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THE BUS BOYCOTT

SPECIAL ARTICLES

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"A Stream of Life on Foot"

By L. BERNSTEIN

THE NATAL SOCIETY
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The People Behind the Penny Boycott

By ALFRED HUTCHINSON



"Your pass!" A boycotter is stopped on his way home.

A Higher Poll Tax

ARTICLES by

DR. W. Z. CONCO
ALEX LA GUMA
DR. H. J. SIMONS
LIONEL FORMAN
HENRY G. MAKGOHI

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FROM THE SIDELINES

This month's writer :
Dr. W. Z. CONCO

ONE Saturday morning, coming from town in a taxi, I arrived at Sophiatown at 9.30 a.m. I paid the shilling to the driver and then, at the corner of the street someone gave my coat a tug from the back.

"Pass!" Looking back, I saw an African constable, with people standing about him. I realised I had walked right into a police net. "Which one do you want?" I asked. "Reference book," he retorted insolently. "I have no reference book as yet," I replied. "I will show you that I am not residing in Johannesburg but am from Umzimkulu, near Durban." (That to clear his geography.) I produced my card: "Awaiting trial: charged with High Treason." That he did not want. "Where is your poll tax?" "I have not got one," I said, and produced my income tax receipt. This too he did not want to see. I thought it strange that of the whole group of police surrounding me by then, not one could make head or tail of the documents I produced.

"You are under arrest for having no pass! Handcuff him. He thinks he is clever!" This last was to a younger policeman who handcuffed my left hand to a fellow African.

So we joined the queue. We were four pairs of handcuffed prisoners, and my partner and I formed the rear of the procession. It took us about 45 minutes to reach the Newlands Police Station. I asked my partner on the way why he was arrested. For not having the Reference Book or "Dom-pas" (Foolish pass), as it is popularly called, he said. He had never had one, and would never carry "that thing" he said. How many others like he, I wondered? How many like us, walking in handcuffed procession each day?

MY arrest was part of the Rand-wide police campaign to break the bus boycott. The previous night there had been over 2,000 arrests. There were thousands more the following week, all for passes, permits, specials, and poll tax.

Yet all the police have failed to smash the boycott. Minister Schoeman charged the African National Congress with using the boycott to test its strength with the Government. There is no need that, for Congress has no doubt of its strength. It taps its strength from the peoples' poverty, high bus fares, low wages, high living costs, the endless police raids and mass arrests. As long as these things remain the people will unite to oppose them. To-day they speak their opposition by walking long miles home.

The State Information Bulletin (surely no *Digest* of affairs, for it would be hard to find more superficial or improperly digested material) says the boycott was built on intimidation. This is not only the largest but the most orderly boycott ever seen. And the most united. Police waited at the bus rank to protect bus-users, said The Star. But there was no one to protect. Intimidation and violence there have been, but all on the side of the police under orders from Minister Schoeman to provoke a showdown. The plan was to provoke violence and then point a finger at the Congress as the scapegoats. But the plan has misfired from the start and the Nationalists stand revealed as the most heartless, bankrupt, bigoted government ever imposed on the people of this country.

THE Gold Coast became Ghana this month and all hearts in Africa beat faster. March 6, 1957, will always be remembered as the thrilling, historic day when the people of a British colonial possession in tropical Africa attained self-government and became a sovereign and independent nation.

It was in August, 1947, that the United Coast Convention was launched to "ensure that by all legitimate and constitutional means the direction and control of the government should pass into the hands of the people and their chiefs in the shortest possible time." That was a mere nine years ago. History moves swiftly when the people get a grip on its steering wheel.

The new constitution on which independence is based is the fourth to be adopted since the end of the second

world war, showing the rapid advance of the Gold Coast towards self-government.

As Desmond Buckle, a frequent contributor to this journal, and himself a Gold Coaster, wrote: "Independence for the Gold Coast has been accelerated by the decline of British imperialism—its own economic crises at home, and its anxiety to avoid, wherever possible, a collision with the national movements of the colonial peoples and to seek an accommodation which would leave British economic interests largely intact."

Born of this era of weakened colonialism and powerful freedom struggles, the new African state will now in turn join the ranks of her sister African and Asian states, striving to help other subject peoples to emerge to freedom as Ghana has done.

A Stream of Life on Foot

By ALFRED HUTCHINSON

WE have been walking these many, many days. And we are walking still. Some said we would not walk so far and for so long. We did not eat enough—and that is true. But must our hunger be the big stick to beat us into line? Many of us are hungry most of the time. That is why we are walking—because we cannot pay the penny increase on the bus fares.

