

Labour Units

DO YOU, personally, know a labour unit?

You may think not, but you do.

All of us do.

Our Annie is one, and Clarens the milkman,
And old Mr. Silver, the butcher's driver,
And Betty who does the washing next door,
And old, old Johannes who empties the
garbage.

And do you know where they live?

I have just found out about Johannes.

He is not very old, about forty six.

He has a wife and four children.

He lives in a room with seven other men.

He has a bed and a sort of locker but it doesn't
lock.

There is one light on the ceiling.

They share a toilet with the eight men in the
next room.

I am not sure where his wife and children are.

I am a little afraid that he is not sure himself.

He knows where they were a few months ago,

But he has not heard recently.

However, in a few months more it will be his
turn to go back,

Then he will find out.

Another labour unit will take his place,

And he will wait his turn.

I do not know what they will all eat

While he waits.

BARBARA BROCK

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MIGRATORY LABOUR...

The Corner-Stone of Apartheid

At the beginning of August, Mrs. Jean Sinclair, National President of the Black Sash, addressed a public meeting in Port Elizabeth. This is an extract from her speech.

The migrant labour system is evil and morally indefensible. It is nothing short of serfdom and we must all realise that all we enjoy as White people in South Africa is built on the foundation stone of slave labour, whether in the urban areas, the border areas or on White farms.

There are some 8 million Africans working in the White areas. It is not known what per-

centage of them are migrant workers, but it is known that it is a substantial proportion and as the years go on the percentage will increase. To every one of them a normal and secure family life is denied.

It is intolerable that a woman cannot live with her husband and children as a family unit.

It is intolerable that an adult woman cannot

marry without the written consent of her father or legal guardian.

It is intolerable that a man, because he is a foreigner, cannot live in a home of his own and that he and his family are forced to live as lodgers with another family.

It is intolerable that a foreigner who has lived for the whole of his working life and paid tax in the Republic cannot become a South African citizen.

Indeed it is intolerable that even men who are South African citizens have no right to bring their wives to live with them in the place in which they work.

It is intolerable that men and their wives cannot guide or control their children's destiny; that the freedom of movement and choice of employment is so restricted that no African can fulfil the most normal and natural aspirations.

It is intolerable that no African has any security of tenure and that as a married man he is forced to live in a "bachelor" hostel; that a migrant worker can only live with his wife for about four weeks a year.

Stable family life is being deliberately destroyed by the laws of the land. Women are separated from their husbands and children from their parents. In Johannesburg we have seen many married couples who are unable to live together because one lives in Alexandra Township and the other in Soweto — geographically separated by less than 20 miles but totally separated by the iron curtain of the pass laws.

There are thousands upon thousands of old people, women and children living in resettlement villages. A few of the women find employment within the settlements, for which they are paid the princely sum of a maximum of R5 a month — others are completely destitute and live on Government rations.

The lucky ones are those whose family ties survive the enforced separation and whose husbands and sons send money back from the cities for the support of those who have no other means of survival.

One can imagine the poverty, the malnutrition, the social evils and the hopelessness in these settlements. One has to remember that all these people are forced to live there and may not leave them without permission. The future holds little hope for them.

One cannot visualise that the present rate of industrial growth in the homelands will provide a better future for the children and grandchildren of the present generation of lost people. Yet the Government continues with its wholesale movement of population into these stricken areas.

You here all know that a community of 200 000 is planned for Committee's Drift when there is already serious unemployment in Grahamstown and Uitenhage. Here another rural slum will be created deliberately in pursuit of White self-interest.

The pass laws with all their frightfulness are the cornerstone of the apartheid policy. They were originally intended, in the last century, to give a measure of protection to the Africans.

There have been five commissions of inquiry into the operation of the pass laws and they have all recommended that they be relaxed considerably and in one case that they should be abolished altogether.

Despite the reports of these commissions the Nationalist Government has amended the pass laws on several occasions, making them ever more onerous and restrictive. After 1948 they were intended to reduce the number of Africans in the White areas and so influx and eflux control have been implemented for years with increasing severity.

The result of all this has been that African family life has been disrupted and the moral fibre of the African people destroyed. Needless to say the numbers of Africans in the towns and cities have not been reduced. There are many more Africans in these areas than ever before.

This has led to a shortage of housing, an increase in pass law arrests, and in frustration and a deterioration in good race relations.

Structure of tyranny

Bearing in mind that the Urban Areas Act incorporating the pass laws is only one of the some 200 laws which govern the lives of the Blacks, the whole edifice of apartheid is propped up on a structure of tyranny.

The Coloured and Asian people have suffered greatly under the Group Areas Act, the Race Classification Act, the Separate Amenities Act and many other acts.

The grand design of separate development is crumbling. The establishment of homeland

governments is not proving the solution it was intended to be. Demands by the leaders of these governments are becoming louder every day. They demand more land; for the homelands to be consolidated; for their boundaries to be defined; for more power and control over their own affairs.

There has been little meaningful development in these areas and poverty and unemployment are widespread. Warnings to White South Africa are constantly being given. Only last month Chief Gatsha Buthelezi said at the unveiling of the tombstone erected in memory of Chief Luthuli that there was no doubt that violence in South Africa was on the ascent and that the chances of a non-violent change were getting scantier by the day.

Legitimate grievances

We know of the unrest in the Black universities and of the attitudes of SASO, the Black students' organisation. We know of the disturbances which arose at the Black universities after Mr. Tiro was summarily expelled after delivering a speech at Turfloop in which he aired the legitimate grievances of Black students.

When students from some of the White universities subsequently held peaceful demonstrations, calling for free education for all South Africans, the reaction of the police and statements made by certain Cabinet Ministers gave us all food for thought.

Mr. W. A. de Klerk, the Afrikaans writer whose new book "The Puritans of Africa — The Afrikaners" is to be published next year, discussed his book with a Sunday Times reporter.

He said the book pointed out that apartheid as a "socio-political vision" was destined for collapse.

In the book he says that "Afrikaners have fallen into an ideological trap, for which there are many precedents in history." They have become obsessed with a "grand vision", the socio-political ideal of apartheid.

"As has happened with many ideologies in history the Afrikaner ideology of apartheid — based on a concept of justice by way of separate freedoms, has led to the opposite — tyranny and injustice."

Time is running out and White South Africa must shake itself out of its complacent, prejudiced and avaricious attitudes.

One feels hopeless when one realises that the government which wields the power is so intransigent because it is obsessed with its ideology and its determination to remain in power. But there is another group which has power and that is the economic sector — industry, including the mining industry, and commerce.

They are the affluent minority who are only too anxious to maintain the status quo, although their pockets are beginning to be affected by the policy.

However because of the urgency and the seriousness of the situation we do appeal to them to use their considerable power to pressure the Government to bring about the immediate relaxation of some of the apartheid laws as a first step towards a change of policy.

While we do not believe that better working conditions, decent wages and the training of workers will alone alter the system, we do appeal for pressure to be exerted by the chambers of industry and commerce on their own members to pay a living wage to their employees.

I know the arguments about not being able to increase wages without an increase in productivity. I know too, from my own experience of living on Government rations for a month, that it is a physical impossibility to increase productivity if you have not enough to eat. Increased wages will increase productivity.

Each and every one of us must use what influence we have to persuade the White people of this country that they will have to accept change and that the sooner they do so the less painful it will be.

The time has gone when Whites can bicker over the concessions they might decide they would be prepared to make to Blacks.

Perhaps the time has come when we should begin to think in terms of a new national convention when all the leaders of all races and groups should get down to talk at a conference table and to hammer out a new system of government which would be acceptable to all. A solution has to be found.

If we wish to survive in this country the sooner the Whites realise what is involved and face reality, renounce their privileged position and accept radical change the better.