

THE COLOURED LABOUR PREFERENCE POLICY:
CO-OPTION AND CONTRADICTION

by

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Historical Overview

Attempts by the South African state to incorporate elements of what later became known as the Coloured group are not new. (1) They have their origins in the attempts by the early colonial state to deflect opposition based on a mass resistance by the colonized people. Stanley Trapido, in his analysis of this process of political incorporation of elements of the Coloured group, has noted that:

The need to incorporate Coloured groups had resulted from their long and bloody resistance ... As the Cape Attorney General said in a celebrated remark: 'I would rather meet the Hottentot at the hustings voting for his representative than meet the Hottentot in the wilds with a gun on his shoulder.* If these people have much physical force - are armed, and - as you say, disaffected - is it not better to disarm them by letting them participate in the privileges of the constitution than by refusing them those long expected privileges to drive them into laagers.'" (2)

[*S. Trapido, "The Friends of the Natives" in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds), Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa (London: Longman, 1980), p. 262.

For a century, although at times with questionable conviction, this incorporationist, anti-integrationist strategy was adopted by successive administrations. Macmillan, writing in 1927 and reflecting on these tactics, noted that:

As a political experiment the constitution of 1853 has been abundantly justified ... But, the very success of this experiment was won at the price of economic well being. The Coloured people have remained a community of poor and backward dependants. (3)

The partial alliance had served to fragment a popular response to the ruling class by these dispossessed people whilst at the same time ensuring the continued immiseration and proletarianization of the oppressed Coloured people.

The particular form of colour discrimination which existed prior to the victory of the National Party in the 1948 election provided the basis for another

form of incorporation of the Coloured middle-class. Findlay in 1936 estimated that approximately 38 per cent of the people classified as White in the Cape Province were of mixed descent. (4) Although obviously limited by the lightness of the individual's skin pigmentation, it was relatively easy in the pre-Nationalist period to "pass for white" and hence become fully incorporated into the dominant race group. The ability to "pass for white" depended largely on the class position of the individuals concerned, and this had the effect of incorporating aspirant petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Coloureds with a light complexion into the ruling class. (5) In many respects, Coloured people came to constitute the South African working class and, to a lesser extent, the petty bourgeoisie who, although not classified as African, had failed to "pass for white". The class nature of colour discrimination in the pre-Nationalist period is exemplified by the Carnegie Commissioners. The Commissioners, unable to distinguish between many poor-Whites and Coloureds, resolved to classify those respondents who addressed them as Baas (Master) as Coloureds. (6)

Coloured political organizations, which began to emerge at the turn of the century, were from the outset ambivalent towards a distinct identity for the Coloureds. This reflects, in part, the contradictory political and ideological positions of these organizations and the class alliances which they embraced. For many working-class people, Coloured identity provided a possible source of strength and dignity with which to face the racist practices of White unionists and the decline in their living standards brought about by the post-Anglo-Boer War depression. For the aspirant petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie excluded from participation in the state, the "Colouredist" organizations provided a potential lever through which to develop their power and patronage whilst at the same time negotiating for further rights. The African Peoples' Organisation (APO) was the most significant Coloured organization. Despite the broader promise of its name, the APO in 1906 criticized Lord Milner for allowing Coloureds to be treated "like the barbarous native". (7) At the same time, Coloured leaders, and notably Abdurahman, the President of the APO from 1905 until his death in 1940, repeatedly attempted to use the threat of an alliance between Coloureds and Africans as a trump card in negotiations with the administration. So, for example, in 1912 Abdurahman warned that:

If Europeans persist in their policy of repression
there will one day arise a solid mass of Black and
Coloured humanity whose demands will be irresistible. (8)

The coming to power of the Pact Government in 1924 had a critical impact on the future identity of the Coloureds. Hertzog's declared policy was that: "Economically, industrially and politically the Coloured man must be incorporated with us." (9) Strategic, as well as ideological, reasons dictated this policy, for, he argued:

It would be very foolish to drive the Coloured people
to the enemies of the Europeans - and that will happen
if we expel him - to allow him eventually to come to
rest in the arms of the native. (10)

In order to achieve his aims, Hertzog published a comprehensive segregation programme in which he proposed, on the one hand, to enfranchise Coloured men and gradually to incorporate them into the ruling political structure, whilst at the same time totally disenfranchising and segregating Africans. (11)

The overwhelming majority of Coloureds refused to support the segregationist programme and Abdurahman, despite some ambiguity, declared: "I do not want to sell the Natives' rights or to be bribed by the Government to leave the Native in the lurch." (12) African leaders, such as James Ngojo, the President of the Cape African National Congress (ANC), warned that the aim of the bills was "to divide the people in order to rule". The aim of Hertzog, Ngojo insisted, was "first to disenfranchise the native and after that the Coloured man". (13) Opposition to the

state's divisive policies was strong and led to an attempt to form a united front, culminating in the First Non-European Conference, held in June 1927 and chaired by Abdurahman and Sol Plaatjie. At this conference it was resolved to find ways and means of uniting Africans and Coloureds in their opposition to the regime, a task which was to occupy much of the energies of Coloured and African leaders until the 1950s.

