstein, Dr. A.J. "Diet of Natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines," Race Relations, First Quarter 1939, p. 16.

(4) First installed on the Rand Mines Group Circa 1914/1915.

(5) Evidence of the Transvaal Mine Medical Officers' Association, printed together with the Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), pp. 120, 121.

Nevertheless, despite its advantages, concrete is hard, uncomfortable and cold. A "chill-proof" layer to improve these conditions had formerly been provided, but had been dispensed with in 1935 by permission of the Director of Native Labour. Thus by 1943 the African miner slept in crowded quarters on what he constantly referred to (in evidence to the Lansdown Commission) as "sleeping coffins". Blankets and mattresses had to be provided by the miners themselves.

Of all the forms of wages in kind, the provision of adequate free food for the African miners most clearly benefited both the industry and the Africans themselves. Working on the mines was exhausting and energy-consuming - to complete his work, mostly manual and unskilled, the African miner had to be fed scientifically to achieve maximum nutritional energy and vitamin value at a low cost. A properly balanced diet improved his health and raised his productivity.

Prior to going on shift, each black worker was issued with his daily bread rations (5oz.), unsweetened porridge and coffee with sugar. No food was provided underground during the course of the day, as no "practicable scheme" could be devised. The principal meal of the day was taken during the early afternoon when the men returned from their shifts. It usually consisted of "hot, hard (i.e. non-liquid) mealie meal porridge, beans or mealies, and a meat and vegetable stew."<sup>(1)</sup> Fish was provided in the stew for those who preferred it to meat. Three pounds of raw meat per man was usually issued weekly, in addition to the meat stew. This meat was cooked by the men themselves on the fires in their rooms. During 1943, however, as a result of war scarcities, the Government gave instructions for the mealie meal and meat rations to be reduced.<sup>(2)</sup> A non-alcoholic beverage "Marewu" (fermented, thin maize meal porridge) was issued twice daily and "Kaffir Beer" (made of millet), with an alcoholic content of less than 4 per cent, twice weekly.<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 380.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 7.7.1943.

(3) Orenstein, op cit, pp. 16, 17.

The Chamber argued that the "excellent feeding" was "one of the most important factors in the popularity of mine work".<sup>(1)</sup> This may well have been true as there do not seem to have been many other reasons why the mines should have been "popular" amongst the Africans.

It was frequently suggested<sup>(2)</sup> that the fact that the vast majority of Africans gained weight whilst employed on the mines, as was shown by the records of their weights, which were taken on arrival, departure and at approximately five-weekly intervals during their employment, indicated that the rations provided were ample.

It is indeed true that in spite of the strenuous nature of their work, the black miner's physical conditions improved as the result of his mine diet. However, this is perhaps not so much a recommendation of the food provided on the mines, but a reflection on the poor quality and meagre quantity of the food supplies of the Reserves.

Strict precautions were taken to employ only men who were physically fit for the strain of mine labour. In pursuance of this aim, the recruit was examined in his home area before leaving for the Witwatersrand, on his arrival at the W.N.L.A. compound in Johannesburg, and again when he first arrived at a mine by the mine's own medical officer.

The African accepted for employment was well looked after. Every man was examined as he returned from his shift and, if necessary, treated at the dressing stations. If the injury needed more than first aid treatment or if he became ill, the African miner was sent to one of the 43 mine hospitals.<sup>(3)</sup> These hospitals provided beds for just over 2 per cent of the total African labour force, which allowed a constant reserve as the number in hospital had never been higher than 1.5 per cent. In hospital the

---

(1) Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 13, Para. 6.

(2) For example, see the Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 13, Para. 6 and the Star of 25.5.1943.

(3) There were nearly 8,000 beds on the mine hospitals in 1943 as compared to a total of approximately 18,000 throughout the Union for non-Europeans in 1940.

African was cared for by a medical officer of the mine medical service. There were more than 60 such medical officers, which meant a ratio of one doctor to approximately 6,000 men, or a doctor for every 90 patients. The European nursing staff ratio was one for every 30 beds, while there was, on average, an African nurse for every 17 or 18 beds. <sup>(1)</sup>

Each day spent by a patient in the hospital was taken as a shift worked towards the completion of his contract. He received no pay, however, unless he did light work and then only at the convalescent rate of 1s. 6d. per day.

Considerable importance was attached to preventing accidents. Propaganda and "safety first" measures, as well as the training of 10 to 15 per cent of the African labour complement on each mine in First Aid, reduced the death rate per 1,000 per annum from 2.60 in 1930 to 2.20 in 1935, and 1.74 in 1940 to 1.48 in 1943. <sup>(2)</sup>

Although feeding and health conditions were closely related and it was in the interests of the mines to maintain high standards in this respect, certain diseases had by 1946 become more prevalent because of cost-reducing changes made in the diet.

Reviewing the incidence of disease among its African labour force over a number of years, the Department of Health of the Central Mining - Rand Mines Group <sup>(3)</sup> found that although the number of shifts lost owing to accidents had been steadily declining, since 1942 <sup>(4)</sup> there had been

- 
- (1) Star, 24.8.1943.  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C., (1943), pp. 14, 15.  
Memorandum of the Transvaal Mine Medical Officer's Association rebutting certain allegations contained in the Statement submitted by the African Mine Workers' Union printed in Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), pp. 130-137.
  - (2) T.C.M. (1943), p. 125.
  - (3) This group employed nearly a third of the total black labour force of the industry.
  - (4) The disease death rate per thousand men had decreased from 5.02 in 1938, to 3.03 in 1939 and 2.94 in 1942.  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 16, Para. 9.

a slight but progressive increase in the shifts lost through disease. (1)

The Report stated:

" 'The rise in the disease rates, in particular those of respiratory diseases, and the increase in shifts lost can reasonably be related to the food shortages. In fact, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they are so related. This conclusion (was) supported by comparative tables which (showed) a steady rise in the cost of food per Native from 1936 to 1939 and a steep rise from 1940 to 1945. . . . Overall feeding costs for the group rose from £767,680 in 1939 to £1,140,148 in 1945 over which period the average number of natives employed fell from 103,226 to 94,878. In regard to these figures the Report added: It should be noted that the increased costs were not due to increases in foodstuffs consumed. On the contrary, owing to the shortages of certain foodstuffs the issues, particularly of meat, had to be curtailed.' "

The result was that the African workers received insufficient first class protein and animal fat to do hard manual work, as the increases in the issues of second-class protein and vegetable fat (in the form of beans and peanuts) did not compensate for the curtailment of part of the meat ration. " (2)

In addition to providing the food, quarters and medical attention already discussed, the industry assisted the African miner in several other respects as well.

The deferred pay system was an attempt by the industry partly to encourage its workers to share their earnings with their dependants and partly to ensure that a proportion of the mineworker's cash earnings was spent in the area from which he was recruited. For the "tropicals" and other "foreign" mine labourers there existed a system of compulsory deferment of pay whereby the African miner received a fixed proportion (3) of his cash earnings only on his return home. The black workers of the

- 
- (1) There is a strong presumption that this was the situation throughout the industry.
  - (2) Umteteli Wa Bantu, 27.8.1946.  
"Poverty Hunger and Disease" by Margaret Ballinger, M.P.
  - (3) The minimum percentage was laid down in the Agreement which permitted recruiting.

Union and High Commission Territories were not compelled to forego the collection of any portion of their cash wages until the completion of their contracts, but could, however, take advantage of a deferred payment system which was entirely voluntary. The miner indicated the amount he wished to draw each pay day (on completion of 30 shifts), while the remaining amount was put aside and, with any other sums saved and deposited with the compound manager, was returned to him upon returning home after completion of his contract.

A certain amount of the deferred pay was retained by the Native Recruiting Corporation to meet immediate demands. The balance was paid over to a Government-appointed body, the Deferred Pay Interest Board of Control, <sup>(1)</sup> which invested it in Government Securities at 1.3/4 per cent and distributed the interest to undertakings and institutions directly associated with the welfare of Africans. From the establishment of the Voluntary Deferred Pay System in 1918, the total distributed in this way had, by 1943, amounted to approximately £148,000. <sup>(2)</sup> In that year the interest on the fund's deposits amounted to £9,800, the services of the board being utilised by over 49 per cent of South African and Protectorate mineworkers. <sup>(3)</sup> The scheme had certainly grown in importance; whereas the amount of deferred wages paid out for the five years 1926 to 1930 was

---

(1) The Board consisted of three Government nominees and three representatives of the N.R.C., with the Director of Native Labour as Chairman.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Appendix M.

(3) Evidence of Mr. J.H. Tandy, Acting Director of Native Labour and ex officio chairman of the Deferred Pay Interest Fund and Mr. P.J. Bennett, secretary of the Fund to the W.N.W.C.

Star 29.5.1943.

The system had enjoyed immediate popularity among the recruited African miners from the Union and Protectorates and 28 per cent by 1920, 33 per cent by 1925 and 52 per cent by 1930 had elected to come under the system.

N.E.C. Para. 927.

The figure for 1943 included all workers, whether contracted or A.V.S.

£775,000,<sup>(1)</sup> the annual figure paid to the workers at their homes by the 1940's was about £750,000.<sup>(2)</sup>

The interest from deposits for safekeeping or remittance and of sums retained under the deferred pay system amounted in the aggregate to a considerable amount, but the individual sums were so small as to make it impracticable to distribute the interest among the black miners. If the African miner had been given the interest which accrued from his money, each man would have received on the average about 2s. per annum. However, this would have involved the N.R.C. in tremendous additional expenses - the administrative costs in 1943 already amounting to £3,000 per annum<sup>(3)</sup> - which would hardly have been justified. In allocating grants the Board aimed at directing the money where it would best benefit the mine labourer and his family. Most of the beneficiaries were religious missions and churches, hospitals, welfare and sports organisations. No money was voted for the education of the African, this being a "matter for the Government".<sup>(4)</sup>

Certain articles of protective clothing were provided free, while others were sold below cost to the black miner. Each underground worker received a free issue of a protective jacket as protection against the cold,<sup>(5)</sup> and, when considered "desirable", a free set of shin and leg guards. The boots which were issued to the underground workers, and to those surface workers who were required to wear boots for protection while at work, cost 16s. 6d. per pair, but were supplied to the African miner at 14s. 6d.

---

(1) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 928.

(2) Star, 29.5.1943.

The discrepancy in the totals for 1930 and 1940 was in part due to differences in the numbers employed and in part to the increased use of the remittance scheme.

(3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 419.

(4) Star, 29.5.1943.

(5) At an annual cost of £120,000.

Evidence on the life of a pair of such mine boots varied. Mr. F.C. Geary, boot inspector of the N.R.C., claimed that a pair which had been properly cared for lasted for from 90 to 270 shifts for underground workers, and from 12 to 24 months for surface workers.<sup>(1)</sup> African miners questioned at random by the Lansdown Commission had unanimously stated that their boots lasted only two or three months.<sup>(2)</sup> The "life expectancy" of a pair of boots included one series of repairs which cost the labourer 7s. 6d.<sup>(3)</sup>

Contrary to the generally recognised principle of providing employees with such protective wear as is demanded by the nature of the work performed, the black underground labourer had to incur a heavy expense in providing his own boots. If we accept the estimates of the Chamber<sup>(4)</sup> this amounted to £2. 5s. 10d. per annum (for 2 pairs of boots<sup>(5)</sup> and 2. 1/4 sets of repairs),<sup>(6)</sup> while, according to the labourers themselves the expenditure each year for an underground worker on boots and repairs was £4. 8s. 0d. (four pairs and four sets of repairs). In either case the burden on the mineworker in 1942 who earned an average cash wage of £2. 17s. 5d. per month (of 26 shifts) was enormous.

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 118.

(2) Star, 18. 8. 1943.

(3) The Crown Mines were an exception in that they provided free repairs of all boots.  
W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 295.

(4) The Lansdown Commission concluded that "in some cases the lifetime of the article (was) shorter" than the Chamber estimate.  
W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 292.

(5) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 36.

(6) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 296.

**APPENDIX A**

**Permanent Workers.**

The black labour force of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines consisted almost entirely of men from the reserves and neighbouring territories who had left their families behind. There was, however, a small group of workers, distinct from the mine labourers, who were permanent employees of the mines and lived on the Witwatersrand with their families. They were, for the most part, the clerks and "indunas" who numbered approximately 1900.<sup>(1)</sup>

This had always been so. The Native Economic Commission of 1932<sup>(2)</sup> stated that of an African labour force of approximately 198,000<sup>(3)</sup> employed on the gold mines, only 1,518 men were housed with their families. By 1943 the position was not much improved and only .84 per cent<sup>(4)</sup> of the African labour force, about 2,455 men, lived permanently on the Witwatersrand during January of that year.<sup>(5)</sup>

The recommended scale of wages and other conditions of employment of these workers were contained in "Standing Instructions" issued by the Gold Producers' Committee in 1939.<sup>(6)</sup> As we shall see these recommended conditions differed significantly from those of the migrant labourer.

All married clerks (usually termed "mabalans") were to be provided with rent-free living accommodation for their families on the mines.

- 
- (1) According to the Lansdown Commission, the number of clerks was 1,935. (W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 96).  
In the breakdown on the classification of surface work given by the Chamber of Mines, "indunas" and clerks numbered 1,871.  
(Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "C" to Statement No. 1).
- (2) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 833.
- (3) The Commission used the term "at present" but did not state in which year or month. By definition the actual number of permanent workers was unlikely to alter although the total number varied greatly. We have used the total for 19th May, 1931, given in Annexure 21 - IV, p. 300.
- (4) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 30.
- (5) The 1932 figure was .77 per cent.
- (6) W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 52.

Because of lack of suitable accommodation on the mines, a few clerks lived outside the mining properties with their families. Some of them received an allowance of 30s. per month in lieu of this accommodation, while others did not receive the benefit of this allowance. Unmarried clerks lived in the compounds in accommodation separated from the latter but received the same cooked rations as mine labourers. The married men who lived with their families were supplied with free fuel, light and uncooked rations for themselves as well as for their families.

The 1939 Instructions recommended the classification of the clerks into three grades for which the respective minimum rates were £4, £6 and £7.10s. for each 30 shifts worked, a scale of £7.10s. to £10. per 30 shifts for "indunas", and a minimum of £3 for each 30 shifts worked by probationers. However, these recommended wage rates had little resemblance to those actually operative in 1943. The Chamber's classification of surface workers listed only "indunas" and first and second grade clerks. Moreover, approximately forty-five per cent of the "indunas" received less than £7.10s. per 30 shifts. <sup>(1)</sup>

Leave arrangements for clerks varied from mine to mine. Unpaid leave was generally granted through a discharge which was cancelled if the clerk returned before the expiry of the period arranged between himself and the Mine Manager. <sup>(2)</sup> In the same way promotions and increases in wages were the ad hoc decisions of the mine management; furthermore, there was no scheme for promotion within the grades.

A "sympathetic attitude" was recommended in the matter of allowing meetings of the clerks' "trade union" in the compounds. <sup>(3)</sup> In addition, by 1943 the Chamber recognised the association even though it was not a

---

(1) Derived from the Evidence of the G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "C" to Statement No. 1.

(2) Evidence of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines Native Clerks' Association to W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 5.

(3) W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 52  
"Standing Instructions" issued in 1939.

registered trade union. <sup>(1)</sup> It appears that it was mainly due to this that many clerks suspected the association of being under the influence of the Chamber, with the result that the membership was small relative to the total number of clerks. <sup>(2)</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of these suspicions, the Lansdown Commission suggested that "recognition of the association (had) led to improvement in the status of clerks". <sup>(3)</sup>

- 
- (1) The Association claimed to have existed as early as 1920 as the "African Mine Clerks' Association" and have changed its name to the "Witwatersrand Gold Mines Native Clerks' Association" on re-organisation in 1936.  
Evidence of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines Clerks' Association to W.N.W.C. (1943).  
A.W.G. Champion, in his capacity as Chairman, gave evidence to the Mining Regulations Commission (1925) on behalf of the "Transvaal Mine Clerks' Association".
- (2) Various given by the Association as 547 in its Memorandum and later as 400 in evidence.  
Star, 1.6.1943.
- (3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 96.

**APPENDIX B.**

**Percentile histograms of rates per shift  
for all African employees of the  
Witwatersrand gold mines, 1931 and 1943.**

ASSUMPTIONS FOR DIAGRAM:

For the purposes of the diagrammatic representation, the following assumptions have been made regarding shift wages as recorded in the sources from which the diagram was derived:

For 1931, rates "less than 1s. 8d." were taken as 19d.

For 1943, rates "less than 1s. 9d." were taken as 20d.

