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# **LIBERATION**

ONE SHILLING

SEPTEMBER, 1957

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**THE ECONOMICS  
OF NATIONALISM**

**THE 1958  
ELECTION**



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

# Liberation

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## **Editorial**

# **WE'VE GOT TO GET RID OF THE NATS!**

**T**O everyone, except apparently the top leaders of the Nationalist Party, it is becoming glaringly obvious that South Africa cannot continue very much longer in its present course, and that far-reaching social and political changes are urgently needed.

From abroad, icy winds of disapproval blow upon our shores. They come not only from those who can be contemptuously dismissed as heads of Non-European or Communist nations, but from people like Adlai Stevenson (who may well be the next President of the United States) and the British Labour Party (which will probably form the next Government of Britain.) The Nationalist Government of the Union constitutes a standing insult and challenge to the newly emancipated nations of Asia and Africa, from Peking to Accra. It is a constant source of embarrassment to its military and political allies, whose existence troubles them every time they trumpet forth some resounding phrase about the "free world."

At home the Nationalists face an increasingly menacing situation. At first when some new act of oppression on their part led to protests from the people they were able to ignore them. They would ban a few more leaders, make more police raids, and carry on as if nothing had happened. But as their rule grows harsher, their acts of oppression more intolerable, the protests become more formidable. They can neither be quelled nor ignored. Each new Nationalist outrage is followed by a minor upheaval — an earth tremor, the prelude to an earthquake.

Think back on this year, 1957, the year that opened with the ominous clashes outside the Drill Hall. There were the bus boycotts — and the earth trembled. There was June 26, when Johannesburg became for a day a silent city. On the platteland a new front has been opened among the once patient and long-suffering countryfolk, as in one rural area after another the women reject or burn their reference passbooks, or tribesmen struggle against mass removals, or Bantu Authorities, or dethronement of their Chiefs.

Non-European resistance puts new heart and determination into White opponents of the Nationalists. Professors and nurses march through the streets in protest against academic and professional apartheid. The Anglican and Catholic Bishops call publicly for defiance of the law on Church Apartheid.

Such signs — and these are but a few of the momentous happenings of the past few months — are plain to be read by any politically literate observer. Their message is clear. The Nationalists have come to the end of the road. Ten years of their misrule, their brutality, their obnoxious and

unnatural theories, expressed through the humourless bombastics of Father of the Bantu Verwoerd and the certifiable ravings of Sjambok Swart, Minister of Police, have convinced all but the blindest and most infatuated devotees of baasskap — that we have come to the end of the road. The people cannot be bluffed any longer. They cannot be driven any further. To attempt to do so is to court a disastrous explosion.

## SIGNS OF AWAKENING

So bold and clear are these indications of impending change that even the Rip van Winkles of White South Africa stir uneasily from their slumbers, become uneasily aware that their cosy dream-world of privilege, stability and illusions of superiority is rapidly vanishing away.

To no section of our population is the awakening more painful and difficult than to the followers and dupes of the Nationalists themselves, their perception of political realities in this rapidly changing world (to say nothing of their consciences) long blunted and dulled by the smug and fixed idea that they have been divinely appointed to rule people of other races and pay them a day's pay for a week's work. This preposterous notion, held with all the blind faith of a religious zealot, has the effect, like all irrational beliefs, of closing the minds of its victims to all facts and evidence to the contrary — the more so, in this case, since it seems to justify and buttress its holders in the possession of not inconsiderable material comforts and privileges.

Yet a glimmering of the uncomfortable truth seems to be penetrating even some of these locked and barred minds. Dr. Wassenaar may be the one swallow that does not make a summer — and his "rebellion" does not seem to go very much further than chewing the cud of venerable clichés about "White unity". But Professor Keet is quite another matter. That, from the inner sanctuary of Stellenbosch a leading D.R.C. theologian should emerge to denounce apartheid in harsh, unsparing terms, as un-Christian, immoral, impractical — here was something new, which not only does great credit to the courage and integrity of Prof. Keet, but has also profoundly accentuated the hidden inner crisis of doubt and uncertainty that has set in in the heart of the Nationalist Party.

The simple-minded plattelander who voted for the Nats in 1948 and 1953 thought he was going to get a republic and an anti-imperialist policy, reductions in the cost of living, and the Non-White population "put in their places" — that is reduced to cowed servility.

But paltry gestures with flags and anthems cannot disguise that so far from advancing to independence, the country is today dominated by foreign imperialism — American as well as British — more than ever. The cost of living is higher than ever. And Non-White unrest and determination to win equality and human rights have reached heights never before known. No matter how much the State and Nationalist Party propaganda organs try to fix the blame on agitators, Reds and Congress, it is plain to all that the cause is the policy of Verwoerd and his colleagues, and that each new attempt to enforce that policy is followed by a new wave of disturbances.

In a word, the Nationalists have failed. Whether they will pay the penalty for their failure at the polls in next year's general election is a matter we do not propose to discuss now. We do not altogether agree with the interesting analysis made by "C.P.E." in this issue, and we propose to

return to the subject next month. But what is of fundamental importance is that the policy of the Nationalist Party has proved itself beyond reasonable doubt as not viable, unacceptable and unworkable. Any further serious attempt to force it upon the country can only lead to a major breakdown.

The big business supporters of the Party, appalled by the chasm that has opened out under their feet through the Songress declaration of an economic boycott, and the far-reaching consequences that can follow, are beginning to have long and deep second thoughts about apartheid and Verwoerd. For the first time since they moved into Union Buildings, the Nats themselves have not only lost their drive and their convictions of infallibility that sustained them through each new absurdity — they have begun to fumble, to hesitate and falter. Schoeman's lion-like roaring about the boycott not being related to fare increases was followed by a lamb-like concession of fare-reductions. The big talk about Poll Tax increases was suddenly dropped and the proposal silently shelved.

We do not believe, and we should not like to give any impression, that the Nationalists are about to change their character, to shed their Nazi elements and turn themselves into democrats, or to retreat. Indeed, they cannot retreat; they have burnt their bridges behind them one by one on their way; they have earned the hatred and contempt of the great majority of South Africans, and the best we can hope of them is that they will, in due course, retire to that graceful obscurity earned by unsuccessful and unpopular politicians.

## NO ROAD BACK

If we are able to write with such confidence that the autocratic Nationalist regime is nearing its end it is not because we are sure that, despite all its rigging and gerrymandering of constituencies, it will lose the colour-bar election next year — though that may well happen too. It is because no government can permanently continue to rule without the consent and against the wishes of a majority which is becoming organised and united and determined on change. The time has to come when that government must give way to overwhelming pressure: and the time is approaching fast in South Africa. It is written large upon the events of the past year in our country, in the sweeping advance of all Asia and Africa towards self-government, in the challenging new spirit among the people, in the unwonted vacillations and uncertainty of the Nationalists themselves.

Not that we imagine the change as an easy, automatic process, achieved without heroic efforts, struggles and sacrifices, advances and retreats, the innumerable skirmishes and zigzags and unpredictable eventualities that must inevitably accompany an era of historical transition. No one can foresee the exact time and manner of the change, the precise details of the shape of things to come.

But change there must be; a break with the misery, tension, repression and uncertainty of this unhappy period — and a break, too, with the past, with the deformed and twisted structure that is crystallised in the South Africa Act, and of which the Nationalist Government has been the ultimate misshapen and unlovely product.

For nothing can be more certain than that we shall not return to the period immediately before the ten-year nightmare of Nationalist rule. Not for nothing have we suffered that nightmare. Once we have summoned the strength, the unity and the determination to end it, the people of South Africa will at the same time have the strength and the will to say — and to see — that it shall never happen again. There can be no road back to 1948. Every serious political group in the country — with varying degrees of clarity — has the wit to see that something more inspiring and democratic is need, something more in step with the spirit of our times, than the supine and cynical conservatism that let the enemy through the gate when Smuts went. And that is precisely why every political grouping in the country, from the United Party leftwards, is busily discussing, formulating and discussing proposals for change.

## CONSTITUTIONAL PLANS

We do not propose here to weary our readers by analysing the ludicrously inadequate reforms proposed by the United Party. Restoration of the Cape Coloured Franchise; a few White Senators to be elected by Non-Europeans on a separate Jim Crow voters' roll: it is all so far behind progressive public opinion, as the U.P. always is, that it hardly merits serious consideration. The Party's millionaire leader, Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, tells the world that "We (meaning the Whites) must take steps to secure the goodwill of these Natives." Then he adds that Africans, being "uneducated people, still in a semi-barbarous state" are "plainly incapable of managing the affairs of the country." We wonder whether the world will be more impressed by Mr. Oppenheimer's novel method of winning people's goodwill by insulting them in the next breath, or by the odd logic of his claims that those whose rule over the past 300 years has left the bulk of the people still, allegedly, "uneducated and semi-barbarous" are the ones most capable of "managing the affairs of the country."

The United Party is not likely to secure the goodwill or support of the Non-White people; its whole history is one of spurned and neglected opportunities to do so; what it now offers is too little and too late. What is significant, however, is not that the U.P.'s reforms are woefully inadequate, but that it proposes any at all; that in its ponderous way it has inched forward a trifle is a mark not of any progressiveness in itself, but of the strength and intensity of the people's demand for progress sufficient to budge even this mudbound elephant of a Party.

The Liberal Party's recent constitutional suggestions merit more earnest attention. This Party appears to have abandoned, or at any rate put into cold storage, the opportunist conception of an educational franchise qualification which repelled so many democrats when the Party was founded, though traces of the same inveterate hankering to appease White chauvinism by compromising democratic principle remain.

The Liberals now propose the reframing of the Union's constitution to provide for greater provincial or regional decentralisation and the entrenchment of a Bill of Rights guaranteeing basic liberties to all. Perhaps the key clause in the whole lengthy document is the following:

"As to method, the aim of the Liberal Party is to secure the summoning of a new National Convention, this time representative of all racial groups instead of Europeans alone, as was the case in 1909. The power

to recast the Constitution would have to be conferred upon such a Convention by a statute of the Union Parliament, subject to general agreement being reached on the nature of the constitutional reforms desired."

We may all agree cordially with the Liberal's conception of a new National Convention, a Constituent Assembly in which all South Africans shall be represented. But that we shall have to wait until such a conception is approved and enacted by our all-White Parliament, mandated thereto no doubt by our all-White electorate, is a prospect that should cause the most stout-hearted and patient liberal to blanch. It is a prospect that need cause no sleepless nights for the ardent White supremacists; they may be confident that if this recipe is followed there will be no freedom in their lifetime, nor their children's either.

Let us frankly ask our friends of the Liberal Party to tell us whether they honestly believe that they have as much hope of seeing their proposals accepted by Parliament as the average ticket-holder has of winning the Irish Sweep? Of course, it could conceivably happen. We could envisage circumstances in which a Union Parliament would by some extraordinary freak, vote to inaugurate a democratic era; just is., with pathetic disregard of the laws of chance, we continue sending our hopeful quid off to Dublin every now and then. But having done so we do not expend our time working out whether having won the prize, we should travel to Europe first or to Asia, buy a Jaguar or a Buick, endow New Age or the Bishop's Fund.

The chances of Parliament convening an all-race Constituent Convention are, similarly, so remote that it hardly seems worth-while entering into a debate with the Liberal Party regarding the details of its proposals designed to meet so far-fetched a contingency. Whether a Convention with such a genesis would or should adopt their rather fanciful plan for a Federal Constitution "entrenching" Provincial Council authorities and civil liberties — always remembering that the principles of these changes would, according to the plan, have to receive the prior approval of the Union Parliament as now constituted — it all seems rather too academic and fantastic for us to be able to enter the debate with any degree of conviction or enthusiasm.

### **FREEeDOM, ALONG WHICH ROAD?**

Are we not, perhaps, being too finical and particular? Should we not be prepared to discuss the proposals on their merits, without regard to the "method" whereby they are to be effected? We do not think so. It is not possible, practically, to discuss specific reforms without some consideration of the manner and the circumstances in which they are to be brought into being. One cannot avoid the overwhelming impression that the new constitutional proposals have been framed precisely with a view to making them more palatable to some hypothetical future all-White House of Assembly and Senate, which the Liberals wishfully envisage as being prepared to consider them. The emphasis on the "tyranny of majorities" which the draft declares to be "as vicious as the tyranny of minorities over majorities" (a proposition which no consistent democrat could for a moment entertain) and the emphasis on Provincial autonomy (under which the Free State, perhaps, could be envisaged as a second Alabama) — these and other features sharply differentiate the Liberals' draft in tone and spirit from the Freedom Charter.

The Charter is meant, and serves, to inspire and guide a majority which is eager for democracy; the Constitutional Draft is meant to coax a reluctant minority which is fearful of democracy. Herein lies the fundamental cleavage of approach, which essays on the relative merits of centralisation and federalism would serve merely to obscure.

Living constitutions are never the product of academic debates on abstractions. A constitution like the society whose institutions it defines, grows out of and expresses nothing but the balance of real social forces in that place, at that time. We do not for a moment believe that the oppressed Non-White majority in our country will ever receive freedom and democracy as a gift from the hands of that privileged minority whose special privileges (and this is the fact which, we feel, the Liberals do not want to face) are bound to disappear in the process.

Thus to divorce proposed changes from the people, movements and events which must inevitably shape them is to put the cart before the horse. The shape of tomorrow's free South Africa will be decided by the majority of our people, of all races — else it will not deserve the name of freedom. And of their traditions, aspirations and ideals will be compounded the mould from which that shape is stamped.

All this is not meant to imply that there should not be, now, a frank and free discussion among all democrats of the broad main principles upon which free South Africa will arise. On the contrary. We ourselves propose to add our share to that urgently necessary process, by initiating in our columns an open discussion of those principles. The details will be found on another page in this issue of *Liberation*. We hope that in the give-and-take of debate all democrats, Congressmen, Labourites, Liberals, Africanists and others will move nearer to achieving that greater clarity of mind and unity of purpose which will enable us to meet the challenge which these stirring and pregnant times present to our generation.

## THE OVERRIDING TASK

But while we discuss the future, let us not forget the present, and the desperately urgent work which faces us now and brooks no delay. For before we build our house of freedom, from the varicoloured and assorted materials which each democratic section has to contribute to the building, we must first clear the site by removing the ugly and useless structure — the jail, torture chamber and lunatic asylum — which now stands there.

To come down to earth: we've got to get rid of the Nats.

That is the central and overriding task which faces every democratic group and section in the country. Until it is accomplished all our hopes must remain dreams, and our plans idle talk.

If we cannot agree yet upon long-term perspectives at least we can all agree that no time should be lost in ending the long crucifixion of South Africa at the hands of that agony and degradation of man's spirit, that terror and shame which is the Nationalist Party.

And in the common strivings and sacrifices, the comradeship of that noble and arduous effort, may we discover the oneness of purpose and the mutual confidence that will help us to build liberty together, when they have gone.



# THE 1958 GENERAL ELECTION

by C.P.E.

**T**HE three judges of the Delimitation Commission have been listening gravely to arguments, consulting maps and inspecting constituencies. We can take it that the General Election campaign has begun.

For the next nine months, the country will pant through the stages of election labour. What will it produce?? Another shattering Nationalist victory, or a stalemate, or (dare we hope!) a turn of the tide?

The Nationalists claim that they have not yet reached the peak of their Parliamentary strength, and I for one am inclined to agree. But that is only half the picture. Parliament does not reflect the true strength of the Nationalist Party. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish between the Parliamentary sphere, in which wholly undemocratic laws give the Nationalist Party an utterly disproportionate amount of power, and the extra-Parliamentary sphere, where the National Party has suffered a series of resounding defeats.

For the sake of simplicity, I want to list the factors which will ensure probably that the Nationalists make good their boast of winning at least 100 House of Assembly seats in the General Election next year (at present they have 94, discounting the two United Party seats generously donated by Messrs. Jonker and Coetzee). Then I will list the factors which, taken together, demonstrate the inherent weakness of the Nationalist Government.

In reality, there is no such clear dividing line. The successes of the national liberation movement in the extra-Parliamentary sphere inevitably will be reflected inside Parliament. But let the proposition stand.

The first fact to be borne in mind is that no Coloured voters will take part in the coming General Election. About 40,000 of them (at 10,000 voters per constituency — the Union quota — this represents roughly four constituencies) have been taken off the roll. Without prejudging the decisions of the Delimitation Commission, one can state as a fact that this will necessitate considerable boundary changes, and that the Nationalist Party will benefit from these changes.

Nor can one ignore the general effect of the redelimitation of constituencies throughout the Union. At present, United Party supporters are concentrated in relatively few constituencies where thousands of votes are squandered on big majorities. The Nationalists, on the other hand, are scattered over as many seats as possible, and their voting strength is put to the maximum use. If this pattern is intensified under the new delimitation, the Nationalists will make further gains.

To ensure the maximum technical efficiency, the Nationalists are putting more men and money into this election than the United Party. In the Transvaal alone 60 fulltime Nationalist organizers have been appointed — an organizer for each constituency, excluding eight safe U.P. seats! Compare this with the U.P.'s half-a-dozen or so organizers in the province. The Nationalists have been raising more money than the U.P. Their supporters have donated more generously, and gentle persuasion has induced English-speaking business men to hand over a few cheques. The U.P. has lost the confidence of the business world and struggles to make ends meet, although matters might improve now that Mr. Harry Oppenheimer has taken a direct interest in the party's affairs and "Div" is infusing enthusiasm into his creaky old party.

But, more important, the Nationalist Party is a homogenous party with common aims. It can claim legitimately to be a *volksbeweging*, whereas the U.P. is a hotch-potch of groups, serving under a motley collection of business-world leaders (who are sneered at by their business colleagues!). The U.P. has no policy to bind its supporters together: the only coherent thing about it is its desire to get back to power. It offers no inspiration or excitement.

Indeed, the whole party-political Opposition is in a state of disunity and uncertainty. The U.P. is bent on obliterating the Labour Party, and the Labour Party, in retaliation, is nominating candidates to fight the U.P. in a number of seats. No progress appears to have been made in the direction of an alliance of the Labour, Liberal, Federal and other progressive groups. The "all-party" bodies, like the Black Sash (bless it!) and the Anti-Republican League, are groping for an opening. The S.A. Bond (does it still exist?), the Central National Party (Dr. F. J. Tromp's birth control party) and Dr. Wassenaar's National Democratic Party are all pursuing their right-wing "coalition" ambitions with absolutely no success. Held at arm's-length, the party-political Opposition in South Africa does not present an inspiring spectacle.

The Nationalist Party remains a single, monolithic party, unencumbered by coalitions or alliances. There is desperate competition for its seats in the Assembly and Senate (compare this with the U.P.'s frantic efforts to find a candidate for the safe East London North seat and settling finally on that naive ex-Liberal, Mr. Clive van Ryneveld, whose main contribution to the defeat of Nationalism will be to bowl out Dr. Donges at cricket.)

I could extend that list indefinitely, but the point, I hope, is made.

Now that is half of the picture. If there are no major national developments between now and the General Election, I see no reason why Strijdom should not increase his majority to 100 seats, or even more. The economic situation might change, of course, but that brings us into the realm of speculation. Strijdom has been worried by the almost total lack of overseas capital, and South Africa is being exhorted furiously to mobilise its own internal capital. On the other hand, exports have brought in more money, and the balance of payments position is so satisfactory that the total lifting of import control is predicted for 1958. Industrial development is slowing down, but that is not an immediate election factor. If wool and other export prices fall, or if there is a decline in uranium and gold production, the problem of foreign exchange might rear its head suddenly, but again that is speculative.

Nor, in my opinion, is the average Nationalist voter sufficiently perturbed by the cost-of-living to switch his vote, or even abstain from voting. The farming community, in spite of having run itself into debt by indiscriminate purchasing of tractors and other equipment and generally spendthrift ways, has in face never had it so good. The Afrikaner worker in the cities is much worse off, but can we say that he has suffered sufficiently to make him lose all faith in his party? I think not.

Reluctantly, one comes to the conclusion that on polling day next year the Nationalist electorate once again will be in a fine state of ferment, and the emotional tide will carry Strijdom on to victory.

But these calculations take no account of the growing strength of the liberation movement, and this is a factor which could cause a complete change in the political situation within a relatively short period. In the past six months, the determined efforts of the opposition forces outside Parliament (White and Non-White have produced an immediate impact on Nationalist circles.

Pressure by the Dutch Reformed Church achieved an amendment to the "church clause" of the Native Laws Amendment Act — and the protest did not reflect the genuine anxiety of the D.R.C. (which has glossed over equally pernicious laws in the past), but anxiety over the storm of protest raging in the country. Again, pressure by the Nationalist universities reflected anxiety not over the university apartheid bill itself, but over the wave of indignation inside and outside South Africa. One can assume that if the opposition forces in South Africa were supine and had accepted the university apartheid bill and the "church clause" without protest, there would have been no "revolt" from the D.R.C. and the universities.

The undoubted dissension in the National Party over apartheid is not a case of authentic heart-searching: it reflects the perturbation, bordering on alarm, of the so-called Nationalist "intellectuals" over the failure of apartheid to achieve anything except a few public notices asserting the supremacy of the White man and a wave of fury such as South Africa had never seen.

The 1957 Parliamentary session culminated in an unofficial disclosure that the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd, is to give up the Portfolio of Native Affairs. The development is of the utmost significance. It means that Dr. Verwoerd, by common consent a prodigious worker and utterly dedicated to the implementation of apartheid, has not only failed to prove that there is such a thing as "positive apartheid", but has exposed his whole party to attack. It means also — and the historic significance of this fact must not be overlooked — that once Dr. Verwoerd goes, apartheid becomes a fumble, a day-to-day stumble.

And all this is due directly to the irresistible advance of the liberation movement.

Whites, too, have taken courage from the example set by their Non-White brothers, and — unique event! — the churches, Nusas, welfare and health bodies have embarked, with their eyes wide open, on a White "defiance campaign."

Opposition outside Parliament is running higher than ever before. In the three years he has been Prime Minister, Strijdom has made no conquests. The trickle of United Party followers over to the Nationalist laager has dried up. Strijdom has made no friends, only enemies.

The strategy of Nationalism was to crush, first White opposition, and then to turn on the Non-Whites. But the former task is even more formidable now than it was, say, six years ago, when Dr. Malan's blandishments were beginning to produce results.

The record since January 1957 is an astonishing one. The bus boycott, a total, shattering defeat for the Nationalist Government, springs immediately to mind. And Mr. Schoeman had the effrontery deliberately to turn it into a trial of strength. What a gross miscalculation of the strength of the African people!

Now there is the anti-pass campaign among African women which, though still in its early stages, has the makings of a titanic struggle. Already, the women have scored astonishing victories.

There were — oh, so many things more! The protest strike on June 26; the Mamathola tribe's refusal to budge; the boycott of Bantu Education and the Bantu Authorities Act; the mass march to the Johannesburg City Hall (and Mayor Goodman's smiling tolerance, "Never mind if they trample on the flowers. We can plant new ones."); the grim loyalty of the people to their arrested leaders . . .

The Suppression of Communism Act is invoked — and Congress grows stronger! Bannings follow namings, and banishments follow bannings — and Congress grows stronger! Arrests follow raids — and Congress grows stronger!

The situation brims over with possibilities. Anything, literally anything, could happen in South Africa today.

Meanwhile, the "wild men" of the Nationalist Party are coming to the top, trampling on the shrewder, more flexible ones with their jackboots. Their philosophy is to take apartheid through to its logical conclusions — the very situation the shrewder ones want to avoid. The Abrahams, Greylings and Von Moltkes emerge as the pace-setters.

Their whole behaviour points to another trial of strength: something to put the liberation movement firmly "in its place" as the United Party, presumably, will be put "in its place" next year. It stands to reason that Congress will not be allowed to escape scotfree with its recent victories. Strijdom has not learnt his lesson. He is going to seek another trial of strength. Already, Mr. Swart is making the familiar, ominous noises.

To sum up: Ultimately, of course, the liberation movement will triumph. Meanwhile, Strijdom may succeed in entrenching himself even further behind Parliament's walls. He may succeed also in inflicting injury on the masses and on their organisations, because after all he has not yet fully mobilised his modern police state in the struggle for White baasskap. Irresistible though the strength of the liberation movement might be, it would be foolish to underestimate these factors.

**C.P.E.**

# THE I.C. ACT —

## What Should Be Done

by LEON LEVY

(President of the S.A. Council of Trade Unions)

**F**ROM the day its terms were announced in Bill form, in 1953, the Schoeman-de Klerk Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 was recognised by every trade unionist in the country as a mortal threat to the structure of free trade unionism as we had known it in South Africa, and to the rights and living standards of the workers. The leaders of the big, old-established Unions announced that every sacrifice must be made, all differences must be sunk, in order to mobilise all registered trade unions against the Bill. They even scuttled the former Trades and Labour Council, with its long tradition of admitting all workers to membership, on the grounds that by conceding to the anti-African prejudices of Unions which had left the T.L.C. they would bring about a united front of all Europeans, Coloured and Indian organisations in the new Trade Union Council, which would be able to defeat the Bill.

Principled trade unionists expressed the gravest doubts about the wisdom of this procedure. They warned that an organisation which had itself admitted a measure of apartheid, would be unable vigorously and successfully to contest a Bill which was intended to carry apartheid to its logical conclusion. Their fears proved well-justified. The T.U.C. proved utterly incapable of mobilising the workers against the Bill. In fact it did not even attempt to do so. Faced with a passive trade union movement, the Nationalist Government pushed the Bill through and promulgated it. Some of its worst apartheid provisions come into force in a few months time: at the beginning of 1958. By that time all unions which are at present registered in terms of the old I.C. Act, and which at present have a "mixed" membership — i.e. contain both European and Non-European members — have to decide what to do about it. Either they comply, in some way or another, with the apartheid principles of the Act, by modifying their present Constitutions to conform with the racialistic outlook of the Government, or else they lose their registration certificates and their present "recognised" status.

This is not a matter which concerns trade unionists only. For too long trade union matters have tended to be left to Union officials only. But the problem of the trade union movement is the concern of all politically minded South Africans, for great democratic principles are involved.

### WHAT THE NEW LAWS SAYS

The former I.C. Act was by no means a model of democratic industrial legislation. Its worst feature was that, by excluding Africans from its definition of employees, it made it impossible for African unions or multi-racial Unions with African members to acquire the legal status and offi-

cial recognition that go along with registration. Without exception, Unions of European, Coloured and Indian workers reacted to this situation by agreeing to exclude from their Unions their African fellow-workers in their industry. A few tried to meet the difficulty by helping and co-operating with parallel, unregistered, African Unions in their industry and consulting with these unions before entering negotiations with employers. Most did not even bother to do that.

But at least, under the old Act, White, Coloured and Indian workers could form a single trade union, with the right of all members to meet together, to serve on all Union Committees and as Union delegates on Industrial Councils.

The new law takes away these rights. In future, as from January 1, 1958, registered trade unions must amend their constitutions. Their Constitutions must provide, either for the membership to consist exclusively of one racial category (White or Non-White), or if, they wish to retain a single organisation for both sections:

1. Separation of members of different races into separate branches;
2. All-White Executive Committees;
3. All-White delegations to Industrial Councils.

Mixed general meetings of all members will be prohibited. No Non-White worker may attend a meeting of the Union's executive, even as an observer. Penalties of imprisonment and fines can be imposed for the crime of infringing these regulations.

#### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

These threats have thrown many registered trade unions into confusion. Many of their leaders are floundering in panic, while the workers wait in alarm for a lead. On the whole they are prepared to struggle in defence of their Unions as they have always known them, which have won them higher wages and better conditions, yet they do not know how to face the situation as D-day comes closer and closer.

No common strategy has been worked out by the Trade Union movement to meet the threat of the I.C. Act. The Congress of Trade Unions has made repeated appeals to the T.U.C. and other co-ordinating bodies for an all-in conference to decide on a proper course of action, but these appeals have fallen on deaf ears.

The C.T.U. has called upon its affiliates not to co-operate in implementing the Act. But, unfortunately this — the only co-ordinating body which admits unions of all workers — does not have many registered unions affiliated to it, and even these few differ as to the best way of meeting the threat.

Still greater confusion prevails in the T.U.C. One of its biggest affiliates — the Garment Workers' Union — anticipated the Act by attempting to set up separate racial trade unions some time ago. At the national conference, the T.U.C. president, Mr. Rutherford, said publicly that he doubted whether this would be a good example for any union to follow. Other T.U.C. Unions are proposing that, in the interests of "unity" the Non-Europeans should accept Union segregation and domination of the organisations by White members.

## A CRUEL CHOICE

There are many harmful and unjust clauses in the new I.C. Act. But these clauses demanding racial separation are the most immediately important. They are the ones that workers in both registered and unregistered Unions are debating and finding so much difficulty in overcoming at present.

On the face of it the mixed, registered union faces a cruel choice at the present time. Let us see exactly what compliance with these clauses would mean.

Some White trade unionists, as pointed out above, have appealed to the Non-Whites to accept the expedient of all-White leadership. Perhaps some of them may make this appeal in all sincerity, in the belief that they, as trade unionists, will conduct the Union in all fairness and impartiality, free of racial bias or favour. But whatever their subjective feelings, they definitely cannot expect Non-European workers to accept such assurances, particularly at the present period. When they have had proved for them beyond any doubt — if there ever was any doubt — the utter and criminal neglect of Non-White rights, interests and aspirations by all-White Parliament, Provincial and Municipal Councils and innumerable other bodies.

All-White executives have existed in certain "parallel" unions for many years. Without exception they have indulged in insulting segregation policies in the Union and in one way or another neglected the special interests of Non-White members.

The danger is even greater when the workers come to consider the implications of the vicious Section 77 of the present I.C. Act. For this section provides for the reservation of specified jobs for members of a particular race-group. What guarantee will Non-White members have that their all-White executive or Industrial council delegation will oppose the introduction of this sinister clause in their industry, or even that they will not use it to try and secure the best-paid and most pleasant jobs "slegs vir blankes?"

Today the Non-European worker is a politically-conscious man. He is fed up with White baasskap in the running of the country, and wants to put an end to it. He is certainly not prepared to tolerate the same sort of thing in the running of his own trade union.

## SPLITTING THE UNIONS

The unpalatable prospect of White-dominated Unions has led many workers — some of them sincere opponents of apartheid, others perhaps opportunists seeking new positions in new unions — to plump for the alternative provided for in the Act. That alternative is the establishment of two completely separate trade unions in an industry: one for Whites, the other for Non-Whites. Those who favour such a course argue that it

is the only alternative for Coloured and Indian workers if they want to resist Section 77 and White baasskap; that at least it will enable Non-European workers to be represented on industrial councils and thus preserve a say in negotiation of wages and conditions.

Some unions have already decided in principle to follow this course, including those in the furniture and textile industries. The idea is gaining in popularity among sections of the Non-White workers, particularly in the Cape. According to the Act, where a Union is split in this way, the racial unions thus formed are each entitled to claim a pro-rata share of the funds and other assets of the previously united organisation. The possibility of forming exclusively Non-European unions, whose leaders would perhaps be more progressive than present union leaders, makes a strong appeal to many trade unionists who are not necessarily racialistic or "anti-White"

Nevertheless, the policy of introducing apartheid voluntarily into the trade union movement is fraught with grave dangers for the workers, and in the long run only the employers will benefit from such a policy.

It is true that splitting the unions this way would give the Non-White workers facilities to meet and negotiate with the employers at industrial councils. But they will be "three-cornered" negotiations, and the employers will be quick to seize upon and to use any divisions that may develop between the two unions.

The unions may try to counter such a danger by establishing a federation which could decide on a common policy. No doubt such a federation would help to preserve a united front. But in times of stress where differences develop, especially over matters affecting industrial colour bars, and the relative importance to be attached to demands on behalf of workers in different wage-categories (which unfortunately so often correspond to different race-categories), the federation may easily be disrupted.

Experience has proved that racial divisions invariably harm the workers' interests — and never more so than in South Africa, where registered Unions, excluding Africans have not only callously disregarded the interests of their African fellow-workers, but also, rotten with internal chauvinism, have proved unable to resist Nationalist Party disruption from within and from above.

Moreover, will the all-Non-European union really be in a position to defeat Section 77 job-reservation proposals if they are introduced at industrial councils? We must not forget that the employers themselves are all Whites; if the White unions want to reserve jobs for themselves they will vote with the bosses on the councils, and the others will be in a minority. In any case the body to decide is not the industrial council, but the Industrial Tribunal, which is specifically set up to create White domination, appointed by the Minister and removed at his will. If the establishment of all-White unions is encouraged, and these unions then demand job-reservation, they are bound to get a sympathetic hearing from any tribunal set up by Mr. de Klerk or the Blankewerkersbeskermingsbond!



## A THIRD ALTERNATIVE

Separate branches under all-White leadership are no solution for the workers; nor are separate trade unions. But there is a third line of action open to trade unions, which will enable mixed unions to preserve their unity and their democratic character. They can have trade unions of Europeans and Non-Europeans in which all members enjoy equal representation and equal rights. In fact such unions can even become genuine all-embracing industrial unions by enrolling African workers in the industry, as well as European, Coloured and Indian workers.

But such trade unions will not be eligible for registration under the present Industrial Conciliation Act. They will have to rely, not on Mr. de Klerk's Labour Department, but purely on their own strength and unity to bring about and enforce the implementation of agreements with the employers. It can be done. It was done in this country for many years, before the I.C. Act of 1924. It is done in many parts of the world where there are no legal provisions for industrial councils and other similar State machinery. In the last resort, all agreements depend not on the State and the I.C. Act, but on the organised strength of the workers.

It may, however, be difficult to persuade a generation of workers and trade unionists accustomed to the type of trade unionism which has been fostered by the I.C. Act to understand these facts of life. The I.C. Act of 1924, which gave trade union recognition to the Coloured, White and Indian workers, has served to blunt their class consciousness. The thirty-three years of the I.C. Act has witnessed the growth of a new generation of workers, unused to bitter struggles for the right to bargain collectively with employers for trade union recognition and better conditions. Thirty-three years of privileges at the expense of the African workers has reared a labour aristocracy, devoid of genuine trade union tradition and consciousness.

Yet, we should not underestimate the extent to which the harsh Nationalist rule has awakened thousands of South Africans, of all racial groups, and brought them to their senses. Are not those Church leaders who advocate militant defiance of Church apartheid more in step with progressive opinion than the timid trade union leaders who advocate voluntary segregation, or the feeble United Party echoing the stale slogan of White leadership? A vigorous campaign among the workers now, not only by a few advanced trade unionists but by the whole democratic liberation movement could lead to a big change in the situation. The advanced, class conscious workers should set the ball rolling at their places of work.

They should explain that the machinery of the I.C. Act in its old form may have been, to some extent, a useful instrument — but the new Act no longer serves the interests of the workers in any way. It acts as a brake on their progress. The planned disunity of the workers, the biased Industrial Tribunal, the restriction of the strike weapon, the idea of reserving jobs for race-groups — all these are meant to be used and will be used by the employers to play off one section of workers against another — in the interests of higher profits and lower wages. They will try to get back concessions which, in the past, they have been compelled to yield to the workers.

The only way to prevent these disasters is to win the workers to boycott the Act and refuse to operate it. And where compliance with the Act would mean forfeiting the existing measure of unity gained by the workers, they should refuse to comply and operate unregistered.

Workers may fear that sick funds, provident schemes, industrial councils and many other fruits of past struggles would disappear as a result of deregistration. They should remember that all these benefits were gained not through Government benevolence but as a result of past struggles, often taking the form of protracted strikes.

They did not win these concessions easily but by forcing them out of the employers through their unity. They can maintain the benefits if they remain united — whether registered or not. And they will lose them if they are disunited, even if they have the registration certificate in the Union office. They can keep their sick funds and retain their past concessions. The employers (most of whom are not so fond of the Government anyway) will not dare to tamper with the workers' sick funds if the workers are prepared to act to defend them.

### **NO REAL PROTECTION**

Even the industrial councils can be retained. They need not be "registered" councils, but they could serve exactly the same purpose as registered councils: a permanent machinery for collective bargaining. Private agreements — legally binding contracts — could be entered into the same as before. There is absolutely nothing to stop collective bargaining between employers and workers, outside of and ignoring the I.C. Act.

What we have to realise is that the new Act no longer provides any real protection for the workers — all it does is provide endless opportunities for Nationalist Government interference in the internal affairs of workers' organisations, whereby de Klerk's registrar can tell you how to frame your constitution, whom you must elect to office, and what you may or may not do with your own union funds. No-one should be deceived by the clauses which grant "recognition" — the Act is like a tempting fruit whose juice is poisonous and will kill at the first bite!

There is no reason for the atmosphere which exists in many registered trade unions: an atmosphere of suspicion, defeatism and inertia. There is no reason for passive acceptance of the I.C. Act. There is no reason to tamper with our constitutions, to set up racial unions, to amend our own rules to suit the Registrar of trade unions. The constitutions are made for the workers to run their unions democratically, in their member's interests. Coloured, Indian and White workers may well take an example from the Africans who have resisted and in fact made a dead letter of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act. Without collaboration from the workers, industrial laws can't work.

The strength and effectiveness of a trade union does not depend on a scrap of paper, the registration, certificate, or the blessing, recognition and goodwill of the labour department and the employer. It depends on the unity and determination of its members to improve their conditions and standards. Trade Unions do not, or rather should not, write their constitutions in order to please an official of the race-crazed Nationalist Government, and if they do so, it is my belief that they will find they have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

It is a thousand pities that the trade union movement has not been sufficiently militant and united to appreciate the correctness of this point of view. A general decision of the unions to boycott the I.C. Act, to refuse to comply with its provisions, and to operate by direct negotiation with the employers, without the unwanted services of the labour department, would have made the whole Act unworkable and a dead letter. If

only our trade union leaders had shown the courage and clear-sightedness of the Roman and Anglican bishops, that is what they would have done.

But they have not done so — although the operation of the Act will sooner or later force them to take such a stand — and the problem now faces each individual union.

### SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Of course, that problem presents itself in a different way to each union, according to the special circumstances that prevail in that industry. Where a Union already consists of only Non-Europeans, then the question does not really rise in this sharp form for it at the present time. There may be no immediate practical advantage to be derived from deregistration and constitutional amendment in such circumstances would be a mere formality. Ultimately, no doubt, all the Unions are going to learn the worthlessness and disadvantages of registration under this new I.C. Act, through their own bitter experiences. But, in the meantime, there cannot be a single simple rule for all Unions, whatever the circumstances and level of understanding. I would definitely advise deregistration in any Union immediately, sooner than split or submit to White domination. But where these immediate threats do not exist, it might be better for progressives in such unions to continue their registration now, meanwhile assisting to organise the Africans in the industry and building unity, in preparation for eventual deregistration.

Again, it may well be in certain Unions that while one section — probably the Non-Europeans who are generally more advanced — are prepared to retain the existing constitution of their existing mixed Union, defy the registrar, and tell him what to do with his registration certificate, the other section may be unwilling to agree. The Whites may insist on submitting to the Act, and demand an "all-White executive" clause in the constitution. The Non-Whites should try to convince their White fellow-workers that this course is wrong and harmful for all. But if the others will not agree it seems clear that the Non-Whites will have no alternative but to safeguard their democratic trade union rights and interests by establishing their own registered organisation separately, as a temporary measure. For otherwise they run the risk of seeing all Union assets and benefits pass into the hands of one section only.

In the long run the workers will realise that only united industrial trade unions, comprising all workers including Africans, can effectively serve their interests. What will most effectively bring this lesson home is the mass trade union organisation of the African workers — a job S.A.C.T.U. and its allies have begun to tackle in the course of the present nation-wide "asinamali" campaign for all-round wage increases and a £1-a-day minimum wage.

If the industrial legislation of the country does not provide for such free, democratic unions, the unions will have to operate outside the framework of such legislation — until they are strong enough and united enough to change the laws. That has been the course of trade union history in every country, including Britain — from the time when labourers were arrested and deported from Tolpuddle to Australia for daring to combine in a Union, to the present time when trade unionists take their places as honoured and respected members in Parliament and all the councils of the land.

# THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF AFRIKANER NATIONALISM

by H. LAWSON

**P**OLITICAL movements do not operate in an economic vacuum. Whether all their members are aware of it or not, they represent certain economic interests and effectively support one side or the other in that universal conflict of interests which marks capitalist society.

In order to understand something of the economic forces which find their political expression in the Nationalist Party it is first of all necessary to be clear about the kind of Nationalism that the Nationalist Party represents. There is a well-known distinction between a broad, humanistic kind of Nationalism that seeks to further the well-being of all the people and the narrow, exclusive kind of Nationalism, also known as chauvinism, which seeks to advance the interests of one section of humanity at the expense of everyone else. Obviously, the Nationalism of the Nationalist Party is of the latter variety.

Now, historically, this exclusive kind of Nationalism has always been linked with the growth of a local bourgeoisie, a class of actual or incipient capitalists. Such a class finds in chauvinism a powerful weapon for extending its domain of economic exploitation and for maintaining an internal market against its rivals. On the other hand, the progressive Nationalism of the peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, which is one of the most significant phenomena of our own times, has arisen out of the struggle of the great majority against Imperialism and its agents. Thus it is not surprising that this type of Nationalism has not been chauvinistic and exclusive but humanistic and democratic in tendency.

There can be no doubt that the struggles of the Boers against British Imperialism did have certain democratic features. But these features could never develop because of the role of the Boers as primitive labour exploiters and of the racialist ideology to which their mode of life gave rise. Moreover, the compromise which the Act of Union sealed between British Imperialism and white South Africa as a whole completely drew the teeth of Boer anti-Imperialism and reduced it to a verbal flourish. In its subsequent development Afrikaner Nationalism rapidly lost what anti-Imperialist content it had once possessed and grew into that monster of vicious chauvinism which we know today.

This development would not have occurred if a new class of Afrikaner had not emerged to give it a social basis. Boer society was not marked by class divisions. It was composed of a relatively homogenous group of subsistence farmers and primitive labour exploiters. But with the growth of large internal markets for agricultural products in the mining areas of Kimberley and the Rand some of the Boer farmers turned to commodity production for profit. They were transformed into entrepreneurs, rural capitalists, who produced, not merely to satisfy their own needs, but in order to make a profit out of the sale of their goods on a market.

The results of this change were far-reaching. On the one hand it led to an intensification of the exploitation of African farm labour, the legal basis for which was provided by the 1913 Land Act, and on the other hand it led to growing inequality among the Boers themselves. It is a universal feature of simple commodity production that it gradually leads to the enrichment of some at the expense of the impoverishment of others. The competition of the market throws the less fortunate contenders out of business while others prosper. This is precisely what happened to the Boers. While some became exceedingly wealthy, real land barons owning several large farms each, others had to sell land and eventually they or their children had to pack up and go to the towns where they were transformed into workers. This process was accelerated by the large scale land speculation of the big mining companies in the Transvaal.

All the time this was happening it was fashionable to talk of the so-called Poor-White problem, but no-one paid any attention to the much more serious problem presented by the concomitant growth of a class of Afrikaans-speaking rural capitalists who provided the soil for that deadly combination of extreme racialism and an untrammelled ideology of exploitation which finds its modern expression in the policies of the Nationalist Party. However, the growth of this class was relatively slow, and it was only when it began to invest its surplus capital in trade, industry and finance that it really became a factor to be reckoned with. The partial shift of Afrikaner capital to other than agricultural investments in its turn created a new class of urban Afrikaans speaking business men who were determined to break the business monopoly of the English speaking section. This new group was concerned above all to capture as large a share as possible of the profits that were being wrung out of the super-exploited Non-White workers of South Africa. Where the old Boers had fought in the first place for freedom from foreign domination the new champions of Afrikaner Nationalism fought for maximum opportunities of exploitation.

It was the period between the two World Wars that saw the first success of the young Afrikaans capitalist class, a period marked by the formation of such pillars of Afrikaner capitalism as Boere Saamwerk, Avbob, Sanlam, K.W.V., Volkshkas and Uniewinkels.

The new class made up in ruthlessness what it lacked in numbers and resources. Its leading representatives recognised that the overwhelming strength of the established capitalist groups made it impossible to force them by purely economic means to share the fruits of exploitation. Thus the further progress of Afrikaner capitalism had of necessity to depend on the use of political means for economic ends. The two political trump cards in this game were the numerical superiority of the Afrikaner and the corrosion of his political consciousness by the poison of racialism. Together, they could be used to give the Afrikaner capitalist a position of power in the country which his economic position alone could never give him.

Thus there were certain analogies in the position of Afrikaner capitalism and that of German Imperialism facing the old established hegemony of British and French Imperialism. In both cases racial demagoguery was used to mobilise political forces that were to gain a new group of exploiters a place in the sun. Thus it is not surprising to find that the new

Nationalist ideology that was developed in the thirties was to a large extent, and often quite explicitly, based on the ideology of Nazi Germany. This emerges clearly in the writings of Nationalist "theoreticians", like Dr. Diederichs, who are also highly conscious members of the new class of Afrikaner capitalists.

In 1939 the new economic forces among the Afrikaners had grown to the point where the new policies could be clearly formulated and given organisational expression. That year saw a mustering of the forces of aggressive Afrikaner Nationalism at the Eerste Ekonomiese Volkskongres and the formation of the Reddingsdaadbond. With a hypocrisy that was new among Afrikaners this handful of entrepreneurs and their ideologists pretended to be "saving" all sections of the Afrikaner people economically, when in fact they were simply concerned to save their own profits and to increase their own economic power.

This group recognised that in the era of finance capitalism and in a country like South Africa, where economic life is so completely dominated by a few financial giants, the development of independent small and medium enterprises was subject to very severe limitations. Thus the only way to real economic power and to a share in the super-profits of the monopolies lay in the co-ordination of the limited resources of the Afrikaner capitalist class as a whole. Such a co-ordination of economic resources was provided by the Reddingsdaadbond at a crucial stage in the historical development of Afrikaner capitalism. Inevitably, the degree of economic centralisation involved in this policy resulted in the concentration of economic power in a very few hands. The pooling of economic resources gave enormous power to the tiny minority who were in effective control of these resources. Thus Afrikaner capitalism assumed a centralised, bureaucratic character which provided an additional basis for its espousal of Nazi doctrines.

The spread of the chauvinistic propaganda of Afrikaner Nationalism was expected to induce an increasing number of Afrikaners to invest their saving and surplus capital with Afrikaans financial institutions, to take out policies with Afrikaans insurance companies, to build their homes through an Afrikaans building society and to do their shopping at Afrikaans shops.

In this way the capital controlled by the handful of financiers at the head of these institutions could be expected to increase greatly and the monopoly of the existing old established institutions could be challenged. In the words of Dr. Diederichs at the second Ekonomiese Volkskongres: "As regards the relationship between business and sentiment it has been our standpoint that business could not be based purely on sentiment but that an Afrikaner business could in no way exist without sentiment."

Large sums were accordingly made available for propaganda purposes and the spectacular rise in the assets of the major financial institutions of Afrikaner capitalism during the last ten years seems to indicate that this investment has paid off handsomely. At the same time it was recognised that the numerical superiority of the Afrikaners among the white voters created the possibility of political power for Afrikaner Nationalism. Once in control of the state its economic branches could be used to further the interests of Afrikaner capitalism in a multitude of ways. So the directly political branch of the movement, the Nationalist Party, was given every support.

But all these manoeuvres might not have gained such immediate concrete results if World War II and the post-war boom had not provided favourable conditions for a greatly accelerated growth of Afrikaner capitalism. Cut off from overseas products local enterprises sprang up and developed rapidly. This period was marked by the foundation of the most important industrial undertakings of Afrikaner capitalism, such as Rembrandt and Veka, as well as the formation of finance companies for industrial and other investments, such as Federale Volksbeleggings, Tegniëse en Industriële Beleggings, Bonuskor and Asokor.

The rate of development of Afrikaner capitalism in the decade 1939/49 was considerably greater than the rate of development of the economy as a whole. According to the figures supplied by A. J. Bosman in a volume entitled "Die Triomf van Nationalisme", the total turnover of Afrikaans business undertakings increased from 5% of the national total in 1939 to 11% of the national total in 1949. In that decade the number of Afrikaans industrial undertakings rose from 1239 to 3385 and the number of commercial undertakings from 2428 to 9585. The total turnover of Afrikaans industrial undertakings increased from £6 million to £44 million and of commercial undertakings from £38 million to £204 million. By 1949 Afrikaner capitalists were estimated to be in control of 6% of the country's industry and 25 to 30% of its commerce (Volkshandel, Sept. 1950).

In the same period, according to Prof. Pauw, the number of Afrikaner directors and manufacturers increased by 295%, of business managers by 208% and of traders by 212%. In 1939 Afrikaners formed 3% of the directors, 8% of the business managers and 4% of the traders among the white urban population, but in 1949 these proportions had increased to 5%, 15% and 10% respectively.

However, the most important source of capital accumulation by Afrikaners during this crucial period was undoubtedly provided by the exploitation of Non-White farm labour on a greatly intensified scale. This intensified rural exploitation was largely bound up with the exceptional profits of the war years and the rapid mechanisation of agriculture which made this possible. Thus the total number of tractors on farms increased from about 6000 in 1937 to 48,000 in 1950, and in 1951 a further 15,000 were imported. In a survey made by the Division of Economics and Markets in 1947/48 it was found that on mechanised farms labour productivity was much higher than on non-mechanised farms and the farmer's profit was approximately doubled. Of course, the wages of farm labourers remained at starvation level.

It was the grossly underpaid, semi-starved agricultural labourer who played the role of the goose that laid the golden eggs from Afrikaner capitalism. Just how golden those eggs were may be illustrated by the fact that between 1937/38 and 1947/48 the sale of farm products by producers' co-operatives, mostly involving Afrikaner capital, increased from £17 to £68 million. It was only because of the enormous profits made by farmers that some of them were able to invest in commercial, financial and industrial undertakings. Because of Nationalist propaganda the big financial institutions of Afrikaner capitalism managed to control much of this investment and in this way rapidly increased their economic power.

Since the coming to power of the Nationalist government the most significant feature of the development of Afrikaner capitalism has been the enormous growth of a small number of big financial institutions. The

high degree of centralisation which has always been a feature of Afrikaner capitalism has become even more marked. While the Afrikaner share in industry and commerce has remained more or less constant, their share in finance, the most vital sector of modern capitalist economy, has been growing steadily. Last year, Dr. M. S. Louw, himself one of the most prominent Afrikaner financiers, estimated their share in the country's insurance business at 16% and in banking at 8%. The Reddingsdaadbond, however, puts the latter figure at 10%.

But the actual economic power of the Afrikaner financiers is greater than these figures suggest. This is due to their commanding position in the state apparatus and the control which they are able to exercise over such government sponsored organisations as the Industrial Development Corporation, the Electricity Supply Commission, Iscor etc. Afrikaner financiers have also sought with some success to attract German, Swiss and Belgian capital into joint enterprises.

For the purpose of assessing trends of development the absolute level reached by Afrikaner finance and investment is less important than the rate of its increase and the comparison of this rate with that of other institutions in the same line of business. When this is done the favourable position of the Afrikaner institutions becomes apparent. Thus, while the total assets of Sanlam more than trebled between 1948 and 1956, the total assets of the Old Mutual merely doubled in the same period. While the total assets of Volkskas almost quadrupled in those eight years of Nationalist rule, the assets of the Standard Bank remained almost stationary. In 1942 Volkskas controlled only 1.5% of all savings and deposits in banks in the Union, but by 1952 it already controlled 9.7%. In an unmistakable allusion the chairman of the Standard Bank stated at the annual general meeting in July 1956 on the subject of "banking competition": "In the Union considerations quite unrelated to the service provided by the bank have often been brought to bear in order to secure the transfer from us of accounts which we have held for many years".

Tremendous progress has also been made by the Afrikaner investment corporations. Thus Bonuskor, to take one example, increased its assets five times over between 1947 and 1956. But the most spectacular phenomenon in this field was the meteoric rise of Saambou, the Afrikaner building society, which increased its assets about thirty times over between 1948 and 1956! Thus does the propaganda of chauvinism pay direct dividends.

Although many of these companies have a large number of shareholders the main beneficiaries of their great expansion have been a small group of financiers who control all the major Afrikaner institutions by a system of interlocking directorships. The overwhelming majority of urban Afrikaners have little or no share in this wealth, as is illustrated by the fact that only 1½% of the Afrikaans speaking adult males in the major centres of the Union have an income in excess of £1000 per annum.

The most recent period has seen the first serious penetration of Afrikaner capital into the mining industry. In 1953 its biggest financial institutions combined to launch Federale Mynbou Beperk which now controls two important Barberton mines and has an important interest in S.A. Minerals Corp. which controls major chromium and manganese mines. In addition, Afrikaner investment companies control two important coal mines and have begun to co-operate in the opening up of certain gold mining areas in the Far West and Far East Rand.



These developments appear to be part of a tendency for a breakdown in the rigid lines of division between the "spheres of influence" of Afrikaner finance capitalism and the old established financial interests. This tendency is assuming ever more definite form. The Afrikaner financiers have at last "arrived." They have become a force to be reckoned with in the economic life of the country, and so they are beginning to be admitted to the boards of directors of important enterprises like S.A. Chrome, Anglo-Alpha Cement, Vanderbijl Engineering, Winkelhaak Mines etc. In fact several of the big financial and mining houses have begun collaborating with Afrikaner finance capital in various enterprises. Among them one may mention Union Corporation, Anglo-Transvaal Consolidated, General Mining and Finance and Johannesburg Consolidated, not to speak of many smaller capitalists who are adopting the same policy.

These recent developments raise important problems for the future development of Afrikaner capitalism. According to their leading economists, even if their own institutions managed to obtain a complete monopoly of all the financial affairs of the Afrikaner people, they still would not control more than 30% of the country's private finance. Thus there are very definite limits to the continued expansion of Afrikaner finance capital on the present basis. As the financial resources of those who can be affected by chauvinistic appeals are limited, once this source has been tapped continued expansion must depend on the use of different techniques. In fact, the only practicable alternative is increased collaboration with the old established financial groups.

Moreover, these new policies may be expected to become manifest long before the above-mentioned limit to expansion on the old basis has actually been reached; firstly, because this limit is only a theoretical limit which would never actually be reached in practice, and secondly, because present policy is always directed by expectations of future trends. Thus it seems not unlikely that the point of reorientation has been very nearly reached by Afrikaner finance capital. At the same time, collaboration with it becomes more and more attractive to the older financial groups, particularly in view of the drying up of external sources of capital. We may therefore expect the process of capital fusion to continue during the coming period on an increased scale.

Such developments in the economic sphere cannot remain without repercussions in the political sphere. The new unity of the exploiting groups is likely to be reflected in an ever closer political collaboration, even across existing party lines. For example, the criticism of the Tomlinson Report by capitalists in the ranks of the Nationalists was almost identical with that offered by their counterparts in the U.P. It is hardly necessary to enumerate the efforts of the U.P. to emulate Nationalist policy.

The only force that will halt these developments is the determination of the people to rid themselves of all exploiters, no matter what language they speak. For the liberation covenant the present trends within South African capitalism make it imperative to place maximum emphasis on the struggle against economic exploitation and against the legalised robbery of the majority of the population. The Pound A Day Campaign will help to smash the attempts of the present ruling cliques to tighten their hold on the country.

# THE GARMENT WORKERS

by RAY ADLER

**T**HE mass production of ready-to-wear clothing in factories is a comparatively recent development in South Africa. A generation ago the term "clothing worker" brought to mind a tailor or dressmaker, making clothes to measure, or else a seamstress doing outwork at home, "in poverty, hunger and dirt."

Many of the tailors and dressmakers had come to South Africa from Eastern Europe during the wave of emigration of the twenties. They brought with them a militant trade union tradition, which laid the foundation of the Garment Workers' Union. Unlike the earlier generation of immigrant craftsmen, mainly from Britain, who established craft unions in the engineering, building and other trades, they did not suffer from a narrow craft outlook. It is to their credit that when big clothing factories began to open in the late twenties, starting a huge expansion that has led to the garment industry becoming one of the biggest in the country in a very short number of years, the tailors reached out a helping hand to organise these hundreds of newcomers to the industry.

The newcomers were girls from the farms, part of the great influx to the towns which took place in the depression years, with no experience of organisation or disciplined factory life. But they proved themselves to be splendid fighters in the trade union movement. We garment workers are proud of the determined fights we carried out in the early years of our union, in which we transformed our conditions and wages from the worst in the country to rank among the best of any secondary industry. In the fights and struggles of those days the young Afrikaans girls fresh from the platteland stood together like seasoned trade unionists; they got up early in the mornings to take their places on the picket line, and fought courageously in the streets against the police who were trying to smash strikes by force.

With this militant spirit and tradition, and a progressive spirit far removed from the conservative timidity of the older unions, the Garment Workers' Union could have become an inspiring example of democratic industrial organisation, and a fine example to all the young unions which have sprung up here during the huge expansion of secondary industry of recent years. Unfortunately it did not do so, and the blame must be laid very largely at the door of Mr. "Solly" Sachs, who was for many years our Union secretary. "Solly" has since been victimised by the Government and forced to get out of the organisation, and it would perhaps seem more gracious and fitting to remember only the merits of his energetic and capable leadership, and to forget the many bitter and unpleasant disputes which I and others had with him in the past. However he has now written a book which claims to be a history of the union (in fact the book is mainly about himself) from which it is clear that he has learnt nothing from the bitter defeats and humiliations which the trade union movement has suffered at the hands of the Nationalists. Yet we must learn those lessons, and act upon them, if the movement is to survive at all. The history of our union is very rich in such lessons.

The root idea of a trade union is that it should unite all workers in an industry, whatever their race, colour, sex or creed. All should be entitled to become members, and all members must enjoy equal rights in the union.

During the height of prosperity in the garment industry, thousands of Non-Europeans joined the trade. At first in the Transvaal there were only a few Coloured workers employed, mainly in the hard and poorly-paid jobs of pressers, but as time went on hundreds and then thousands of Coloured and Africans became qualified as machinists and became highly skilled and efficient workers. With the ending of the general depression in the country, the flow of White women ready to undertake factory work dried up — the employers had no alternative but to turn to Non-White labour. Today, a substantial majority of garment workers are Non-Europeans.

These Non-European garment workers have become the backbone of the industry and the most loyal and class-conscious members of our Union. They played a splendid part in the fights for improved wages and conditions. But they were denied any say in the central leadership of the Union or on the Industrial Council where their wages and conditions were negotiated.

From the start Mr. Sachs set his face against a policy of democracy and equality in the Union with regard to these workers. He himself, he always claimed, was a very progressive and revolutionary person, with no colour prejudice. The argument always was that "the Afrikaans girls would not sit down at meetings with the Non-Europeans, and it would split the Union." Hence the Union began those apartheid practices which have undermined and corrupted it, long before the ugly word was heard of and before the present Government came into power.

The Coloured workers were segregated into a "Number Two" Branch, with separate, and inferior, offices and with no representation on the Central Executive Committee. When officials of this "second-class" branch, reflecting the demands of their members, demanded democratic representation they were threatened with immediate dismissal. To this very day, although now a majority, they have not won representation on the Central Executive Committee, or on the Industrial Council. The principles of the new Industrial Conciliation Act — apartheid and white domination — were unfortunately practiced for many years by our Union.

Despite such treatment, it was the Non-European workers who time and again have proved their worth. When the Blankewerkersbeskermingsbond, under the leadership of men like Schoeman and de Klerk, both now in the Nationalist Cabinet, began making inroads into the Union (helped, it must be said, by the appeasement and apartheid policy of the Union leadership) the Coloured and African workers were their most determined opponents. Had it not been for the support of the Non-European workers, the present European leadership would long ago have been replaced by Charl Mayer and other Bond representatives. When the famous protest demonstration was held on the City Hall steps, against the banning of Mr. Sachs, the Non-European girls turned out in full force, and it was they who met the full brunt of the police charge and had their heads split open, many being taken to hospital.

Little recognition of this valiant part is given by Mr. Sachs in his book. The "Rebel Daughters" of his title all turn out to be Europeans (the little autobiographies of Union leaders are in fact the best part of the volume) and such devoted followers of the author as Hetty du Preez and Lucy Mvubelo are not even mentioned.

Since Mr. Sachs' departure his protégées in the Union leadership have continued on the fatal path of appeasement to racialism which he taught them. To our shame, the leaders of our Union played a leading role in dissolving the former Trades and Labour Council, and replacing it with the Trade Union Council which excludes African workers. The excuse for destroying the T. & L.C. was that it would help to bring about unity in the struggle against the new I.C. Act — then a draft Bill. But the T.U.C. has never fought the I.C. Act effectively, or even tried to do so.

Instead, even before the new Act was passed, the G.W.U. leaders, with indecent haste, became the first to accept the principle of separate Unions for European and Non-European workers. As Mr. Kotane correctly pointed out at the time ("New Age: May 3, 1956): "It is an illusion that you can overcome the menace of apartheid to the workers' movement by surrendering to the principles of apartheid."

These weak-kneed policies of opportunism and retreat have naturally had the effect of weakening the Union. The result is plain to be seen in the place where, to the worker, it counts most — in the pay-packet. For the first time in many years, the new agreement recently signed by our Union leaders accepts a substantial cut in wages — this at a time when prices are going higher and higher.

Instead of the wages being £6.14s. a week for experienced machinists it has been cut down to £5.3s. It is true that those already in the industry are supposed to have their former wage-levels protected, and it is only the newcomers (the so-called "B" Group employees) who will get the new lower wages. But anyone who is not blind could have seen what would happen — it is already happening — top-wage workers are being replaced, and hundreds of workers have been compelled to sign applications to the Industrial Council asking for exemptions from their correct wages. I have seen scores of garment workers myself queueing up at the Labour Department for unemployment benefits.

That is the position in the garment industry after all these years of apartheid and appeasement policy started by Solly Sachs and continued by the present leaders of the union. Similar policies in most of the rest of the trade union movement have reduced the organised workers of South Africa to a position in which they have unfortunately proved unable to resist the Fascist attacks of the Nationalist Party.

So long as workers' leaders remain obsessed with complying with legal formalities in order to maintain their registration the position will get worse and worse: only the employers and the Nationalists will benefit. The only solution is to embrace all sections — including the Africans, who are proving the most determined progressive force in the country — in united and democratic trade union organisations.

A real history of the garment workers' union — which means more than just a one-sided expression of the cult of an individual — would prove the correctness of this solution to the hilt. Such a history has yet to be written.