The institutionalized form of political preference for people who came to be designated as Coloureds was given expression on the economic level by colour-bar and other regulations which allowed Coloureds to enter occupations barred to Africans. Many crafts and skilled occupations were regulated by closed-shop and apprenticeship controls which served to entrench the position of relative privilege of Coloureds but served equally to prevent Coloureds competing with Whites for skilled jobs. The legislation served to reproduce, for Coloureds, an intermediate position in employment between Africans and Whites.

At the same time, the employment, accommodation and movement of Africans, from the beginning of this century, was increasingly strictly regulated. Through these measures the ruling class was able to impose a hierarchical, racial division of employment and accommodation in which Africans were relegated to the lowest levels. From 1924 on, in line with the wishes of the Cape Town city councillors, Hertzog began to implement stricter controls over Africans. (14) In terms of the Hertzog strategy of Coloured labour preference, the authorities in the Transkei were instructed not to issue passes to Africans wishing to travel to Cape Town to seek work. (15) By the end of the decade the Urban Areas Act (1930) enabled the administration and the City Council of Cape Town to regulate the influx of Africans into the Cape Peninsula. By 1941, the first period for which I have reliable statistics, over 2300 Africans were refused entry into the Cape Peninsula, despite the relatively tight labour market created by the war economy. (16)

In the Western Cape, strict influx control during the 1920s may be associated with Hertzog's political strategy for Blacks - his attempt to incorporate Coloureds whilst segregating Africans. In part, this strategy was a defence against the threat of a militant black challenge. The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), in the early phase of its development, incorporated African and Coloured workers in an organization which potentially posed a severe challenge to the state. Its rapid development to its zenith in 1927-28 was witnessed with alarm by the state, and the incorporationist strategy of Hertzog in part signifies an attempt by the state to deflect opposition based on a mushrooming movement incorporating African and Coloured workers. On the political level, it will be recalled, the Coloured leaders continued to use the possibility of an alliance with Africans as a lever with which to extract concessions for Coloureds from the state. The significance of the Coloured vote in several Cape constituencies was a further factor which encouraged the various political parties to appear to promote Coloured interests. Parliamentary candidates promised concessions to the Coloured voters in return for their vote. (Support of the majority of Coloured voters for opposition candidates, particularly after 1948, and the implementation of political apartheid finally led to the removal of Coloured representation in parliament in 1968.)

Marion Lacey attributes the origins of the Coloured Labour Preference policy and strict influx control in the Western Cape, in the mid-1920s, to the demands of the mines for a monopoly over labour from the Eastern Cape. (17) But, the question of mine labour had been a major issue in the Cape before 1920 and cannot account for the breadth or timing of Hertzog's political strategy for blacks - his attempt to incorporate Coloureds. The factors outlined above, which emphasize the challenge posed by the subordinate classes, cannot be omitted from an analysis of state strategy. It is these challenges which compel the state to attempt to reconstitute social relations in its favour and to attempt to reconstitute the "system of fortresses and outworks" that provides the long-term guarantee of stability for the ruling class.

The National Party

The Nationalist Government, which came to power in 1948, developed fully the commitment of previous regimes to a "civilised labour policy" in which, firstly, Whites and, secondly, Coloureds would have preference in employment. The policy had its effect first within the administration: within a year of their coming to power they had replaced 1,696 Africans by 1,290 Whites and 406 Coloureds. (18) The Nationalists, in line with their apartheid doctrines, immediately set about developing machinery for further control over African employment, residence and movement, building on the foundations laid by previous administrations. Government Notice 1032 of 1949 prevented African work-seekers from remaining in the Peninsula for more than fourteen days a year. The controls were further extended in 1952; in terms of section 27 of the Native Laws Amendment Act, all African women in the Peninsula were subject to compulsory registration. The employment of African women in the Peninsula was increasingly predicated on the possession of a valid permit - a scheme later instituted throughout South Africa in order to ensure that "women and all unemployed appendages" be banished to the bantustans and that the reproduction of the labour force take place in the African reserves. By 1956 5000 African women had been endorsed out of the Peninsula and 26,213 had been issued with permits to remain in the area, of which 10,300 were conditional upon their continued employment in the Peninsula. (19)

The particularly strict implementation in the Cape Peninsula of influx control regulations, together with the implementation of the Population Registration Act (1950), Group Areas Act (1950), and other legislation, in part may be understood in terms of the policy of Coloured Labour Preference adopted by the Nationalist regime.

