

THE NON-EUROPEANS ON THE LAND.

By Z. SANDERS.

In 1946 there were about six million non-European people engaged in agricultural pursuits. Of these three and a quarter million lived in the Reserves and two and a quarter million on European farms.

The people on the Reserves cannot make a living by farming alone. In the 1913 Land Act a principle was laid down fundamental to South African economy ever since. Non-Europeans may buy land in certain areas known as Native Reserves. They may not buy land elsewhere in the Union. Certain areas were set aside (ten and a half million morgen altogether - i.e. 7.3 per cent. of the total land of the Union). In the individual provinces the percentage distribution was: Natal, 23 per cent. of the total area of the Province; Cape,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; Transvaal,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; Orange-Free State, 5 per cent. The lands were practically all of extremely poor fertility, except for the Western Transkei and Pondoland. Some parts in the Northern Cape and Northern Transvaal are permanently drought-stricken. According to the 1911 census, non-Europeans numbered 78 per cent. of the total population. They were given the privilege of acquiring land in 7.3 per cent. of the country. In 1936 a further Land Act earmarked seven and a quarter million morgen more to be purchased over ten years by the Native Trust and to be added to Reserve land. By 1943, four million morgen of these lands had been bought. When the total extra morgen have been bought there will be seventeen and three quarter million morgen available for non-European ownership - 12.4 per cent. of the total area of the Union.

In unsurveyed areas (the greater percentage of the land), land tenure rights stem from Governor-General to the chief to the individual tribesman. The latter will cultivate his plot with his family for many generations. Although tenure is only terminated under exceptional circumstances, unless the family immigrates it forfeits its holdings. Thus the ownership is incomplete. Many reserve men do not feel that they own their land, and that it is still Crown land. Land belongs to the white man, they say.

In surveyed areas (originally applied to the Glen Grey Area) - the principle of one man one lot is applied - the dweller holds his land in perpetual quitrent from the Government. The holdings are inheritable. They may be sold only to/.....



to another tribesman. Individual Smallholdings are the practice only in a few areas - the Ciskei and parts of the Transkei.

All grazing lands in the Reserves are communal.

In the Reserves, then, the Africans may buy and own land, but the picture of individual holdings and small farmers - on the lines of the countryside of Europe - needs considerable modification. In very rare cases do the conditions of Reserve farmers correspond with those of a peasant in Europe.

In 1946, a Government agriculturist described the Glen Grey area in the Ciskei as follows: of eighteen thousand families, ten thousand possessed no arable land, but merely a residential plot and access to the communal grazing land. The average family income was four shillings a month, derived from seven sheep, three goats, one ox and one calf. Eight thousand families owned arable land, but their average income from produce was an additional three shillings a month (giving a total of seven shillings). "We conclude then that the income of the group of families with arable allotments is seven shillings per month, and the income of a larger group without land is four shillings per month".

I quote from the Gillmans' book - "Perspectives in Malnutrition". "It is erroneous to regard a Native Reserve as an agricultural area. It would be more accurate to speak of it as a well-spread out residential area where the average family unit makes the most out of his land than the average city dweller pottering around in backyard gardens.

"Obviously no family can live on four shillings or seven shillings a month for it needs food, building materials, blankets and clothes, fuel and light, school books, church dues, medicines, etc. Hence we find seventy per cent. of the men are absent from the district working on the mines or in other labour centres, remitting to their hard-pressed families in the Reserves such share of their small wages as they can spare. Even boys are sent out to work in the towns. Three-quarters of the children of school-going age never attend school and most of those who do attend are girls."

Thus more than half the people have no land, and even of those who have, there is insufficient for subsistence. Very

rarely/.....

rarely are there any surplus commodities to exchange for cash. The migrant labourer is no mere accidental occurrence in a peasant family; he is an essential part of the social and economic structure of the Reserves. Without his wages the people cannot live. So even in this group, when a form apparently amounting to land ownership exists, the family cannot live by agriculture alone. This is an important difference between the rural African and the European peasant.

Let us now examine the conditions of the two and a half million non-Europeans living on European-owned farms.

In each district and in each Province there are certain local differences, some of which we will mention.

In the Cape Province there are Coloured and African people on the farms; there are none who own land outside of the Reserves. A few individuals are tenants on European farms - a situation which is legal in the Cape, as long as the rent is more than thirty six pounds per annum; a few labour tenants are found near Bathurst, renting their land and paying with their part-time labour. However, the great majority of non-Europeans living in the Cape rural areas outside the Reserves are full-time wage labourers. The head of the family works for the farmer and in return for his services receives:

1. a cash wage of ten shillings to fifteen shillings per month per adult male
2. rations -- mealies, coffee, sugar and skimmed milk;
3. a small plot of land whereon to build his home, also limited grazing rights and a small garden.

Families regularly live with the wage-earner and the wife and children often serve the same master.

In Natal the people concerned are Indians and Africans. The majority, unlike those in the Cape, are part-time labour tenants working usually for about six months, and receiving in turn a plot of land (say five acres), rations (variable) and cash wages varying from nothing to about ten shillings per month. The full-time agricultural labourer is gaining ground in Natal, however. He is found particularly on sugar plantations on the coastal belt, but is appearing more and more

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in other parts of the Province. He will usually live in a compound and be supplied with rations and paid wages. His family are left in the Reserves, and he will help them out with part of his earnings.

At the present, full-time labour is practically universal in the Orange Free State too. Living with his family on a corner of the European farm, the labourer works all year for the farmer. He has a herd and limited grazing rights for his family. Rations may help him to subsist but usually these are for working members of the family only. Wages are extremely low, the maximum being one pound per month for adult males. Sometimes the employer pays the polltax, or he may give his labourer leave to earn cash in town.

In the Transvaal labour tenants are probably still in the majority, working ninety to one hundred and eighty days in the year for the farmer. They will usually receive no wages but earn the right to live with their families in a kraal on the main farm. A few squatters are still found in some parts helping the farmer with his harvest, but often with no fixed contracts and working their small piece of land for themselves. The full-time wage labourer, as in Natal, is a group that is growing in numbers more and more in the Transvaal, and the compound is becoming the rule in some areas.

In the Cape and the Orange Free State the full-time agricultural labourer is thus the largest group, living on the farm with his family with only a token wage. In Natal and the Transvaal, part-time labour tenants are still common, but are giving way to the full-time labourer; there is still the further development - the man who lives in a compound, works for wages and subsidizes his family in the Reserves.

The trend in all Provinces is thus towards the disappearance of the labour tenant and to the emergence of a rural proletariat on the farms.

The African is driven out of the Reserves by poverty and the necessity to pay his taxes; he is prevented from going to the town by legislation. He has no choice but to offer his labour to the European farmer or go to the mines. His plight is such that he must take what he can get, his bargaining power being slight. Being unorganised, he can offer no resistance to the demands of the farmer, and he is accordingly used in the way most suited to the needs of his employer, and to the

advancing needs of capitalist agriculture.

We find among rural Africans an overall picture of poverty, malnutrition and disease that is difficult to imagine without direct experience. A countryman is traditionally healthy, robust, with a diet full of fresh fruit, meat and dairy produce. The African on the farm lives on mealineal, often bought from the store, because he can not grow enough on his land. He eats practically nothing else besides a few shrubs and an occasional potato. The babies \* malnutrition diseases in the most seven forms; adults die of Tuberculosis; the infant mortality rate (an excellent index of standard of living and hygiene) is one of the highest in the world.

It is a serious mistake to consider the African on the farm loosely as happy in his state and better off than in the towns. He is not this; he belongs to one of the most depressed populations in the world.

Education is minimal and inferior. Clothes he cannot afford. Medical attention he does without. Cultural advancement is practically impossible. Small wonder he escapes to the towns whenever he can.

The rural labourer is an impoverished group; but more than that, he is prevented from improving himself. As has been said, there is no escape for him - either back to the Reserves, where poverty is even more profound, or to the towns where he is forbidden to go. The rural labourer is truly in chains.

In South Africa, one of the starting points of Native policy is that farmers will not and or cannot pay their labourers a wage that will compete with that paid in industries, since in many cases European farming methods are uneconomic. So while there is a natural movement to the towns, legislation, regulations and restrictions are imposed to prevent this flow. The numerous Acts and Amendments demonstrate clearly that these laws have not been found easy to apply. They are designed to maintain a static framework in a dynamic social and economic situation - an impossible task. The African evades the network of regulation and policy wherever he can; he leaves the farm and finds his way to the towns somehow to seek higher wages.



There can be no solution for the intolerable difficulties of the non-European rural population - the majority of the population - within the framework of the existing colour-caste structure of South African Society. For this reason, the content of the national liberation of the non-white peoples of South Africa must very largely be one of land reform. ~~The~~ discussion of the shape that reform must take is an urgent task of the liberation movement - not as an academic exercise, but as a vitally necessary means of evolving a programme which will mobilise the rural population for their own emancipation.

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