

in Nyasaland, and adapt its techniques in building up the loose-knit coalition of urban and rural dissidents which at present constitutes the nationalist movement in Southern Rhodesia. ●

South African Trade Unions Division Under Law

LUKAS MOKOENA

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD workers are organised into trade unions in their own industries and united in national trade union co-ordinating bodies. In no country but South Africa are they organised on racial, sex or colour lines. Although employers and Governments have always combined in opposition to the organisation of workers into trade unions there have been no legal enactments to divide them into separate unions. Thus the unity of the workers is purely and entirely left to the workers themselves and they have found ways of uniting in spite of stratagems and tactics adopted by employers.

In South Africa conditions are entirely different. Workers are divided by law into racial groups. In terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act, separate trade unions or separate branches of a trade union are required for white workers on the one hand and Indian and Coloured on the other. African workers are expressly excluded from the definition of "employee" in terms of the Act. Coloured and Indian branches of a Union must have an all-white Executive. Although African trade unions are not as yet illegal, the State makes it extremely difficult for the Africans to be organised. Under the Group Areas Act, the African unions have no right to occupy premises in an urban area. Under the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, the heavy penalties for strike action militate against the formation of a Union.

It is not only the fact, however, that workers cannot unite together into one Union which is a major barrier to working class unity, but that legally and conventionally certain categories of work are reserved mainly for white workers. In terms of the Mines and Works Act, blasting certificates can be obtained only by whites. The Job Reservation Determinations made in terms of the relevant section of the Industrial Conciliation Act have so far reserved jobs for white workers only. Although there are no legal barriers to any worker becoming an apprentice (with the exception of the building and printing industries) traditionally only white workers have apprenticeship training. This is slightly different in the Cape Province with regard to Coloured workers, but the over-all situation is that the majority of non-whites cannot qualify as skilled workers.

African workers are deprived by statute of the basic

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rights of freedom of movement and the freedom to sell their labour to the highest bidder and this hinders their economic advance.

The labour aristocracy of white workers thus created is not unique to South Africa. It is a well-known employer tactic to divide the workers. But, as stated above, nowhere else does this have the force of law.

The interaction of legal compulsions which separate workers, and the creation of a skilled and privileged force of white workers has led to the present disunity of the labour movement in South Africa. Certain emotional attitudes have become deeply entrenched and make it difficult to break through the barriers to unity.

THE WHITE WORKERS GENERALLY regard themselves as workers only when issues affect them as white workers. They regard the non-white workers generally and the African workers in particular as a threat to their economic security. Thus consciously and unconsciously they are opposed to the organisation of African workers into trade unions. Many of them support "Job Reservation" in the mistaken belief that it will *protect* their jobs.

African workers, struggling against a mass of legislation, open intimidation, persecution and prosecution to maintain their unions, place no reliance whatsoever on the support of their fellow-white workers. In too many cases have white workers "scabbed" on their fellow African workers in the same factory when the Africans have gone on strike. To the African workers, therefore, the white worker is identified with the employer.

But it is not only in the major issue of strikes where the white workers "sell-out" the African workers. In wage negotiations, where the privileged whites negotiate on behalf of the unrepresented and unconsulted Africans, the latter fare very badly.

In day-to-day contact at work there is often underlying hostility between the two groups. White workers actually use their positions to disorganise African trade unions. They have been known to tell African workers that their Unions are not legal. Active trade union shop stewards have lost their jobs not because the director of the company concerned does not want them but because the white foreman does not like their trade union activities. In other words, while the laws of the country are designed to prevent the African workers from organising into trade unions, the white workers, in addition, act as a stumbling block in the formation of such unions.

These attitudes of white workers are even found among trade union secretaries or industrial council agents. Some secretaries of white trade unions do not hesitate to recommend the expulsion of an African shop steward to his boss, if the shop steward is a militant trade unionist. If the latter asks a white trade unionist to explain trade union procedure which he does not understand well, the answer is usually to have the African sacked. One can imagine what resentment this creates in the minds of African workers.

In many industrial councils, African trade unionists are treated as "boys." They are spoken to contemptuously, bossed by the agents, typists or secretary in

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PURE WHITE MAN'S LAND 'SHOULD BE THE IDEAL'

THE APARTHEID of separate counters and buses was no longer sufficient stimulation for the positive idealism of the youth of the Nationalist Party. Mr. P. S. Marais (secretary of the party in the Cape) said last night.

'Only the vital ideal of a purer White man's land, only the stimulating prospect of a task that could be tackled selflessly, could thrill again and put a sparkle in the young eye.'

Mr. Marais was speaking at a sryddag meeting of the Nationalist Party at Hopetfield.

No Longer Issues

He said language, emblems and form of government were no longer issues, and for this reason the ideal of a purer White man's land must achieve a new urgency in the political set-up.

Mr. Marais appealed to youth to accept the ideal of the gradual removal of the Bantu from the Western Cape with enthusiasm. The young people should be prepared to say: 'Rather economic impossibilities than the certain ruin of the White nation and slavery.'

What had hapened and was still happening in territories to the north would happen in South Africa. Mr. Marais quoted Africans like Nkrumah, Banda and Mboya to show what the Black man wanted—'Africa for the Black man.' 'Africa must be freed from the White man,' 'The White man can stay, but only without privileges.'

'Uhuru' Cry

This was the sort of language the Black man was using. It was the same sort of 'Uhuru' cry which had even been heard outside the Cape Town Post Office on a Sunday afternoon.

He was not able to quote the words of South African Bantu leaders like Luthuli and others because it was now an offence to do so—you know what their language is like though—the Black man will be satisfied with nothing less than a vote for every adult in the country. They will be satisfied with nothing less than 'destruction of separating walls.'

Mr. Marais said it would not be possible for a White minority to maintain control over a Black majority for all time. Even the policies of the United Party and the Progressives would not be acceptable to the non-Whites.

Asked who was going to take the place of the Natives employed as farm labourers and in the fishing industry on the west coast of the Province, Mr. Marais said no less a man than Dr. Jan Graaff, brother of the Leader of the Opposition, had said that numerically the Coloured people could make the change-over possible—*Cape Times*. [L.H.]

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the presence of their members. Yet these very men derive their pay from the subscriptions paid by the African workers to the Council in question. The African worker believes that the white worker treats him like this because of the colour of his skin and he regards him as nothing but his enemy.

SO FROM THE MAZE OF LAWS and the deeply-rooted emotional attitudes arise these barriers to working class unity which are given concrete expression in the fact that there are three major co-ordinating bodies in South Africa: (i) The Confederation of Labour (almost exclusively white) (ii) The Trade Union Council of South Africa (white, Indian and Coloured, with a recent amendment to their Constitution to permit African trade unions to affiliate) and (iii) the South African Congress of Trade Unions, (multiracial, but predominantly African).

The recent amendment to the constitution of the Trade Union Council to admit African trade unions led many observers to believe that progress towards unity had been made. Unfortunately, the actions of the Trade Union Council with regard to the General Law Amendment Bill dashed such hopes. The Council obtained an "assurance" from the Minister of Justice that the provisions of the Bill would not be applied to trade unions recognised under the Industrial Conciliation Act, namely, white, Indian and Coloured trade unions, but not African trade unions. This action has confirmed the belief of African workers that the role of the white workers is to oppose them, hamper them and even betray them.

What of the future? It is necessary to state that these attitudes discussed above are not immutable. They are the product of the political and economic set-up of the country and as these change, so will these attitudes change. Despite all restrictions, including the criminal prosecution of 40,000 African workers for "illegal" strikes since the introduction of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, there are more African trade unions in active existence now than at the time when the Nationalist Party came to power. Their determination to organise themselves can only be impeded, never halted. As these Unions grow in strength and numbers, so will their white counterparts be forced to take cognisance of their existence and their demands. On the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, for instance, where African trade unions struggled against similar disabilities, the African Mineworkers' Union became so powerful that in their recent strike, the white Mineworkers Union issued the following statement:

"Our members will not take the place of any African miner to produce copper. There will definitely be no scabbing."

This is a major breakthrough on the trade union front in Southern Africa and what has happened on the Copperbelt could be an indication of the future pattern here. At present, however, the working class in South Africa is deeply divided and the non-white workers are required to educate their fellow white workers to the true meaning of working class unity. It has never been a demand of the non-white workers that whites must be excluded from jobs to make way for them. ●