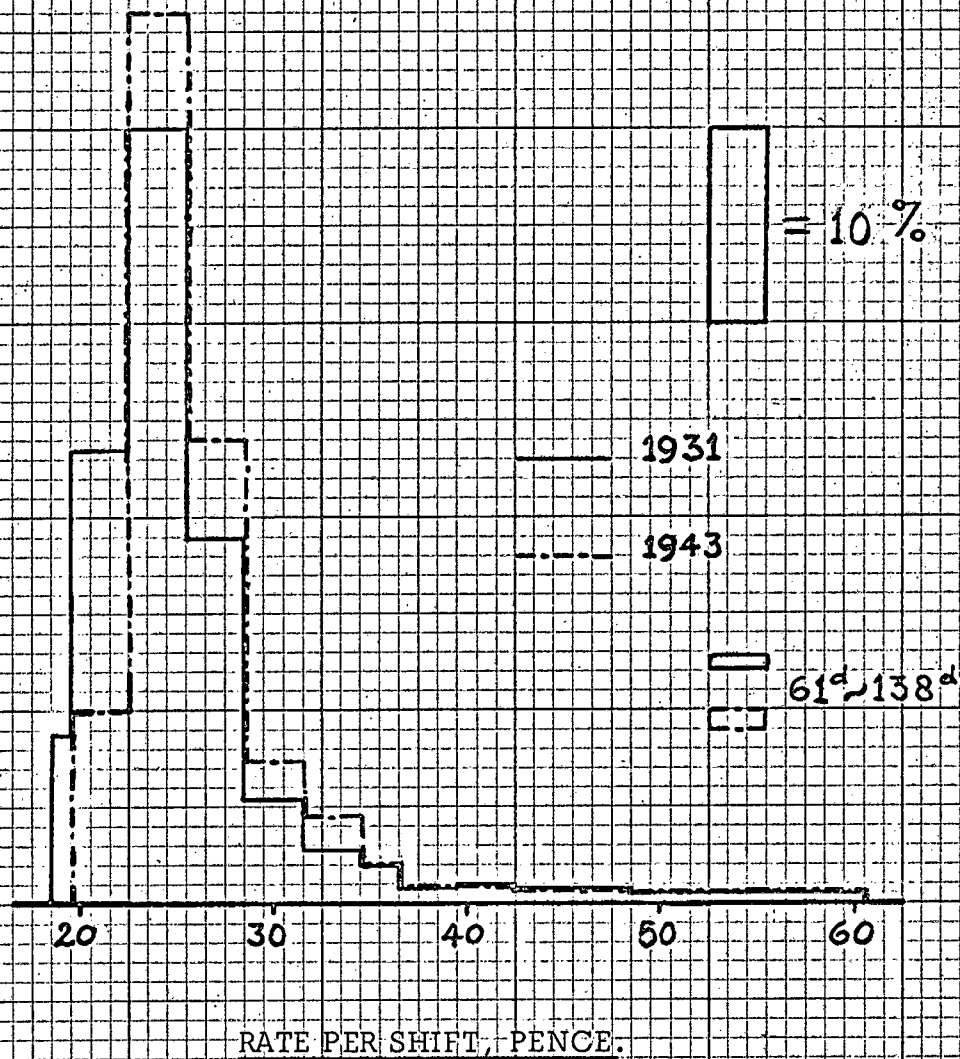
rates "over 9s." and "over 11s." were taken as not exceeding 11s. 6d.

The percentages at shift rates from 61d. to 138d. are represented in the diagram by the small rectangles detached from the base line.

EXAMINATION OF THE DIAGRAM SHOWS THE FOLLOWING:

Both in 1931 and in 1943, shift rates were centred around 25d., the modal class being in each case 23d. to 25d. Only a small percentage of employees were at rates above 36d. (5.5 per cent in 1931 and 1943, to one decimal place).

Ignoring any minor alteration in the percentages at rates above 36d., one may say that from 1931 to 1943 the total percentage in the classes "19d." and "20d. to 22d." decreased by 15.2 per cent, from 26.4 per cent to 11.2 per cent; and the percentage in higher shift rate classes increased correspondingly. The increase was mainly in the next higher classes, i.e. in the class "23d. to 25d.", an increase of 6.2 per cent, from 39.8 per cent to 46 per cent, and in the class "26d. to 28d.", an increase of 5.1 per cent, from 18.9 per cent to 24.0 per cent.



PERCENTILE HISTOGRAM OF RATES PER SHIFT FOR ALL AFRICAN EMPLOYEES ON THE WITWATERSRAND GOLD MINES, 1931 and 1943.

DERIVED FROM:

Evidence of the Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission, U.G. 21 of 1944, Statement No. 1: Annexure "C".

Report of Native Economic Commission, 1930-1932, U.G. 22 of 1932, Annexure 21-IV, p. 300.

**APPENDIX C.**

**Average cash wages per shift of African  
labour on the Witwatersrand gold mines,  
1930 - 1942.**

AVERAGE CASH EARNINGS OF ALL AFRICANS ON THE  
WITWATERSRAND PRODUCING GOLD MINES, 1933 - January, 1943.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Per Shift</u>	<u>Per Month of 26 Shifts</u>
1933	2s. 1. 2d.	54s. 7d.
1934	2s. 1. 2d.	54s. 7d.
1935	2s. 1. 2d.	54s. 7d.
1936	2s. 1. 5d.	55s. 3d.
1937	2s. 1. 6d.	55s. 6d.
1938	2s. 1. 9d.	56s. 1d.
1939	2s. 2. 2d.	56s. 9d.
1940	2s. 2. 3d.	56s. 11d.
1941	2s. 2. 4d.	57s. 2d.
1942	2s. 2. 5d.	57s. 5d.
Jan. 1943	2s. 3. 0d.	58s. 6d.

SOURCE:

Evidence of the Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission, Statement No. 1 : Annexure "B".

**AFRICAN LABOUR CONDITIONS: THE  
MIGRANT, HIS INCOME AND EXPENDI-  
TURE.**

One of the characteristics of African economic development has been the migration of large numbers of Africans from their homes to towns, mines, and plantations, to supplement their claims on the subsistence economy with a money income. During the early stages of contact with the money economy, "the peasants produced a cash crop on a spare-time basis while continuing to produce their subsistence requirements. The migrant labour system is a counterpart of that, representing a partial entry into the wage economy. Under this system, those who came to work in the mines and plantations still retained a foothold in the subsistence economy".<sup>(1)</sup> Initially migration occurred because of the difference between the economic opportunities in different regions. However, when the voluntary supply of migrant labour became inadequate, direct and, more often, indirect pressure, in the form of poll, or hut taxes,<sup>(2)</sup> was applied. New wants and luxuries gradually became semi-necessities and contributed to the flow of labour. This, indeed, was the pattern of development in South Africa, where the discovery of diamonds and gold gave rise to a nearly insatiable demand for migrant labour. Over the years the gold mining industry became the epicentre or vortex of the system, drawing workers from far afield. The extent of this has been picturesquely described by the Chamber of Mines itself:

"They come on foot, on horseback, on bicycles, by dug-out canoe, by lake and river streamers, in lorries, by train and some even by air. They come from as far afield as 2,000 miles. They come from all points of the compass - from the peaceful hills of the Transkei, from the lion country of the Bechuanaland bush, down the broad reaches of the Zambesi, from the tropical shores of Lake Nyasa and the mountain fastnesses of Basutoland. They come, too, in their thousands from the hills and valleys of Portuguese East Africa, from the rocky uplands of Sekukuniland, the tangled swamp country of the Okavango delta and the

---

(1) Myint, H. The Economics of the Developing Countries, Hutchinson, 1964, p. 58.

(2) The poll tax was levied on every African over a certain age while the hut tax depended on the ownership of huts.

green fields of Swaziland. From these far corners of Southern Africa men from more than 100 different tribes are attracted every year to the Witwatersrand by the magnet of the mining industry".<sup>(1)</sup>

The vital importance of the gold mining industry to the development of South Africa has already been discussed.<sup>(2)</sup> The industry was, in turn, dependent on migrant labour which was "a fundamental factor"<sup>(3)</sup> in its profitability. The migrant's "income" from the Reserves was taken into account when his requirements were assessed, as he earned this income "largely as a result of, the fact that he (was) granted.....land to cultivate, and pasturage, with practically free occupation of both" by the Government. This "substantial subsidy" enabled him to work "in the intermittent fashion which suits him and accords with his historic background and tribal circumstances."<sup>(4)</sup> The industry was based on the labour of the landed African, who accepted work on the mines at the then existing rates of pay.

The Chamber contended that the remedy for the comparatively less fortunate landless class of African miner was the provision of more land. If the employment of these men required higher wages, then, like the urbanised African, they would become "unsuitable" for work on the gold mines. Furthermore, it was suggested that the economic position of the "average" employee should be considered when assessing the requirements of the black miner, as the landless African constituted an insignificant proportion of the total employed.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Chamber's efforts to perpetuate the migrant labour system are understandable. The switch-over to a stabilized labour force would

---

(1) Mining Survey, June 1951, T.C.M., quoted by Hobart Houghton, D, "Men of Two Worlds: Some Aspects of Migratory Labour", S.A.J.E., 1960, pp. 181, 182.

(2) See p. 119.

(3) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 160.

(4) *ibid*, p. 173.

(5) *ibid*.

have involved raising wages and the heavy expenses of converting a casual labour force into a permanent one. However, the Chamber did not stop at this but went on to justify the system on moral grounds. The word "monstrous" was used to describe the process of the "detrribalizing and converting" of the African "into a discontented black proletariat in the towns."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is difficult to believe that the Chamber was, in fact, entirely serious when it asked the rhetorical question: "Is there any other body of workers in the world so fortunately situated?"<sup>(2)</sup> Apparently it was, for in evidence to the Native Laws Commission of 1947, the Chamber asserted that the migratory system gave the African labourers "a freedom no other worker in the world enjoys, enabling them to retain their valuable heritage and yet be free to choose the occupation they wish, when they wish, and for as long as they wish."<sup>(3)</sup> This statement goes far beyond mere special pleading in its idealisation of a far from ideal situation.

In evidence before the Commission, the reference to the "miserable and depressed conditions in the Reserves" was denounced by the Chamber as a "parrot cry sedulously echoed by agitators and Parliamentarians".<sup>(4)</sup> The average black miner had, on the basis of the Chamber's estimates, "a considerable surplus of earnings over his economic requirements", which "he could easily augment.....by increasing to some extent his period of work on the mines without detriment to his tribal and family life".<sup>(5)</sup> As we shall see, this standard rationalisation was largely devoid of substance.

There had been a gradual tendency, with the passage of time, for the black miners from what was for many years classified as British

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 150.

(2) *ibid*

(3) Evidence of G.P.C. to Native Laws Commission of Enquiry (1947), p. 39.

(4) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 156.

(5) *ibid*, p. 174.

South Africa<sup>(1)</sup> to become "more regular workers". At the turn of the century they spent an estimated 3 to 6 months away from home,<sup>(2)</sup> by 1924 the Chamber insisted on nine months' contracts, and by 1931 the average length of service was 10.88 months.<sup>(3)</sup> By 1942 the average period of service was 352 shifts, which was equal to 13.6 calendar months; the total period of absence from home for each visit to the mines averaged about 14 months.<sup>(4)</sup> Together with this increase in the length of service between 1931 and 1942, there had, in addition, been a decrease in the time spent by each man at home between periods of work. The average period spent in the reserves by an African mineworker in 1931 was 8.1 months,<sup>(5)</sup> the comparable figure for 1943 was 7.6 months.<sup>(6)</sup> Over 20 per cent of the British South African labour force which had previously been employed on the mines<sup>(7)</sup> in 1943, had returned "after what may be regarded as no more than a holiday visit to the Reserves".<sup>(8)</sup> The breakdown of the time spent in the Reserves by these men is given below:<sup>(9)</sup>

- 
- (1) Africans from the Union and the Protectorates.
  - (2) South African Native Affairs Commission (1903-05), Para. 365.
  - (3) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 815.
  - (4) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 35.  
The balance was the time spent travelling to and from the Reserves and other inevitable absences from home.
  - (5) N.E.C. (1930), Para. 816.
  - (6) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 202.
  - (7) More than 80 per cent.
  - (8) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 209.
  - (9) *ibid*, Appendix "I", p. 55.

Duration of time spent in Reserves between periods of work by  
British South Africans previously employed on the mines, (Nov. 1943)

<u>Months</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	7.96
2	6.17
3	6.53
4	7.63
5	6.66
6	9.87
7	3.57
8	4.50
9	5.59
10	3.86
11	1.40
12 and over	36.26

These percentages are significant as they show that many African miners worked on the mines almost continuously. The Lansdown Commission considered the 1943 average length of service (13.6 months) and stay at home (7.6 months) to be a "wholesome standard".<sup>(1)</sup> By implication the Commissioners therefore acknowledged that there was "undue interference" in the family lives of 45 per cent of the men. For many of them the Reserve income was only a myth. It was the poorer classes who would have desired to augment their earnings, yet, contrary to the over-simplified suggestion by the Chamber that they could choose mine work when they wished and for as long as they wished, the expedient of working for longer periods was not open to them.

In the course of outlining the "social structure" of the African people in its evidence before the Native Laws Commission of 1947, the Chamber stated that the change from a migratory to a permanent labour force would be so great that "those opposed to the present system (i.e. migratory) should produce the most convincing reasons before any deliberate attempt to make even a partial change is contemplated.....the ultimate results of any ill-considered action might prove disastrous to the people of South Africa as a whole".<sup>(2)</sup> In the next breath, however, the Chamber gave the

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 243.

(2) Evidence of G.P.C. to N.L.C. (1947), p. 37, Para. 1.

very reason why the migratory system should not have been retained. It said: "In the tribal system of the native people of South Africa there is a clearly defined structure of which the family unit is the root".<sup>(1)</sup> By striking at the family, the migratory labour system threatened the whole social structure of the African, without replacing it with anything else. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Urban Natives (the Smit Committee) of 1942 referred to the "maladjustment arising from broken family ties" in respect of Africans in compounds. It was common to all societies that the "family (was) the fundamental unit upon which the community is built. A system which runs contrary to the maintenance of this unit of social life is in essence unsound. . . . . the Committee (had) received extensive evidence of the detrimental results of broken family life".<sup>(2)</sup>

The social evils resulting from the migrant labour system was not confined to its disastrous effects on African family life. It was suggested by many witnesses that the system of African contract labour, which meant long separations between husband and wife and distorted the sex ratios in the country and the towns, was largely responsible for the increasing prevalence of adultery, prostitution, venereal disease, juvenile delinquency etc., among the African people. The evidence of the South African Institute of Race Relations was typical of these views:

"The long separations of husbands and wives cause unfaithfulness on both sides, and undermine the discipline of the home in relation to children. African homes are in effect "broken homes" for a large part of their existence, and social workers know that the "broken home" is at the heart of a great many grave social problems, such as adultery, desertion, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and adult crime".<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to N.L.C. (1947), p. 37, Para. 2.

(2) Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives of the Department of Native Affairs, (1942), Para. 47.

(3) Evidence of South African Institute of Race Relations to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 7., Para. 36.

The Chamber's contrary view was summed up in this unconvincing argument:

"It has been said that the compound system leads to immorality. This is the result of regarding the problem through European eyes. The fact is that, fundamentally, the sex life of a tribal native is covered by a very strict code. As an example of this, it should be recognised that in a number of native tribes from the time it is established that a woman is pregnant until her baby is weaned, sex relationship between man and wife cease. All credit is due to the native male for the traditional manner in which he accustoms himself to practise continence during such periods, which are not infrequently spent at work on the gold mines. It is, perhaps, unfortunate in this respect that the high moral standard of the vast majority should fail to receive public recognition through the failure of the comparatively few to live up to the standards laid down by tribal law and custom. Moral standards are generally lower in detribalised urban communities than in the native territories. Antagonists of the compound system refer vaguely to the growth of ill-health, illicit liquor sellers, prostitution, venereal disease and all those consequences of vicious living as though they can be directly traced to this system. In point of fact, the reverse is the case. Tribal ethics tend to lessen excessive impulses among natives from the Reserves". (1)

This statement tells us a great deal about the Chamber's attitude. It shut its eyes to the problems, and did not face them.

In the words of Professor D. Hobart Houghton, migratory labour is "an evil canker at the heart of our whole society, wasteful of labour, destructive of ambition, a wrecker of homes and a symptom of our fundamental failure to create a coherent and progressive economic society." (2) The trend, which has been discussed above, for Africans to work on the gold mines for longer and longer periods and spend less time in the reserves exacerbated an already serious problem.

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to N.L.C. (1947), p.31, Para.9.

(2) Hobart, Houghton, D., "Men of Two Worlds: Some Aspects of Migratory Labour," S.A.J.E., 1960, p.189.

The Commission admitted that the mining industry was under no further obligation as regards wages than to make up the difference between the African's Reserve income and the amount required to keep his family and himself. Because of the "community of benefit and obligation which (existed) between the Government and the gold mining industry", it was considered "unnecessary" and "unprofitable" to examine the argument that the income from the Reserves should be regarded in the same light as the private income of a European employee.<sup>(1)</sup> The Smit Committee of 1942 had earlier investigated the problem and found that such an argument for low wages was only acceptable "if it (was) considered equitable that industry should accept what would amount to a subsidy from the employee fortunate enough to possess private resources, a frankly untenable position".<sup>(2)</sup> It was, in fact, argued by witnesses<sup>(3)</sup> before the Lansdown Commission that it was actually the Reserves which subsidised the gold mining industry, for cheap migrant labour made otherwise "non-payable" mines profitable to shareholders. In addition, the subsidised gold mines, through taxation, assisted nearly every region and sector, except the Reserves. The serious and progressive deterioration of the Reserves referred to by, inter alia, the Native Affairs Commission in its Report for the years 1937-38 - "it is notorious that the existing native locations and reserves are congested, denuded, over-stocked, eroded and for the most part in deplorable condition"<sup>(4)</sup> - is hard to reconcile with the picture of the migratory labour system depicted by the Chamber of Mines. It has, on the contrary, been used to add weight to the argument that the reserves were bled in the interests of the mines and other sectors.

Conditions in the reserves were investigated at some length by the Lansdown Commission which visited some of the areas in the Cape, Natal

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 224.

(2) Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives of the Department of Native Affairs, (1942), Para. 47.

(3) See, for example, Evidence of Dr. G.W. Gale to the W.N.W.C. (1943).

(4) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 122.

and the Transvaal, and also sent out questionnaires to ascertain relevant information. With few exceptions it was found that the Reserves had become overpopulated and overstocked, causing a decline in the productivity of the land. The economic condition of the inhabitants had consequently been "detrimentally affected".<sup>(1)</sup>

Although the Chamber had contended that the Transkei was "practically self-supporting from the food point of view, the import of grain being very small",<sup>(2)</sup> it was found that there had been a serious decline of grain production in that area and a steady increase in the amount of grain which it imported. The figures are given in the table below:<sup>(3)</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Actual crop of maize reaped</u> <u>Bags</u>	<u>Actual crop of kaffir corn reaped</u> <u>Bags</u>	<u>Maize imported</u> <u>Bags</u>
1939	1,838,600	108,050	30,570
1940	1,310,050	85,550	117,830
1941	1,398,700	96,580	344,220
1942	1,381,000	89,450	259,680

The accepted requirements per unit of population were 2.75 bags of grain per annum; the average available for consumption, taking account of the maize consumed while green and the maize imported both by rail and road, was estimated to be only 1.6 bags per head per annum<sup>(4)</sup> over the period 1939-42.

In the Ciskei, too, grain production fell far below the needs of the inhabitants. The yield in 1943 was approximately 8.1 bags per family per annum as against the accepted requirements of 13.75 bags.<sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 121.

(2) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 101.

(3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 138.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 140.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 149.

The South African Institute of Race Relations Memorandum to the Lansdown Commission quoted the following description of the Glen Grey district in the Ciskei which appeared in the South African Medical Journal of 1943:

"It is erroneous to regard a Native Reserve as an agricultural area. It would be more accurate to speak of it as a well-spread residential area, where the average family unit makes no more out of his land than the average city dweller pottering around in his backyard garden.....As an agricultural venture, this Native Reserve must be regarded as a total failure. Not only are its production figures negligible, but the methods employed by the residents in their efforts to squeeze a livelihood off the land are destructive. Overstocking has denuded the veld and started soil erosion on a large scale". (1)

The same Memorandum quoted the Third Interim Report of the Industrial and Agricultural Requirements Commission:

"There is every likelihood that production will decline (in the Reserves) as the cumulative effect of soil depletion and erosion gathers momentum. If unchecked, a continuation of the situation now prevailing in the Reserves must undermine a large part of the Union's land resources". (2)

Not all soil exhaustion and erosion can be attributed to the system of migrant labour; there are several other contributory causes, such as the system of land tenure. An important factor must also have been the absence of the younger men, i. e. of the more vigorous elements of the population, for increasingly long periods which must have adversely affected efficient farming techniques and animal husbandry.

With regard to the reserves in the Cape Province, the Commission concluded, therefore, that insufficient crops were reaped and insufficient stock owned to feed the resident population. Numerically, the Cape was of considerable importance to the mines, as 30 per cent of the total

---

(1) Evidence of South African Institute of Race Relations to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 4., Para. 22.

(2) *ibid.*, p. 5., Para. 23.

employed and 50 per cent of the British South Africans employed on the gold mines during 1946 came from the Cape Province. <sup>(1)</sup>

Conditions in the reserves of the Transvaal, Natal and Zululand, and Swaziland, were considered to be satisfactory; in the rest of British South Africa (Orange Free State, Basutoland and Bechuanaland) they were similar to those which prevailed in the Cape Province. The number employed from the former areas in 1946 was approximately 13 per cent of the total, and from the latter 17 per cent. The "foreign" blacks on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand during 1946 numbered approximately 40 per cent of the total employed. <sup>(2)</sup> The Governments of Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Portuguese East Africa refused to give evidence to the Lansdown Commission, so that the investigation of conditions in these areas were severely hampered. Nevertheless, on the information available, it was felt that the "foreign" miners were a "good deal better" off than the Union and High Commission Territory men. <sup>(3)</sup>

The uneven distribution of wealth was a feature repeatedly referred to by the Lansdown Commission. While some families owned no stock and had no arable land to cultivate, a small wealthy minority, on the other hand, not only had the use of many acres of land but also owned many cattle and sheep. The range of wealth, especially in the Union reserves, was very great. In the Transkei, for example, officials estimated that approximately 20,000 married men (out of a population of approximately 260,000 families) were without allotments in 1943. <sup>(4)</sup> A typical survey of the Territory showed that 44 per cent of the families had no cattle, 20 per cent owned from 1 to 5 head, and the remaining 36 per cent more than 5 head. <sup>(5)</sup> The extent of the mal-distribution was extremely large -

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to N.L.C. (1947), p. 17.

(2) *ibid*

(3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 183.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 125.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 129.

nearly a half of the population of the Union reserves owned no cattle whatever<sup>(1)</sup> - and further complicated the measurement of the economic requirements of the migrant workers.

In the light of the Commission's findings about the general insufficiency of food in the reserves, its conclusions on the health conditions in the Union reserves is not surprising:

"The Commission is satisfied that the allegation as to the unsatisfactory state of health of the rural natives and the existence of malnutrition in the reserves generally is no 'parrot cry', but, on the contrary, that the conditions give cause for grave concern."<sup>(2)</sup>

In arriving at this conclusion the Commission quoted a number of authorities. Dr. Peter Allan, the Secretary for Public Health, had tested 6,508 Africans in the Ciskei and Transkei with tuberculin between 1924-26 66 per cent reacted positively.<sup>(3)</sup> The Chief Magistrate for the Transkeian Territories reported in 1936: "In all districts tuberculosis continues to take a heavy toll. . . . . The menace of the disease looms very large and the general physique of the native is steadily deteriorating".<sup>(4)</sup> Dr. F.W. Fox of the South African Institute of Medical Research said that malnutrition and disease in the Transkei and Ciskei were widespread and referred to the African's deteriorating standard of physique.<sup>(5)</sup> Dr. Mary McGregor of the Umtata Health Unit reported: "Nearly 50 per cent of the babies born in the Umtata district died before reaching the age of two years", and "Medical work in the Transkei becomes increasingly disheartening as it becomes increasingly obvious that the biggest enemy is malnutrition; and the greatest lack is fresh milk. The health problem rapidly becomes one beyond the scope of the medical man".<sup>(6)</sup> The Commission heard evidence from Dr. Ryno Smit,

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 190.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 200.

(3) *ibid*, Para. 187.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 188.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 192.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 194.

Medical Inspector for the Native Areas, and Dr. G.W. Gale, Assistant Health Officer in the Department of Public Health, both of whom supported the views quoted above about malnutrition and poverty in the reserves. <sup>(1)</sup>

The view that the health of the Reserve African had deteriorated; due mainly to overstocking, soil erosion, insufficiency of land, unequal distribution of stock and consequent lack of essential foods, inefficient methods of agriculture, and poverty, was corroborated by many other experts. According to Dr. E.H. Cluver, Director of the South African Institute of Medical Research, the term healthy when used with reference to the African was a "misnomer". As a labourer the black man was unfit and did "not live to be an old man in South Africa", and moreover, as many as 50 per cent of African babies died before they were 12 months old. <sup>(2)</sup> Dr. J.M. Latsky, Nutrition Officer of the Union Health Department, reported widespread malnutrition in the Ciskei during 1945. <sup>(3)</sup> In the same year Dr. H.M. Bennett, Director of the Mount Coke Hospital, near Kingwilliamstown, voiced the opinion that the children in the Ciskei were then more undernourished than at any time during the previous 12 years. <sup>(4)</sup> And finally one might mention the indictment of a former Secretary for Native Affairs, Mr. J.F. Herbst, who was reported in 1944 as saying: "The deterioration in the health of the Transkeian community is now most evident. The well-developed, well-nourished muscular figures of, say 50 years ago have been replaced by weedy under-sized deficient manhood". <sup>(5)</sup>

If these were the results of the "balanced South African native policy" to which the Chamber referred in basing its African employment policy, <sup>(6)</sup> it seems quite clear that the "policy", to say the least, was in urgent need of overhaul. The perpetual migration of the African males had a harmful

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 197.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 30.5.44.

(3) *ibid*, 28.5.45.

(4) *ibid*, 14.9.45.

(5) *ibid*, 24.4.44.

(6) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 101, see pp. 125 and 126.

effect upon their productivity both in subsistence agriculture and in wage employment, as well as on the soil of the reserves and the physique of their inhabitants.

The Lansdown Commission's primary function had been to make recommendations on wages and the conditions of employment of the black labour force on the Witwatersrand gold mines, with particular reference to the economic requirements of the migrant workers. In order to do so the Commission calculated the income and expenditure of the migrant and his family over a period of two years, thus making allowance for the continuous exodus of temporary migrants followed by a stay in the reserves.

The figures arrived at, although, admittedly an improvement on those outlined by the Chamber, left much to be desired. The Lansdown criteria for the diet scale of an African family in the reserves was based on "the minimum that a man's income should enable him to supply to his family in the way of food if they are to be maintained at a reasonable standard of health".<sup>(1)</sup> This was to be distinguished from the Chamber's estimates, which were rejected on the grounds that they were based on the standard the African was compelled to adopt because of his limited means, and not that required to preserve his health.<sup>(2)</sup> Nevertheless, the scale adopted, as well as certain other features of the Commission's estimates, - the Chamber's claims as to the black worker's boot requirements had previously been questioned,<sup>(3)</sup> but in its calculations the Commission gave the Chamber the benefit of the doubt - were such that Professor Edward Batson's comments on the "conventional standard datum line" appear to be applicable to the Commission's standard as well:

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 231.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 228.

(3) See p. 159.

"Such a standard is perhaps more remarkable for what it omits than for what it includes. It does not allow a penny for amusements, for sport, for medicine, for education, for saving, for hire purchase, for holidays, for odd bus rides, for newspapers, stationery, tobacco, sweets, hobbies, gifts, pocket money, or comforts or luxuries of any kind. It does not allow a penny for replacements of blankets, furniture, or crockery. It is not a 'human' standard of living. It thus admirably fulfils its purpose of stating the barest minimum upon which subsistence and health can theoretically be achieved under Western conditions. It does not in any sense describe even a minimum ideal". (1)

Calculations were made in respect of three labourers, who, over a period of two years, remained at work on the mines for 14 months, 16 months and 18 months respectively, and spent the remaining time, 10 months, 8 months, and 6 months respectively, at their homes in the reserves. Assuming that these labourers and their families lived according to the standard set by the Lansdown Commission, the final results, both for 1939 and 1942, in all cases would have been a considerable shortfall: (2)

	1939		1943	
	<u>Surface Worker</u>	<u>Underground Worker</u>	<u>Surface Worker</u>	<u>Underground Worker</u>
Shortfall of income over expenditure for labourer at work for 14 months and at home for 10 months ...	£27. 4s. 1d.	£25. 5s. 0d.	£45. 1s. 2d.	£43. 18s. 6d.
Shortfall of income over expenditure for labourer at work for 16 months and at home for 8 months ...	£21. 18s. 0d.	£19. 13s. 4d.	£39. 11s. 2d.	£38. 5s. 2d.
Shortfall of income over expenditure for labourer at work for 18 months and at home for 6 months ...	£16. 12s. 0d.	£14. 1s. 9d.	£34. 1s. 2d.	£32. 11s. 11d.

The black miner's budget for working for 14 months and spending 10 months in the reserves was of special significance, since these constituted both the average length of service stay at home periods in 1943 and those approved

(1) Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives of the Department of Native Affairs (1942), Para. 23.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 242.

of by the Commissioners. It was felt that an increase in the amount of time spent on the mines at the expense of that passed at home would have diminished the income of the reserve and unduly interfered with family life. A breakdown of this budget is given below:

1943 Budget of Labourer at work at mines for fourteen months (357 shifts) and living in the reserve for ten months

	<u>Surface Worker</u>	<u>Underground Worker</u>
Wages	£31. 4s. 9d.	£35. 14s. 0d.
Cash income from the reserve	£8. 10s. 0d.	£8. 10s. 0d.
Value of own produce consumed by family	<u>£27. 0s. 4d.</u>	<u>£27. 0s. 4d.</u>
Income	<u>£66. 15s. 1d.</u>	<u>£71. 4s. 4d.</u>
Food and clothing for wife and children (3), kraal expenditure, taxes, etc., for two years	£87. 10s. 0d.	£87. 10s. 0d.
Man's ordinary clothing for two years	£7. 18s. 0d.	£7. 18s. 0d.
Man's additional requirements at mines for twelve months	£7. 1s. 0d.	£9. 18s. 0d.
Man's additional expenses at mines for period worked in excess of twelve months, excluding non- recurring items	13s. 11d.	£1. 3s. 5d.
Man's food for period of stay in reserve	<u>£8. 13s. 4d.</u>	<u>£8. 13s. 4d.</u>
Expenditure	£111. 16s. 3d.	£115. 2s. 9d.
Income	<u>£66. 15s. 1d.</u>	<u>£71. 4s. 4d.</u>
Shortfall	<u>£45. 1s. 2d.</u>	<u>£43. 18s. 5d.</u>

Source: W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 242.

To bring about an improvement in the economic position of the mine labourer, the Lansdown Commission made recommendations, <sup>(1)</sup> which, if adopted, would have resulted in an increase in the annual earnings (i. e. for 306 shifts) of the lowest paid labourers on the surface and underground by £10. 4s. 0d. and £11. 14s. 7d. respectively. For fourteen months (i. e. 357 shifts), the earnings of surface and underground workers were to have

---

(1) See p. 204 for breakdown of recommendations and cost to the industry.

increased by £11.17s.7d. and £13.13s.7d. respectively. The "average" worker - the man who worked for 13.6 months and stayed at home for 7.6 months - would still, however, have been faced with considerable hardship.

	<u>Surface Worker</u>	<u>Underground Worker</u>
Initial shortfall	£45. 1s. 2d.	£43.18s. 5d.
Increase per recommendations	<u>£11.17s. 7d.</u>	<u>£13.13s. 7d.</u>
Final shortfall	<u>£33. 3s. 7d.</u>	<u>£30. 4s.10d.</u>

Further relief measures were not considered because of their possible "disastrous economic consequences" on the gold mining industry. The shortfall would have had to be made up by improvements in reserve conditions. <sup>(1)</sup> However, no real progress towards the rehabilitation of the reserves was possible as long as the system of migrant labour continued and the able-bodied adult male African spent "the greater part of his working life circulating between wage earning occupations in the urban centres and subsistence farming in the reserves". <sup>(2)</sup>

The Economic and Wage Commission of 1925 held that the possibility of producing at least a part of his family's subsistence by farming in the reserves strengthened the migrant worker's bargaining power in the labour market and "(enabled) him to resist an unjust contract and to exact something like the full economic value of his services" <sup>(3)</sup> It did not appear, however, that the average migrant had a very strong bargaining position in so far as he accepted employment on the mines, and so had to be satisfied with a standard of living regarded as unsatisfactory by any rational criteria.

The stabilisation of the African migrant worker, according to the Chamber, "would have a catastrophic economic effect upon the native themselves. The system provides a bridge between the old tribal pastoral existence, which is now impossible in its entirety, and the complete

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para.323.

(2) Hobart Houghton, D., "Land Reforms in the Bantu Areas and its Effect upon Urban Labour," S.A.J.E., 1961, p.166.

(3) Economic and Wage Commission, U.G.14 of 1926, Para.281.

industrialised condition which is undesirable in the national interest and in any event impracticable, at least for some generations to come". (1)

The Fagan Commission aptly commented on this simile of a bridge -

"a bridge is intended to be crossed, not to serve as a permanent abode". (2)

Already by the 1940's the crossing was long overdue. The ill effects on the reserves and on the African's productivity, both as a farmer and as an industrial worker, were becoming increasingly apparent.

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to N.L.C. (1947), p.36, Para.5.

(2) Report of the Native Laws Commission, U.G.28 of 1948, p.43, quoted by Hobart Houghton, D., "Men of Two Worlds : Some Aspects of Migratory Labour," S.A.J.E., 1960, p.186.

**AFRICAN LABOUR CONDITIONS: TRADE  
UNIONS AND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE.**

Trade unions have never been illegal in South Africa yet their fight for recognition has been both bitter and bloody. There was little significant organisation in the mining areas until after the Boer War, and, then only amongst the Europeans, whose main goal was to protect white labour against the increasing use of Africans in jobs involving some industrial skills. These early European trade unionists had to wait until 1915<sup>(1)</sup>, however, before the Chamber of Mines recognised them. Recognition was only granted, moreover, after a strike on the gold mines in 1913 over the question of their status, and a general strike during 1914,<sup>(2)</sup> and, finally, after the intervention of General Smuts.

With the exception of the Mine Clerks' Association,<sup>(3)</sup> the Chamber has never recognised the existence of a trade union among the African miners. Although African trade unions both in mining and other sectors of the economy have not been officially recognised or encouraged, there has been no legislation to prevent their formation and they are not illegal. However, legal obstacles as well as more drastic measures, such as the banning of leaders, have been used to prevent African trade union organisation and strikes.

---

(1) Until 1915 the only trade unions recognised by the gold mining industry were the trade unions representing the winding engine drivers. From 1915 onwards, the policy of recognising trade unions was adopted by the industry. The mechanics' union, constituting about 15 per cent of the European employees on the mines, had not been recognised by 1924 as they had not accepted the conditions stipulated for recognition.

Evidence of the Gold Producers' Committee to the Economic and Wage Commission (1925), Statement No. 2, p. 1.

(2) A strike which originated on the Natal coal mines, spread to the railways and gold mines and consequently developed into a general strike.

(3) See pp. 161 and 162.

Legislation to recognise, protect and contain trade unions, as well as to establish statutory machinery for collective bargaining was first introduced early in 1923.<sup>(1)</sup> The Industrial Conciliation Act, passed in the final session of the Smuts Government in 1924,<sup>(2)</sup> made it compulsory for trade unions to apply to the Industrial Registrar for registration, though if refused they could still continue to exist. "Trade union" was defined as "any number of persons associated together.....for the purpose of regulating relations between themselves and their employers or for protecting or furthering the interests of employees.....in relation to their employers". The vast majority of Africans were, however, excluded from the operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act by the definition of "employee" which read "any person engaged by an employer ....., but shall not include a person whose contract of service or labour is regulated by any Native Pass Laws and Regulations, or by Act No. 15 of 1911....., or by Law No. 25 of 1891 of Natal..... or by Act No. 40 of 1894 of Natal ....."<sup>(3)</sup> Unions of Africans whose contracts of service were regulated by any pass law and Africans recruited by labour agents or holders of employers' recruiting licences were not unions in terms of the Act and thus could not apply for registration.

Although many African men in the Cape and Orange Free State, where there were no pass laws and where many employers of Africans were not required to have recruiting licenses, as well as African women workers in factories fell within the definition of an "employee" and could

- 
- (1) The Smuts Government introduced the bill on the lines of the recommendations of the Industrial Board that had investigated the Witwatersrand disturbances in 1922. House of Assembly Debates, Vol. 1 (1924) p. 16, quoted by Ellison Kahn, "The Right to Strike in South Africa - "An Historical Analysis" S.A.J.E., 1943, p. 34.
- (2) Routh, C.G.C., "State Intervention in the Regulation of Wages and Working Conditions in Great Britain and South Africa", S.A.J.E., 1949, p. 295.
- (3) Industrial Conciliation Act, No. 11 (1924), para. 24.

thus legally join registered unions, <sup>(1)</sup> all African mine workers were excluded from participation in the operation of the Act as they were covered by the Native Labour Regulation Act (No. 15 of 1911). The essence of the Industrial Conciliation Act was that it established machinery for the regulation of conditions of work and the setting of wage-rates by industrial councils comprising representatives of employers and registered unions sitting together. By an amendment in 1930, agreements of the councils could, under most circumstances, be made binding not only on the parties themselves but on a whole industry. <sup>(2)</sup> Thus the African mine worker, prevented from forming registered trade unions, was also largely precluded from taking part in collective bargaining. <sup>(3)</sup>

In addition, from the time Africans first began working on the mines in considerable numbers, "it has been well-nigh impossible for them to stage a legal strike". <sup>(4)</sup> As early as 1841 <sup>(5)</sup> and until 1904, <sup>(6)</sup> various Masters and Servants Acts were passed in the four territories which later became the Union of South Africa. The early Cape, the first Natal and the Transvaal Acts, with which we are

---

(1) Horrell, Muriel., South African Trade Unionism, S.A.I.R.R., 1961, p. 61.

Amendments to the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1930, 1937 and 1959 revised the definition of an 'employee' in order to place further obstacles in the way of African trade unionism.

(2) Doxey, p. 137.

(3) He could still take part in collective bargaining - but the effectiveness of this was limited (1) by not being able to extend an agreement reached with employers to other employers and (2) because an agreement reached by others, in which he had no part, might determine his own conditions of employment.

(4) Horrell, op cit, p. 60.

(5) Doxey, p. 128.

(6) Kahn, op cit, p. 26.

particularly concerned, were "ostensibly colour-blind",<sup>(1)</sup> yet the Courts held that they applied only to unskilled work, which, by and large, did not include Europeans. The Acts imposed criminal sanctions for breach of a contract by a servant. Thus, as long as the contract between master and servant was in existence, a servant could not leave his master's employment.<sup>(2)</sup> Although there was little consideration of the possibility of strikes when the Acts were passed, the laws "were wonderfully adaptable"<sup>(3)</sup> and were used extensively on the gold mines.

With the passing of the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911 penal sanctions were applied to contractual obligations of the black miner for a wide range of offences.<sup>(4)</sup> Conviction of an offence in terms of this Act rendered the miner liable to a fine of up to £10 or imprisonment not exceeding two months. The African labourer was guilty of an offence if he:

- "(a) without lawful cause deserts or absents himself from his place of employment or fails to enter upon or carry out the terms of his contract of employment; or
- (b) wilfully and unlawfully does or omits to do anything which causes or is likely to cause injury to persons or property; or
- (b) (bis) neglects to perform any work which it is his duty to perform or unfits himself for the proper performance of his work through the use of dagga or other habit-forming drugs or by having become or being intoxicated during working hours; or
- (b) (ter) refuses to obey any lawful command of his employer or any person lawfully placed in authority over him or uses insulting or abusive language to those in authority; or

---

(1) Kahn, op cit, p. 26.

(2) The Act also protected the servant against wrongful acts by the master.

(3) Kahn, op cit, p. 27.

(4) See next page.

- (c) after entering into an oral or written agreement of service with a labour agent or authorised recruiting officer and accepting an advance in respect thereof, accepts another advance from another labour agent or recruiting officer in consideration of entering upon another contract of service before he has completed his term of service under the first-mentioned agreement."<sup>(1)</sup>

These limitations on the black miner severely inhibited normal trade union activity and, in the words of the 1951 Industrial Legislation Commission, left "no scope for collective action for the improvement of conditions of employment",<sup>(2)</sup> nor did it contain any provision for negotiation or for the fixing of minimum wages. J

Strikes are inextricably bound up with the right of free speech and assembly, and by curtailing these rights, a legislative body indirectly restricts the use of the strike as a weapon. General provisions in regard to the prohibition of public assembly are contained in the Riotous Assemblies and Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1914.<sup>(3)</sup> This measure gave the Minister of Justice authority to prohibit public gatherings and the "dissemination of documentary information" whenever, in his opinion, "there is reason to apprehend that feelings of hostility would be engendered between the European inhabitants of the Union on the one hand and any other section of the inhabitants of the Union on the other hand".<sup>(4)</sup> In addition, the Act could be used to control the actions ancillary to striking itself, such as picketing and intimidation. The Act came as an aftermath of the defeat of the white miners in 1914 and was designed to cope with the possibilities of a recurrence of the industrial upheavals of 1913/14, as the existing legislation was apparently ineffective. Although precipitated by the

---

Footnote (4) from previous page: The Chamber regarded this as "a fundamental principle of the law of South Africa" and "absolutely essential in the present economic condition of the native".  
Evidence of the G.P.C. to the Economic and Wage Commission (1925), Statement No. 3, p. 1.

- (1) Section 14 (1) of the Act, summarised by Doxey, p. 129.  
(2) U.G. 62 of 1951, p. 194, Para. 1445 quoted by Doxey, p. 130.  
(3) Act No. 27 of 1914, as amended by Act No. 19 of 1930.  
(4) Kahn, op cit, p. 28.

excesses of a white strike, the Act, as amended in 1930, was to be used to great effect by the Government to undermine the African Mine Workers' Union during the 1940's. Invoked both to prevent Europeans from instigating or assisting African strikes and to suppress the activities of "agitators", the Act resulted in the arrest of the leaders, both miner and non-miner, of the 1946 strike. It was thus a major cause of the collapse of the strike.

Wide as it was, the Riotous Assemblies Act was further reinforced under the War Government of Smuts. Although the Act inhibited trade union organisation, War Measure 1425 was introduced in 1944.<sup>(1)</sup> This proclamation totally prohibited meetings of more than 20 persons on mine property, and, in so far as it was only the African Mine Workers' Union which held meetings on gold-proclaimed land, the measure was nothing more than a crude, but highly effective, method of preventing the A.M.W.U. from establishing communication with prospective members. Before the end of that same year the measure was to be invoked against the leadership of the Union. In effect, the organisation was immobilised.

African trade unions came to rely on a measure supplementary to the Industrial Conciliation Act, the Wage Act,<sup>(2)</sup> for giving legal expression to their aspirations. This Act created machinery for fixing wage-rates and regulating conditions of work in industries where the employers and employees were not organised. Domestic servants, government employees, farm workers and others were excluded from its operation - as mine workers were not included in this list, the Act could be applied to the Mining Industry, but actually never was.

---

(1) During the Second World War the Government was anxious to prevent stoppages of work in essential industries. War Measure No. 9 of January, 1942, and War Measure No. 145 of December, 1942, gave the Minister of Labour power to intervene in industrial disputes that were likely to affect the war effort by appointing arbitrators. The penalties for striking illegally were greatly increased, yet there was compensation in the further avenues that were opened whereby the Africans' grievances could be redressed. Although these measures were apparently applicable to the African miner, they were never invoked.

(2) Act No. 27 of 1925, as amended by Act No. 44 of 1937.

Despite the restrictions on public gatherings and the prohibition on strikes, a committee to organise African mine workers was formed at a conference of a large number of organisations convened by the Transvaal African Congress during August, 1941.<sup>(1)</sup> Nearly two years later this committee, calling itself the "African Mine Workers' Union", was only able to claim a membership of 1,827<sup>(2)</sup> out of approximately 300,000 black miners. By October, 1945, the Union claimed a card membership of 20,000 of whom only 2,000 had paid subscriptions.<sup>(3)</sup>

The A.M.W.U. was not representative of African labourers on the mines as its paid-up membership accounted for less than one per cent of the total African labour force.<sup>(4)</sup> This, however, can be partly accounted for by the legal obstacles discussed above and partly by the attitude of the Chamber of Mines. The Chamber opposed the formation of a trade union amongst its African labourers as they were "insufficiently advanced to understand the principles of Trade Union organisations".<sup>(5)</sup> The Chamber was "strongly averse to any steps that would stimulate or encourage the growth of the trade union movement amongst Native mine workers".<sup>(6)</sup> Its method of opposition was the subject of a court case when Colonel A.E. Trigger, manager of the Mines Police Department of the New Consolidated Goldfields, claimed

---

(1) Evidence of A.M.W.U. to the W.N.W.C. (1943), Annexure "B". A body calling itself the Coloured Mine Workers' Union apparently applied to be registered in September 1928, but was refused after the South African Mine Workers had lodged an objection. "Coloured" may have meant all non-Europeans as there were only a few Coloured as opposed to black mineworkers.

Osborn, V.H., A Critical Survey of Trade Unionism in South Africa, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1931, pp. 78, 79.

The following very unsatisfactory reference is given:

"Reported in "Star" dated ?.9.28.

(2) Evidence of A.M.W.U. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.1.

(3) Evidence of H.J. Simons to Seditious Trial 1947.  
Cape Argus, 13.2.47.

(4) This is on the assumption that the figures given by the Union itself were correct and not exaggerated.

(5) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.90.

(6) *ibid*, p.92.

£1,000 for alleged defamation contained in Senator Basner's statements to the Lansdown Commission. In giving judgement against Basner, Mr. Justice Murray of the Supreme Court said:

"I feel constrained.....to express my disapproval of Colonel Trigger's conduct. I do not question the bona fides of his objection, both personally and from the point of view of his employers, to the existence of the African Mine Workers' Union, as Communist or Communistically inclined. There is also much to be said for the belief that Communistic theory is too heady a wine for consumption with safety by the mass of the members of the Native Mine Workers' Union.

"Even so, Communism in theory is entirely legal and permissible, and the Native Mine Workers' Union, on the evidence, is a perfectly legitimate association - even if, which has not been proved, its leaders are Communists or inclined to Communism.

"The method adopted by Colonel Trigger to safeguard the interests of the mining industry was to insinuate a spy into the councils of the native union and to cause that spy to practice deceit. It is not a method which commends itself to me - I refrain from using the descriptive adjectives appearing in the innuendo, but it leaves behind an unpleasant taste. The end has not justified the means."<sup>(1)</sup>

Perhaps the end did justify the means. It certainly must have seemed so to the Chamber - for the A.M.W.U. apparently never got off the ground.

Although unrepresentative of the African miner, the Union nevertheless acted as a pressure group. An examination of the Union's evidence to the Mine Native Wages Commission reveals a striking contrast - the letters to the Prime Minister of 12th September, 1941, and the Minister of Labour of 9th January, 1943, in the Appendix are well-reasoned and informed, the evidence itself is unsubstantiated, illogical and poorly presented.

Senator Basner refused to accept responsibility for all the statements in the Memorandum while Justice Lansdown himself harshly (and perhaps fairly) criticised the exaggeration of the document when he said:

---

(1) Rand Daily Mail, 3.1.45. A member of the Mine Police had joined the A.M.W.U. to obtain information about the organisation. Judgement was given against Basner, whilst Trigger was awarded damages of £50. Basner, however, won on appeal.

"When one reads the memorandum one wonders why half the labourers are not dead, why the death rate has decreased to 2.94 per thousand. There is nothing you touch here which you do not condemn. I am only saying this because I should regret it if it were found that there was any over-statement or exaggeration in these communications that you have made here, because exaggeration very often defeats its own case". (1)

It is difficult to avoid the general impression gained from newspaper reports and the available evidence, that sections of the memorandum actually were so far-fetched and irresponsible that they in fact harmed the case of the African Trade Union. The widespread fear of victimisation may have contributed to the total lack of supporting affidavits but is not an acceptable excuse for the document's failings. The Union squandered the opportunity of airing its grievances and thus, in the final analysis, failed when it was most needed.

The question whether African mineworkers should be unionised was considered by the Lansdown Commission, which rejected the idea as the black miners had "not yet reached the stage of development which would enable them safely and usefully to employ trade unionism as a means of promoting their advancement". (2) The Commission recognised that the African miners needed protection - "the excellence of the recruiting organisation and the economic necessities of the natives in their reserves.....exercise a measure of compulsion which pro tanto may be said to clog the exercise of free will" (3) - and so recommended that the Government "maintain its surveillance". (4) The system whereby the individual miner brought his complaints and grievances to the notice of the responsible authority was, however, inadequate in passing on "information of mass grievances", and, for this purpose, it was suggested that welfare officers, men with a "sound knowledge of the native mentality",

---

(1) Star, 8.7.1943.

(2) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 467.  
See the Appendix to this Chapter.

(3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 468.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 469.

be appointed.<sup>(1)</sup> Although the Commission reported in 1944, the first group of "Native Liaison Officers" were only appointed during May, 1947.<sup>(2)</sup>

After the strike of African mineworkers in August, 1946, renewed demands were made by various organisations for the recognition of the A.M.W.U. Typical of these protests was the resolution passed by the Anglican Synod of Johannesburg which urged the Government to recognise the African Mine Workers' Union and other African trade unions, and proposed "that negotiations between the Chamber of Mines and native mineworkers should be opened without delay so that future unnecessary conflict and bloodshed may be avoided".<sup>(3)</sup>

The mounting pressure for a review of policy towards black trade unions finally extracted a comprehensive response from the Chamber of Mines. During November, 1946, the Chamber issued a lengthy statement defending its position and claiming that "trade unionism (was) against the best interests of tribal natives employed on the mines".<sup>(4)</sup>

The Chamber based its case on the general assumption that the African labourers on the mines were not sufficiently advanced to control and manage a trade union without outside aid, and, as such assistance might be from communists, trade unions should not be recognised. Other reasons were advanced. The nature of service on the mines was one of these, for mine labourers were held to differ from other urban African workers as they did not live in the towns at all, but returned to their tribes when their period of service was over. This was supposedly strengthened by the contention that the African had no trade union tradition, and no experience or appreciation of the responsibilities arising from collective representation. Further, the promotion of a trade union would ostensibly disrupt tribal life as there would be a conflict of loyalties between the labour organisation and the tribal system.

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 473.

(2) Star, 17.5.1947.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 8.10.1946.

(4) Rand Daily Mail, 16.11.1946.

Full statement included as Appendix.

All this, it seems, would have violated the spirit of that national policy of trusteeship which claimed to preserve all that was best in African tribal life.

It is possible to sympathise with the Chamber's fear of unrest on the mines. It is not so easy, however, to sympathise with their reason for rejecting African trade unionism. There is an unavoidable impression that they were looking for arguments to justify a preconceived attitude largely based on political and economic fears. The available evidence indicates, on the contrary, that there is no inherent connection between industrial unrest and trade unionism. In short, the Chamber's attitude was based on specious arguments.

**APPENDIX**

**Tribal Natives and Trade Unionism.**

THE POLICY OF THE RAND GOLD MINING INDUSTRY

Recent happenings have focussed attention on the subject of trade unionism among Native mine labourers. In view of the public interest that has been aroused, and the many misconceptions of this aspect of the Gold Mining Industry's Native policy, the following official statement is issued by the Gold Producers' Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines:-

It is the opinion of the Gold Mining Industry that trade unionism is against the best interests of tribal Natives employed on the mines. They are not yet sufficiently advanced for trade unionism, nor do they themselves want it.

Of approximately 300,000 Native mine labourers, over 290,000 are untutored tribal peasants who, between the ages of 18 and 45 years, come voluntarily to the mines seven or eight times on short terms of employment averaging between 12 and 13 months. At the end of each period of work, they return to their families and their pastoral and agricultural pursuits in the Native territories. The extent of this migration is reflected by the fact that each year there is a turnover of Native mine workers of almost 100 per cent.

These migratory labourers, whose periodic contracts are made with the approval of their tribal chiefs, come to the Witwatersrand from a number of territories and are members of a large variety of African tribes speaking different languages. About 140,000 come from the Native Reserves in the Union; about 50,000 from the High Commission Territories of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland; about 75,000 from Portuguese East Africa, south of latitude 22 degrees south; and the remainder - about 35,000 - from the so-called tropical areas. Each year some 40,000 leave their kraals for the first time, and their short stay on the Witwatersrand is their first direct contact with European civilisation.

The culture of all these Natives is tribal and rural. Their contact with industrialism and industrial conditions is only recent, and they have little knowledge or understanding of the organisation of industry. They are bound by the strongest ties to the traditions, customs and the authority of their respective tribes.

### NATIONAL POLICY

The basis of the attitude of the Gold Mining Industry to its Native labour force is the principle of European trusteeship - the declared basis of South African national policy as embodied in the Native Trust Acts. In accord with this principle, the industry, in the administration and organisation of its huge Native labour force, seeks to preserve all that is best in Native tribal life.

In the employment, the housing, the feeding, the entertainment and recreation of these hundreds of thousands of Natives, tribal tradition and connection are fostered and respected. The organisation of the compounds in which the Natives live, has as its basis the pattern of tribal organisation and discipline to which the Natives are accustomed and from which they show little inclination to deviate.

The Gold Mining Industry considers that trade unionism, as practised by Europeans, is still beyond the understanding of the tribal Native; nor can he know how to employ it as a means of promoting his advancement. He has no tradition in that respect and has no experience or appreciation of the responsibilities arising from collective representation. No proper conduct of a trade union is possible unless the workers have that tradition and such a sense of responsibility.

Were the tribal Native precipitated into a form of organisation of which he has no real experience and for which he is not sufficiently advanced, he would fall an easy prey to control by alien interests - often acting from political motives - which would undermine his own tribal customs and allegiances, and his own conception of values. Conflict between the allegiance demanded by a trade union and those owed to the tribe, would tend to disrupt tribal life; a result diametrically opposed to a basic principle of national policy.

### ABUSES AND IRRESPONSIBILITY

The full recognition of, and the cordial relations with, European trade unions show that the Gold Mining Industry is not hostile to trade unionism as such. The tribal Native who works intermittently on the mines for approximately eight years between the ages of 18 and 45 is obviously in a different position from the European or urban Native who has to work throughout his lifetime. The Industry considers that the introduction of trade unionism among tribal Natives at their present stage of development would lead to abuses and irresponsible action.

The demand for a basic wage of 10s. a day by the African Mine Workers' Union, which led to the recent strike of Native mine labourers, exemplifies this serious element of irresponsibility. Had the demand succeeded, 35 of the present total of 45 producing gold mines would have been forced to close and, among all its other consequences 240,000 Natives would have been thrown out of work.

