

CHEAP, BLACK LABOUR FUELS ECONOMY

Any ideology has to come from the experiences of the people and the kind of oppression they undergo. We find ourselves in a capitalist society today. But it is a capitalist society with a racist twist. The overwhelming majority of black people in South Africa are reduced to workers, irrespective of whether or not they would like to enter the ranks of the capitalist class.

Capitalism thus assumes a novel character with the distinction between the haves and the have-nots being colour. The working class is split into a privileged white working class or labour aristocracy and an extremely oppressed black working class. This statutory proletarianisation of the black man in general is well summed up by the past nationalist minister who said that "there is no station in life for the bantu beyond that of a labourer".

Within the body politic we again find that the demarcating line between those who wield power and those who do not is colour. Again it is the black man who is disenfranchised.

Socially the same statutory prohibitions apply. It is blacks who are ghettoised, blacks who are forcibly removed, blacks who are fed gutter education and blacks who have separate and unequal amenities.

We can thus say that Blacks are politically, economically and socially discriminated against and are forced to occupy the lowest rungs of this society.

These are the material conditions existing in society today and any ideology that does not take cognisance of this is starting from the basis of historical fallacy. Black consciousness emerged from the boiling point of this society and the experience of the most oppressed segments of this society. It emerged from the pain of our degradation, the shame of our plight and the vision of our restoration to the ranks of free and proud people of this earth.

Taking into account all these factors, the future society we envisage is one in which there will be no discrimination on the basis of colour; where there will be no economic exploitation on the basis of class; where the wealth of the nation is equally distributed among all her people. Education shall be entrenched in law and the leaders of the people shall be

of the people, elected by the people to serve the people.

It should be obvious that only the oppressed are capable of bringing about the necessary transformation in any society. However this does not occur of its own accord. It has been said that a people can only be oppressed to the extent they allow themselves to be oppressed. Such a truism implies that a national consciousness has to be activated.

Proceeding from the premise that in our vast numbers is our strength we have to harness that strength to the best effect.

It is the economy that is the backbone of any society and the economy of this country is based on abundant and cheap black labour. It follows that the black working class is the pivot around which the liberation movement revolves.

The Black worker possess immense economic power but as yet he has not realised his full potential and is not able to exercise his economic strength on a coordinated basis. Our focus is on accelerating realisation of this potential, of making him aware that he holds a power without parallel in this country. We have to emphasise the political content of the labour struggle, of making the struggle of the worker the struggle of the community. The worker and the political organisation have to become one and indivisible.

We have to work towards the objective of the workers joining the political organisation in ever increas-

ing numbers and the political organisation being ready, willing and able to tackle questions of labour and nurturing the ascendancy of worker leadership.

It is perhaps fortunate that I am speaking in a rural area because this is where the majority of workers are recruited from. Rural areas have been earmarked as vast labour reserves and are the granaries of the country. Every liberation movement in South Africa has been guilty of ignoring the workers in the rural areas and we must ensure that AZAPO does not perpetuate this error.

We may add that students have a role to play in the liberation struggle. Firstly they possess certain skills which can be utilised for the furtherance of our struggle and secondly they tend to have an incredible amount of free time. Students can thus play an activist role in the community. But at this point a note of caution must be sounded: because students possess certain specialised skills, they can be seduced into a comfortable accommodation within the system. Therefore students have to make an active and authentic commitment to the liberation struggle. Vigilance has to be their watchword and they have to bear in mind that they are part of the black community before they are students.

AZAPO commits itself to the liberation of black people under the active leadership of the black working class and the guiding philosophy of black consciousness.



ON STRIKE: Black workers on strike use their economic muscle also to express dissatisfaction with their denial of rights and are becoming aware of their collective strength to demand change.