The policy was first outlined in some depth in 1955. Eiselen, the Secretary of Native Affairs and first lieutenant of Verwoerd, explained the policy in the following terms:

Briefly and concisely put, our Native policy regarding the Western Province aims at the ultimate elimination of Natives from this region. (20)

The existing mechanisms for the implementation of this policy already existed and the policy was implemented with immediate effect. By 1957, Chief Magistrates in the Peninsula reported a decline in the African population of the Peninsula over the previous two years. Women, as I have noted, initially bore the brunt of these restrictions, to which they responded with valiant but ultimately unsuccessful defiance. By 1959 the administration had begun to turn its attention towards men, and between January 1959 and March 1962 over 18,000 men and 5,975 women were endorsed out of the Cape Peninsula. (21) Included in this number were many individuals deported out of the region under section 29 of the Urban Areas Act - the "idle and undesirable" clause. This clause was widely interpreted to include militant unionists, community leaders and other "trouble-makers". Many of the ANC militants, such as Makholisa, the leader of the Cape Town defiance campaign, were expelled to the Transkei.

It should not here be necessary to chronicle the effects of influx control in terms of human life and suffering. People banished to the reserves have faced starvation and forced separation from family and friends. It is not surprising that the accelerating underdevelopment of the reserves and the associated relocation of over 1.3 million people in these areas have led to a growth in the number of people illegally in urban areas which state repression and increased influx control have failed to reverse. (22) Official estimates place the number of illegals living in Cape Town at over 85,500. (23) The number working illegally, officially estimated at 60,000, exceeds the legally employed African population. (24) This is despite the increasingly brutal enforcement of influx control measures which, for example, led to the conviction of 17,000 Africans in the Cape Peninsula in 1978 and the deportation of 3,666 Africans from the area in August and September of 1981. (25)

The policy of influx control in the Western Cape has remained virtually unchanged since the implementation of the Black Labour Act in 1964 and the Physical Planning Act in 1968. Whereas in the rest of the country the Riekert proposals have led to major modifications in influx control, this has not occurred in the Western Cape. (26) In this region, the policies advocated by the Riekert Commissioners have been enforced for nearly two decades in terms of the Coloured Labour Preference policy. So, for example, the close association between accommodation and employment and a strictly regulated distinction between contract and permanent labour and the harsh treatment of illegals, all central to the Riekert Commission, are measures which have been enforced in the Western Cape for twenty years.

The Coloured Labour Preference policy, as I have outlined, has its origins in the attempt by the ruling class to deflect the challenge of a mass opposition against the state. In the 1920s, and again in the 1950s and 1970s, this was particularly evident. As the Minister of Finance at the time of the Sharpeville and Langa uprisings in 1960 and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency noted:

The disturbances have taught us another lesson to which the Government has also directed attention previously. This lesson is that in those areas where the Coloured community forms the natural source of labour, it is wrong to import Bantu in large numbers, and eventually to create two unprosperous communities - the Government will, therefore, apply more strictly its policy that Coloured labour should be put to the best possible use ... (27)

On the one hand, the state sought to legislate against the employment and residence of Africans in the Western Cape. At the same time the state sought to increase the insecurity of the remaining contract workers in the Western Cape, partly in order, it was hoped, to reduce their militancy. The success of this strategy to this day remains a subject of heated debate within the state, employer class, and trade unions. It is clear, however, that no simple correspondence exists between the threat of deportation and militancy. Evidence given to the Commission of Inquiry into the attempted insurrection at Paarl in 1962 suggests that the increased threats and insecurity faced by the migrant workers was a direct cause of the surge in militant activity among the Paarl workers, whilst that given to the Cillié Commission, investigating the 1976 uprisings, suggests the opposite is the case. (28) My research project, covering over four hundred workers, trade unionists and employers in the Western Cape during 1981, revealed that migrant workers cannot be assumed to be less militant. Nor do they conform to the stereotypes of economism and ethnicity which at times are ascribed to this group by the authorities and others. The specific historical experience of many migrant workers in the Western Cape in the 1950s was one of radical militancy. This experience served to bind migrant and permanently settled workers in their united opposition to the regime. The consciousness and actions of workers and communities cannot be determined a priori in terms of structural determinants. Rather, it is necessary to examine their specific historical experience. In the Western Cape the nature of trade unionism, political leadership and organization, religion and other factors is critical in this respect.

Employers

Employers, although opposing the strict enforcement of the Coloured Labour Preference policy, have until recently broadly supported its objectives. Their main concern has been the loss of a "pool of labour" and with the effects of a policy of influx control which is not uniformly applied throughout South Africa - fearing that this may raise wages in the Cape and undermine the competitiveness of Cape industry. (29) Of course, important contradictions exist within the capitalist class. Capitalist farmers, manufacturers and others who are unable to relocate elsewhere and are in need of an abundant supply of cheap, unskilled labour have been particularly vocal

in their criticism of the Coloured Labour Preference policy, whilst large finance capitalists, many of whom are not dependent on cheap African labour and who are able to operate in different regions, have emphasized the long-run strategic advantages of the Coloured Labour Preference policy.

The concern of Cape business, naturally enough, has been that profitability should not be adversely affected by the particularly strict enforcement of influx control in the Western Cape. In particular, the Cape Chamber of Industries in 1960 insisted that, whilst "we accept the fact that Native influx control is necessary", "Coloureds were not interested in or suitable for performing unskilled work and we must therefore emphasise the need for a local Native labour pool". (30) Many employers, over a long period of time, have come to accept and reproduce an ideology which identifies the Coloured proletariat as "work-shy" and "idle", prone to "absenteeism", "drunkenness" and "inebriety". (31) In part, this ideology is rooted in an appreciation of the destitution and family decay which have accompanied the destruction of communities and the oppression of the Coloureds. Whereas "idle and undesirable" Africans are endorsed out of the urban areas, Coloured vagrants and unemployed remain in full view of the bourgeoisie. But, the reluctance of employers to employ Coloureds in unskilled tasks also reflects the successful resistance of Coloureds to low wages and management's ability to capitalize on the extreme poverty, desperation and insecurity of illegal and migrant Africans. Furthermore, the representatives of Cape employers see the preferential treatment of Coloureds in education, housing and employment as a cause of the resistance of Coloureds to super-exploitation. The Cape Chamber of Industries has told the Government that, whilst it broadly supported the objectives of the policy of Coloured Labour Preference, "there must be a warning and a plea not to set the sights too high ... which will engender in many Coloureds the feeling that labouring work is beneath them". (32)

The solution recently offered by Cape employers is to ensure an adequate supply of labour by providing urban blacks with permanent rights to remain in the area. This they justify on strategic grounds, in line with the ideology of total strategy currently popular with the ruling class. In their evidence to the Wiehahn Commission, the Cape Chamber of Industry warned of urban blacks being

... intensely frustrated by the limitations imposed by their employment. Dissatisfaction on that account is already reaching disturbing proportions and is bound to erupt if this relatively small segment of our Western Cape population is not provided with more satisfactory job opportunities. (33)

In part, the pleas of Cape industry to the authorities have been answered. The state, in conjunction with the Urban Foundation and a consortium of monopoly capitalists, has begun to provide better quality permanent housing and employment opportunities for aspirant permanently settled Africans in the Peninsula.

The Ruling Party

Up to this point, I have presented the National Party's strategy of Coloured Labour Preference as coherent and unproblematical. This is a gross over-simplification. As O'Meara has argued in a recent paper:

The National Party came into office in 1948 as the political organisation of a shifting, highly differentiated and contradictory class alliance. (34)

O'Meara identifies important differences between the social basis, organization, membership and ideology of the Cape and Transvaal provincial organizations which are relatively autonomous within the party's federal structure. The Transvaal party is broadly identified with the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and White workers, whilst the

Cape party has always been dominated by big Afrikaner capital and capitalist farmers. The doctrinaire policies of the Verwoerd era, and with these I would include the Coloured Labour Preference policy developed by SABRA, are closely associated with the ascendancy of the Transvaal party in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Coloured question, it seems, has consistently provided an important source of friction within the Nationalist Party. It was a source of division between Malan and Hertzog, which contributed to the 1934 split and emergence of the National Party, with Malan, a founder of the National Party, recommending the removal of Coloureds from the voters' roll in opposition to Hertzog's incorporationist policy. It should be noted that, in the pre-war period at least, the regional divisions hypothesized by O'Meara and others fail to provide an adequate account of the complexity of the alliances which directed Nationalist policies. The base of Malan was in the Cape whilst that of Hertzog was in the Orange Free State and Transvaal interior. Malan's strategy provided the foundation for doctrinaire policy of apartheid developed under the leadership of Verwoerd.

The rise of Verwoerd can be associated with the increased regional bifurcation of the National Party. The Transvaal party, from that time until the current crisis, has consistently adopted a strategy which favours the complete segregation of the Coloureds. Verwoerd viewed the Coloureds as a "nation in their own right" and in 1959 insisted that:

... we definitely do not accept that there will be integration or intermingling of the political structure for the Coloured and for the white man, neither in the municipal sphere nor in any higher sphere. (35)

Verwoerd and his allies in SABRA and the Department of Native Affairs supported the notion of Coloured self-government within the White state of the Western Cape. The proposed removal of all Africans from the Western Cape, announced in 1955, was in line with this aim. So too was the removal of Coloured representation from parliament and the passage of legislation which created a separate Coloured Persons' Representative Council. The fundamentalist position adopted by Verwoerd, on the issue of Coloured identity, has been strongly upheld by subsequent leaders of the Transvaal Party. It is no accident that Connie Mulder and Andries Treurnicht, the principal protagonists of Verwoerd's separatist doctrines, have now left the party to form a conservative opposition. Prominent in the manifesto of these parties is the segregation of Coloureds and the rejection of P. W. Botha's scheme of power-sharing for Coloureds and Indians.

P. W. Botha, O'Meara argues, represents the interests of the Cape Nationalist Party and Afrikaner monopoly capital. Botha, as Prime Minister of an increasingly centralized and militarized state, has focussed much of his energy on the integration of Coloureds into the ruling political arena. In the main his reasons have been strategic and must be understood within the context of the Total Strategy plan outlined by Botha in 1977. (36) Coloureds, Botha and his military advisers argue, can provide a much needed bulwark in defence of the state:

There are thousands of coloured people who are Christians and anti-communists. I say the time has come to take these people as far as possible with us, for the sake of civilisation and the security of the country. (37)

The President's Council, Botha added, had been appointed in order to perform this task:

All the Government is doing is to say to the Coloured people, 'we cannot include you in a common voter's roll, because if we do there will be agitation to include urban blacks and soon we'll

have black majority rule. Therefore we have to find other methods'. (38)

Despite speculation that Botha favours the restoration of a parliamentary vote for Coloureds on a separate voters' roll (39), a Special National Congress of the federally organized National Party, only the third in its history, on Botha's instigation approved plans for separate White, Coloured and Indian parliaments overseen by a President and Cabinet whose authority would be paramount in all matters of "common interest". The proposed constitution closely resembles that approved by the National Party at its 1977 Congress and has, according to one commentator, "estranged reformists by dashing them". (40)

The strategy of the state is a further desperate attempt to win the support of the Coloured and Indian bourgeoisie and, if possible, extend this alliance to include the bulk of the Coloured and Indian populations. The alliance between the military, the state and monopoly capital, although riddled with conflicts and contradictions has been associated with fresh attempts to reconstitute social relations in favour of the ruling class. The "incessant and persistent efforts to defend and extend the existing balance of forces" are broadly contained within the Total Strategy Plan. The object of this is to deflect opposition based on a mass populist challenge to the state. In the Western Cape the policy is articulated in the attempts to incorporate politically and economically elements of the population designated as Coloured. As Botha has insisted, "we must adapt or die". (41)

The historical experience of the ruling class together with political considerations within the ruling party have determined that at least in the present phase this reformist, incorporationist strategy is to be directed at Coloureds and Indians and, to a lesser extent, urban Africans. The Strategy is directed at the co-optation of the black leadership and incipient bourgeoisie, and no changes have been initiated which will alleviate the exploitation and suffering experienced by the broad mass of black workers, their families and dependants. On the contrary, the regulations and repressive provisions which govern the lives of the proletariat have been streamlined and rendered more effective.

Previous attempts by the state to incorporate the Coloured bourgeoisie have met with limited but not negligible response. In so far as the state has succeeded in producing "political schizophrenia" in the Coloured leadership and has partially undermined an effective populist oppositional alliance, their policies of flirting with Coloured politicians and legislating for racist trade unions and other institutions have not been in vain. But, the resistance of Coloureds to separate Coloured political institutions has been effective. The boycott of all elections for separate Coloured representation by the overwhelming majority of persons eligible to vote and the political sabotaging of the Coloured Persons' Representative Council by the (Coloured) Labour Party reflect the level of opposition to these institutions. It is this resistance which has prompted the government to explore new forms of political incorporation for Coloureds.

It is not clear to what extent the antagonism directed towards separate institutions is rooted in the ineffectiveness of these institutions. It is the view of many opponents of the state, within the ruling bloc, that given an effective say the Coloureds would opt for an alliance with the ruling class. A rejection of separate institutions by the Coloured leadership cannot be assumed a priori to be indicative of a rejection of a separate Coloured identity or an identity of Coloureds with a populist challenge to the state.

The evidence suggests that within the group designated by the state as Coloured critical divisions exist and that, whilst a minority of the group and notably the bourgeoisie and aspirant new middle class are committed to collaboration with the ruling class, the bulk of the Coloureds are firmly committed to non-

collaboration. Discretionary collaboration, which has been the hallmark of Coloured organizations such as the APO and the Labour Party, has been undermined as a viable option by the failure of successive regimes to honour the commitments of the discretionary collaborationists to their constituents. It seems, therefore, that increasingly the Coloureds, whom a Nationalist Minister once described as "The allies of the whites in the struggle for South Africa" (42), are now more estranged from the Whites and the ruling class than they have ever been. The Labour Party, although still ambivalent, declared that "we accept the word black because we are defining ourselves now". (43) Rejecting the recent offers of participation in the President's Council, the leader of the Party made clear that:

Nothing but direct representation in parliament for all South Africans is going to satisfy the majority of South Africans and particularly the Labour Party. (44)

Collaboration with the regime for the Coloured bourgeoisie may carry the incentive of a house in Constantia, a R24,000 p.a. job on the President's Council, or simply a chance to wield economic and political power and patronage. (45) But, despite the promises of the Coloured Labour Preference policy, over ninety percent of Coloureds earn below the PDL and over thirty percent are unemployed or marginally employed. (46) For the bulk of the Coloured population - the proletariat, the students and sections of the petty bourgeoisie - the existing system and the new reformism have little to offer and will continue to be rejected.

The attempt by the state to incorporate the bulk of the individuals designated as Coloured and to prevent a populist black alliance is failing. Investigating the cause of Coloured participation in the 1976 uprisings, the Government's Commissioners were forced to admit that the Coloureds

were prepared to regard the Black man as his comrade in distress and to continue the struggle for improvement with him.... They reject not only the word 'Coloured' but also the idea of a separate Coloured identity.... He joined up with the Black community so as to remove his grievances and obtain his rights through concerted action. (47)

The individuals defined by the state and the ruling class as Coloured increasingly are rejecting this designation and, through struggle, are defining themselves.

Conclusion

I have indicated that the effect of the legal-administrative division of the African labour force into permanently settled, contract and illegal workers has not succeeded in producing a highly fragmented African working class in the Western Cape. This, I suggest, is in part due to the unifying and radicalizing influence of progressive trade unions and political and community organizations which have successfully embedded themselves in the daily experience of the African working class. Coloured workers, on the other hand, since the turn of the century, have been subject to highly economistic and racist trade unions. (48) These, together with the ambiguous attitudes and "Colouredist" perspectives of the major Coloured political parties, have had a devastating impact on the Coloured working class. The domination of radical Coloured politics by principled intellectuals who have failed to penetrate below the petty bourgeoisie and have engendered a politics of inaction has compounded the situation. The overall effect has been to produce a Coloured working class which does, at times, tend towards racist perceptions of the African working class. Although opposed to the state, these workers remain hesitant to identify with the African oppressed and display what Adam Small has described as "the political schizophrenia of the Coloured person, a condition more common than the common cold". (49)

The "political schizophrenia" and racist perceptions which may be embedded in the consciousness of certain groups of Coloureds, as I have argued, is the result of the specific historical experience of these workers and the failure of their collective organizations, communities and leadership to resist these divisive tendencies. The distinct racial identity of Coloured workers, where it exists, demonstrates the success of the dominant ideology in penetrating the dominated classes and reproducing a distinct racial form of consciousness. But, as I have also argued, the identity of individuals as Coloureds cannot simply be ascribed to the successful penetration of a dominant ideology. Furthermore, Coloured identity, in so far as it exists, is profoundly ambiguous and may be intertwined in infinite, historically specific permutations with familial, cultural, religious, political, communal and other determinations of consciousness and action, which preclude any simple race or class determinism. (50)

The extent to which individuals designated as Coloureds recognize and act upon this racial identity is never pre-given. This identity, particularly in so far as it determines political action and consciousness, is itself a site of struggle. In the Western Cape, as is the case elsewhere, the working class is defining itself through struggle.

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Notes

[I would like to thank Stanley Trapido, William Beinart and Brian Hackland for their helpful criticisms of earlier drafts of this paper.]

- (1) The racial categorization of the population of South Africa in this paper will follow the official classification outlined in the Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950, and in the legal-administrative practices of present and preceding governments. It is necessary to emphasize that the categories African, Coloured, Asian and White are rejected by many of the individuals so defined. For definitions of the statutory race groups, see M. Horrell, Legislation and Race Relations (SAIRR: Johannesburg, 1971), and supplements. The term "Black" in this paper will refer to all Africans, Coloureds and Asians and should not be confused with the current use by the South African state of this term to refer to persons formally designated as Africans, Bantu or Natives.

The State, in essence, embraces the apparatuses and machinery for exercising the ambitions of the ruling alliance. In practice, the state is itself the site of intra- and inter-class conflict. It is at times incoherent, corrupt and incapable and is the locus of critical contradictions which make nonsense of monolithic, conspiratorial and reified interpretations of the state.

- (2) S. Trapido, "White Conflict and Non-White Participation in the Politics of the Cape of Good Hope", University of London PhD thesis, 1970, p. 39.

The history of the Khoisan community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provides fascinating insights into the ambiguity and diversity of responses to proletarianization pressures. Elements of the Khoi during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were absorbed by the Xhosa and continued to resist the colonial regime. Another small group continued an independent existence, either migrating north-eastwards or living as brigands within the borders of the colony. "The Majority, however, were converted into the menials of the white man, depressed socially, economically and politically", as S. Marks and R. Gray have noted in their essay "Southern Africa and Madagascar"

in R. Gray (ed), The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol 4, c.1600 to c.1790 (Cambridge: CUP, 1975). The proletarianized Khoisan community, together with the freed slaves, constitute one source of ancestry for persons now designated as Coloured.

- (3) W. M. Macmillan, The Cape Coloured People (Johannesburg: Faber, 1927), p. 267.
- (4) G. Findlay, Miscegenation (Pretoria: Pretoria News, Vol. 36), p. 44.
- (5) See S. Trapido, "The Origins and Development of the APO", University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Collected Seminar Papers on The Societies of Southern Africa, Vol 1 (1970), pp. 90-91, and G. Watson, Passing for White (London: Tavistock, 1970), p. 120.
- (6) See S. Paterson, Colour and Culture in South Africa (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 316, fn 1.
- (7) Cited in R. E. Van der Ross, The Founding of the African Peoples Organisation, Cal. Inst. of Tech., Munger Africana Library Notes (1975), p. 21.
- (8) Cited in H. J. and R. E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950 (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969), p. 120.
- (9) J. Hertzog, Smithfield speech, 13 November 1925, cited in Paterson, op. cit., (1957 edition), p. 14.
- (10) J. Hertzog, Joint Sitting of Parliament, Hansard, 12-15 February 1929, Col. 169 (Government Printer, Pretoria).
- (11) See Union of South Africa SC 10/1927 and Government Gazette Extraordinary No. 1570, 23 July 1926 (Government Printer, Pretoria).
- (12) Cape Times, 17 June 1926, cited in Simons and Simons, op. cit., p. 343.
- (13) The Star, 16 November 1925, cited in Simons and Simons, op. cit.
- (14) C. Saunders (ed), Studies in the History of Cape Town, Vol. 1 (University of Cape Town, 1979), p. 171.
- (15) S. Van der Horst, Native Labour in South Africa (Frank Cass, 1971), p. 273, fn 3.
- (16) Union of South Africa, Commission of Inquiry into Conditions Existing on the Cape Flats, UG 18/1943, paras. 75-76.
- (17) M. Lacey, Working for Boroko (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1981), p. 373, fn 25.
- (18) M. Horrell, Survey of Race Relations 1950-51 (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1951), p. 50.
- (19) M. Horrell, Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-57 (Johannesburg, 1957), p. 71.
- (20) W. Eiselen, "The Native in the Western Cape, 1955". ICS microfilm M897 (1), item 10.

The Western Cape Region, strictly defined, includes the Economic Planning Regions 01, 04 and 05. Eiselen and subsequent administrators have defined the region to include a larger area and in practice the boundaries of the region have fluctuated according to the purpose of the demarcation.
- (21) South Africa, Hansard, Debates, 1962, 10, col. 1542.
- (22) M. Horrell et al. (eds), A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1981 (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1982), p. 274.
- (23) Hansard, 1981, 4, Question Col. 230.
- (24) Interview. Mr Lawrence, Director of Labour, Cape Peninsula, BAAB, 11 November 1979.
- (25) Hansard, 1979, 6, col. 443, and 1981, 5, questions 14/9/81.
- (26) South Africa, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Legislation Affecting the Utilisation of Manpower (Riekert), RP 32/1979.
- (27) Hansard, 1960, 18, col. 8342.

- (28) South Africa, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Events of the 20th to 22nd November 1962 at Paarl and the Causes Which Gave Rise Thereto (Snyman), RP 51/1963. South Africa, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances at Soweto and Elsewhere from 16 June 1976 to 18 February 1977 (Cillié), RP 55/1980, Vol. I, Part B, paras. 31.2.3-15. The Cillié Commissioners suggest that the insecurity of African migrants in the Western Cape, at least in part, accounts for their reactionary attacks on permanently settled Africans. However, the police are alleged, by church and other witnesses, to have incited the migrants to attack the permanent residents, threatening them with deportation should they participate in the popular resistance. Before and after the migrants' attacks, as the Commissioners are forced to admit, there was goodwill between the migrants and the permanent residents.
- (29) The Manufacturer, February 1955, pp. 31-33. Cape Chamber of Industries, Evidence to Wiehahn Commission, 28 October 1977.
- (30) Cape Chamber of Industries, Year Book 1959/60, p. 23.
- (31) See Cape Chamber of Industries, "Evidence to Theron Commission", 17 August 1973, paras. 3.3 and 175.
- (32) Cape Chamber of Industries, Presidential Address to Annual General Meeting, Cape Town, 24 November 1966.
- (33) Cape Chamber of Industries, "Evidence to the Wiehahn Commission", 28 October 1977, para. 7.1. See also Cape Employers Association, "Evidence to the Riekert Commission", 17 October 1977, para. 3.1, and Cape Chamber of Commerce, "Evidence to the Riekert Commission", 1977, para. 2.1.
- (34) D. O'Meara, "'Muldergate': the politics of Afrikaner Nationalism and the crisis of the capitalist state in South Africa", unpublished seminar paper, Dar es Salaam, 28 November 1980, p. 13.
- (35) H. Verwoerd, quoted in The Cape Times, 13 December 1980.
- (36) P. W. Botha, then Minister of Defence, Defence White Paper, 1977 p. 5.
- (37) P. W. Botha, Airmail Star, 4 April 1981, p. 7.
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) See, for example, Die Burger, 19 September 1980.
- (40) The Observer, London, 1 August 1982. Report by Allister Sparks.
- (41) See, for example, The Star, 7 August 1979.
- (42) H. Smit, the Minister of Coloured Affairs, in Hansard, 9, col. 2929.
- (43) D. Curry, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party in Address to the 7th Labour Party Conference, 20 April 1973, UNISA Acc. 237, c.1.4.5.
- (44) H. J. Hendrickse, Leader of the Labour Party, in Opening Address to the 16th Labour Party Conference, 28 December 1981.
- (45) See Report in The Cape Times, 4 October 1980.
- (46) Calculations based on my research conducted between July and December 1981 and on statistics derived from Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Coloured Population (Theron), RP 38/1976. Tables 5.9, 5.10 and paras. 5.85, 5.107 fn 1, 5.126. It has been possible to calculate the number of income earners but not the number of families below the PDL.
- (47) Cillié Commission, op. cit., Part B, paras. 30.24.3-4.
- (48) See D. Lewis, "Trade Unions and Class Stratification" in H. van der Merwe and C. Groenewald (eds), Occupational and Social Change among Coloured People in South Africa (Cape Town: Juta, 1976).
- (49) A. Small, The Coloured People: a 1970 appraisal. One view (SAIRR: Johannesburg, 1970).
- (50) This section is based on interviews conducted with trade unionists and community leaders during July to December 1981. In the Western Cape non-racial and more democratic trade unions and community groups, despite the wrath of state repression, have already made considerable inroads into workplaces and communities previously dominated by "Colouredist" institutions.

These more democratic organizations provide a challenge and hope for the future. The Cape Peninsula community newspaper Grassroots provides a valuable source of information on the development of work-place and community organization in the Western Cape. See also the South African Labour Bulletin (SALB) 3 (2) 1976, 5 (6 and 7), 1980, and 6 (1), 1980, for articles on the Meat Strike, Fattis and Monis Strike, and Trade Unionism in the Western Cape.