For the detribalised Natives on the mines, comprising some 3 per cent of the labour force and consisting mainly of Natives employed on clerical work, there is already in existence the Witwatersrand Gold Mines Native Clerks' Association which is recognised by the Industry.

### GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS

The Gold Mining Industry's view that the tribal Native is not sufficiently advanced to assimilate trade unionism is supported by the findings of a number of Government Commissions. In 1940 a Commission appointed to inquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, considered the position of the tribal Native in relation to trade unionism. In paragraph 175 of its report, the Commission stated:-

"For trades unionism, as trades unionism is generally understood by the British worker, the African worker in Northern Rhodesia is clearly not ready. The reason for this unreadiness is not far to seek. In no case has his education gone very far; in most instances it has not even begun. Further, his introduction to industrialism and industrial conditions is of a very recent date, too recent to admit of his intelligent participation in the more elaborate trades-union system existing in Great Britain."

The same arguments may be applied to tribal Natives working on the Rand.

In 1942 the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives, under the chairmanship of Mr. D.L. Smit, Secretary for Native Affairs, in suggesting that "... Native trade unions should be registered and afforded administrative recognition ..." specifically excluded the mining industry from this recommendation. The Smit Committee stressed that the Natives for the gold mines were recruited almost exclusively from reserves and tribal areas, and that there was a considerable percentage of foreign Natives from tropical Africa and Mozambique. They were, however, untutored; and a danger in their organisation foreseen by the Committee, was a cleavage on colour lines, a result obviously more repugnant than past cleavages along lines of class or supposed conflicts of interest.

The introduction of trade unionism for Native mine labourers was again considered, in 1943, by the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission which heard evidence by the Gold Mining Industry, by various societies and individuals, by labour organisations and also by the African Mine Workers' Union and by the African National Congress.

This was a judicial Commission headed by Mr. Justice C.W.H. Lansdown, Judge-President of the Eastern Districts Division of the Supreme Court; and included Mr. H.P. Smit, Controller and Auditor-General of the Union; Mr. H.S.H. Donald, Government Mining Engineer; Mr. A.A. Moore, President of the S.A. Trades and Labour Council; and Mr. H.G. Scott, Acting President of the Native Appeal Court for the Cape Province and the Orange Free State.

In paragraph 466 of its report, the Commission agreed that the more educated and socially advanced classes of Natives recognised the value of trade unionism. In the next paragraph, however, the Commission stated:-

"The position of the vast body of Native labourers on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand is, however, different. As a result of meetings with many of them and several Native associations purporting to make representations on their behalf, the conclusion has very definitely been forced upon the Commission that they have not yet reached the stage of development which would enable them safely and usefully to employ trade unionism as a means of promoting their advancement."

The Commission found further that the tribal Natives' periods of service were comparatively short and non-continuous, and a considerable proportion of them were domiciled in foreign territory. These facts in themselves, the Commission concluded, made it difficult for any trade union to operate successfully among tribal Natives: moreover, it would be impossible to find among their numbers persons who could administer and maintain the organisation of a trade union.

#### CONTROL OF UNIONS

In any reasoned discussion of the matter it has always been accepted that the control of Native trade unions, if recognised, should be placed in the hands of persons either actively engaged in or directly connected with the industries concerned. It has similarly been accepted that no Native organisation should be permitted which is used for political ends or which does not have as its principal object the representation of its members' interests on matters connected with their employment in industry.

Because tribal Natives on the gold mines are insufficiently advanced to manage their own trade unions, it follows that the control of such unions would fall, inevitably, to persons not connected with the Industry.

As far as is known, the self-styled African Mine Workers' Union is directed by persons who are not employed on the gold mines and the union is not representative of the vast body of tribal Natives in the Industry.

In the recent strike it was immediately apparent that this was no sporadic movement, but was the beginning of a general strike organised and directed from outside the Industry by the African Mine Workers' Union - which claimed to represent the strikers - and that union's supporters.

It is clear that the union is connected with and has the support of communistic influences. Members of the Communist Party, by whom the union was actively assisted in the recent strike, took part in the distribution in mine compounds of provocative pamphlets and other literature.

The question of permitting outside bodies to participate in the management of Native trade unions was dealt with by the Lansdown Commission, which in paragraph 467 of its report stated that:-

"The Commission which has met representatives of those bodies which would essay the task of constituting, maintaining and controlling trade unionism amongst the mine Natives, is of opinion that the public interests would definitely negative the delegation of such powers to any of those bodies. When the time comes that the mine labourers of the Witwatersrand are capable of benefiting by any trade union organisation, the movement must, in the general public interests, be constituted and managed by those labourers themselves and under the guidance, instruction and influence of the Departments of Labour and Native Affairs."

The Lansdown Commission stated, in paragraph 458 of its report, that no movement for a trade union had come from the mine Native labourers themselves, the vast bulk of whom knew nothing about trade unions and were not concerned to become members of any society.

This statement is equally true today. There is still no general movement among tribal Natives for a trade union. During the recent strike, a majority of Natives on many of the mines affected were unconcerned with the activities of the African Mine Workers' Union and were forcibly prevented, by others, from proceeding to work which they were otherwise prepared to do.

#### FIFTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE

If trade unionism is an unsuitable medium for the representation of the interests of the tribal Native on the gold mines, what is the alternative?

Avenues already exist, and have existed for many years, through which Native employees of the Gold Mining Industry can present their views to the managements. The procedure has been developed, in accord with the principle of European trusteeship, by officials with special knowledge of Native customs and language and mining conditions. The Industry has, from its inception, promoted the welfare of these workers and, apart from the initial period when conditions were inevitably primitive, can point to over half-a-century of progressive success in this field.

All matters affecting Native employees as mine residents are under the administration of the compound manager on each mine. The compounds were described by the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission of 1943 as "efficiently managed by men of experience and with sympathetic consideration for the welfare and comfort of the inhabitants."

Every Native employee may go direct to the compound manager, who is always ready to listen to grievances without their passing through formal channels.

The organisation of the compound is based on the tribal organisation to which the Native is accustomed. The tribal pattern is the Chief, the Induna, the headman and the kraal head. In the mine compound the pattern is the compound manager, the Induna, the tribal representative - called the Isibonda - and the room headboy, who takes the position of the kraal head.

It is a general custom in the mine compounds for the occupants of each room to elect one of their number as their spokesman and intermediary with the Isibonda. He is elected to represent a number of members of any particular tribe, varying from 80 to 300. On occasion the Isibonda is appointed by the compound manager.

The highest Native authority in the compound is the chief Induna, who is directly responsible to the compound manager and is required

to ensure that all matters concerning the welfare of the Natives receive due attention. In large compounds assistant Indunas, generally representatives of the tribes from which the greatest number of Native labourers is derived, are also appointed.

#### INTERESTS SAFEGUARDED

It is essential that the Natives employed in the Gold Mining Industry have some organised body to supervise their general welfare, to see that the terms and conditions of employment are faithfully carried out, and through whom contact with their tribes and homes may be maintained. These duties are carried out by the organisations responsible for their recruitment - the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, Limited, and the Native Recruiting Corporation, Limited. A special department was created at the inception of the Native Recruiting Corporation, Limited, in 1912, and has always been controlled by men who, because of their intimate association with Native peoples and their knowledge of Native languages and customs, are specially fitted for the work.

Inspectors of this department regularly visit mine compounds and, in collaboration with compound managers, investigate complaints and satisfy themselves that every attention is given to the material comfort and well-being of the Native workers.

The Industry does not suggest that the existing arrangements for safeguarding the interests of Native mine workers are final, or incapable of improvement. Changes in detail are made in the light of experience, as they have always been in the past, and there is every reason to suppose that they will similarly be made in the future.

#### NATIVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

The Industry emphasises that it is the special function of the Native Affairs Department to care for Native interests and to represent Native views to others. Ever since the passing of the Native Labour Regulation Act in 1911, the Governor-General has appointed inspectors

whose duty it is to enquire into, redress, or otherwise report to the Director of Native Labour any grievance complained of by Native workers. These inspectors pay weekly visits to all mine compounds.

It was suggested by the Lansdown Commission (paragraph 473) that:-

"... a scheme better designed to meet the present conditions of the Native workers on the Witwatersrand mines would be to appoint as welfare officers working under and subject to the control of the Department of Native Affairs in consultation with the Department of Labour a number of men of sound knowledge of the Native mentality, speaking one or more of the Native languages and preferably with experience of underground conditions, whose duty it would be to move about regularly amongst the mine workers; to hold at convenient times meetings with them or their chosen representatives at which the collective voice of the whole body of the Native workers of the mine might find expression; and to present to the Department of Native Affairs and to the mine managements any matters of interest or importance which might be agitating the minds of the men."

The Gold Mining Industry considers that this recommendation should be implemented.

Natives are traditionally conservative, and it is the considered view of the Gold Mining Industry that step-by-step progress on the lines understood by the Natives is a practical method of advancing their relationship with their employers, whether that development takes place under the authority of the employer or of the Government. A trade union organisation would be outside the comprehension of all but a few of the educated Natives of the urban type: it would be not only useless, but detrimental, to the ordinary mine Native in his present stage of development.

11.

**NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY SIX.**

The Report of the Mine Native Wages Commission was finally tabled in Parliament on the 24th April, 1944.<sup>(1)</sup> The Commission recommended<sup>(2)</sup> an increase of 5d. per shift in the minimum wage of all African miners (from 1s. 9d. to 2s. 2d. per shift for surface workers and from 2s. to 2s. 5d. per shift for underground workers),<sup>(3)</sup> payment of a cost of living allowance of 3d. per shift,<sup>(4)</sup> provision of a boot allowance of 3s. for 30 shifts to all workers required to wear boots,<sup>(5)</sup> and the extension to the black miners of time-and-a-half rates for overtime and Sunday work.<sup>(6)</sup> The aggregate cost of adopting these proposals, assuming a black labour force of 300,000, was estimated at £2,642,000 per annum.<sup>(7)</sup>

The implementation of these recommendations would, according to the calculations of the Commission, have reduced the annual deficit for the surface worker (for the year during which he was at work on the mines) to 4d. and converted an annual deficit for the underground labourer (again only for the year at work) of over £9 to an excess of income over expenditure of £2. 9s. 9d.<sup>(8)</sup> These calculations were on the basis of a "budget" based on the "minimum requirements to keep a native family at a reasonable standard."<sup>(9)</sup>

---

(1) Cape Times, 25.3.44.

(2) Separate recommendations were made for the "permanent" workers - cost of living allowance of 5d. per shift, improved wage scales, grant of leave on full pay for two weeks per annum after 2 years' service. Although the Government did not comment on these recommendations, the industry nevertheless adopted them in full. W.N.W.C., (1943), Paras. 312, 314 and 317. Rand Daily Mail, 3.1.47.

(3) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 302.

(4) *ibid*, Para. 287.

(5) *ibid*, Para. 293.

(6) *ibid*, Para. 306.

(7) *ibid*, Para. 325.

This figure included the proposed benefits to the "permanent" workers. The cost of living allowance accounted for £1,168,000, the boot allowance for £317,000 and the wage increase for £1,157,000.

(8) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 321.

(9) *ibid*, Para. 230.

Their adoption would not have radically improved the position of the migrant labourer. Both immediately before the war and in 1943, the migrant labourer had "to be satisfied with a scale of living.....regarded as unsatisfactory, being below the line of ordinary reasonable requirement".<sup>(1)</sup> The Lansdown recommendations fell short of providing the migrant with an income which equalled expenditure for the labourer and his family not only for the period during which he was at work, but also for that period combined with another, i.e. "reasonable", stay in the reserve. Such an "ideal" was "under present conditions, unattainable".<sup>(2)</sup> For its achievement it was necessary to improve conditions in the reserves, so that the income of the Africans there could be raised.

In a superficial examination of the effects on the gold mining industry of the suggested additional allowances to the black miners, the Commission came to the very tentative conclusion that the expected increased costs "would hasten (the) end" of four mines.<sup>(3)</sup> No detailed analysis was made of whether these allowances would necessarily have resulted in a change in the pay limit;<sup>(4)</sup> nor were possible methods investigated for the industry to further subsidise the marginal mines. An example of the preferential treatment accorded low grade mines was the practice of allocating a larger proportionate share of the available African labour to the poorer mines, so that some mines with high grade ore had no more than 70 per cent of their full complement of black labour while some of the poorer mines were allotted 90 per cent of their complements.<sup>(5)</sup> It was, however, suggested that revenue derived from indirect taxation<sup>(6)</sup> (imposed upon product only and not upon profit), should be the source of Government assistance if the

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 245.

(2) *ibid.*, Para. 322.

(3) *ibid.*, Para. 330.

This is out of a total of approximately 60 mines.

(4) The "pay limit" means the minimum amount of gold contained in a ton of ore which can be mined without monetary loss.

(5) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 55.

(6) Customs dues, high railway rates, claim licences and gold realization charges.

W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 337.

industry was unable to economise and therefore to continue producing ore of the same volume and same grade. The Commission pointed out that an industry which paid £17,000,000 per year in profits should be able to pay an additional £2,600,000 in wages to its lowest paid workers. <sup>(1)</sup>

The insistence of the Lansdown Commission that "no less (than the adoption of their recommendations) can be done for the workers" <sup>(2)</sup> apparently went unheeded. Although the total effect would have been that the labourer's income still fell short of expenditure for the combined period of work at the mines and residence in the reserve, Prime Minister Smuts, in consultation with the Chamber of Mines, initiated improvements which involved an annual additional expenditure of approximately £1,850,000, 30 per cent less than the total recommended improvements (£2,642,000). As proposed by the Commission, African workers were to receive pay at time-and-a-half rates for overtime or Sunday work. In lieu of all the other findings of the Commission, however, the wage of surface workers was to be increased by 4d. per shift and that of underground workers by 5d. per shift. <sup>(3)</sup> The cost of these increases was to be met by remission of taxation in the form of the gold realisation charges <sup>(4)</sup> which amounted to approximately £2 million for the financial year 1944-45. <sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) W.N.W.C. (1943), Para. 331.

(2) *ibid*, Para. 323.

(3) These improvements were to take effect from 1st April, 1944.  
Cape Times, 25.3.44.

(4) The depreciation of the dollar-sterling rate just before the outbreak of war gave the gold mines a large unexpected rise in the price of their product. The mines received this increased price, minus the realization charges which were borne by the Reserve Bank acting as agent for the Treasury. By 1940, however, most of these charges fell away by mutual agreement between the Union and United Kingdom Governments, with only a small amount still being collected for the loan account in the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The gold realization charge of 3s. 6d. per fine ounce of gold was levied from 1940 to 1945. In effect it meant that the mines received 164s. 6d. per ounce instead of the 168s. which was then the price of gold.  
Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p. 47.  
Report of the Committee on Gold Mining Taxation, U.G. 16 of 1946, Paras. 140 and 141.

(5) T.C.M. (1945), p. 122.

The relative effects of the changes in wage rates suggested by the Lansdown Commission and those decided upon by the Government are summarised in the following table:

<u>SURFACE EMPLOYEES</u>			
<u>Previous Wage Rate</u> <u>per Shift (1943)</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>Employed</u> <u>1943. (a)</u>	<u>Commission's</u> <u>Recommendation</u> <u>per Shift. (b)</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>New Rate</u> <u>per Shift</u>
Under 1s. 9d.	4,658	2s. 5d.	2s. 1d.
1s. 9d. to 1s. 11d.	30,360	2s. 5d.	2s. 1d. to 2s. 3d.
2s.	17,488	2s. 5d.	2s. 4d.
2s. 1d. to 2s. 3d.	7,993	2s. 5d. to 2s. 6d.	2s. 5d. to 2s. 7d.
2s. 4d. to 2s. 6d.	5,742	2s. 7d. to 2s. 9d.	2s. 8d. to 2s. 10d.
2s. 7d. to 6s.	6,889	2s. 10d. to 6s. 3d.	2s. 11d. to 6s. 4d.
Over 6s.	135	over 6s. 3d.	over 6s. 4d.
TOTAL	<u>73,265</u>		

<u>UNDERGROUND EMPLOYEES</u>			
<u>Previous Wage Rate</u> <u>per Shift (1943)</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>Employed</u> <u>1943. (a)</u>	<u>Commission's</u> <u>Recommendation</u> <u>per Shift. (b)</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>New Rate</u> <u>per Shift</u>
Under 1s. 9d.	-	-	-
1s. 9d. to 1s. 11d.	-	-	-
2s.	107,690	2s. 9d.	2s. 5d.
2s. 1d. to 2s. 3d.	61,648	2s. 9d.	2s. 6d. to 2s. 8d.
2s. 4d. to 2s. 6d.	26,427	2s. 9d. to 2s. 11d.	2s. 9d. to 2s. 11d.
2s. 7d. to 6s.	29,566	2s. 11d. to 6s. 4d.	3s. 0d. to 6s. 5d.
Over 6s.	1,181	over 6s. 4d.	over 6s. 5d.
TOTAL	<u>226,512</u>		

(a) Source: U.G.21 - 1944, para. 78.

(b) Including cost of living allowance and (for underground workers) boot allowance.

SOURCE: Social and Economic Planning Council, Report No. 11, "Economic Aspects of the Gold Mining Industry", Pretoria, 1947, p. 29.

As can be seen, the scales introduced by the Government meant that the majority of employees received less than the Commission had recommended, but the minority of higher paid black miners received a penny more per shift than the Commission had thought necessary.

The result of these increased scales on the average wage of the African mineworker are shown below:

Average cash earnings of all Coloured workers on the Gold Mines - Witwatersrand and Extensions

1942	2s. 3.12d.
1943	2s. 3.84d.
1944	2s. 7.92d.
1945	2s. 9.36d.
1946	2s. 9.60d.

Sources: Derived from T.C.M. (1942-46)  
G.M.E. (1941-46)

The new scales were only in force for three-quarters of 1944 with the result that the average wage for the year was a 4d. improvement on 1943. However, both for 1945 and 1946, average cash earnings increased by 5½d. over the 1943 level, an improvement which exceeded the changes initiated by the Government and Chamber. A possible explanation for this apparent disparity may be that the distribution of workers within the wage grades had changed in favour of the higher grades after 1943.

The costs of the improvements in the conditions of employment, however, were approximately those which had been envisaged. Over the three year period, 1944-46, the recommended increases (5d. for underground workers and 4d. for surface workers) were on average those which were actually paid.

"Expected increase of total coloured wage<sup>(1)</sup> for 1944, 1945 and 1946<sup>(2)</sup> (assuming 75 per cent underground workers at 5d. per shift and 25 per cent surface workers at 4d. per shift) - £5,943,489.

---

(1) "Coloured" referred to non-whites. Nearly all the "coloured" miners were black.

(2) For 2.¾ years, from 1st April, 1944, to 31st December, 1946. The average number of coloured men in service for 1944 was 297,511, for 1945 307,140, and for 1946 the number was 304,857 (total of 909,508 for the 3 years).

Actual increase of total coloured wage for 1944, 1945 and 1946  
(over 1943 figure)<sup>(1)</sup> - £5,940,712.

Source: Derived from T.C.M. (1943-46)  
G.M.E. (1941-46)

Smuts' statement on the relief which was to be given to the industry was, however, ambiguous. On the one hand he said that the gold realisation charges which had been collected since 1940 would be made available "to meet this situation", while on the other he referred only to the gold realisation charges collected "in respect of the financial year 1944-45"<sup>(2)</sup> According to the first statement approximately £11 million was to be placed at the disposal of the mines; the second statement implied that only £2 million could have been used by the industry to meet the cost of increasing the wages of its black labour force.<sup>(3)</sup> In either event, the amount was apparently sufficient to meet the industry's requirements in full.

The gold realisation charges levied for the first six months of the financial year 1945-46 were not returned to the industry. As the price of gold had increased from 168s. a fine ounce to 172s.3d. as from 1st January, 1945, the Government consequently advised the Chamber that in view of this higher price it was not considered "necessary to extend (the) arrangement".<sup>(4)</sup> The increase in the gold price of 4s.6d. a fine ounce more than compensated for the gold realisation charges of 3s.6d. a fine ounce. Moreover, from 1st October, 1945, this levy itself was abolished,<sup>(5)</sup> which made both the charges and the increased price available for the purpose of financing the improvements in African wages. Thus the return of the gold realisation charges for 1944-45 of approximately £2 million,<sup>(6)</sup> together with the benefits of a rise in the gold price from January, 1945, and the discontinuation of the

- 
- (1) However, the number in service during 1943 was 3,019 greater than the average of the number in service for the years 1944-46.
- (2) House of Assembly, 24.3.44, Hansard, 3817, 3818.
- (3) T.C.M. (1940-46).
- (4) Rand Daily Mail, 12.6.45.
- (5) Report of the Committee on Gold Mining Taxation, op cit, Para.141.
- (6) Gold realisation charges during the year ended 31st March, 1945 were £1,971,071.  
T.C.M. (1945), p.122.

gold realisation levy from October, 1945, meant that the industry was able to meet the expense of improving African labour conditions without incurring any additional expenditure.

Press comments on the Government's response to the Lansdown Commission were varied. The Cape Times referred to it as a "compromise" which was "unsatisfactory in meeting the just demands of the native worker and it is unsatisfactory in its potential effect on the already high cost-structure of South African economy".<sup>(1)</sup> The "solution", according to The Cape Argus, was an "equitable and practical method of alleviating what would otherwise have become a situation of extreme gravity", although it was recognised that it did not "go to the root of the matter".<sup>(2)</sup> The Rand Daily Mail, however, expressed surprise that an inquiry was called "into the wages paid by one of the best employing bodies in South Africa to its native workers." The suggested reason for this was that South Africans found "it difficult to stomach.....the sight of a well-run self-supporting industry". It made reference to the "milking" of the mines at the expense of other sectors of the economy - "agriculture has probably got most of the profits of the mines; if the miners are to have more, agriculture must have less".<sup>(3)</sup> The Star, apparently the more liberal of the Johannesburg papers, referred to the Cabinet's decision as "sensible" and "courageous". Criticism of Smuts' failure to apply the total increases recommended could "easily be met by reference to the economic situation. The mine natives, who work on the 'all found' basis, are by no means so hard hit by the rise in living and general costs as workers in other employment".<sup>(4)</sup> The Guardian, published by the Communist Part of South Africa, alone attacked the Government's decision, noting that Smuts had by implication "condemned the Commission for being too generous".<sup>(5)</sup>

---

(1) Cape Times, 25.3.44.

(2) Cape Argus, 24.3.44.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 27.3.44.

(4) Star, 25.3.44.

(5) Guardian, 30.3.44.

The appointment of the Native Mine Wages Commission had naturally raised the expectations of the African mine labourers. Its recommendations, however, were regarded as "miserable and grudging", while Smuts' decision to cut these "to the bone" was scornfully condemned.<sup>(1)</sup> Protest meetings of mine employees were organised by the African Mine Workers' Union.

The Government used its emergency war powers to introduce War Measure No. 1425 which prohibited meetings of more than 20 persons on gold-proclaimed land (mine property) without a special permit. Permits were rarely granted and never at all to the African Mine Workers' Union, a non-recognised trade union. This was an exceptionally serious blow to the Union which relied mainly on mass meetings of the workers to conduct its activities. The measure was used to harry officials of the Union and retard effective trade union organisation. J.B. Marks, President of the A.M.W.U., and four other officials were arrested during December, 1944, for contravening the Proclamation. All were subsequently found not guilty on a technicality.<sup>(2)</sup>

Subsequently, in May, 1945, a large meeting of black miners<sup>(3)</sup> requested the Government to meet a deputation from the A.M.W.U., which had a mandate to ask for:

- "(1) The implementation of all the recommendations of the Native Mine Wages Commission for improved wages and conditions. The improvement to be retrospective as from 1st April, 1944.
- (2) The removal of the Emergency Regulation banning meetings of more than 20 persons on Gold proclaimed land.
- (3) A general increase of wages."<sup>(4)</sup>

These requests were not, on the face of it, unreasonable, yet the miners were not even granted an audience by the Acting Prime Minister, J.H. Hofmeyr.

---

(1) Inkululeko, 15th April, 1944.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 16.1.45.

Inkululeko, 9th December, 1944; 19th December, 1944; 29th January, 1945.

(3) It was alleged that 2,000 men (representing all the African mineworkers) attended the meeting in the Trades Hall on 6th May.

(4) Inkululeko, 9th June, 1945.

The impatience of the African miner with his conditions of employment was reflected in the growing number of strikes on the Rand. These conditions had deteriorated since the Commission reported - the rising cost of living had further aggravated the position of the migrant worker and, because of a drought and poor crops, there had been a reduction, with Government sanction, of his beer and porridge rations.<sup>(1)</sup> Typical of the unrest was a hunger strike of about 3,500 men on a compound of the Crown Mines.<sup>(2)</sup>

"Riots" of black mineworkers occurred regularly during the early months of 1946. The distinguishing feature of these "disturbances" was that they were all concerned with non-provision of certain rations. Police were used to devastating effect - on the Modder East Mine, for example, a police baton charge resulted in the death of two and hospitalisation of over 100 African miners.<sup>(3)</sup>

More than 2,000 delegates<sup>(4)</sup> attended the annual conference of the African Mine Workers' Union on Sunday, 14th April, 1946. It was unanimously resolved that the Chamber of Mines and the Government should take "immediate steps to provide adequate and suitable food for the workers,"<sup>(5)</sup> and that, "in accordance with the new world principles for an improved standard of living subscribed to by our Government at U.N.O.," the minimum wage of all African miners should be raised to 10s. per day. The text of these resolutions was sent to the Chamber and a reply in the form of a printed post-card dated 6th May, 1946, was received from the A.M.W.U. The reply simply noted that the matter was "receiving attention". This was both the first and the last Chamber communication received by the A.M.W.U.<sup>(6)</sup>

---

(1) See p. 156.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 21.7.45.  
Inkululeko, 28th July, 1945.  
This paper claimed that 5,000 workers had gone on strike.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 8.3.46.

(4) Figure given by Rand Daily Mail, 14.4.46, in a report which occupied a full 3 column inches.

(5) Rand Daily Mail, 15.4.46.

(6) The Impending Strike of African Miners, A Statement by the African Mineworkers' Union, 7.8.46., p.3.

Roux suggests that it "was apparently sent in error by a subordinate clerk".<sup>(1)</sup>

This April conference was followed by strikes of African miners on a number of mines. In each case the miners demanded 10s. per day and better food, but returned to work after the police had taken "action" and arrested the ringleaders.<sup>(2)</sup> The Rand Daily Mail, in reporting on the strikes at the Luipaardsvlei and Randfontein Estate Mines, observed "there have been similar strikes on other mines along the Reef in recent weeks, and the similarity of the demands made on each occasion indicates that a central organisation is behind the apparent spontaneous strikes on various properties".<sup>(3)</sup> The A.M.W.U. did not claim any credit, however, and further stated that the strikers were "not acting on the advice of the leadership of the Union".<sup>(4)</sup>

Again in late May, the Union convened a mass meeting of mineworkers. If the earlier demands were not met, it was unanimously agreed that there should be "preparation for a strike of all native mineworkers on the Rand".<sup>(5)</sup> The meeting was open and was attended by the Police, the Director of Native Labour, and representatives of the Chamber of Mines.<sup>(6)</sup> The Chamber and Government were thus given timely notice of the black miners' intention to

---

(1) Roux, p. 337.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 4.5.46., 6.5.46., 7.5.46., 29.5.46.  
Justice was not very expeditious. Fifty-nine men from the Randfontein Estates Mine had to wait over 10 weeks in order to be found not guilty of contravening the Riotous Assemblies Act.  
Rand Daily Mail, 20.7.46.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 4.5.46.

(4) The Impending Strike of African Miners, op cit, pp. 3 and 4.

(5) Rand Daily Mail, 20.5.46.  
Meeting held on Sunday, 19.5.46.

(6) Evidence of Det. Sgt. H.G. Boy at preparatory examination on an allegation of sedition of eight members of the Communist Party.  
Cape Argus, 22.1.47.

strike.<sup>(1)</sup> Mr. G.H. Beatty, addressing a Shareholders' meeting, suggested that the agitation was by communists and that it was hoped "to get over it without much trouble".<sup>(2)</sup>

The next two months were uneventful. At a conference of the African Mine Workers' Union<sup>(3)</sup> held on the Newton Square, Johannesburg, on Sunday, 4th August, 1946, the gathering reached agreement both on the strike and the date on which it was to begin. It was unanimously resolved:

"Because of the intransigent attitude of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines towards the legitimate demands of the workers for a minimum wage of ten shillings per day and better conditions of work, this meeting of African miners resolves to embark upon a General Strike of all Africans employed on the Gold Mines, as from the 12th August, 1946." <sup>(4)</sup>

The decision to strike on a certain day was proposed by an unidentified African and agreed to by the meeting. Neither the proposal to strike nor the decision to do so on a certain day came from J.B. Marks, President of the A.M.W.U., or any of the other speakers. Marks, however, did specifically warn against the use of violence and cautioned the men not to break up kitchens and the offices of the compound managers. A policeman present at the meeting alleged that the unknown miner who demanded the

- 
- (1) The authors of a recent book have also drawn attention to this point:  
"The proceedings (of the meeting) were widely publicised, but mine owners and Government refused to credit Africans with the capacity to organise concerted action on a large scale in defiance of the elaborate system of surveillance, intimidation and espionage that operated in the compounds".  
Simons, H.J. and R.E., Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950, Penguin African Library, 1969, p. 573.
- (2) Rand Daily Mail, 23.5.46.
- (3) The A.M.W.U. claimed an attendance of "over one thousand delegates" while a police witness to the "Sedition" trial of 1947 estimated that only 300 to 400 African miners attended.
- (4) The Impending Strike of African Miners, op cit, p. 1.  
Rand Daily Mail, 12.8.46.

strike said, "It is better to die here than to go home empty handed". (1)

The strike thus decided upon began on 12th August. Mary Benson portrayed the scene very vividly even though she was not there:

"At 3 a.m. on Monday, 12th August, it was a cold clear night on the highveld. All along the Reef from hundreds of shaft-heads African miners surfaced at the end of their shift and walked out in the wintry night, back to the compound. Some, as they tramped wearily along, passed others, awaiting to go underground. But on seven mines they passed no one. The cages went down empty. The huge fly-wheels stopped. The great mine strike had begun". (2)

The African mine strike of 1946 lasted four days and, according to the Chief Native Commissioner for the Witwatersrand, involved 73,557 workers. 1,248 of them were injured in the course of police action, nine were killed. (3) The strike was quickly broken - as were a few heads. The black worker did not gain a single concession from the Chamber and, in fact, at no stage were negotiations even opened to discuss their "apparent" grievances. Such, in brief, was the course of the strike.

The strike had started quietly during the early hours of Monday morning, 12th August. Initially it was successful for more than 48,000 men (4) reacted to the call to stay away from work. Eleven properties were affected - a total stoppage at 6, but only a partial abstention from work on the remaining

- 
- (1) Evidence of Det. Constable J.S. Viviers at preparatory examination on an allegation of sedition of eight members of the Communist Party. Cape Argus, 22.1.47. Guardian, 23.1.47.
  - (2) Benson, Mary., The African Patriots, Faber and Faber, London, 1963, pp. 126 and 127.
  - (3) Estimates of strike casualties given by Mr. J.M. Brink, Chief Native Commissioner for the Witwatersrand. Forum, 26.10.46. Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Africans Annual Report, April, 1946 to March, 1947, p. 4.
  - (4) The Chamber estimate of the number involved was 45,000. After the Chamber statement was issued, 3,000 men on the Sub-Nigel joined the strike. Star, 12.8.46.

five.<sup>(1)</sup> A novel element was introduced at this early stage when workers on the City Deep mine, who had been driven from their compounds, went underground where they then held a "sit-down" strike.

As Government reaction to the demands of the African miners' had been tardy, so its reaction to the threat of a strike by the A.M.W.U. had likewise been tardy. Yet now the Government reacted (or perhaps over-reacted) and already by the first morning of the strike reinforcements were sent to Johannesburg. A baton charge was made on black miners in Benoni who "contemplated an attack on the police station".<sup>(2)</sup> Apparently the police were acting on the principle that attack was the best form of defence. On all the mines involved in the strike, police arrested the ringleaders, constantly referred to in the daily press as "agitators".

The Tuesday (13th August) saw little change in conditions on the Witwatersrand gold mines. The police had surrounded each compound where the workers were on strike. Thirty-two of the Rand's 45 producing mines were reported not to be affected by the strike - the number of mines at which there was a total stoppage had increased to eight, a total of 13 mines being involved.<sup>(3)</sup> The African miners were being arrested in increasing numbers. At the Turf compound, 36, and at the Chris Compound, 24, were held when "strong detachments of police visited these compounds".<sup>(4)</sup>

The Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions convened a meeting to debate two resolutions - whether all the African Unions affiliated to the Council should go on strike immediately, or whether the Chamber of Mines should be given 48 hours to open negotiations with the African Mine Workers' Union before a general strike was called. While this debate was in progress, news was received that the offices of the Garment Workers' Union had been raided by the police, and all the printing

---

(1) Star, 12.8.46.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 12.8.46.

(3) Star, 13.8.46.

(4) Rand Daily Mail, 14.8.46.

and duplicating machinery in them removed. Soon afterwards the police calmly requested J.B. Marks, President both of the A.M.W.U. and the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions, to come out of the building in which the meeting was being held and thereupon arrested him. Marks appeared in Court the following day (14th August) but his bail application was refused.<sup>(1)</sup> The case was remanded until 22nd August. Thus only 24 hours after the strike commenced the Government detained the leader of the African miners. The meeting of Non-European Trade Unions, on hearing of Marks' arrest, immediately decided by an overwhelming majority that a general strike of all African workers represented by the Council of Non-European Trade Unions should be called within 48 hours. This general strike did not, however, take place.

Critical events were still to take place on the second day of the strike, Tuesday. After Marks and several other officials of the A.M.W.U. had been arrested, the police raided the Head Office of the A.M.W.U. and confiscated files, letters and other documents. As the strike had been organised by the Union, this move, in conjunction with the arrest of many of the Union's leaders, must have both seriously inhibited continued organisation and assisted the mine authorities in breaking the strike.

It was on this day that African miners were for the first time fired upon by the police. The latter surrounded the strikers at the Sub-Nigel Mine and when stoned, "fired 12 rounds, selecting individual targets".<sup>(2)</sup> In the ensuing panic amongst the black miners four were trampled to death. The verdict of the subsequent inquest on these men was "death due to asphyxia occasioned though the four deceased being buried under other natives after having fallen at the entrance to a compound during a stampede after shots had been fired at or towards an unruly mob of compound natives by members of the police in an attempt to quell a riot".<sup>(3)</sup> Eight workers had sustained

---

(1) Together with three others, he was charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act with inciting African mineworkers to cease work. Star, 14.8.46.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 14.8.46.

(3) *ibid*, 24.10.46.

gunshot wounds - one later died of wounds in both thighs. Soon after this "incident" all the workers on strike at the Sub-Nigel Mine, irrespective of whether it was their shift or not, indicated that they "wished to go underground". The death of some of their number had a significant effect on the strikers. In addition, the news of the deaths must have inhibited and deterred those contemplating strike action and weakened the resolve of those already involved.

The strike developed into a "see-saw" affair on the Wednesday, (14th August). While some of the original strikers went back to work, others, for the first time, went on strike. On balance, however, by late afternoon the trend was "back to work".

The many Africans who had been arrested during the preceding two days were speedily brought to trial. Sixty-two were charged in the Johannesburg Magistrates Court with contravening Section 19 of the Native Labour Regulation Act by refusing to commence work. The case was remanded until 28th August and each of the men was released on payment of £1 bail. The twenty men employed on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines did not fare so well. Similarly charged to the 62 above, these men had their contracts cancelled by a Germiston Magistrate. Similar sentences were meted out to 53 miners from the Simmer and Jack Mine.<sup>(1)</sup> "Justice" was both swift and harsh, and was undoubtedly intended as a lesson to those miners who still refused to work.

Smuts had appointed a Cabinet sub-committee of the Minister of Mines (S.F. Waterson), the Minister of Labour (Dr. Colin Steyn), the Minister of Justice (H.G. Lawrence), and the Minister of Native Affairs (Major Piet van der Byl) to "deal" with the strike.<sup>(2)</sup> On the Wednesday, however, Smuts told a regional committee of his party, in words which have a familiar ring, that he was "not unduly concerned over what was happening on the Witwatersrand mines.....because the native strike was not caused by legitimate grievances but by agitators".<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) Star, 14.8.46.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 14.8.46.

(3) Star, 14.8.46.

The black workers continued to stage "sit-down" strikes. Police were called to the Nigel Gold Mine and descended to investigate the position. It was reported that "they drove the natives up stope by stope, level by level until they reached the surface".<sup>(1)</sup> This was later denied by the Management, who claimed that the men had "voluntarily" returned to the surface.

By the Thursday (15th August), the strike had been all but broken - only two mines still being affected. By the following evening (16th August) all the mines had returned to normal. Seventeen mines had, in varying degrees, been involved. As many as a million man-hours were estimated to have been lost.<sup>(2)</sup>

The attitude of the black striker had initially been peaceful. A newsman who toured the strike compounds found that the men treated the occasion as if it were a Sunday:

"They sat or lay about in blanketed groups, sunning themselves behind compound walls out of the wind. Others strolled along veld paths smoking and talking.....The only signs of abnormal conditions were the frequent lorry-loads of armed police arriving in the area".<sup>(3)</sup>

The ill-advised arrest of ringleaders, however, led to a wave of intense bitterness and ill-feeling which was reflected in a change in the black workers' attitude. Nevertheless, the clashes between the police and miners occurred for the most part in the compounds themselves or in their immediate vicinity. The black workers apparently heeded Marks' advice not to break up the kitchens and compound managers' offices, which had been the practice of previous black strikers, but vented their resentment by hurling rocks at the police who encircled them. Few clashes took place outside the environment of the mine. Mass marches on Johannesburg, undertaken for no apparent reason, were turned back in spite of the fact that they were orderly. The march on the Nigel Police Station which resulted

---

(1) Rand Daily Mail, 16.8.46.  
Cape Times, 16.8.46. "Police Drive Strikers to Surface".

(2) Star, 16.8.46.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 12.8.46.

in five fatalities had, on the other hand, been undertaken for the legitimate purpose of enquiring after some leaders who had been arrested. On these occasions, however, the police considered it necessary to resort to batons, bayonets and even the use of guns.

It is futile to attempt to apportion responsibility for the fatalities and injuries. The police as well as the daily press claimed the Africans were armed with "sticks, stones, steel bars, knives, iron bars and other weapons".<sup>(1)</sup> Photographs of the "weapons" collected after the clash at the Nigel Police Station showed the vast majority to be sticks, an article usually associated with the "blanket African". Police action had apparently been directed, or so the Johannesburg newspapers suggested, towards safeguarding the citizens of the Witwatersrand. The Cape Times, However, commenting on the third day of the strike, found much to be desired in the attitude of the Police:

"It is deplorable, but it is one of the facts of South African life, that when there is native labour unrest there are clashes between natives and the Police, and that when there are clashes between natives and the Police the native casualties will be in the majority. Those who organise native labour demonstrations or strikes, therefore, unless they do so on grounds that are both just and urgent, are deliberately baring not their own but their deluded followers' heads to the baton. Which increases the culpability of their irresponsibility. On the other hand there is abundant justification for the prevalent complaint among both natives and Europeans who try to be objective that the force used by the Police in dispensing native demonstrators commonly errs on the side of ruthlessness. Although it is no use being half-hearted when order has to be maintained, it is not only inhumane but unwise to use force too violently".<sup>(2)</sup>

Other newspapers did not describe the clashes in the same terms. The Rand Daily Mail reflected general sentiment when it suggested that the police deserved "the gratitude of the public for their courageous and skilful behaviour".<sup>(3)</sup>

---

(1) Rand Daily Mail, 15.8.46.

(2) Cape Times, 16.8.46.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 14.8.46.

The Mail was not alone in its praise of the police. The 1,600 policemen<sup>(1)</sup> who had been made available on the Rand to deal with the labour troubles were later complimented by the Minister of Justice and the Witwatersrand Deputy Commissioner of Police for their "restrained" behaviour - each European being rewarded with a bottle of beer<sup>(2)</sup> and each non-European policeman, appropriately, with kaffir beer.<sup>(3)</sup>

From the first day of the strike, "agitators" had been blamed for inciting the workers to refuse to work. Already by the third day Smuts had publicly agreed with this view, while the Rand Daily Mail<sup>(4)</sup> quite blandly identified the "forces behind the strike". "Prominent" among these forces was "the Communist Party".<sup>(5)</sup> The fact that the strike was organised from outside and that Marks was a communist was cited as proof that the strike was caused by "agitators". It could, however, hardly have been otherwise. Anyone trying to organise miners from the inside would soon have found himself outside in any event due to the hostility of the Management. A Compound Manager, in fact, said as much at the trial of the leadership of the Communist Party in early 1947: "If he found organisers in the compounds who were trying to organise the workers into trade unions he would try to get rid of them". Further, he stated categorically that this policy was universally practised all along the Witwatersrand.<sup>(6)</sup> Numerous organisations, including the Communist Party and the Institute of Race Relations, condemned the use of police to break the strike. The police, by adopting physical force and

---

(1) Star, 16.8.46.

(2) Rand Daily Mail, 20.8.46.

(3) *ibid*, 23.8.46.

(4) The "Cape Times" used rather devious logic to support the stand of its sister paper (The Rand Daily Mail) and of the Prime Minister: "With no responsible European backing, the strike was doomed from the start. This is complete justification for General Smuts' statement..... that the strike was the work of agitators".  
Cape Times, 16.8.46.

(5) Rand Daily Mail, 14.8.46.

(6) Mr. J.C. Brown, Compound Manager, New Kleinfontein Mine.  
Star, 22.1.47.

intimidatory tactics, <sup>(1)</sup> must have had a significant effect on the outcome of the strike. Yet the responsibility and blame for the strike was decisively shifted to the communists by the police raid on the Party offices during the strike. <sup>(2)</sup> In addition, 12 members of the Johannesburg District Committee of the Communist Party were included amongst the more than 50 men and women of all races charged with conspiring to incite, and of inciting, the black mineworkers to strike. <sup>(3)</sup> The impression which the Government obviously wished to spread, viz. that the Communist Party was behind the strike, was further reinforced by the allegation of sedition brought against the Party's National Chairman and seven other prominent communists during January, 1947. <sup>(4)</sup>

Perhaps the complicity of the "agitators" was put into true perspective by the Sunday Times which urged the Government to "analyse the basic causes of discontent among native workers and ascertain what makes them a fertile field for the agitator". <sup>(5)</sup> What then were the African miners' "basic causes of discontent"?

The origins of the strike are complex but not necessarily obscure. We shall list them below in an order which does not necessarily reflect their importance.

First, the general state of unrest throughout the world. Industrial disturbances swept over the world after the war. For patriotic reasons trade unions restrained their members during the war years so that the end of the conflict saw renewed activity and militance by unionised workers.

Second, the heightened race consciousness which was manifested at this time both in South Africa and other parts of the world, such as India,

---

(1) Printing offices were raided, pamphlets confiscated, sweeping arrests of miners and non-miners made, "scabs" protected, and possession even taken of a loudspeaker van.

(2) Cape Times, 16.8.46.

(3) Rand Daily Mail, 3.9.46.

(4) Cape Times, 22.1.47.

They were committed for trial but the case was not proceeded with.

(5) Sunday Times, 18.8.46.

Indonesia, the Middle East and the African Colonies. The subject populations of Asia and Africa were asserting their claims to those freedoms the Allies had claimed to defend against Hitler.

Third, the example set by the African mineworkers' European counterparts. The white miners had successfully, but illegally, struck during March, 1946. The strike began as a protest against the dismissal of an employee in arrears with his subscriptions to the South African Mine Workers' Union (closed shop agreement) and developed into a demand for new elections of Union officials.<sup>(1)</sup> It lasted for nearly ten days and, although quite illegal, involved every mine on the Reef - no officials of the Protesting Committee were arrested and the men were not forced back to work.

Fourth, the colour bar and the economic disabilities of the African miners. The appointment of the Lansdown Commission buoyed up the hopes of the black miners, but the Report and the Government's reaction to the Report must have persuaded the most reasonable among them that the only way to gain a living wage from the Chamber was to resort to strike action. The Government virtually ignored the estimates of the Commission and did not even contest them. The decision, therefore, to grant relief to the black miners which was insufficient to meet their minimum requirements, on the basis of the Lansdown Commission's calculations, was therefore regarded as purely expedient. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that African trade unions were not officially recognised and could not therefore participate in collective bargaining.

Fifth, the shortage of food affected the rations of the miner and the cost to his family. Because of the scarcity of certain foodstuffs, the Government had permitted the Chamber to reduce mine rations. Furthermore, during 1945 there was a maize crop failure in the Transkei and other reserve

---

(1) The Settlement included a new election of officials to the South African Mineworkers' Union and provision for the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry into the Union.  
Rand Daily Mail, 23.3.46.

areas, with the position described as "desperate", as maize supplies from other areas were also being curtailed. A member of the Maize Board, speaking in his personal capacity, voiced the opinion that Africans faced "absolute starvation unless there are bountiful crops of maize in other countries of the world".<sup>(1)</sup> However, the Minister of Native Affairs (Major Piet van der Byl) told Parliament: "No natives are 'starving'.. The expression is one commonly used by natives to indicate that food supplies are below normal".<sup>(2)</sup> It was, nevertheless, that typhus prevailed throughout the Transkei and that the health conditions of Africans in general were deteriorating.<sup>(3)</sup>

Sixth, the political motivations of the unenfranchised and an increasingly prevalent resentment of authority. Smuts' statesmanlike speeches outside South Africa, the foundation of the United Nations Organisation, and documents such as the Workers' Charter had a profound effect on the Africans. The world had once more been made safe for democracy and, strangely enough, they wished to have a share in it.

Symptomatic of the temper of the African was the spontaneous decision by the Natives' Representative Council, an organisation supposed to represent Africans throughout the country, to adjourn in protest during the Mine Strike of 1946 (14.8.46.). Dr. J.S. Moroka, a member of the Council, referring to the "wanton shooting" of the black miners, moved the motion of adjournment as a "protest against the breach of faith towards the African people".<sup>(4)</sup>

---

(1) Rand Daily Mail, 12.1.46.

(2) *ibid*, 2.2.46.

(3) *ibid*, 22.1.46., 31.1.46., 7.2.46.

(4) Rand Daily Mail, 15.8.46.

The Resolution of the Council read as follows:

"The Council having since its inception brought to the notice of the Government the reactionary character of Union Native policy of segregation in all its ramifications deprecates the Government's post war continuation of a policy of Fascism which is the antithesis and negation of the letter and the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Charter.

The Council, therefore, in protest against this breach of faith towards the African people in particular and the cause of world freedom in general resolves to adjourn this session and calls upon the Government forthwith to abolish all discriminatory legislation affecting non-Europeans in this country".

Report of Proceedings of the Natives Representative Council, Adjourned Meeting of the Ninth Session., U.G.12 of 47.

The Star commented:

".....it was not entirely clear from the discussion what specific act or omission was being condemned. The councillors denounced in the most general terms the whole discriminatory native policy of the country.....

.....it must be conceded that the Council acted under some provocation and perhaps under considerable stress of feeling. Its meeting happened to coincide with the strike by a large number of native labourers on the mines, and with reports of disturbances in which the police had used bayonets and some strikers had lost their lives. The council as the only representative body of natives in existence, must have learnt of these happenings with grave concern, yet all attempts to elicit information or satisfactory assurances were fruitless.....

.....it was ... the culmination of a process of neglect which has left the council with nothing to do but brood over its grievances for nearly a decade". (1)

Moroka, in speaking to the motion of adjournment, referred to the Council as a "Toy Telephone". (2)

Of all the different factors discussed above, perhaps the most immediate cause of the strike was the widespread disappointment with the none-too-generous findings of the Lansdown Commission and their even more niggardly implementation by the Government. After the initial high hopes the subsequent disillusionment was extreme. On top of this came the cuts in the food rations, which rubbed salt into still open wounds.

---

(1) Star, 17.8.46.

(2) See Paton, Alan, Hofmeyr, O.U.P., London, 1964, pp.430-442., for a full discussion of these events.

12.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE . . . .

Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose. <sup>(1)</sup> African labour conditions over a time-span of more than fifty years - the period we have discussed in detail - are remarkable not for the changes and improvements that one would expect as a natural by-product of increasing mechanisation, industrialisation and sophistication, but for their rigidity, especially in wage-rates, and their resemblance to conditions at the turn of the century. Prof. Frankel's dictum which we have quoted earlier adequately states the present writer's views - "Nothing has changed so little in South Africa as the black man's rate of pay".

By the 1940's the Chamber still relied on views regarding the African labour force of the gold mines which were somewhat dubious. Typical of these was the Chamber's obsessive pre-occupation with the theory of the African's strong preference for more leisure over greater income which must lead to a backward-sloping supply curve of black labour. The Chamber adamantly maintained that the African "(utilised) extra remuneration rather to purchase more leisure than to increase his standard of living", <sup>(2)</sup> even though the African in this country had increased his average length of service on the mines by more than 200 per cent during the first four decades of the century. The average length of stay at "home" in the reserves between periods of employment had, in addition, been drastically curtailed, to such an extent that the Lansdown Commission referred to the "holiday visit" to the reserves of a fifth of the men from the Union and Protectorates.

Clearly one of the most significant figures for the industry was the average cost incurred by a mine for each shift worked by an African miner. According to the breakdown already discussed on page 150, the total

---

(1) I am indebted to Mr. H.F. Kenny for this French expression.

(2) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.169.

for 1942 was 3s. 4. 8d. per shift. <sup>(1)</sup> The only comparable figure available is that for 1924 - 3s. 2d. <sup>(2)</sup> Over 18 years the cost of employing an African labourer increased by 2. 8d. per shift or 7. 3 per cent. The pay component had, however, remained the same, viz. 2s. 2. 5d., despite a marked raise in labour productivity. During the same period the retail cost of living index rose by 8. 3 per cent. <sup>(3)</sup> This illustrates the Chamber of Mines' declared policy of utilising "cheap native labour".

In 1941, in correspondence with Senator J.D. Rheinallt Jones, the Gold Producers' Committee of the Chamber of Mines reported as follows:

"It will be within your knowledge that during recent years there have been substantial general improvements in the circumstances of non-European employment, i. e. in regard to housing, feeding, hospitalisation, recreation and such general amenities. In addition, there have been financial concessions of some importance, such, for instance, as the setting up in January, 1936, and again in 1937, of new minimum rates for native employees resulting in the fact that average rates of pay today are approximately 1½d. per shift

---

(1) The breakdown in 1942 was as follows:

Wages	2s. 2. 5d.
Hospital	1. 15d.
Food	5. 28d.
"Other costs"	6. 97d.
Capital costs of compound and hospital buildings	<u>. 94d.</u>
Total	<u>3s. 4. 8d.</u>

(2) The figures given for 1924 were as follows:

Average pay per shift	2s. 2½d.
Feeding, medical attendance, housing, etc.	<u>0s. 9d.</u>
Total wages equivalent paid	2s. 11½d.
Additional cost of compensation, recruiting, etc.	<u>0s. 2½d.</u>
Total cost of African shift	<u>3s. 2d.</u>

Evidence of G.P.C. to the Economic and Wage Commission (1925), Statement No. 5, Para. 14.

(3) Union Statistics for 50 years, Bureau of Census and Statistics, Pretoria, H-24.

in advance of average rates in 1935; whilst in 1939, the concession of the payment of incoming rail fares and food for the journeys for natives serving a minimum of 270 shifts, represented a further improvement in circumstances of employment. The monetary value of these two concessions was approximately £75,000 per annum.

It is also pertinent to your enquiry to refer to the fact that the Native Recruiting Corporation, Limited, and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, Limited, make regular and substantial donations to a number of missionary and cultural organisations, entirely for the benefit of natives in all territories to which the interests of the mines extend; whilst in 1935 a donation of £85,000 for the benefit of natives in the Union and the British Protectorate territories was made for capital purposes for Native welfare.

In regard to the level of cash wages, comment may be made on a matter which is frequently overlooked. The average rate of pay in cash for all native employees in 1930 was 2s. 1. 9d. per day, in 1935 - 2s. 1. 2d. per day, and in 1941 - 2s. 2. 6d. per day. Unless quoted in association with the numbers employed in the respective years (201,000; 272,000; 369,000) the rates of pay are to a great extent deprived of significance. The increase in the number of natives employed from 201,000 to 369,000 is the best evidence that the Industry's rates and terms of employment are the best open in the Union (or, indeed, in Africa generally) to large numbers of natives of equivalent industrial experience. It is legitimate to assume that the natives represented in the increase in numbers would, if not employed on the mines, be employed elsewhere in less attractive or less remunerative employment.

In the absence of detailed statistics, it is impossible to say that there are more natives employed in the better classes of employment, or that those classes have achieved any increase in rates compared with the average. The impression is, however, that larger numbers of natives are getting higher wages than in the past, and the fact that the average rates show comparatively little change is not conclusive that individual classes of natives are not materially better off." (1)

A few days later a correction was offered, which stated:

"The monetary value of the concessions stated at £750,000 per annum is underestimated, as the following figures will make clear:-

The average rate of pay in cash in 1935 was 2s. 1. 2d., whereas the rate today is 2s. 2. 6d. Taking the numbers employed as 369,000 and the shifts worked per annum as 312, the wage increase amounts to £670,000.

---

(1) Letter from A.J. Limebeer, Secretary, Transvaal Chamber of Mines, to Senator J.D. Rheinallt Jones, 12.11.41., Ballinger Papers.

The value of the rail fare and feeding concessions is £280,000, so that the total should be £950,000 instead of £750,000. "(1)

The point of view this illustrated is significant. The "improvements" in the way of financial concessions to African workers consisted partly in restoring a drop in their average rate of pay which had occurred between 1930 and 1935, and partly in paying an increased total wage bill through employing many more Africans at a minimally improved rate of pay. African labour, the cost of which had remained virtually stationary in money terms had, in a period of rising prices, become relatively cheaper and was being utilised in larger quantities.

It is apparent that in the years immediately after Union, the Chamber, if permitted, would have altered its labour policy by providing greater opportunities for the African miner. Although the pressures for doing so increased with the passage of years, the Chamber's propensity, in fact, its inclination, to strive for the goal of utilising the black worker to his full potential apparently floundered on the mentality of appeasement which pervaded negotiations between the Chamber and the white workers.

This mentality is well illustrated, not only by its abrupt refusal to Senator Rheinallt Jones of information on the benefits afforded, during the past ten, or even five years, to European, African and Coloured employees respectively, but by the terms in which the refusal was conveyed:

". . . . in view of the fact that the rates of pay and the terms of employment of natives employed on the gold mines are superior to any others open in the Union to natives of similar industrial experience and available for employment in large numbers, the Committee considers the proposed comparison with Europeans undesirable and unnecessary. Moreover, if it be agreed that any such comparison is desirable, it is the view of the Committee that in the case of the mines, the comparison reveals the native position in a more favourable light than in other large industries in the Union.

---

(1) Letter from A.J. Limebeer, Secretary, Transvaal Chamber of Mines, to Senator J.D. Rheinallt Jones, 19.11.41., Ballinger Papers.

Admittedly, the prospect of promotion for natives is circumscribed, both by legislation and by current sociological views in the Union, but, as you are aware, the mines are not in a position to discuss that aspect of the matter. You will also be aware of the widespread comment in the Union on the comparison between wages and conditions of employment for natives in the Mining Industry on the one hand, and on farms and in other industries on the other.

In conclusion, I am asked to place on record the opinion of the Gold Producers' Committee that the discussion of terms of Native employment on the lines you indicate is likely to prove dangerous, both to the interests of the natives and to the peace of the country.

Yours faithfully,  
Signed: A.J. Limebeer  
Secretary

P.S. The Committee has decided to report this correspondence to the Minister of Mines and the Minister of Native Affairs".<sup>(1)</sup>

Professor H.M. Robertson has suggested four possible causes for this acceptance of a "colour bar" by employers whose costs are raised as a result: shared prejudices which prove stronger than economic interests; a sop to preserve tranquil labour relations (with the existing force); bowing to political pressure; and the knowledge that so long as competitors have to meet similar requirements in the organisation of their labour forces, there can be no unexpected challenges to meet on this score.<sup>(2)</sup> It was due, perhaps, to a combination of all four, rather than one specifically. It is also a possibility that the industry's actions were conditioned by its expectations. The estimates of the expected life of the industry which were made from time to time have all been proved to be on the conservative side.<sup>(3)</sup> However, even if these were for "public consumption" only, informed impartial opinion, while not as pessimistic

---

(1) Letter from A.J. Limebeer, Secretary, Transvaal Chamber of Mines, to Senator J.D. Rheinallt Jones, 27.11.41., Ballinger Papers.

(2) H.M. Robertson, unpublished paper.

(3) Estimates by the Chamber in 1930 showed a decrease in black labour requirements from 205,000 in that year to 186,000 in 1934. This period, contrary to expectations, was one of tremendous expansion. Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Labour Resources of the Union (An 890/1931), p. 30, Annexure "V".

as the Chamber, found little scope for optimism. Throughout the years the many "miracles" have led to a considerably longer life-span for the mines than the pessimists had thought possible. <sup>(1)</sup> The Chamber's calculations and resulting actions might, in fact, have differed if they had considered not merely the short-run, but also the long-run costs to the industry.

We have seen throughout this investigation the results of undue complacency. It may be argued that the colour bar is a political and extraneous factor to which the Chamber reacted in the only way possible. As the colour bar reserved the skilled and semi-skilled work for whites, the blacks could only be employed on unskilled work and at the relatively low rates of pay this implied. To obtain the vast amount of black labour needed at low wage rates, the industry assisted in the perpetuation of the migrant labour system. The wage for the African was apparently determined by a combination of three factors: The mines decided collectively to pay a wage not determined by productivity, but kept to a minimum since it was regarded merely as a supplement to the "reserve income" derived from the land under tribal society, and since, with a fixed price of gold, remuneration must be limited by an inability, on the part of the industry, to pay more. The industry, however, adopted a different approach in deciding upon wage claims for the European. In his case it recognised as early as 1911 that "wages are based on a living wage, plus a margin which varies according to the healthiness and safety of the work, and the responsibility and skill demanded of it". <sup>(2)</sup> In 1926, the Chamber defined its wage policy with respect to whites as follows:

"Wages must be adequate to provide subsistence; thereafter, they must be determined by the value of the work performed, i. e. the production achieved thereby, and the resultant ability to pay them." <sup>(3)</sup>

These criteria were not applied to blacks.

- 
- (1) Even as supposedly threatened men sometimes live longer than expected, so mines often continue to work for a considerable time after the end of their "official" lives.
  - (2) T.C.M. (1911), p. Lxix.
  - (3) The Wage Position on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, (1926), published by the G.P.C., Para. 100.

It would be superfluous to depict once more the deteriorating economic position of the African miner in the years before the 1946 strike. The Chamber's analysis was all-too-familiar: "The average mine native..... spends about half of the time between the ages of 18 to 40 at his home in comparative idleness and 'retires' about the age of 40 - an enviable position".<sup>(1)</sup> However, as we have seen, the average black miner spent much of the prime of his life many thousands of feet underground in conditions hardly conducive to health, on work both strenuous and exacting, with little opportunity for advancement and no provision at all for retirement, in short, in a situation which few semi-industrialised workers would tolerate.

---

(1) Evidence of G.P.C. to W.N.W.C. (1943), p.168.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Andrews, W.H., Class Struggles in South Africa, 1941.
- Alexander, Ray and Simons, H.J., Job Reservation and the Trade Unions, Enterprise, Cape Town, 1959.
- Benson, Mary., The African Patriots, Faber and Faber, London, 1963.
- Cartter, A.M., Theory of Wages and Employment, Illinois, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1959.
- Davidson, Basil., Report on Southern Africa, Jonathan Cape, London, 1952.
- Davies, Ioan., African Trade Unions, Penguin African Library, 1966.
- Doxey, G.V., The Industrial Colour Bar in South Africa, O.U.P., Cape Town, 1961.
- Duffy, James., Portugal in Africa, Penguin Africa Library, 1963.
- Dunlop, J.T., Wage Determination under Trade Unions, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1950.
- Dunlop, J.T. and Diatchenko, V.P., Labour Productivity, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- Feit, Edward., African Opposition in South Africa, Stanford University, Stanford, 1967.
- Frankel, S. Herbert., Capital Investment in Africa, O.U.P., London, 1938.
- Gitsham, Ernest and Trembath, James., Labour Organisation in South Africa, E.P. & Commercial Printing Co., Durban, 1926.
- Goodfellow, D.M., A Modern Economic History of South Africa, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1931.
- Hancock, W.K., Smuts: The Sanguine Years, 1870-1919, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962.
- Hancock, W.K., Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919-1950, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968.
- Hancock, W.K., Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Vol. 2. Part 2, O.U.P., London, 1937.
- Hepple, Alex., Trade Unions in Trevail, Unity Publications, Johannesburg, 1954.

- Hepple, Alex., South Africa - A Political and Economic History, Pall Mall Press, London, 1966.
- Hicks, J.R., The Theory of Wages, London, MacMillan, 1963.
- Horrell, Muriel., Racialism and the Trade Unions, S.A.I.R.R., Johannesburg, 1959.
- Horrell, Muriel., South African Trade Unionism, S.A.I.R.R., Johannesburg, 1961.
- Houghton, D. Hobart., Some Economic Problems of the Bantu in South Africa, S.A.I.R.R., Johannesburg, 1938.
- Houghton, D. Hobart., The South African Economy, O.U.P., Cape Town, 1967.
- Hutt, W.H., The Economics of the Colour Bar, London, Andre Deutsch, 1964.
- International Labour Office, Minimum Wage Fixing and Economic Development, Geneva, 1968.
- Katzen, Leo., Gold and the South African Economy, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1964.
- Myint, H., The Economics of the Developing Countries, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1968.
- Paton, Alan., Hofmeyr, Oxford University Press, London, 1964.
- Phelps Brown, E.H., The Economics of Labour, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962.
- Salter, W.E.G., Productivity and Technical Change, Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- Simons, H.J. and R.E., Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950, Penguin African Library, 1969.
- Malan, Rt. Hon. Senator F.S. Malan., South Africa After the Union, 1910-1921 The Union of South Africa, The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. VIII, Cambridge, 1936.
- Plant, Arnold., Economic Development, 1795-1921, The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. VIII, Cambridge, 1936.
- Lewin, Julius., 'The Rise of African Nationalism' in Politics and Law in South Africa, 1963.

- Roux, Edward., Time Longer than Rope, University of Wisconsin Press, London, 1966.
- Turner, H.A., Wage Trends, Wage Policies, and Collective Bargaining: the problems for Underdeveloped Countries. (Dept. of Applied Econ. occasional papers:6: University of Cambridge), Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Van der Horst, Sheila T., Native Labour in South Africa, O.U.P., Cape Town, 1942.
- Van der Horst, Sheila T., The Effects of Industrialisation on Race Relations in South Africa. (in Industrialisation and Race Relations: a symposium ed. by Guy Hunter, London, O.U.P.
- Wootton, Barbara., The Social Foundations of Wage Policy, Unwin University Books, London, 1926.
- Arkin, Marcus., "Strikes, Boycotts - and the History of their Impact on South Africa," S.A.J.E., 1960.
- Becker, G.S., "Investment in Education," American Economic Review, May, 1960.
- Berg, E., "Backward Sloping Labour Supply Functions in Dual Economics - The Africa Case", Quarterly Journal of Economics, August, 1961.
- Blainey, G., "Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid" The Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. XVIII, No. 2., August, 1965.
- Clack, G., "The Nationalisation of South African Trade Unions", Cambridge Research, January, 1966.
- Clack, G., "Industrial Peace in South Africa", British Journal of Industrial Relations.
- Davenport, T.R.H., "The South African Rebellion, 1914", English Historical Review, London, 1963.
- Denoon, D.J.N., "Capitalist Influence and the Transvaal Government during the Crown Colony Period, 1900-1906", The Historical Journal, London, 1968.
- Denoon, D.J.N., "The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-1906", Journal of African History, London, 1967.
- Diamond, C.R., "The Native Grievances Inquiry, 1913-1914", S.A.J.E., 1968.

- Hobart Houghton, D., "Men of Two Worlds: Some Aspects of Migratory Labour", S.A.J.E., 1960.
- Hobart Houghton, D., "Land Reforms in the Bantu Areas and its Effect upon Urban Labour", S.A.J.E., 1961.
- Frankel, S.H. assisted by Herzfeld, H., "An Analysis of the Growth of the National Income of the Union in the Period of Prosperity before the War", S.A.J.E., 1944.
- Kahn, Ellison., "The Right to Strike in South Africa - An Historical Analysis", S.A.J.E., 1943.
- Read, C.L., "The Union Native and the Witwatersrand Gold Mines Presidential Address", S.A.J.E., 1933.
- Robertson, H.M., "150 Years of Economic Contact between Black and White", S.A.J.E., Part I, December 1934, Part II, March, 1935.
- Routh, G.G.C., "State Intervention in the Regulation of Wages and Working Conditions in Great Britain and South Africa", S.A.J.E., 1943.
- Robertson, H.M., "The Historical Evolution of South African Wage Levels", Race Relations, Vol. VI, 1939.
- Rheinallt Jones, J.D., "The Position of the Worker under the Labour Laws of the Union", Race Relations, Vol. VI, 1939.
- Rottenberg, S., "Income and Leisure in an Underdeveloped Economy", Journal of Political Economy, 1952.
- Turner, H.A., "Trade Unions, Differentials and the Levelling of Wages", Manchester School of Econ. & Social Studies, Vol. XX, No. 3, September, 1952.
- Van der Horst, S., "Equal Pay for Equal Work", S.A.J.E., 1954.
- Van der Horst, S., "The Economic Implications of Political Democracy", supplement to Optima, June, 1960.
- Steenkamp, W.F.J., "Bantu Wages in South Africa", S.A.J.E., June, 1962.
- Van der Horst, S., "Some Effects of Industrial Legislation on the Market for Native Labour in South Africa", S.A.J.E., 1935.
- Vatter, H.G., "On the Folklore of the Backward Sloping Supply Curve", Industry and Labour Relations Review, Vol. XIV, 1961.
- Viljoen, S.P., "Higher Productivity and Higher Wages of Native Labour in South Africa", S.A.J.E., 1961.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., Statements of Evidence Submitted by the Gold Producers' Committee to the Native Laws Commission of Enquiry, Johannesburg, 1947.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., The Native Workers on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, P.R.D. No. 7, Johannesburg, 1947.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., Tribal Natives and Trade Unions, The policy of the gold mining industry: statement., Johannesburg, Chamber of Mines, November, 1946.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., Statements of Evidence, Statistics and Memoranda, Submitted by the Gold Producers' Committee to the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission on Remuneration and Conditions of Employment of Natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, Johannesburg, 1943.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., The Wage Position on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, July, 1926., Johannesburg, 1926.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., Statements of Evidence submitted by the Gold Producers' Committee to the Economic and Wage Commission, Johannesburg, 1925.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines., Annual Reports for the years 1910-1947.

Cape Times, August, 1946, January-March, 1920.

Cape Argus, August, 1946, January-March, 1920.

Guardian, August, 1946.

Sunday Times, August, 1946.

Inkululeko, 1940-1946.

South African Outlook, 1940-1946.

Rand Daily Mail, 1940-1947, January-March, 1920.

Star, 1946, January-March, 1920.

Royal Commission on the National Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions : Evidence taken in ... South Africa in 1914, 1914.

South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905, Cape Town.

Report of the Mining Industry Commission, 1907-1908, Pretoria.

Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1906-1908, Cape Town.

Reports of the Transvaal Labour Commission, 1904, London, Cd.1896.

Report of the Economic Commission, January 1914, U.G. 12 of 1914.

Report of the Native Grievances Inquiry Commission, U.G. 37 of 1914.

Report of the Witwatersrand Disturbances Commission, U.G. 55 of 1913.

Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, U.G. 45 of 1919.

Final Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, U.G. 34 of 1920.

Report of the Special Commissioner appointed to enquire into the Boycotting of Rand Storekeepers by Natives, U.G. 4 of 1919.

Report on Investigation of Accounts of Mine Storekeepers on the Witwatersrand and as to the Fixing of Prices of the Chief Articles of Native Trade in the Witwatersrand Area, U.G. 4 of 1919.

Report of the Mining Industry Board, U.G. 39 of 1922.

Report of the Mining Regulations Commission, U.G. 36 of 1925.

Report of the Economic and Wage Commission, U.G. 14 of 1926.

Report of the Low Grade Ore Commission, U.G.16 of 1932.

Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Labour Resources of the Union, An. 89 of 1931.

Report of the Native Economic Commission of 1930-1932, U.G. 22 of 1932.

Report of the Trading on Mining Ground Commission, U.G. 33 of 1935.

Report on Nyasaland Natives in the Union of South Africa and in Southern Rhodesia by J.C. Abraham, 1937.

Report of the Commissioner appointed to inquire into the causes of the native disturbances in Johannesburg, Govt. Notice 1184, Gazette 915, September 4, 1918.

Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission on the Remuneration and Conditions of Employment of Natives on Witwatersrand Gold Mines and Regulation and Conditions of Employment of Natives at Transvaal undertakings of Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company, Limited, U.G. 21 of 1944.

Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives of the Department of Native Affairs of 1942.

Social & Economic Planning Council, Report No. 9. The Native Reserves and their place in the economy of the Union of South Africa. U.G. 32 of 1946.

Social and Economic Planning Council, Report No. 11. Economic Aspects of the Gold Mining Industry. U.G. 32 of 1948.

Report of the Committee on Gold Mining Taxation, U.G. 16 of 1946.

Report upon the work of the Miners' Phthisis Medical Bureau for the Three Years ended 31st July, 1944. U.G. 15 of 1946.

Report of the Department of Labour for the year ended 31st December, 1945, with which are included the reports of the Wage Board; The Chief Inspector of Factories and the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner. U.G. 9 of 1947.

Report of the Department of Native Affairs, U.G. 44 of 1946.

Annual Report of the Government Mining Engineer, U.G. 41 of 1947; U.G. 39 of 1946; U.G. 8 of 1946; and for the years 1907, 1908, 1913, 1914, 1919, 1920 and 1921.

Reports of the Native Representative Council, 1941-1947.

Report of the Unemployment Commission, 1919, 1920 and 1921.

Wilson, F.A.H., Labour in the South African Gold Mines, 1936-1965, unpublished Ph.D., Cambridge University, 1967.

Ould, C.R., General Smuts' Attitude to White Labour Disputes between 1907 and 1922, unpublished M.A., University of the Witwatersrand, 1963.

Hessian, B., An Investigation into the Causes of the Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand, January to March, 1922, unpublished M.A., University of Witwatersrand, 1957.

Osborn, V.H., A Critical Survey of Trade Unionism in South Africa, unpublished M.A., University of the Witwatersrand, 1931.

Hallack, R.K., White Labour Policy in South Africa, 1900-1914, unpublished M.A., University of Cape Town, 1932.

Robertson, H.M., unpublished paper on the Colour Bar.

The Impending Strike of African Miners, A Statement by the African Mineworkers' Union, 7.8.46.

Race Relations, Official Journal of the South African Institute of Race Relations, 1935-1947.

Union of South Africa, House of Assembly Debates, 1940-1947.

Union of South Africa, Senate Debates, 1940-1947.

Evidence of Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa to the Economic and Wages Commission, 1925.

Xuma Papers, South African Institute of Race Relations Library, Johannesburg.

Ballinger Papers, University of Cape Town Library, Cape Town.

University of the Witwatersrand Library, Johannesburg.

This collection of papers contained the evidence of the more important organisations and parties who appeared before the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission.