

The Migratory Labour System and the Social Conditions of BLS Migrant Workers on the South African Mines

Main Aspects of Issues Involved with Special
Reference to Unionisation Prospects

By Dominic Milazi

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to traverse the much trodden area of migrant mine workers from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In doing so, it focusses on what has specifically been termed "the mass of hitherto peasant populations" now turned "a depressed 'temporary' proletariat class of the capitalist Social System". It will be shown that for some, mining employment is seen as superseding farm income and farm activities as supplementing it. Put another way, subsistence agriculture alone no longer provides enough for "migrant" families and, whatever farm household income there is, does not suffice for adequate family maintenance so that off-farm income sources are taken to be a necessity. This, by the way, is partly because of the deliberate policies over the century, to allow the flow of movable factors of production, chiefly migrant labour, from their home base.

Such dependence as exists on the periphery of South Africa especially of migrant mine workers on the booming gold mines has, of course, historical roots in that the countries affected were in the main, British Colonies intended eventually to become appendages of South Africa. No reasonable improvements were made, either in terms of infrastructure or economic development. They were merely sources of cheap labour from which economic surplus was extracted. Today, the scars of that historical link are still in evidence. The migratory labour system is very much a lively phenomenon and indeed a fundament that, over the years, has significantly contributed to industrial advance and economic prosperity of South Africa.

The theme under consideration lays no claim to a comprehensive coverage but will limit itself to the following:

- the migration cycle that renders migrant workers both part of and separate from the home and host country labour force: on the one hand, they constitute workers in the most insecure jobs (their employment is regarded as temporary), they suffer discrimination in wages, training and promotion, and are a non-free labour force most defenceless and un-unionised. On the other hand, they face a bleak economic future with few, if any, alternative work opportunities for self-realisation or effective development;
- we shall also examine how the Chamber of Mines takes advantage of the situation to regulate migrant labour on behalf of the collective interests of its affiliate members in the mining industry; and
- the options available to supplier states within the migrant system in terms of extracting major economic benefits from a negotiated "commercialised" migration policy. A trenchant, but brief, comment on a "retention" labour policy of qualified manpower will be made;
- last but not least, we shall deal with the case for unionisation of foreign mine workers if they are to disengage from perpetual economic subordination as labour units that can be imported or exported at will without collective bargaining machinery.

The Chamber of Mines

Amongst its multifarious interests, the Chamber of Mines regulates the supply of labour and employment policy for its affiliate members in the various subsectors of mining industry. These include gold, diamond, platinum, asbestos, copper and other metal industries. Its actual recruitment and supply of labour to individual mines both from South Africa and supplier states is managed by parallel organisations - the Mine Labour Organisations (MLO), the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA), and the Native Recruitment Corporation (NRC). These are individual corporations, most of whom are also members of the Chamber of Mines. There is, however, no clear analysis available in respect of breakdown of foreign/labour ratios or interlocking directorates and cross-holdings of investments. Suffice it to say that the Chamber of Mines is a key element in the foreign labour network which, in addition, provides its own budget for administration, gold marketing, public relations, training and research running in excess of P17 million annually.¹

Various other activities are connected with the Chamber of Mine's employment policy particularly the recruitment component. It has, for example, its own "skilling" programme for training team leaders, technicians, artisan aides, etc. Within the confines of the host country laws,² there is re-division of labour through re-classification and fragmentation of artisanal work - in order to circumvent industrial colour bar. This focus on the importance of the skill component of the labour supply is intended, inter alia, to pave the way eventually for a successful introduction of new technology and, in turn, to encourage workforce stability.³

At the more general level of procurement of "cheap" i.e. unskilled labour, the Chamber of Mines mobilises its research programme to:

- assess maximum work levels per shift and motivation for maximal physical work;
- use weight categorisation for placing recruits under e.g.

Category A: comprising almost all workers with sufficient "working capacity for moderate rates of work". i.e. those with 130 lb. minimum weight.

Category B: of men less than 130 lb. minimum weight but with adequate physical working capacities for moderate work.

- check (a) minimum oxygen intake rating in order to determine the underground labourer's capacity for physical work (shovelling, tramming, timber transporting, etc.);
- (b) weight/work/endurance capacity differences of urban and rural recruits, and individual worker or gang productivity.

The parallel "sister" organisation, Mine Labour Organisation, takes responsibility for the transport of contractees, their subsistence en route and arrangements for return to the point of recruitment upon completion of contract only after, of course, ensuring that contractors comply with all labour laws of supplier areas.

In the lines that follow we shall specifically focus on the mine recruitment "phases" and conditions required in each phase, the explicit or implicit basis of pre-selection, conditions of life on the mines and briefly other basic interests and policy orientations of Chamber of Mines as the representative of the collective interests of its affiliate members.

The volume of labour migration and the intensity of recruitment in the Southern African region varies according to the country affected and the degree of economic development or viability, but much also depends on the Mine Labour Organisation which extensively "projects" propaganda at its "supply source" in order to make easier, and cheapen securement costs of, the "flow" of labour to its depots.

Taking 1970 as the base line, recruitment among the Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland countries shows increases or decline as evidenced by statistics on the periodic absence of able-bodied men in various surveys. According to Breytenbach, the average number of employees from these countries working on the mines was 166, 264 in 1970. A year later another survey estimated that some 45,000 Batswana or approximately 16 per cent of Batswana's workforce (aged 15-65) were temporarily employed in South Africa.⁴ The exact number of migrants is difficult to determine for Lesotho but 210,000 in the mid-1970s may come nearest to the truth.⁵ About 70,000, including 25,000 women are estimated to be in South Africa on a non-circulating basis.⁶ Swaziland exports a smaller number of its labour force estimated at 17,000 in 1977.⁷ In that country, the modal age-group is 20-29 accounting for nearly 40% of the absentees.⁸ If comparisons are anything to go by, then it would appear (from the foregoing figures) that Lesotho has a very strong migration dependence. The variations in labour dependency have been differently interpreted. Others, such as Böhning,⁹ note that whereas migrants originating in rural Botswana and rural Swaziland seem to perceive of their homesteads as their economic base, and of migration as a

supplementary source of income, rural Basotho seem to perceive of their home areas as complementary, if not supplementary, to mining employment. Böhning also argues that Botswana and Swaziland seem to face the least control problems due to the interaction of a less crushing level of poverty, low degree of migration dependence and the population's emotional ties with their home countries.¹⁰ Much of this generalisation, in our opinion, requires deeper research.

Still others (mainly anthropological researchers) speak of the sustained pressure exerted during the colonial rule to cultivate an oscillation of men between two modes of production as part peasants and temporary proletariat such that the absence of male workers (which the World Bank once called the 'bleeding' of able-bodied men from the land) ensured, in most instances, stagnation of rural production.

Except, perhaps, for Swaziland which has a relatively high level of formal sector wage employment, conditions or prospects of employment in other BLS countries do not significantly match. For the average Swazi, land is relatively available for viable subsistence farming and for adequate means of livelihood even though the existing land tenure system (and not erosion of land or aridity of it as in the case of Lesotho and Botswana respectively) constitutes one of the serious problems to viable agriculture.

Because of these differential capacities to absorb labour among supplier states, the Chamber of Mines has been able over a century to successfully, recreate a depot system spreading throughout Southern Africa to recruit "surplus" manpower but also to provide the organisation with basic information and intelligence on local conditions and prospective labour surpluses.¹¹ As already stated, the Mine Labour Organisation ensures that contractees comply with all labour laws in supplier areas. But there are a number of other indicators which enable an informed assessment of the system's performance:

- certain age groups are for the most part specifically excluded from recruitment e.g. those over 40 years who are considered "too old", the infirm, the feeble-looking, those with records of communicable diseases, or the under-weight or "too small" in size;¹²
- other recruitment requirements include transfers to central depot in South Africa (Johannesburg centre) for a second medical examination (X-rays and fingerprinting etc.). The first exercise of this kind is carried out at the local depots. Rejectees are either repatriated - in severe cases, - or given surface work at lower rates of pay;

- the mode of travelling is variegated. Some workers travel by rail on tickets bought by Mine Labour Organisations (e.g. Basotho); others travel by air (e.g. recruits from Maseru to Welkom). Mine Labour Organisation operates an air network - WENENA Air Services, but in other circumstances use is made of national airline facilities including special terminal facilities at Jan Smuts. Obviously the advantage in the utilisation of air services lies in the savings in time;
- as indicated, Mine Labour Organisations depots preselect on an explicit or explicit height/weight basis (said to have some logical validity). "Costs per recruit" vary greatly up to R40 from local depots to far-flung states;¹³
- during contract health is regularly monitored;
- in addition records of recruitment, expenditures, repatriations, etc., but also deferred pay, are kept.

Of course recruitment expenditure and the Chamber of Mines health policy in general must be viewed in strategic cost/benefit terms since they are firmly based on profit considerations.¹⁴ This is also evident from the fact that there is no obligation of social responsibility shown to either the black miner or his family in terms of short or long-term social security.

Beyond the initial recruitment processes there are the inductions into the mining world itself with peculiar patterns of social control, or institutionalisation and a curious assortment of tribal and paternalistic authority structures: entry into the mine world requires communication skills - the learning of a lingua franca (fanakalo) and normative guidelines - safety instructions or "rules of the mines". Perhaps the most detested device of social control, which as one observer has put it, inculcates "docility and submissiveness", is the so-called "acclimatisation" process. To be "acclimatised" takes four hours at a time throughout a working day in a heated room known as "The House of Satan". The process, usually of 4 to 5 days duration, consists of "trotting up and down a step about one foot above floor level, the height being adjusted to one's weight."¹⁵ Stopping leads to penalty of re-starting."

For a long time, the Chamber of Mines has been engaged in acclimatisation of workers to the mines the objective being to achieve "optimisation in the division of labour and job-allocation".¹⁶ There are, however, indications that this trend may diminish with "stabilisation" policies where the

trend is towards a lower proportion of, at least, foreign workers that are recruitable only on the basis of valid re-engagement certificates.

Patterns of authority and of social control are closely linked to the character of the compound system and the conditions of life in the compounds. The system defines very much and dominates every aspect of mine life - after work.¹⁷

- entrances and exits are normally 'guarded' such that during disturbances every personal movement may be circumscribed;
- except for some mines, accommodation remains founded on the basis of ethnical and tribal division. It is thus a source of intra-worker factionalism;
- "boss boy" or induna system still operates to mediate worker/management relations - and in some groups probably ineffective "works committees" function;
- "rapport" between workers and supervisors remains largely cemented to "traditional" stereotypes of submissiveness found in the "boss/boy" syndrome;
- food is reportedly "mass produced" in an unattractive form and in an uncongenial setting.

Clearly the Chamber of Mine's strategy and basic interests are complex - involving social, economic as well as political factors. We can observe a policy of extensive manpower recruitment over vast catchment areas coupled with a "skilling" programme - an advantage which for supplier countries may be a disguised disadvantage if the necessary social structural or occupational reforms are delayed too long. Social liabilities are entirely excluded, yet migrant families are expected to produce and reproduce labour. This and the facts of institutionalisation (mass accommodation, mass feeding, etc. often under reportedly indecent condition), confirm the view that the migrant labour system is based on profit rather than human considerations.

Remittance and Investment Prospects

Whilst there are certainly pecuniary gains connected with the migrant system e.g. cash earnings 'away' that are being remitted, there is, however, evidence which seems to indicate that migration has not augmented capital formation in the countries of emigration. We refer to the following "non-pecuniary costs" which are likely to be substantial.¹⁸

1. - goods produced in the receiving country that are deemed superior to substitute local products and their consumption bringing social status.
2. - the "demonstration effect" which appears to be a direct result of exposure to the host country through emigration.
3. - both 1 and 2 raise consumption levels beyond the production capacity of the supplier economies.

These, then, are some of the externally-generated patterns of consumption and expenditure.

Yet one of the main concerns of supplier governments is (or ought to be) the integration of financial remittances and deferred pay into national economic planning and their investment on behalf of returning migrants.

Taking again 1970 as the base line, Breytenbach claims that in that year the value of remittances and deferred pay of mine workers was: Botswana R1.1 million, Lesotho P4.4 million and Swaziland P0.6 million.¹⁹ A higher estimate for Lesotho in 1972/3 in terms of the total financial returns from migrant workers was R16 million.²⁰ Comparable data for Botswana and Swaziland is not available. One survey on Swaziland, however, estimates that almost three-quarters of the country's mine workers send home more than E15 per month, about half remitted more than E25 per month.²¹

Despite these financial returns, there is hardly any supplier state with investment policy regarding deferred pay by other remittances. Neither is the needed practice of accounts and accountability linked with the national economic planning or investment on behalf of migrants. Comparative figures on deferred pay on the other hand are quite substantial. Thus 99% of Botswana participate in the voluntary deferred pay scheme which deducts 60% of their pay;²² in the case of the Swazi miners it is 95% who regularly participate in a similar scheme.²³ For Lesotho, the new mandatory system as against the previous voluntary one, used by 90% of the Basotho, requires the mining houses to transfer 60% of the cash earnings during the middle four months of each six-months contract concluded in the country.

Except in Mozambique, where there appears to be a greater proclivity to improve agricultural holdings or to invest capital in artisan trades,²⁴ Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland countries, by comparison, still have to show similar proclivity to channel such capital-in flows into migrant schemes. To date

workers appear to "invest" a greater proportion of earnings available in cattle, food, clothing, household goods, school fees and even luxury goods.²⁵ Interestingly enough, the colonial authorities in the Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland countries collaborating with the host country could claim, originally when money was deferred and deposited with banking bodies in South Africa, that they were donating to welfare services in the supplier countries! If so, then there is even more reason for supplier countries themselves to channel these remittances into development plans.

Possible Strategies/Option for Supplier States

What strategies, so far, have been advocated on the question of foreign labour migration? In this section, we shall focus briefly on the following suggested options: (a) the "lock-in" approach by Wahl, (b) a commercial strategy by Stahl, and (c) the retention and re-integration of qualified men as part of a possible future policy by Claus et. al.

The "lock-in" approach upheld by Ward²⁶ proceeds from the viewpoint that what is abundantly clear is that the migration of labour, in this case Basotho workers, constitutes the most fundamental factor in the survival of the economy. He then continues:

"Lesotho should train its labour in a much wider variety of technical and vocational skills and sell their services direct to foreign industrialists operating in their own countries".²⁷

A formulation such as this, for planners in the economy of Lesotho, whereby the state "locks in" its future to the South African labour market is essentially a strategy which underpins recent recommendations for Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho made by Stahl. The latter has advocated a "commercial policy of labour export" under which the "governments of BLS (countries) should approach the South African government and negotiate an arrangement whereby BLS could take up employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors".²⁸

Both advocates admit that there are advantages accruing to such controversial and perhaps unconventional policies - which they add - may be politically unacceptable. But, they argue further, labour migration at present just "happens" and it is more influenced by the South African government labour control and regulations and the mines' recruiting policies than by the supplier government policy.

Evidently, the suggested options for Lesotho, take into account the fact that the country has limited natural potential and circumscribed economy that relies for the majority of its people - squarely on crops and livestock vulnerable to weather conditions. An economic system of this nature is still very inadequate in terms of capital formation because farmers, the major producers, are more concerned with immediate needs than with future productivity. As a result several studies²⁹ have called for rapid improvements along with the structural transformation of the country's economy at multiple sectoral levels, perhaps "prioritised", e.g. reform of the agricultural system, reducing overgrazing and erosion, aiming at a fair degree of self-sufficiency at least in staple foods as a pre-condition for the development of a country whose main natural resource is the soil, providing greater incentive values in the agricultural system and import replacement policy of industrialisation as well as forming a nucleus of competitive industries and increasing the effort to 'domesticate' migratory labour through policy-based labour-intensive development schemes. Thus whilst the 'lock-in' or 'commercial approach to migrant labour questions may have its short-run advantages (political implications notwithstanding) in the long-term the solution of the problem largely depends on mapping up a clearly defined socio-economic development path.

Overall, therefore, Stahl and Ward argue for the optimisation of conditions of employment in terms ranging from those of attestation of fees, deferred pay, wages, bonuses and compensation benefits i.e. mainly strategic financial considerations to transport 'bottlenecks' such as overcrowded trains and buses, inadequate working and living (compound) conditions including the mutable variations in mine training and treatment, occupational statuses and promotional prospects and not least the lack of collective bargaining machinery in the presence of apparent vulnerability emanating from the insecurity of contracts or their possible abuse. These are but a few of the irregularities in the employment practices related to mine workers in the migratory system. It is thus a negotiating strategy, one that becomes even more powerful when alternatives to migratory labour including more labour-intensive growth strategies and structural transformation of the source country economies are rapidly improved. It follows that in the absence of the latter, any action designed to affect the number of migrant workers must be very seriously weighed. Equally important are the assessments or taking into account of the differential fortunes related to individual countries, including the existence of intra-regional disparities in levels of economic development, opportunity and resource base. These are sig-

nificant issues partly because they are part and parcel of the 'pros and cons' facing supplier states both when related to individual countries and at a joint inter-state level.

Theoretically then, such measures as outlined above, seek to mitigate "unintended" consequences of the labour migration system and to optimise benefits. This is only a short-term if not one-sided option. By itself it will, when carried to fruition, undoubtedly bring into the open the dependence, public or social (as over against the "private" gains) of the individual mine worker, associated with migration. In general, as labour oscillates, it is an advantage to supplier states, at least to the limited extent of ameliorating unemployment (a safety-valve) and of providing remittances for subsidising the rural households of contracted migrants. As such it has economic and even political connotations - and it is no doubt the fruits of a two-fold contradictory pursuit or financial benefits which by implication cultivate greater dependency on the host economy.

On the other hand, it can become - under radically altered circumstances - an instance of genuine interdependence, of both host and supplier states through joint negotiation. The implications of such a situation are contingent upon institutional links and mechanisms (machinery, if you like), of collaboration to be established - if only to limit or accommodate conflictual/competitive interests. Different, perhaps, in character, the negotiating states nevertheless face common and continuing problems of maintaining national independence from a 'dangerous' dependence. We shall briefly mention some of these from the view point of the receiving country:

- it is common knowledge that the mines have embarked on a mechanisation programme, i.e., replacing manpower with machinery, which means that instead of being labour-intensive, work will be capital-intensive and there will therefore be little or no need for a lot of labour from outside South Africa. At the same time mine owners are deliberately letting more black miners become skilled and increasingly employing domestic labour from the "homelands" - in the hope of stemming the unlimited dependence on foreign labour;
- South Africa, like any other country, is faced with a problem of unemployment. It might decide to employ more of its locals rather than foreigners to reduce the rate of unemployment. If the rates of unemployment are such that they reach alarming proportions, South Africa, in the interest of her own internal security, may phase out foreign labour migration;

- another issue is that there is after all a decrease and decline in the volume of gold - it being a non-renewable commodity, so that eventually some mines will be closed down rendering less pressing the need for labour from the present operational mines.

The tendency in South Africa to substitute labour-intensive with capital-intensive production processes while it may be linked to state subsidisation and tax abatements for capital investment, to the nature of foreign investments, and to the notion that advancement means using the latest capital-intensive technology, it is also - in a strategic way - connected to the development of black wages; this is a factor that seems to pave the way for capital-intensifying production technologies in white areas - thereby reducing the employment opportunities for black workers in these areas. That the long-term costs involved in 'considerable wages' paid to African mine labour may become too heavy to be out-weighed by the short-term benefits accruing from such labour is quite evident from Harry Oppenheimer's presidential address to Anglo-American Corporation. He had this to say to the mining house that remains supreme in terms of relative distribution of African labour:

"There comes a stage in the development of any country at which the trend towards a more capital intensive economy is necessary and irreversible and the possibilities of sustaining economic growth on a low-wage labour intensive basis becomes exhausted. South Africa is certainly in that stage".³⁰

The point is made here that, whilst it is important, very much so, that supplier states work, plan, and act jointly and in concert if they are to achieve the desired objectives, the process of maximisation of benefits accruing to labour is, in the final analysis, not exhaustive. The imperative towards forced withdrawal on the part of the receiving country is clearly in vogue. And the system of contract/foreign labour is gradually on the wane. 'Unforeseen circumstances' may even shake the fundamentals of supplier states: government, the larger society but especially returning migrants and their dependents. There will be grave consequences and defensive adjustments to make. It follows then that any moves designed to affect the number of migrant mine workers must be very seriously viewed. Unlike in some western industrialised countries where government policy has been directed towards the integration of foreigners already working in the country - and their families or at least tolerance of the idea of foreign workers prolonging their stay even when unemployed, this is by no means the case in South Africa.

The long-term destiny of foreign labour migration is thus a big economic and political question mark - a perspective which should render imperative fundamental labour migration policies, but more importantly, viable alternative outlets for genuine manpower utilisation-cum-development. Claus et. al. studies the point in this direction. The deeper underlying thrust of their investigation in terms of research findings and the policy implications thereof shows evidently that basically the fulcrum of the whole exercise should be the mobilisation of labour. We shall look at some of the issues raised, issues that are sectoral rather than global in perspective and which also, in my view, need looking into by means of further research.

In a study titled "Migration of Qualified Technical Manpower from Lesotho to the Republic of South Africa" the team outlines some of the possibilities of retention and re-integration of qualified men as part of a possible future policy - although they are aware that Lesotho is bound to continue to export unqualified men, at least in the short-run. Some of the measures put forward step into a minefield of economic, political and even ideological controversy. They are bound to be disputed by others - particularly the proponents of the withdrawal strategy. With that warning, let us nonetheless proceed to an outline of the recommendations which are by no means exhaustive:

- the Lesotho government should do all it can to make the migration of unqualified manpower to the RSA continue as smoothly as possible for at least the foreseeable future;
- this does not exclude the possibility that the government may need to prepare itself for a massive return of qualified manpower in case of emergency - political changes - and of changes in manpower needs in the RSA;
- qualified workers should be persuaded to come back or at least be retained in Lesotho.

To implement such a policy, the team further recommends the following measures as necessary:

- co-ordination and planning of research in the fields of manpower, wages, and migration;
- greater activity of the labour department and the labour offices in job placement. This would inform possible job-seekers on the state of industrial development, jobs and wages in Lesotho as well as give workers confidence in these institutions with the possible effect of retaining or re-integrating potential migrants;

- further development of trade tests, of labour legislation and adjustment of wages. Entrepreneurs and managers should not only be represented in the trade test committees but also be involved in the corresponding tests "and so be convinced of the quality of a worker with a trade test";
- wage increases in the RSA will have to be followed by Lesotho in order not to widen the wage gap. Some government companies could overcome their acute shortage of skilled workers if they could fix their wages independently from the government pay scale;
- adjustment of professional training to conditions on the labour market particularly the initiation of efforts by both the technical training institutes and the labour departments to inform companies regularly about their final year students and the trade descriptions which are prepared by the institutes along with such professional training, in-service and on-the-job training and evening courses should be encouraged in order to upgrade semi-skilled and skilled workers.

A few comments are in order. Claus et. al.'s approach clearly stands apart from the "lock-in" or "commercial" strategies by Ward and Stahl respectively. At the level of qualified manpower, the emphasis is on retention, re-integration and control along with providing attractive employment opportunities, job incentives as well as monitoring the allocative process. It is implied here that the supplier states can achieve greater independence and "higher" forms of national self-reliance in the furtherance of domestic development since they have access to the much needed labour for development plans.

At the "lower" levels of manpower utilisation, this approach recognises the fact that if conditions or prospects of employment have not improved at home, migration has some advantages, notably:

1. absorption of unemployment.
2. living off the resources of another country instead of one's own and
3. acquisition of certain skills.

In terms of 3 the balance of "positive" effects of work experience derived in South African mines tends generally to be in regard to work discipline, industriousness, teamwork, etc. Beyond this, some mines do provide, on a limited scale, training courses in various fields, including literacy, and apprenticeship in several artisan trades - though these are

restricted through the enforcement of colour bar by the Mines and Works Act and the powerful White Mine Workers Union respectively. Even here it would seem, as indicators are, that 'labour units' are now becoming people. The very fact that government failed to support white mine workers in their strike for colour bar - a few years ago - is in itself a revolution in labour policy. Suffice it to say, however, that vocational training, whether in the country of origin or the country of immigration, is an essential element of any migration policy. Indeed an appropriate policy must take account of all links in the migratory chain, including departure, the stay abroad, and return to the home country.³¹

Prospects for Unionisation of Migrant Mine Workers

In "Another Blanket"³² several researchers expressed a feeling of the migrant mine miners that "when (they) lodge their complaint they are expelled". Upward communication through works or Liaison committees is severely hampered. These committees cannot discuss wages, because that is a matter decided by the Chamber of Mines. This cuts out probably 80% of the worker's interest. The committees cannot enforce their requests because they have no right to strike. The committee system, therefore, appears to remain in the realm of "toy telephones".³³

In the circumstances, to ameliorate the working conditions, especially in the absence of meaningful change, unionisation, if encouraged, might prove a more profitable gain for migrant workers than promoting only a policy to secure revenues and by implication labour markets for the mines. We can further explain the case for unionisation of foreign mine workers on the basis of the following:

- the need for advocates on behalf of victims of mine health hazards or work injury. The precarious situation of the miner and his family or dependents should be more than responsibility of mining houses and the host country in which they are located rather than the burdensome problem of the labour supplying countries;
- there is the equally important need for pension funds, to redress labour costs since the migration system lies at the heart of the underdevelopment of the mine workers involved: especially in view of the fact that the socio-economic cost of upbringing, education, health and general social welfare is assumed by workers or their home countries and the fruits of their labour go to mining industries. The country representatives from which the mine workers originate have a civic responsibility in this regard;

- that responsibility extends to current "controversial" issues such as the so-called "minimum average" wage entrenched through the monopolistic centralisation of labour recruitment by the Chamber of Mines. This eliminates competition for black workers and the effects that would result of pushing wages up. Progressive mining houses e.g. Anglo-American (AA) and the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company (JCI) have often broken away from the "minimum average"³⁴ and in the case of AA, have declared their "intrinsic in-hostility" to the unionisation of their mineworkers.³⁵ Trade unions in supplier states should take opportunity of this to jointly negotiate terms of co-operation.

In a foreword to "Another Blanket" D.A. Etheredge, chairman of the Gold and Uranium Division of the Anglo-American Corporation whilst telling us the AA is "as anxious as anyone to find out what black employees are thinking and what their grievances and aspirations are",³⁶ went further to point out some of the "changes AAC has in hand" which will ameliorate the grievances in Lesotho:

1. a new hostel in Maseru "which will make a big difference" at the point of recruitment.
2. plans to fly recruits between Maseru and Welkom - a measure that will render the position "much better than at present".
3. provision of better accommodation for wives at the mines.
4. hostel designs with greater privacy for individual miners.

Ameliorating the working conditions of mine workers seems, therefore, feasible for Lesotho and by implication can be negotiated by other BLS supplier countries.

Other recommendations such as those contained in "Another Blanket" - a joint product of some mining houses and Lesotho institutions - are levelled at government, mines, and labour unions respectively. As yet they have not been fully explored. We summarise some of these as pertinent.

- Indunas should be genuine leaders - elected and maintained by the workers who would have to be taxed for this purpose;
- extending visiting time and easing formalities;
- Lesotho government be expected to set up labour representatives in the main migrancy centres of South Africa.

- Lesotho Federation of Labour (LFL) should be assisted to investigate immediately provident fund, compensation, and insurance for migrant mine workers and demands made to the mining companies to implement immediate and adequate arrangements in this respect.

One important criticism likely to be levelled against such a case for unionisation is that the perspectives have a "consumptionist" orientation, that prospective unions would strongly be oriented towards bread and butter issues. Consequently they would seek to extend their benefits under the existing political and social system rather than effect basic changes in the system itself. And yet given the "real-politik", these recommendations can do no more than scrape the surface of the problem. Many would not cut much ice with the tough managers of mining houses let alone those in the government. However, governmental intervention and trade union collaboration along with representatives of the CM who see eye to eye on these other related issues can have a common commitment. Indeed, with the reform/negotiation strategy, hitherto the relative cheapness and docility of labour is no longer to be taken lightly. It is, in the long-term, a costly social and political liability for both host and supplier countries in the regions' stability - more so now that the argument about social security measures affecting the profitability of the mines "because of the fixed price of gold" no longer holds.

FOOTNOTES

1. D.G. Clarke: The South African Chamber of Mines - Policy and Strategy with Reference to Foreign African Labour Supply, DSRG Working Paper No. 2, Pietermaritzburg, April 1977, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 35.
3. Ibid.
4. W.J. Breytenbach: Migratory Labour Arrangements in Southern Africa, Africa Institute, Pretoria 1972 and C.W. Stahl: Labour Export in Southern Africa - Some Welfare and Policy Implications with Regard to a Joint Policy on Recruitment Fees, WEPR Working Paper, ILO: Geneva, July 1977, p. 2.
5. W.R. Böhning: Black Migration to South Africa - What Are The Issues? WEPR Working Paper, ILO: Geneva, June 1977, pp. 4-9.
6. Ibid., p. 43.
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22. W.R. Böhning, op. cit., p. 30.
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30. Quoted in: Anne Golley: Skilled Workers - South Africa is Falling Further Behind in Its Needs, The Star, 12 November, 1978, p. 28.
31. The OECD Observer, No. 76, July/August 1975, p. 13.
32. AIM, Another Blanket: Report on an Investigation Into the Migrant Situation, Johannesburg, June 1976.
33. Ibid., p. 25.
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35. AIM, op. cit., p. III.

ABBREVIATIONS

WEPR = World Employment Programme Research

DSRG = Development Studies Research Group

NUL = National University of Lesotho

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APPENDIX

SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN AFRICAN WORKERS
IN SOUTH AFRICA 1964/1970/1977 (IN THOUSANDS)

SECTOR	1964	1970	1977
MINING	281	352	288
- AFFILIATED TO CM	231	267	208
- NON-AFFILIATED MINES	50	85	80
AGRICULTURE	144	45	16
MANUFACTURING	23	12	10
CONSTRUCTION	4	6	9
COMMERCE	2	5	4
DOMESTIC SERVICE	8	21	14
GOVERNMENT SERVICE	7	10	10
OTHER	14	4	6
ANNUAL TOTALS	484	455	357

SOURCE: G.M.E. Leistner, 1967
Mine Labour Organisation, Annual Report, 1964-77
Department of Statistics, Population Census
(Report No. 02-05-01); Pretoria, 1971.
Republic of South Africa, House of Assembly
Debates, 3-7 April 1975, pp. 555-556.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1970-76

('000)

YEAR	LABOUR SUPPLY	EMPLOYMENT	UNEMPLOYMENT NUMBERS	%
1971	8,820	7,614	1,206	13.7
1972	9,066	7,733	1,333	14.7
1973	9,319	8,008	1,311	14.1
1974	9,563	8,233	1,330	13.9
1975	9,783	8,406	1,476	14.1
1976	10,033	8,573	1,460	14.6

SOURCE: Charles Simkins, Measuring and Predicating Un-employment in South Africa, 1960-77, in C. Simkins and D.G. Clarke, Structural Unemployment in South Africa, Natal University Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1977.

SURFACE AND UNDERGROUND WAGES

DATE OF INCREASE	SURFACE MINIMUM	UNDERGROUND MINIMUM
DECEMBER 1974	120c	160c
JUNE 1975	140c	220c
JUNE 1976	155c	250c

SOURCE: AIM, Another Blanket, Johannesburg, June 1976.

NUMBER OF AND AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK WORKERS
EMPLOYED BY THE GOLD - MINING INDUSTRY, 1972-76

YEAR	ANNUAL AVERAGE EARNINGS	NUMBER EMPLOYED ('000)
1972	R 257	87.2
1973	350	86.8
1974	365	87.4
1975	947	121.9 (JULY)
1976	950	174.6 (JULY)

SOURCE: Charles W. Stahl: Labour Export in Southern Africa: Some Welfare and Policy Implications with Regard to a Joint Policy on Recruitment Fees, WEPR Working Paper, ILO, Geneva, July 1977.

INCREASES IN AVERAGE MONTHLY UNDERGROUND CASH EARNINGS DURING THE 1970's

1971	R 18
1972	21
1973	30
1974	47
1975	81
1976	88

SOURCE: John Kane-Berman: Labour Supply on the Gold Mines in the 1970's, AIM, Another Blanket, Johannesburg, 1976

AREA	NUMBER RECRUITED		INCREASED %
	1975	1976	
TRANSKEI	37,015	54,475	47
BOPHUTHATSWANA	7,998	15,358	92
NATAL AND KWA-ZULU	5,354	12,159	127
LEBOWA	2,089	4,551	179
CISKEI	2,692	4,228	57
GAZANKULU	448	1,095	144
VENDA	202	600	197
SWAZI BANTUSTAN	286	843	195
CAPE "WHITE" AREA	14,704	26,849	83
TRANSVAAL "WHITE" AREAS	1	3	200
O.F.S. & QWAQWA	4,310	8,104	88
WITWATERSRAND & VAAL TRIANGLE (URBAN	2,646	5,347	102
BOTSWANA, LESOTHO & SWAZILAND	61,875	73,006	18

SOURCE: John Kane-Berman (Labour Editor of the Financial Mail
in: Another Blanket: Report on an Investigation into
the Migrant Situation, June 1976, AIM.

MIDDLE OF 1976 - TOTAL BLACK COMPLEMENT

(MINE WORKERS)

SOUTH AFRICA	170,000
LESOTHO	85,000
MOZAMBIQUE	79,000
BOTSWANA	26,000
ZIMBABWE	16,000
SWAZILAND	13,000
ANGOLA	3,000
OTHERS (INCLUDING NAMIBIA)	1,700
MALAWI	182
TOTAL (ROUNDED)	394,000

SOURCE: John Kane-Berman (Labour Editor of the Financial Mail) in: AIM, Another Blanket: Report on an Investigation into the Migrant Situation, Johannesburg, June 1976.

The following table indicates how the flow of men from the various parts of South Africa have been increasing: