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# SASH

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Special issue  
on migrant  
labour

**The Black Sash magazine**

# MIGRANT LABOUR



MERCIA WILSWORTH

6 A cancer which rages thus in the life of the African population must necessarily affect the whole social and religious life of all the races in our fatherland. By virtue of God's laws the Whites will not remain untouched by the sickness which is ravaging the moral life of the African.

*Report on migrant labour; the Cape Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church.*

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# The Black Sash Die Swart Serp

**M**IGRANT labour was conspicuous by its absence as an issue in the recent election campaign. Yet it is the most important single factor in our national life, affecting as it does the lives of every person in the homelands, half of the total number of Africans working in the common area of the Republic, and every other citizen, Black and White — perhaps not so intimately but nevertheless most profoundly in often unrecognised way. It affects our economic development, our social life and, above all, our spiritual and moral character. The system must go whatever the cost.

It does not matter what adjustments we would need to make. Such evil cannot go unchecked and nothing whatsoever, however rational seeming, can justify its continued perpetration.

In 1972 the South African Council of Churches commissioned Dr. Francis Wilson to report on the migrant labour system. The resulting book "Migrant Labour in South Africa" is a detailed carefully researched document containing all the discoverable facts about the system as it operates in South Africa. It has proved to be a most valuable book to those who are worried about the effects of the pass laws on our national life and has certainly widened the number of people who know the facts. It has led some of them to express their concern publicly for the first time.

This issue of Sash is an attempt to try to relate the facts to the ordinary lives of people. In doing so we hope that many who have not read Dr. Wilson's book will be motivated to do so and thereafter to use their influence, in whatever way is open to them, to have the system totally abolished. There are many ways in which this can be done by individuals through their membership of Churches, professional bodies, women's organizations, Chambers of industry and commerce and Service clubs. It is also the right of every citizen to write directly to members of Parliament and to the responsible cabinet ministers. It often does not seem to do any good and individual effort rarely shows any direct results but cumulative pressure does count for something in the end.

The articles in this magazine, particularly those written by doctors who work at mission hospitals in the homelands, tell of such a gross distortion in the social fabric of the African community that no one can read them without being deeply moved and without a feeling of despair at the dreadful damage we have already done to whole communities and to several generations of people.

The tragedy is that of children growing to adulthood in so disorganized an environment that they repeat the pattern of their parent's lives and in turn rear children who are alienated from society, deprived of love and security as well as of food and material necessities. This is the great evil we do; an evil which it is already too late to undo for thousands of people and which we cannot and must not allow to continue.

It is not an argument to say that this way of life is inherent in the African character. Every one of us would react to the same circumstances in the same way and our children would show the same alienation. The sins of the fathers are indeed visited upon the sons but in this case our sins are being visited on other men's sons.

It is very important to realise the extent to which migrant labour is one of the foundation stones of our national life. The other two complementary factors are influx control and the wholesale removal and resettlement of people from the common area into the homelands.

Influx control prevents people from moving into areas where there is hope for economic development and employment offered. They are not allowed either to seek work or to take up residence with their families.

The resettlement policy is turning the homelands into vast labour pools where unemployment and poverty ensure a constant supply of cheap, unskilled labour for the mines, factories, farms and public services whose profits and benefits are not shared with the workers who make them possible.

One only has to look at the growth of Itsoseng within the borders of BaphutaTswana in the Western Transvaal. This town has been established in an area where employment opportunities are practically nil. Settled families from 14 Transvaal towns are being moved from existing houses into Itsoseng. The houses in the towns are being demolished and hostels are being built instead. Men who have been living in family conditions near to their work will now have to become oscillating migrants leaving their families in the homelands and living themselves in unisex hostels for the whole of their working lives. The women are prevented from supplementing the family income by doing casual domestic work, and yet another community is being created where the distorted social life described by Dr. Thomas will arise in a very short time.

The speed with which a community can be

broken down contrasts tragically with the long laborious haul required to build it up again.

While much of the blame rests squarely on the shoulders of the Nationalist Government who have deliberately legislated to extend and entrench migrant labour in the interests of the White group, the White public must also accept some of the responsibility. The electorate has gone along with the policy, sometimes with enthusiasm, sometimes through apathy and ignorance. Every White person who employs even one African should know at least the circumstances of life for that one worker but they most often haven't bothered to find out. Frequently employers only become agitated when their own convenience is at stake. It is true that the homelands are generally remote, permits are needed to move around in them, and the unreal but traditional picture of the Black man with his green land

and his cattle who works only occasionally for money to spend on luxuries is still firmly believed by a majority of Whites. But the facts have been well publicised, information is freely available, warnings have been sounded loud and clear by Churchmen and medical missionaries who work with the people in the disintegrated communities. Social workers, ministers, criminologists and doctors who work among the disorientated men who labour in our towns and live in compounds and hostels have spoken out over and over again. How much more does it take for people to be moved enough to do something about it?

The answer to that question is also a tragic one. We cannot wait until total chaos has overtaken us all because then it will be too late. We cannot let any more children be born into hopelessness. We cannot continue to buy our own privilege with other people's lives.

## Truth is only what people want to believe

It is, of course, impossible to provide evidence proving that the labour system in South Africa has the effect of corrupting spiritually the White people who live in this society. However, no analysis of the system can ignore the fact that there is amongst large numbers of White South Africans, an attitude of mind that isolates them from their fellowmen. The extent of this isolation may be gauged by considering what would happen if even in ten White families the fathers were compelled to spend their entire working lives living alone in urban barracks whilst their wives and children were forced to leave them to eke out a separate existence in some rural homeland. Yet there are hundreds, thousands, of South African families whose existence under such conditions is regarded without undue discomfort by the same people who would be horrified if the families concerned were White. Some would argue that the isolation, which makes such lack of reaction possible, arises simply from the fact that White voters do not know the true situation; others would argue that they are incapable of appreciating the situation because, as the disillusioned journalist in Leon Uris' novel on the Warsaw uprising had come to believe, "Truth is only what people want to believe and nothing

more." Where the discovery of facts is likely to make one uncomfortable, all men have an uncanny ability to ignore them, or rationalise them away for as long as they possibly can. In such situations ignorance of the truth may be as much a failure to listen as anything else. At its worst, such refusal can, it seems, turn people schizophrenic in the sense that they develop two different personalities; one for their normal relationships with their friends and acquaintances; the other for their reactions to and attitudes towards people who, for one reason or another, have been categorised as "different". Yet how different is any man? "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge?"

The fact that White South Africans, by and large are, unable to comprehend the full extent of what the migrant system is doing to fellow men in their own country, is symptomatic of a spiritual disease, ravaging the soul of White South Africa.

Francis Wilson

# The Legal Background

SHEENA DUNCAN

**S**OUTH AFRICA's migrant labour system has been much analysed and discussed in recent months, but the full weight of the legal controls which supply labour units to the White economy is not generally understood.

Migrant workers in the Bantustans are processed through labour bureaux which are more like cattle markets than anything else. Men register there as workseekers then hang around to await recruitment. They wait for days, weeks, months. Then comes the great day. The recruiting agent is expected. He arrives. Two hundred and fifty men line up. He wants 184 labour units for the companies he represents. He walks along the line and beckons forward those he chooses. This one looks strong, this one looks young and teachable, this one is too old, that one looks too thin. This one says he doesn't want to work at R8 per week because he was paid R11 in his last job. He must be too cheeky. "Get back in the line. I don't want cheeky boys". Those who are not picked must wait, maybe weeks, maybe months, until the next recruiting agent comes. The "cheeky" one won't argue next time. He will be ready to accept whatever wage is offered. His children are starving and a little is better than nothing.

These men do not come to the labour bureau to undergo this degrading process of their own free will. Every man who lives in the Bantustans must, by law, register as a workseeker at his tribal labour bureau within one month of becoming 15 years of age and must continue to register as a workseeker within one month of becoming unemployed throughout his life until he is 65, unless he is exempted by the labour officer because he is a bona fide scholar or farmer, or has been allowed to be self-employed or is, in the opinion of the labour officer, physically or mentally incapable of being employed.

When a man registers at his labour bureau his reference book is stamped that he is registered as a workseeker, but this does not mean that he is actually permitted to seek work. He is not allowed to leave the area of jurisdiction of the labour bureau to sell his labour. He must wait to be requisitioned for. He cannot choose which area he wishes to work in. If he wishes to work in Pretoria for example, he cannot do so unless an agent from Pretoria chooses to and is allowed to recruit at that particular bureau. If a directive has been issued that agents from Pretoria may not recruit labour at that specific bureau there is no way that he can go to work in Pretoria. Mr. Sithole is registered as a workseeker in

Hammanskraal. His wife and children are lawful residents of Johannesburg but he cannot be employed in that city because agents from Johannesburg are not allowed to recruit labour at his bureau. Nor is he allowed to move to live in the area of any other labour bureau which might be open to recruitment from Johannesburg.

If employers in one area are short of labour then certain labour bureaux may be closed to recruitment by all but agents from that one area. Mr. Senone is registered as a workseeker at a labour bureau which is closed to recruitment from all areas except a nearby border industrial growth point. He is earning R16 per month in a factory and is forbidden by law from selling his labour for what it is worth in any other place. Mr. Tshilwane is in a similar but worse position. He is an experienced steelworker with a wife and four children to support but his labour bureau has been closed to all recruitment except by White farmers in the district. He is therefore prevented by law from using his skills and must work as a farm labourer for a wage which in no way compares with what he was earning three years ago.

White farmer are, of course, a privileged group of employers in South Africa and some of the provisions of the 1968 Regulations appear to be designed to keep them happy, with a ready supply of workers.

When a man registers as a work seeker for the first time he is classified by the labour office in a specific category of employment. The labour officer is supposed to take into account the man's own wishes and qualifications "as far as practicable" but there is no law which prevents a labour officer from placing a man in a category of labour to which he has the strongest objections. His wishes do not, in practice, count for much. Mr. Thupudi is a young man who has recently left school in the Orange Free State and, very much against his own wishes, has been classified as a mineworker by the labour officer. When he argued he was told that he had to work on the mines because his father had done so. Once a man has been classified he may not be employed in any other category of labour unless he is signing a contract for mine or farm work. This means that the type of work he is classified for when he is 15 is the only type of work he may do for the rest of his working life. If he begins as a domestic worker he will have to remain one whatever skills he may acquire, or however he may hate his work in "the kitchens".

All migrant workers must now work on annual

contracts. When the one year period expires the employer must discharge the worker and return him to his home area. This system was devised to prevent workers from qualifying for permanent residence in the urban areas. Even if a worker returns to the same employer each year for ten years this is not deemed to be the ten years continuous employment required by Section 10 (1)(b) of the Urban Areas Act. It is not continuous because it must be terminated and renewed every year.

When a worker accepts employment offered to him a written contract is entered into. Everyone has a copy of the contract — except the worker himself. The employer or his agent has one, the tribal labour officer and the labour officer in the work area have one each and the attesting office has one. If the worker wants to dispute any of the conditions of his employment he has no

copy of his contract to produce as proof that the employer is not fulfilling the contract. Workers often seem to have misunderstood the terms of the contract because deductions are not explained. Advances made to the worker for fares or food may be deducted from his pay packet provided that he is left with R1 after 30 days work.

It is axiomatic that a man should be the owner of his own labour. In South Africa this is an accepted principle for White workers, but African men do not own their own labour. It is controlled, directed, used and abused by the State according to a master plan over which the worker has no control. Migrant workers have no choice whatsoever as to whether they will work, how, where, for whom or for what reward. Slave labour? At least a slave owner had a financial interest in the health and strength of his slaves. He paid good money for them.

*This article was first published in The Star. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the Editor.*

‘South Africa has chosen to make migratory labour a permanency, keeping the vast majority of its labour force perpetually oscillating between rural and urban areas. This leads to economic, social, medical and religious evils which can no longer be tolerated in a professedly Christian. It is the duty of all Christian bodies to say so. The deliberate disruption of family life at the dictates of an ideology is a blot which must be eradicated by those who have the means and the power to do so. Christian conscience will not be silenced until this happens.’

*The Archbishop of Cape Town.*

# A hostel's not a home

JOYCE HARRIS

**I**F a man feels at home he is at home. If he does not regard a particular place as his home it is not his home, and no measures taken to settle him there will make it his home. There is a vast difference between the active and voluntary choice of a home, a job, a way of life or their involuntary enforcement, and such enforcement is an act of dispossession resulting in a feeling of alienation.

A migrant worker is rarely at home, either physically or emotionally, and his family is similarly dispossessed by the involuntary separation from husband and father and an enforced existence in a euphemistically termed "Homeland". These people can exercise no control whatsoever over any aspect of their lives.

Dr. Francis Wilson, in his book "Migrant Labour in South Africa", estimates that no less than 51% of Africans in registered employment in White areas are oscillating migrants, that is about 1 305 000 people. All these men and women and their families are being subjected to a system which provides a daily experience of dispossession and alienation.

The vast majority of migrant workers in the White urban areas are "at home" in hostels or compounds, of which the new hostels in Alexandra are an example. The men's hostel houses 2 700 inmates in four-, six- and eight-bedded dormitories with no tables or chairs, no provision for heating and only one overhead light per room. Five inmates must share one gas-ring and 14 must share one bath or shower and one toilet. Apart from one bar-lounge holding 300 people no provision has been made for inmates to be anywhere but on their own beds. There is no privacy, no comfort, no security of person or property. There is endless queueing, morning and night, for ablution, for toilets, for cooking facilities, for transport to and from work.

Human life is impoverished in such circumstances. Disorder and violence are well known in hostels, as are crime, delinquency and prostitution. The illegitimacy rate is alarming, and inevitably so. Where such hostels exist in the midst of settled communities they have a highly undesirable and unhealthy influence on the moral standards of the whole community, with families fearing for their daughters. Whole generations of children are growing up not knowing who their fathers are and often with no-one to care for them. It is small wonder that men who are subjected to such a way of life turn to drink, to crime, to extra-marital sex, to homosexuality, small wonder if they become irresponsible or

anti-social. They are deprived of "home". They are dispossessed. Their lot is unrelieved suffering, without the comfort of husbands, wives, children. Every day they go to work, to jobs not of their own choice, and every evening they return to a frustrating existence which has been shown to produce the highest alcoholic rate and the poorest nutrition amongst urban Black people.

Once a year, or more often if he can afford the transport and the time, the migrant worker goes "home". His "home" will be in a rural township or a closer settlement in a "homeland" which bears little resemblance to home. His family will probably have been moved there after being evicted from a "Black Spot" or a White-owned farm, or after being endorsed out of a White urban area, or having simply been caught up in one of the monumental re-shufflings of whole populations, such as is presently being envisaged for KwaZulu. His house may have been built for him, without doors, windows, ceilings or floors, without drainage, possibly without water laid on or it may have been built by himself or his family in his absence with whatever building materials they may have been able to lay their hands on. The poverty will be abysmal, with little or no provision for the subsistence farming to which their traditional life-style has accustomed them. The population will consist almost entirely of women, children and old people, as the able-bodied men are migrant workers in the cities.

His children will not recognize him. His wife, with insurmountable difficulties of her own in trying to make ends meet and feed and educate the children, will be wondering whether he has been faithful to her during the long year's absence.

"Home" in the "Homelands" is a myth. It is not, "A place where one properly belongs, where one finds rest, refuge or satisfaction". Life in the "Homelands" contains none of the ingredients expected of a "home". The entire tribal system has been disrupted. All the familiar moves and customs have disintegrated. A social structure has been destroyed and a vacuum substituted. Not only has the extended family disappeared, but family life in its most concentrated form — mother, father, children — has become an impossible dream for South Africa's ever-growing numbers of migrant workers. Urban life in the tribal areas is being imposed upon a traditionally rural people, but with none of its compensations.

Problems in the "homelands" are being compounded by increasing over-population. "Redundant Bantu" are shunted there out of the White

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areas. Forcibly abandoned wives appear to have a biological need to conceive a baby whenever their husbands come home, perhaps in order to retain some feeling of contact and closeness in their absence.

By its enforced policy of migrant labour this Government is dispossessing and alienating a vast section of the people of this land, who are not permitted to live where they want to live, to live together as family units, to work where they want to work in jobs they choose to do. But the Government will not do this with impunity, for dispossession causes two-fold damage — to the dispossessed and to those responsible for their

misfortune. The entire social fabric is adversely affected, with repercussions which cannot be accurately prognosticated or assessed.

Mr. Vorster has said, "you must not take a man's home away from him."

The American poet, Robert Frost, has written, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there,

They have to take you in.

I should have called it

Something you somehow haven't to deserve."



Those who believe that the continued existence and expansion of the migratory labour system will ensure the survival of the White man fail to grasp the extent to which such a policy increases social tensions and the possibility of violence. Whilst it may, in the short run, be easier to control migrants than to control men with rights to be in town; and whilst the argument that Blacks must exercise their political rights in the homelands of which they are citizens provides some rationalisation (to Whites at least) for not granting them rights in town, the fact remains that the extension of the migrant labour system, the destruction of family life, and the growth of massive single-sex hostels in the urban areas, with a corresponding lack of all those daily relationships between husbands and wives, fathers and sons, children and their grandparents, cousins and aunts, which weld human communities together, makes a society far more susceptible to being torn apart in times of crisis. Indeed we would argue that the lack of these bonds makes the society far less human, far more explosive, and hence even from the narrow perspective of White political survival, much more dangerous. For the future well-being of the country an alternative arrangement whereby these human relationships may be encouraged to grow strongly is plain common sense.

Francis Wilson

## IN THE CISKEI:

# Sowing seeds of deprivation

TRUDI THOMAS

*Dr. Trudi Thomas has worked for 11 years at a Mission hospital in the Ciskei. The following is her introduction to "Their Doctor Speaks". This booklet was privately published in Cape Town and may be ordered from Mary Wheeldon, 11 Sheerness Road, Kenilworth, C.P., price 25 cents. This article is reprinted by kind permission of Dr. Thomas and the publisher, Dr. Wheeldon.*

### Migrant labour

**W**IDESPREAD poverty and destitution, unemployment, childhood malnutrition, illegitimacy and desertion are some of the norms of rural Ciskeian society. Migrant labour is the main reason for this social chaos, the word "chaos" being used advisedly and unemotionally to describe gross dis-organization.

There are other influences such as the backwardness of the people and some stultifying effects of their culture, but these quickly yield to a social, as opposed to an antisocial, economic structure which does not depend on migrant labour nor subeconomic wages. Many individuals are enjoying better economic status, but the social disorganization of the whole community easily keeps abreast of any economic improvements, and this will continue while the economy is dependent on migrant labour.

One popular argument used to justify migrant labour is that many African men prefer the way of life it dictates. This is analogous to justifying drug addiction because drug addicts are in favour of it. A system which in addition to fostering an anti-social life style ("anti-social" in that it prevents family life, the accepted "unit" for building a healthy society) also breeds a preference for this anti-social behaviour must be particularly strongly condemned.

Migrant labour produces its devastating effects by disrupting family life.

### The disruption of African family life

It is unusual for rural Ciskeians to enjoy uninterrupted home life in the commonly accepted sense where parents and children live together as a matter of course. Most families are disrupted at some time and in some degree by the need to earn a living away from home in accordance

with our migrant labour policy. For many, a "family unit" is never even formed.

This disruption of home life, this absence of normal family influences can adequately explain some of the deplorable attitudes and behaviour of these people. When we recognise the sort of forces which have moulded the society, we are obliged to admit that different — more normal — forces could produce a different — more normal — society. This dynamic concept, in contrast to the dead end "you can't change them" view, ought to lead to a more constructive attitude and action.

### Married life in the Reserves

If you consider a married Ciskeian couple — man and wife — there is a very strong likelihood that the man, in order to support his family, will have to go away to work in the towns as there is very little employment nearer home. A few lucky ones will be able to visit their families occasionally. These snatches of home life compensate for the high cost of travelling which swallows a greedy slice of their earnings. Most men, however, are precluded by great distances and working conditions, from seeing their wives and children more than once a year, for a month at a time. Even a three-year separation is unremarkable. This means that for long periods of their youthful, sexually active lives a good number of husbands and wives live apart. As an exception, from personal idiosyncrasy or unusual self-control, a few individuals may be able to deny their natural biological desires, but this cannot apply to a whole population, especially when it is not culturally attuned to such practices.

### Illegitimate babies

Inevitably, there is a great harvest of illegitimate children. Most of these are spawned in the towns, the progeny of "husband" and "girl-

friend". But the wife in the reserves, living an un-naturally lonely and unsupported life, is also not immune to the temptation, or perhaps more charitably, the need, of a man's company and so two categories of illegitimate children are produced, each burgeoning growing points for more human misery. And here we must add yet another enormous group, the children of young, unmarried men who flock to the towns in search of work, and also live "out of context" socially speaking.

The child of the "huband" or "boyfriend" in the town is a liability and an embarrassment to him. He may deal with his problem in one of several ways. A simple — and common — solution is to deny his fatherhood. That is why a huge and evergrowing number of African children can claim to have "no father", why old women in charge of their daughters' illegitimate wryly answer "Oxford Street" or "Eloff Street" or "Adderley Street" when asked who the children's fathers are.

### The high cost of home life

However, many men do honour their responsibilities and try to support their girl-friends and children. Then the prosperity which such a man came to the town to find is soon dissipated, for his earnings must maintain three establishments: his legitimate family in the reserve, his own quarters in the town, and now his girl-friend's and a child's. It is salutary to realize, girl-friends apart, how the necessity for maintaining two homes — however humble — and the cost of travelling for the privilege of seeing his family, reduces his effective salary — and his opportunity for a better standard of living. He is forced to pay a comparably exorbitant price for an incomparably shoddy article, in this case, an unsatisfactory home life.

### Women migrants

The girl-friends of our migrant labour force may be married or unmarried, and they are usually in the town for economic reasons just as intrusive as the men's (married women who go to work in the towns seldom live with their working husbands, often not even in the same city, as there is no married accommodation for migrant labourers, and the dictates of influx permits together with the pressing need for employment forces people to take whatever opportunities are available). Many women migrants have been deserted by husbands or boy friends, others have been forced to turn bread winner through the death or sickness of their menfolk. Most have children in the reserves who are their sole responsibility to sustain. Frequently they are also the support of old parents. There are also young girls trying to escape the boredom, through lack of occupation, and the grinding poverty of the reserves.

Depending on her circumstances a woman may regard an unwanted pregnancy as a nuisance — or a calamity, bringing her own and her family's fortunes, which she came to the town to seek, crashing about her ears. Jobs and infants are incompatible. No job — no money. No money — no school books for the children, no milk for the toddlers.

### The illegitimate baby's fate

Commonly a women will try to nurse her baby herself during the early months, but typically, before the first year, economic pressures become intolerable and she must cast about for someone else who will take care of her baby. She may be driven to desperate measures, like dumping the baby in the father's room and "getting lost" — "he gives me babies but no money". Or she may hire a woman in the location to nurture her child — one of the surest ways of buying neglect and maltreatment. Sometimes the baby is tacked onto an aunt's family. The aunt is frequently already fully extended, financially and emotionally, by the needs of her own immediate family. She may not deliberately maltreat this unwelcome little appendage, but nor is she disposed to go out of her way to cuddle it, and make it feel loved and wanted.

As a rule, however, it is granny who is left "holding the baby", a grim throwback to the old accommodation "kraal" system. So after some months spent in the reserves with her old mother (not infrequently sharing her old age pension) she leaves her babe in granny's care and returns to the town, to work, with promise of money for granny and child, which she does not always fulfil. The plight of some of these old women and babies is exquisitely pathetic. Granny may be 70 or even 80. She may be an invalid — indeed many die while still in harness, in so doing upsetting yet another social apple cart. Some old women care single handed for a dozen or more children, some are so feeble that they cannot lift their charges from the floor one old woman was obliged to crawl up steps when she had a baby on her back.

As the "illegitimate" mother tugs her child from her breast and hands it over with a tin of milk to its new guardian, the seeds of neglect and cruelty, of emotional deprivation and undernutrition are sown — and we can confidently expect a crop of brutish and vicious adults.

Husbands, absurdly, feel very strongly that their wives should remain faithful to them. If a wife does err, and has another man's child, he expects to get rid of it — any way she likes, or he drives her away. Infanticide is a socially accepted and tautly "hushed up" solution. Babies are "delivered" into lavatories, or found and cleared away with the rubbish in the bins in the morning. Women may be left to give birth to unwanted babies without any attendants, and if the

infant does not survive despite lusty crying at birth, clearly heard by the neighbours, there is an end to the matter. Even up till nine months women bowing to social pressures, are driven to kill their offspring probably by smothering them. The more common course is to give the baby to granny who must, in charity, be forgiven if she begins to show resentment.

### The children of resentment and reproach

The illegitimate baby begins to emerge as the dirtiest little fly in the social ointment. He is forever fouling up attempts to untangle already difficult circumstances, forever dissipating hopes of a better standard of living, forever making demands on resources already stretched too thin. To his parents, if he is acknowledged at all, he is a nuisance, an embarrassment, a liability, a calamity, a mistake that refuses to be erased (except, sometimes, tastelessly, by death from malnutrition). These are the Children of Resentment.

*And deprivation.* Deprived of affection and sufficient food. Having no birthrights nor privileges nor status. Lacking discipline (only reviled). Denied self-respect. Nobody notices them nor praises their triumphs. Nobody comforts them, nobody cares. Unprotected, unstimulated, untutored, unoccupied, left to their own devices.

Deprived, too, of example. They have no model of home life, nor of the roles of husband and wife and how they ought to treat one another, and what parents should do. The knowledge of these things is not instinctive, and so quite simply these children do not learn to behave decently in the accepted social sense. All the factors commonly accepted as leading to "decent" social behaviour and attitude and standards are specifically lacking in these children. It is therefore to be expected that they will show opposite characteristics. Indeed it may be said that they have been specifically trained to indecent behaviour, attitudes and standards.

### An unplanned experiment

If you set out deliberately, for the sake of behavioural science, to produce a vicious and brutish person, you could hardly pick a better set of deprivations. However, experimental conditions do not have to be deliberate to have their effect, and so in the fullness of time, and in accordance with psychological laws, these children *must* become irresponsible and undisciplined adults, callous and uncaring and lacking in initiative and resourcefulness. (Lack of enterprise, particularly, is often seen as an inherent African characteristic, and although it may have cultural determinants, it cannot be denied that deprivation can provide a full explanation).

Again, driven by relentless psychological and emotional forces these children search for affection and acceptance. They have lots of time, and nothing to do, and no standards to guide their

behaviour. These conditions lead inevitably to sexual experimentation. It seems that most of these children by the ages of 12 or 13 years are sexually active, and the only reason why the girls don't become pregnant before 15 or 16 is because they are not biologically mature until then. And here enters yet another category of illegitimate children, children of children, with perhaps even more birthwrongs than their counterparts in the towns.

Illegitimacy is a self-fertilising catastrophe. It is a brutalising and uncivilising influence. Initially its nuisance value and the demands it makes on a community of limited resources fans resentment, which is an extremely damaging attitude in terms of humane and generous behaviour. As a result of resentful and brutal "care", these children acquire brutal values. They (and very soon their children) snowball human depravity and misery.

### Predictable outcome

It is difficult not to become impassioned when considering the dehumanising, and uncivilising effects, which the disruption of their home life has on Africans, especially when they are blamed for becoming the inevitable products of inescapable circumstances — circumstances which they would surely not voluntarily have chosen. A child of 15, out of this environment, who falls pregnant approaches the innocence of a bitch, can be apportioned no more responsibility.

There are many other brutish manifestations similarly determined, such as neglect of old people, abandonment of children and desertion of pregnant girl friends. There is a widespread lack of a sense of decency shown by louts who rape imbecile women (their relatives frequently request sterilization to prevent repeated pregnancy from this cause), and rob the old and crippled of their pensions, and the common occurrence of the impregnation of school girls by their men teachers. Deprivation must also be acknowledged to be an adequate explanation of unenterprising and shoddy work habits.

Examinations of all these manifestations will show that they are certainly not unique to Africans — but they are universally found in severely disorganised and underprivileged societies.

I quote from the *Psychology of interpersonal behaviour* by Michael Argyl, page 179:

"They cannot form relationships of friendship, love, or permanent attachment with other people. They are not concerned about the welfare or sufferings of others, are basically indifferent to them, and quite lacking in remorse for their own past acts: it is as if they are unable to understand how other people are feeling.

"There is some genetic basis, to psychopathy at any rate. More important is a childhood history of lack of love, ill-treatment, neglect, lack of

discipline, and lack of a stable home, combined with certain social conditions — social and economic deprivation, juvenile gangs in the area, and absence of satisfying work opportunities."

### Legitimate children

Not only illegitimate children suffer from the effects of family disruption. Most legitimate children, too, are separated from their fathers for long periods of their childhood. The privileged ones are cared for by their mothers, and can look forward to regular registered letters at the post office to provide them with food and clothes and school books. They also get their rightful share of affection and attention, as well as discipline and responsibility. These parents must be admired for making such a good life out of such poor material.

### Broken homes

Other children are not so lucky. Their parents' marriage begins to crumble under the stresses of separation. Broken marriages are synonymous with broken homes. When bonds of loyalty and responsibility weaken, a man may stop sending money home. A common story when a woman brings a baby to hospital suffering from malnutrition is — "He has sent no money for six months, and then it was only R6, and we have four children", or "He doesn't even write". She may show her resentment by neglecting her children in a sort of token spitefulness against a faithless husband. She may become infuriatingly inert and difficult to help because the struggle seems so hopeless. Often she struggles on — it is

uncomfortable to picture the sort of scenes where distracted women try to comfort hungry children in empty huts scattered through the reserves, situations leading eventually to these children becoming overtly malnourished. Eventually she is driven to leave her children with whoever will have them (granny probably) and go to the towns to work for them.

Broken marriages and desertion and faithlessness are distressingly common, and the reason is clear. It is fundamental to realize that African relationships, as in all cultures, depend on loyalty and affection. These bonds in turn depend upon mutual support and comfort, on shared experiences and responsibilities, and companionships. All these must be sacrificed when the man goes away for long periods, becoming virtually a visitor in his own home. Inevitably many ties come undone. Human relationships are very sensitive and separation makes them very vulnerable, and provides a fertile ground for faithlessness, jealousy and suspicions and accusations, real and imagined. These lead to shattered relationships which cause great misery: in relevant interviews, people often express great bitterness and seething resentment, which may spill over into all their interpersonal relationships. Unloved they become unloving neglected, therefore neglectful unsupported, therefore un-supporting.

Perhaps this is a lurid picture. I have tried to show how abnormal social forces can cause deplorable characteristics, that migrant labour selects and reinforces brutish attitudes, callous and irresponsible behaviour. It has an uncivilizing effect which must be weighed against any possible advantages.

"By law the gold mines were until 1969 allowed to provide family housing for not more than 3% of the Black labour force excluding "foreign natives". But as the proportion of South Africans was not more than one-third of the total this meant that effectively only 1% of the Black labour force was eligible for family housing. However the position of even this 1% has become tenuous since the issue in 1969-1970 of an official circular sent out by a local Bantu Affairs Commissioner to the mines in the Klerksdorp area instructing them that children might no longer stay in the married quarters."

*Francis Wilson*

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## IN KWAZULU:

# Must we sink together?

ANTHONY BARKER

*This is the text of Dr. Barker's address to the Black Sash conference held in Durban in October '73.*

**A**T the height of the controversy about the Tugela headwater reserves, some pretty hard things were said. From the Zulu point of view these boiled down to a general defiance towards being dispossessed, with their historical occupancy of this land as their main argument. The White point of view was the simple one: if you let these people stay, or even give them more land, they will wreck it so that it can never be recovered. It is not the present disastrous erosion and poverty plain for all to see, and for all to learn from?

We have not, I suppose, heard the last of this dispute, and we know well enough that it was not the first confrontation over land between Black and White. Perhaps the killing of Maritz, Retief and the Boer leaders by Dingane was the prototype of all these struggles over land and resources? Each one of them, as it arises has a similar pattern. There is a common recognition of the need for room on which to live and to graze one's cattle. These divergent needs are seen as mutually exclusive. And feelings run high, to the detriment of compromise or even good sense. The dispute is usually resolved by the application of superior power of one group upon the other; which may be violent power or legal dispossession under laws which are themselves not even.

The Drakensberg Reserves are a problem out of due time, when we might have expected that all this was over many years ago. From 1913, and again in 1936, delimitation of land is, in the eyes of government, a fixed and decided matter. There is the superior power that has been exercised, and it does not seem to signify that these territorial awards were made on the basis of a population very much smaller than that of today. Voluntarily, apart from a little juggling in the name of consolidation, there is to be no further addition of land available to the Zulu nation. Mr. Vorster has made this perfectly plain to Chief Buthelezi. From the Zulu point of view the only remaining question is how to survive on this amount of land: how to develop it: how to house the burgeoning population: how to receive the urban population when, in 1978, the tide is to turn from flowing towards the cities, and run back into the homelands again? It is a question

that the Zulus know cannot be answered: an equation of resources that can never be balanced. The more they try to meet White needs, the greater must become their overcrowding, the more disastrously deep and wide their dongas. Then the farmers will have even greater right than they have today to point the accusing finger: are they not hopeless, these Zulus?

With anything so precious to all of us as our land, with its power to sustain us and to give us of its richness in farming its surface or mining its depths, there must be deep-rooted feelings. It is not for nothing that we call this land of ours a fatherland, and that one of our most sacred concepts is the integrity of our borders. We feel we belong to the land, just as surely as it belongs to us. Those who abuse it, or seek to deprive us of its wealth, are seen as our enemies. We are emotionally jolted when we see the land's abuse, the bare hillside, the river running red with silt. And this is clearly why those Tugela reserves under the shadow of the Drakensberg raise such high feelings, engender such bitter recriminations. They are seen as undeniable evidence of African inefficiency and, more damning still, of the poverty of African talent for development of any sort.

White farmers know their problem. They know the nature of this grassland, and how it dies if it is abused. They know how few cattle, relatively, it will support, and how delicate a balance of crops must be maintained if it is not to be exhausted. They see how the Zulu farmer, short of land, without capital and ignorant of conservation, breaks all these restraints year after failing year, until his soil goes and his livelihood.

Seeing all this ruin, it is hard for efficient men not to become accuser and judge all at once. It is difficult to ask the question why, when the facts of land-abuse are so evident. It is more than human to refrain from the greater judgment that we are looking not merely at land-abuse, but at incurable ineptitude also. Under these emotions, the question we ask in the title of this conference: wages or ignorance? becomes circumstance or inability?

And this is the question all men of good will must honestly ask themselves, since from time

to time, I'll bet most of us have come near to despair and judged, saying that poverty itself is evidence of inferiority. This is what they mean who write letters to the Natal Mercury, citing incidents of roadside violence between Blacks, or ungrateful conduct on the parts of their housemaids, or in praise of the good old Zulu who knew his good fortune to be under the protection of the Whites, unlike some-I-could-name who allow themselves to be influenced by Senator Charles Diggs.

Because I am interested to know the answer, I tell myself and you this story of one district in a homeland: the district of Nqutu in KwaZulu. The story is a personal one, gained through more than 28 years of biased observation (this I freely admit: I dig these neighbours) from the commanding heights of being a doctor in a homeland. Some of this story will be personal, but some will be taken from a study made over the past two years, having its origin in your own organisation and guided by members of the University of Natal, here in Durban. We are almost through the two year period of study, but such facts as I can give will have been taken from preliminary work on the first year's questionnaires. The aim is to have a large sample — some 10 000 papers — which may, perhaps, seem overly large. It is done deliberately to try to overcome observer bias. All questionnaires are suspect, and those which relate to income most especially. People are at liberty to embroider on matters of finance, among Whites from fear of the income tax man, among Blacks lest your cattle get taken away. So we chose a big sample, and have had at least six observers working in different centres to gather information.

The Nqutu district, where this study has been made is characteristic enough of the highveld part of KwaZulu. Perhaps there are districts better off than ours — I devoutly hope there are — but there are others whose story would be much the same. Nqutu village, where our hospital is, forms the eastern angle to a roughly equilateral triangle with Dundee and Vryheid. We have as our border (should the word nowadays be "frontier"?) to the west, the Buffalo river and, to the north and west, the Blood River. We have three good battlefields, each of which bears testimony to the conflict between White and Black interest: Blood River, Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift. And, proudly, we are in KwaZulu, which makes us feel a cut above the ordinary folk of Natal, just as the Welsh, for some unaccountable reason, see themselves set apart from the English. We have 165 000 hectares of beautiful scenery, of which we are very proud, and from which our people try to wrest their living. On this large number of hectares (I used to call it 650 square miles) almost 80 000 people as at the 1970 census, live. It was not always so. In 1945 when we came to Nqutu, there were 32 000 people, and by 1960 the number was still only 46 000. Recent advance

has therefore been considerable.

In additions to the humans living on the land, there is stock: cattle, horses, donkeys, sheep, pigs, goats and so on, approximating to 87 000 cattle-units. This is too much stock for our land to bear. The estimated cattle-carrying capacity of our district is 2,14 hectare per cattle unit. We are working on 1,89 hectare per cattle unit. It is hard to estimate the position with agriculture, but a glance will tell that much of our land is unsuitable for the plough, by reason of its rocky or picturesque nature. The plains are annually cultivated, and annually — sometimes better, sometimes worse — yield the poor crops of exhaustion. For 20 years now there has been a steady increase in the sale of fertilizer in the district, but more sophisticated modes of agriculture, mulching and composting, are little known and not practised among our people.

Clearly, even in face of growing population density, there is much room for improvement. We have a good rainfall of around 800 mm p.a. (or 30 inches) but we are often in the grip of drought in the unwatered fields. Better seed, better methods of cultivation, new ideas about animal husbandry, all must improve our yield. But little happens and we are forced once again to ask ourselves why don't people do better? White visitors are often caustic about this, their judgements showing even as they ask the question. They are sure they would do better were they in a similar case, and we shall never know whether this would be so since they do not have to try the experiment.

But with all the betterment in the world, can this land bear on its bosom so many as 124 people per square mile? Can the old expectations of the Zulus — a field for their crops, grazing for their cattle — be realised at this density? I believe not, and so also do the planners, who now clearly indicate, by their placing of new homeland dwellers in close settlement, that the old Zulu cattle-dream is over. Subsistence farming is dead, nor will improvements serve to bring about its resurrection. For subsistence farming to work, more land as well as better methods would have to be used, and this, as we have seen, is the unthinkable thought.

So, how are the people to live. Economic necessity, agricultural breakdown and the rising expectations of the young, alike would drive the Zulus out of their territory. The new men and women are no longer the sort to plod along in petty agriculture against the sure knowledge of declining productivity and the recurrent threat of drought and hail. Even the seduction of cattle, which would have brightened their fathers' eyes, has lost its ancient allure. It becomes easier to buy food in the supermarket than to grow it in the field, while a dairy yields milk in a more convenient form than the homely cow. This may be very sad, and perhaps have also some menacing implications for the future of our people, yet

I think it is understandable: I have lived on these new assumptions for all my life, nor have I ever milked a cow.

At the end of the 19th century, White South Africa was anxious to flush the Zulu out of his land and into farming and industry. To this end the Natal government instituted the poll tax in 1905 that started the Bambatha Affair. Lack of success led to the importation of Indian and Chinese labour. Three quarters of a century later the aim has been achieved, and it is no longer so sure that this is what government requires. But desired or not, the wish of our brighter spirits today is to join the 20th century, get into the monetary economy, and become an international young man.

There are many restrictions in his way. Until recently in theory, and in great measure in practice also, the Black contribution has been pegged at the level of certain lowly forms of labour. It is indeed a sign of grace that 1973 is the year in which, in spite of so many dreadful things, job reservation began officially to crumble. What Government departments have long been doing in a clandestine manner and building contractors have done and been fined for doing, is now, at last, high policy. Mr. Vorster himself has indicated that he will not stand in the way of Black tradesmen... But, wonderful as it is to hear these sweet notes, it must be sternly remembered that there is no change in the structures of power. White supremacy remains White supremacy, now and for ever. And because of this, the Black man must have still no firm foothold in the city. Although he may go further than ever before, and although his wages are steadily rising, and his bargaining power is increasing, the Black man is still little more than a pair of hands, registrable in the service of the White man, and with no reasonable rights in the city to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is as a migrant that he must enter the city: and as a migrant he must leave behind him his reasonable happiness and saving tenderness. Do we wonder that the migrant becomes so lacking in the gracious attributes, if we conspire to steal from him the sources of gentleness?

For the migrant in the city, life is costly to maintain. It is reckoned that 80% of his wages are spent in keeping himself going, and that only 20% goes back home to his family. This figure is, of course, an indication rather than a fixed percentage. Doubtless there are heroic husbands who remit a greater percentage, but they seem to be few. From the study it appears that most of our women receive between R10 and R20 per mensem from their migrant menfolk. On this they must support themselves, their children, and perhaps grannie or a not-quite-sensible aunt. And these, remember, are the lucky households. Unemployment is a serious problem with us. It is hard to obtain work once you are out of the city, and the tribal labour bureau, through which men are

recruited, is not always good at spreading the message of the coming of those who seek labourers. If a man falls down on his tax, loses his Dospas, or has within that book a damning reference, he can find it hard to get out again from the homeland. Then there are the disabled. These may be the comparatively fortunate ones with obvious disability who, after irritating delays, nevertheless get their grant. Worse off are the slightly disabled who have some additional factor, such as being over 60 years of age, who may not get a grant but who are extremely unlikely to get work in any line-up before the recruiter in which he is in competition with young, fit men. In addition are those who have come down socially, through alcoholism or recurrent pellagra, until they can no longer hold down any sort of job. There are those whose health is eroded by tuberculosis, and who must spend months under treatment, climbing back into even reasonably good health. And widows, for whom there are no grants at all. This is a sad picture, but, I truly believe, an accurate one to account for the extremely low per capita cash income which averages 40c per week. I have tried to show that the safety net which in former years was spread below our people — the net of homeland productivity — is full of holes, by reason of overcrowding, poor farming, declining fertility and the removals which press more and more people on to the land. It may be that we begin to see something of the pattern of hopelessness and poverty that stultifies ambition and cools the fires of development within us.

But it is not only in work and agriculture that we are taxed to answer our question: ignorance or wages? Circumstances or ability? We think of the burden of malnutrition in the homelands. Here we are indeed challenged, for why is kwashiorkor so common among us — we admit over 250 cases a year — and yet not seen in White Durban North? Here, as with pellagra in older patients, the background of our kwashiorkor children is the background of poverty. Together with poverty there is agricultural bankruptcy and, of course, migrant labour dividing families. These are the sombre backdrop of this sad disorder, but ignorance takes a hand, too, and sometimes folly and sometimes evil as well. Even superstition (which is the other person's religious system) is often invoked by the critical, though I think there is little here to blame. The typical kwashiorkor patient is between nine months and two years old. He — in this predominantly female gathering I should perhaps have said "she", but custom is against me — is illegitimate, conceived while mother was away at work in the town. Father has repudiated parenthood (for were there not other men you comforted?). The young mother comes home for delivery, often, in these days, with us in the hospital. She loves this little one, and sets off along the right path with its care and feeding. But there is no outside means of support which, on the narrow financial margins

of our homes, is too great a burden to be born. She is forced out by this circumstance, leaving her baby with grannie and returning to work and the city. And, of course, there are the unnatural mothers too who slink away before morning dawns, leaving their infants to be found in the morning by the long suffering elders, who, by this time have borne much already. But these are the exception: most often this early return is an economic necessity, and the cruel laws forbidding children to be with their mothers, such as have recently been announced in Randburg and Sandton, complete the separation.

Grannie takes over the baby to the best of her not very great ability. She may lack understanding, she may lack money, or perhaps both are in short supply. There is no lack of affection, which is grannie's greatest talent, but affection alone, though it is most sustaining, will provide neither protein nor energy. Grannie frequently suckles the little one at her own breast, and occasionally stimulates milk again to flow, though never in any amount. The baby begins by losing weight, falling below the line on the weight chart which, at the 3rd percentile, represents dangerous levels of sub-nutrition and which, if the child remains in those lower regions of nutrition, leads to the full clinical picture of kwashiorkor. The baby swells up, its hair becomes downy and discoloured, a dark rash appears in the napkin area he becomes listless and refuses the very food which alone can save him. All this is, of course, the outward and visible sign of an inward and physical disaster which only too often ends in death. But with all its faults, I think our Zulu people cope better with their problem than we might were the same pressures applied to us. For this child of this domestic worker there is love aplenty, even if it is ignorant love: this I conclude to be better than the child's becoming, as it would in our fraction of the society, a charge against the rates.

So, in three fields: in agriculture, work and in malnutrition, we have tried to look at the proportion of responsibility born by wages and the proportion that results from folly, ignorance and evil. We have, perhaps, seen our people as even less free to act to their own salvation than we had thought. Seeing well-dressed people around, with, apparently a good supply of money, we have perhaps forgotten the other side of the picture, that of rural poverty, malnutrition and hopelessness. Here, surely, we are obliged to question the good sense and humanity of our society whose main assault on its Black citizens is that it separates them, breaks up their families and their loves.

We started by looking at the Zulu society and wondering whether their temporary eclipse was of their own making. We end by looking at our White selves, to ask how heavy a burden we have lain upon the Zulus? For have we not held out before the eyes of the Black people a vision splendid of liberty and decent living, and then taken away every incentive by our job laws? Have we not justified our poor wages — we are all guilty — by pointing to the paucity of Black ability: that same ability we have ensured that he may not acquire in any open market? Have we not, in the name of law and order, taken lives and the liberty of individuals; and in the name of security silenced our just critics? Have we not failed to help men to live decently with their families, because it suited us that they should not do so?

I ask if ourselves not this list of social sins, not evidence that we, too, in every respect as the Zulus, are victims of circumstances we can no longer control? If we, ourselves, are so unfree to act, then let us for pity's sake stop criticising others who are with us in this maelstrom of change. They, too are drowning, and we must sink together, unless together we struggle to escape while there is still time.

# The hard facts

*At the Black Sash conference, held in Durban in October 1973, Miss Elizabeth Clarke, who is the social Welfare officer at the Charles Johnson Memorial Hospital at Nqutu in Zululand, spoke of conditions in that area. The following article is compiled by SHEENA DUNCAN from facts given in her address.*

**T**HE statistics of life at Nqutu reveal the harsh realities of existence for thousands of South Africans living in overcrowded homelands where no employment offers and where to survive at all is an achievement. The land is badly eroded and grossly overpopulated. The Tomlinson Commission estimated that Nqutu, if fully developed, could support 13 000 people. 86 000 live there now and it is estimated that by 1980 120 000 people will be living there. This population explosion is not entirely due to natural increase. People have been resettled into the area from "Black spots" and White farms and others have moved in "voluntarily" because they have been forced off farms in the common area and have had nowhere else to go.

Yet, with a population this size there are only 1 500 jobs in the district so the men are forced leave to work. They must, of course, register at the labour bureau and wait to be recruited. They are also compelled to have paid the annual poll tax of R2,50 before they are registered as work-seekers and to raise this amount often means getting into debt before having any hope of being offered work.

Once a man has found work he may expect to be paid between R30 and R60 a month if he is lucky enough to be sent to a large urban centre such as Johannesburg but much less if he is sent to a small town or is recruited for farm work.

The average income at Nqutu for the families of migrant workers is R9,90 a month. This is what a man manages to send home after he has paid his own expenses in the city where he works. Some women have been luck enough to find employment with one of the home industries whose growth has been stimulated by the mission and may expect to earn two or three rands a month to supplement the money sent home by the breadwinner, or sometimes as their sole means of support.

It must be remembered that, although Nqutu is a rural area which used to be basically agricultural in character, one third of the families have no livestock of any kind. Most of these families have been resettled into the area.

For people living in such poverty expenditure on food, fuel and transport in that order has priority. If there is anything left over it will be spent on clothing and schooling for the children.

## Food

Those families who can afford it find that the basic food necessities for a month cost R11,29 analysed as follows.

Maize meal and starches	R4,87
Beans, skim milk and proteins	1,98
Fresh vegetables and fruit	1,08
Tea, coffee and sugar, etc.	1,87
Salt and fat	0,51
Bread	0,98

Contrary to the thinking of most South African White people food is not necessarily cheaper in rural areas. A bag of mealie meal, which costs R4,84 in Dundee, cost R5,85 at Nqutu. Rural stores do not usually supply fresh produce at all so transport costs may be incurred in obtaining fruit and vegetables.

## Fuel

Fuel may not be collected without permission which is rarely given so wood, coal dan paraffin must be bought. A six to eight foot log costs 35 cents and coal R1 per bag. An expenditure of R8 a month on fuel would be necessary in winter to keep a family adequately warm and to provide for the essential cooking. In fact the average family at Nqutu is able to spend only R1,55 per month on fuel. Hot water for washing and the burning of fires for warmth only are unheard of luxuries.

## Transport

To people living in a rural area such as Nqutu, where many are illiterate and there are no communications media, movement is absolutely essential not only for visits to shops, clinics and Church but to maintain contact between members of the family and friends. Taxis and buses are the means of transport and journeys cost 1½ cents per kilometre.

**Education**

The school enrollment figures at Nqutu show once more the very high drop out rate which is a marked characteristic of the Bantu Education system. 13 990 children are enrolled in 50 primary schools. 1 160 children are attending the four post primary schools and 110 children go to the one high school.

**Family life**

Family life, so vital to Zulu society is being totally disrupted by migrant labour. Men going away to the towns become absorbed into town life and the money they earn is often spent on liquor and women. The wife and children left in the country are deserted to all intents and purposes. Money stops coming into the home, and, pressed by hunger, the wife sells everything she possesses. When this is exhausted she will work for neighbours in return for food for herself and her children.

Because every penny is needed for food no development can ever get off the ground. Aged, disabled and mentally retarded people are neglected and then abandoned because the family can no longer support them as was customary in traditional Zulu society.

Even in cases where a husband continues to support his wife and to return faithfully to her each year the social distance between them increases inexorably because she cannot share in or comprehend his experiences in the town. They often develop conflicting values and aspirations.

So once more a community shows signs of breakdown. It has become impossible for young men to provide the traditional amount of lobola, parents allow couples to live together without any of the traditional legal controls which ensured marriage stability in the past. Casual unions become common, there is less commitment to the idea of marriage, unwanted children are shunted around to different relatives and grow into unstable adults to repeat the tragic history of their parents in their own relationships.

Although many factors contribute to the social conditions I have been attempting to describe, the fact that life in the Bantu Homelands is so dependent on migrant labour colours every aspect of the problem. Hardly a single family is not affected and the complete disorganisation of family life which it has produced may largely be attributed to it. The disruption of family life must disrupt society. The social instability it produces has been demonstrated throughout the world wherever it has occurred. Migrant labour must be regarded as destructive, unnatural, anti-social, untenable.

*Dr. Trudi Thomas.*

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# A ruinous system

ROBERTA JOHNSTON

**T**HE Black worker in South Africa, if discussed at all, is usually considered as a blob in an amorphous mass of "Bantu Labour". It is more comfortable to ignore the fact that he is an ordinary working man with ordinary needs.

It is the proud boast of some employers that none of their workers are paid less than the Poverty Datum Line, which is estimated yearly. Employers who pay less justify their actions by insisting that they cannot afford to pay more and that the worker is inefficient and under-productive.

Although it acts as a necessary guide line, to base minimum wages on the Poverty Datum Line is a monstrous conception. The latest available figure has been drawn up by the University of Cape Town Wages Commission for the Cape Town area — R89,44 for a family of six, two adults and four children of varying ages. It includes expenditure on very basic food a minimal amount of clothing, education, rent, taxes, transport, cleaning materials, fuel and lighting and a total of 0,69 cents for "health". No provision is made for serious illness, furniture, blankets, the odd glass of beer or a cold drink, a day's outing for fun, cigarettes or a Christmas dinner. The conclusion must be reached that as a guide to a living wage for a family living together it is inadequate and inhuman.

The worker who comes into a White area to earn money both for himself and for the family he has been forced to leave behind in the Bantustan, probably requires to earn more than the settled urban workman. His basic needs are the same. His cleaning materials probably cost less, but his food is more expensive because he does not share with a family and must buy everything in small quantities. His transport costs have to include visits home if he is to keep in touch with his family at all. He must pay his taxes, hut tax, poll tax, tribal levy. He pays income tax (with no deductions for dependants) on R360 per annum. He has to pay income tax when he is earning less than half the Poverty Datum Line figure. And of course, he has to feed, clothe and educate his family in the Bantustan who for the most part, live in urban type settlements and are entirely dependant on what he can send home. Unlike White people, education for Africans is not free.

There is no question that the majority of migrant workers do not earn anything like the inadequate Poverty Datum Line figure and employers even deny them normal yearly incre-

ments. Wages in some areas are so low that many of the people who last year came out on strike for higher wages returned to work for much less than the Government proposed minimum for the Durban area — R15 per week. The percentage of workers earning less than the Poverty Datum Line varies in each survey and for each area, but it cannot be less than 60% and may be as high as 80%.

The reasons for this poverty are obvious. South Africa has a vast pool of employable people who cannot find work. Few Blacks are in a position to refuse work of any kind, at any wage, and those who do find that someone even needier will accept work for any cash wage at all.

Contracts are drawn up in the Bantustans and the worker is often confused, as in the case quoted by the University of Cape Town Wages Commission of farm workers being offered R5 per week plus accommodation, only to find when getting to the farms that "accommodation" meant sleeping five to a room on the floor, and did not include food. These men were required to work up to 14 hours a day in summer and were arrested and jailed if they deserted. This is not by any means an isolated case, as the recent strikes have so clearly proved.

Few migrant workers have saleable skills. Many are illiterate and are thus excluded from all but the most rudimentary labouring jobs. Many are semi-educated: they have had a year or two at school until the money ran out or they found that there was no room in the school for them. The education factor does militate against training but basically they lack skills because they are migrant workers. Recently a few training schools for artisans, etc., have been set up in the Bantustans but such training is required to be used in the Bantustans not in the common area. The number of these schools in the White areas is negligible and training must be confined to settled urban people. Some employers have made valiant attempts at training but others who could achieve much are understandably loath to train personnel who are on contract for one year only. The mining industry has shown that with determination and modern methods, a great deal can be achieved with short term contract employees.

Vast numbers of migrant workers suffer from malnutrition because of low wages. Low wages are defended because the workers are under-productive. Workers cannot produce because of malnutrition and the vicious circle continues.

Employers in White Zululand state that the local worker is certainly not worthy of his hire, but admit that most of the population suffers from bilharzia or tuberculosis or both at once. Wages are traditionally low and malnutrition must also be a factor in the reported low productivity.

It is essential that Black workers have bargaining power. The Trade Union is an integral part of employer-employee relations in all capitalistic societies and is recognised as essential and inevitable whenever industrialisation takes place. And of course, any Trade Union worthy of the name would first and foremost vote out the migratory labour system which transgresses all that organised labour stands for.

So much requires to be done. Employers who pay a decent, living wage and train their workers are finding that profits go up rather than down. Most employers fail to realise this and need to be shown that a contented, well-fed and secure labour force produces and produces well; and every convinced employer is one more ambassador for the abolition of migrant labour.

Untrained, unskilled, unhealthy, underpaid migrant labour, along with the huge turnover in numbers, must of necessity be uneconomic and underproductive. The system is expensive in time, in paper work, in transport costs, in human costs and is ruinous to South Africa, both morally and economically.

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It is tragic that women who try to improve their lot and make a better life for their children by going away to work for them frequently only succeed in precipitating their children into malnutrition, because they are forced to leave them with unsuitable guardians who, if not downright unscrupulous, are less capable — like old women and sick relatives — or less motivated to "scrounge" for them, and in many cases of course they must summarily deprive their children of their breast milk, frequently inadequate after the sixth month, but nevertheless a small source of protein. It requires unusual motivation to rear a child successfully in this impoverished society. Thus "initiative" and "self help" is punished rather than rewarded. The flaw, of course, is that anyone should have to choose between staying and starving with her children, or leaving them to the care of unsuitable guardians and going away to earn their bread."

*Dr. Trudi Thomas.*

# What is the future to be?

JEAN SINCLAIR

THE Government's decentralisation policy was conceived for political rather than economic reasons, ostensibly to enable workers to live with their families in the Bantustans while working in the common area. Industries are supposed to be established on a large scale in the border towns where there is an endless supply of cheap labour. The curbs placed on industrial expansion in the metropolitan areas and the concessions made to industrialists who move to the border area growth points are attempts made to prevent the continuing flow of workers from the Bantustans to the existing employment centres. They have not succeeded in doing so.

Industrialists, on the whole, have not found that the advantages of tax holidays and the waiving of wage agreements outweigh the disadvantages of operating in remote districts. By the end of 1972, after 12 years, only 85 000 jobs for Africans had been created in border areas which involved public investment of almost R7 000 per job. At the present rate the border industries cannot hope to provide employment for the majority of men in the Bantustans who must continue to move to the cities for work.

If this policy really meant that men were to be enabled to live in family conditions near their places of work it would deserve wholehearted support and co-operation. Unfortunately it does not mean this at all. Migrancy is still the pattern of labour in the border areas as it is the rest of the common area of the Republic. Workers who are domiciled in the Bantustans but who work in nearby "White" areas must also work on annual contracts. The vigorous provisions of the 1968 Regulations must be complied with. Thousands of workers in the border areas still live hundreds of kilometres from the places where they are employed. They must be housed in hostels and compounds. The low average wages paid in border industrial areas and the high cost of transport prevent them from visiting their families very often. The Government's wild cat scheme for trains travelling at a speed and a frequency to allow workers to travel distances of up to 100 kilometres daily would be prohibitively expensive even were they to be practicable.

A fallacy of the policy is exposed by a look at the most favoured areas where the Black townships which serve highly industrialised "White" cities are actually situated within the Bantustan boundary at a reasonable distance from the city centres and where the border industry policy must

work if it is going to work at all. Pretoria and Durban are examples of such places. Here some men who live in the Black towns of BophutaTswana and KwaZulu are able to live with their families and to commute to work every day, but this does not mean that the percentage of migrants working in those cities is less than it is elsewhere in the Republic.

Pretoria lies on the edge of one of the pieces of BophutaTswana. It has 29 343 men living in municipal hostels and in private hostels and compounds plus some 20 000 domestic workers living on their employer's premises. According to Dr. Francis Wilson most of the hostel rooms have been built since 1963 and one-third of the total between 1969 and 1971 so they have been established since 1960 when the move towards decentralisation was planned. The building of hostels with at least another 9 000 beds has now been authorised in the municipal area. This is bad enough but a hostel for 10 000 men is to be built in Mabopane, a town within BophutaTswana. Forty seven per cent of those men working in Pretoria who live within the municipal area are oscillating migrants.

In Durban 51 348 workers live in municipal and private hostels and compounds and there are 30 000 living as domestic workers. Nine thousand workers are housed in "single" accommodation in Umlazi, a KwaZulu town, and plans for Ntuzuma, also in the Bantustan, include hostel accommodation for between 40 000 and 50 000 men. Dr. Wilson estimates that there are now at least 100 000 migrant workers in Durban (55% of the total number of workers) not including those who are living illegally in the townships.

At the very least hostels for migrants should have no place in the "homelands" yet vast hostels are being built. It is no wonder that separate development has no credibility.

The increasing use of migrant labour cannot be blamed entirely on the Government. Employers in border towns could do a great deal if they cared enough. In Phalaborwa, for example, one company is trying to phase out migrant labour and is building family housing within the Bantustan for its work force. Another company's policy is to employ migrants and house them in compounds, which is obviously cheaper in the short run. Here we have one reason why the Government has been able to persevere with the policy of migrant labour. One is entitled to ask why a

major employer of labour in Natal chooses to employ migrants from the Northern Transvaal in preference to men from nearby KwaZulu or why employers in Durban recruit women workers from the Transkei in preference to women already living in the area. The answer surely is that migrant workers are forced to accept a lower wage and employers do not have to invest money in the infra-structure necessary for the housing and facilities needed for families.

It is the White South African's consent to and co-operation with Government policy which is allowing the evils of migrant labour to proliferate.

If half the Black men working in the common area at present are migrants what is the future to be. Do we really intend to sit back while more and more family housing is abolished and more and more hostels are built, inside the Bantustans as well as in the common area...?

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## What must be done about it?

- Build houses for families in the centres where employment opportunities lie.
- Provide freehold tenure for African people in the common area.
- Remove the curbs on industrial growth and expansion in the existing urban areas.
- Choose new growth points for their economic potential instead of for ideological reasons.
- Repeal the 1968 Regulations.
- Stop the destruction of existing housing.
- Stop the mass removals of settled communities.
- Give all South Africans freedom of movement.
- Abolish the pass laws.
- THESE THINGS ARE NOT IMPOSSIBLE. WE SAY WE CANNOT DO THEM BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT TO DO THEM.
- NOTHING WHATSOEVER CAN JUSTIFY THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MIGRANT LABOUR SYSTEM. WE HAVE ALREADY DESTROYED EVERYTHING OF VALUE FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.
- WE MUST BUILD, NOT BULLDOZE.

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