We walk in Alexandra Township. We walk in Sophiatown, in Lady Selborne, in Moroka, Jabavu. . . . They walked, too, in distant Port Elizabeth. In Moroka, Jabavu, Lady Selborne, Port Elizabeth, they need not have walked but for the knowledge that their brothers and sisters are walking and they have stretched out their arms in sympathy.

A man is shot dead in Lady Selborne—and many more are injured. A boycottter is dead on the highway. Why, the newspapers do not say. But he has walked his last mile. A European has been sentenced because in his kindness he gave boycottters a life. Is his kindness his crime? Police cordons along the road. Patches of them all along the road. Cars carrying boycottters stopped. Driver's licence. Police dangling tape measures. Fifteen inches for each passenger. Pass. Tax. Oncoming walkers veering and disappearing into the side street. Others walking on to meet the police with the outstretched hands hardly giving their victims a second look. The growing group of men on the pavement waiting to be taken to prison. They say it is a routine police check: but it is a blow aimed at the boycottters' spirit which has survived weary miles of walking in rain and in sunshine. It is the penny tribulation. . . . And yet we continue to walk.



Sheltering from the storm

THE BUS BOYCOTT STORY



An Alexandra Township Boycotter.

They say many of the people live below the breadline: our hunger is no secret. Perhaps the breadline is the gnawing girdle of hunger round our stomachs and our children's stomachs—the nagging poverty. They say a penny is a trifle; that the bus boycott is all fuss and bother over nothing. They say that the boycott is the work of agitators. Is it not hunger that is the agitator? In 1944 we walked the very same nine miles we walk today—and for the same reason. We have no money. Then we walked and did not pay the penny. And today they want us to pay the penny and we are not better off than when we first walked. Except that we have tasted victory. . . .

Yesterday at the square we stood in the dusk—thousands of us. The stars then were only beginning to appear in the sky. We stood, we sat, and some of us leaned on our bicycles. **Asinamali! Azikwelwa!** We have no money. The buses are not being boarded. We said goodbye to PUTCO then because it said that if we did not ride the buses they would be taken off the road for good. We would walk. We cannot pay the penny: our poverty is not a secret. And so we walk and hear the sizzling tyres of the empty buses and feel the fire in the soles of our feet.

We do not walk for the love of walking. There is no glamour, no romance. We have been tired these many days—as if the weariness of all the days had been rubbed into the marrow of our bones. We have forgotten when we have not been tired. There are some who say they sleep on their feet. . . . It is a cruel, gruelling walk. In that walk many a kind deed has been done: a car, stopping, a lift and a respite. The gratitude that does not find easy words. The questioning and the bridging of the gap that is being wedged wider and wider. . . . Many are the lift-givers who have run the gauntlet of police cordons; of senseless harrying. Many have seen their passengers dragged out of their cars as if they had committed some heinous crime. But some have continued to give lifts. Some grieve when the skies threaten rain—for the walkers in the rain. The inveterate lift-giver in a little green car—the “women's special.” Some famous on the highway: the pirates of mercy. Who is the intimidator and who the intimidated? Who are those who need police protection and find police persecution?

“What do they want with us now?” What do the police want from the boycotters? Daily the people walk into the city. A stream of life on foot, geared for the long trudge. For the boycottter walks as no other walks. The police stand in the road—a boulder of grief and annoyance. From early morning the people leave their homes and swing on to the highway and face the city. Dawn cracks on some walkers and the morning sun sweeps the quiet city pavements and the plodding people. It is a straggling line of walkers, of lines of nodding heads on bicycles. There is a bitter magic in it: a footsore magic. And daily in the evening, tired from the workshops, the flats, the factories . . . that same stream plods homeward in

the dusk. And yet our newspapers had letters of the "had them" and of "also have had them"—people decrying the laziness, wastefulness, perverseness of the African people. Mr. Schoeman has been pulling down high heaven to break the bus boycott. Employers have been told to be tough, to sack, to cut the wages of late-comers.

Little "boycotter" on your mother's back, asleep, crying or gurgling. You will hear it told how we walked in the rain, in the sun, in the morning and evening light. It will be the year of the great bus boycotts that flared up in various places. It will also be the year of the treason trials. You may grow up free from "penny" boycotts . . . the poverty like a great black cat . . . the petty tyrannies that make a soul scream.

It is a gruelling walk and the hill at Orange Grove looms in the awaking eye . . . stretching endlessly—a hill of aching joints. Old women plodding doggedly on, sometimes with washing on their heads and babies on their backs. Jog-trotting young men with their jackets slung over their arms. . . . The long line of bicycles, the horse-drawn carts. . . . And the police. Some adventurous, stout, middle-aged woman talking of getting a bicycle. "I used to ride one when I was a girl. I'd have to practise again outside the location. . . ." And you suppress the smile. Or walkers sealed in a fortress of silence, facing the city.

We have been walking these many, many days.

Little "boycotter" asleep, crying or gurgling on your mother's back. You will hear it told how we walked in the sun and the rain and the evening light. You will hear, too, of deeds of human kindness; of the police and what they did to the people. And perhaps you will grow up



Some queued for taxis.

in a kinder world where people do not march for a penny; a penny held firmly, almost desperately, because it is a morsel of food dug from your hungry mouth. . . .

Meanwhile we walk. How long we shall walk, we do not know. . . . But we walk just as we have been doing these many, many days. Just as we walked once before.

Asinamali! Azikwelwa!

TREASON TRIAL PROFILE :



WHEN the summer of 1923 had come to the village of Cwaru, a son was born to Nowest and Henry Velele Mkwayi, and he was named Wilton Zimasile. This village, Cwaru, was the village of Velile Sandile, the chief, the son of Faku Sandile who had inherited it from Gonya.

Now it came about that Velile sold all his lands and the village without speaking to the people and they were

Wilton Zimasile Mkwayi: A Son of the People

angry and came in numbers from all over to talk together with the chief.

To this assembly came the Native Commissioner, saying: Sandile has sold the land and all living on it must go.

And the people wept and could not rest at night and left the land which had belonged to Velile, the son of Faku, the son of Gonya.

This was in the year 1940.

So Wilton Zamile who attended school at Debe found a home for his parents and brothers and sisters at Zihlahleni, and when he had passed the fourth standard he left school to work in order to buy bread for his family.

For six months he pushed wheelbarrows of concrete and thereafter worked in a dynamite factory in Somerset West as a clerk for £7 per month, until Nowest Mkwayi was called to her ancestors and Wilton Zamile returned to his home. In East London influx-control made it hard to find work and he went to Port Elizabeth. Then it came about that Henry Velele, his father, also died, and Wilton Zimasile became the father of his sisters and brothers.

For a long time he worked in a factory which manufactured things of tin. Then it came about that the workers in this place went on strike,

and Wilton Zimasile, being one of them and a leader, was told to go. And thereafter he was a leader among the workers in many places and led two strikes and became an organiser of the African Textile Workers, Volunteer-in-chief of the New Brighton and Eastern Cape African National Congress, Treasurer of the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions.

Now in the year 1956 there was a great gathering at Cholomnqa near Kingwilliamstown at the headquarters of the chief, A. V. Sandile. This was a gathering of the linkosi Zama Ngqika (Ngqika chiefs) and many of their people attended. Here Wilton Zimasile spoke to the people about the Bantu Education Act and the Bantu Authorities Act and the people cried for him to become Sihlalo Wethu Wakombkulu, chairman of the Gaika Tribal council, but the chiefs said that this must not be.

On their way home Wilton Zimasile was cheered by the people: *Mayibuye iAfrika!* That meeting was held in August and September, 1956. On the 5th December, 1956, he was arrested on a charge of "High Treason."

This is the story of Wilton Zimasile Mkwayi, a son of the people. Ncincilili.

ALEX LA GUMA.

THEY WALK FOR US

By A. FORBES ROBINSON

NEARLY every householder in New Brighton had held in his hand the leaflet which asked him and his family to take part in this boycott "in sympathy with our brothers on the Reef."

The organisers could not call the people together and speak to them. Meetings are not allowed.

Everything depended on the leaflet and the word being passed from mouth to mouth.

How would the people respond?

Would they say, "This thing that has happened to our people nearly a thousand miles away, what has it to do with us here in Port Elizabeth?"

There were people recently moved to site and service, Kwazakhele about whom there was no certainty.

There were new arrivals at Korsten who had not lived long in a city.

Only to-morrow would it be known.

On Monday before the sun had risen, people were starting to walk.

By seven o'clock there were thousands of people walking.

Young men and old, women carrying bags or parcels, talked to each other. The more serious listened, trying to gauge the mood of the people.

Everywhere there were armed policemen sitting in vans.

The old father over there with the white beard and the worn army coat and the faded felt hat with the crown pointing up. He could have travelled by bus. No he, too, prefers to walk, helped by a stick.

It was a pleasure to see him, together with the others, in groups in their hundreds, and later in their thousands, walking, walking. . . .

That evening many had walked over twenty miles.

Many still had hours of work to do at home.

The evening paper said the boycott had been 85 per cent. successful. It condemned the organisers; it condemned the boycott.

On Tuesday the press thought that the boycott was over 90 per cent. successful.

The mayor of Port Elizabeth made a statement. "This ill-conceived action can achieve no benefit to the African people of this town, either now or in the future. . . . A boycott of this nature can only result in loss. The

boycott has been attended by acts and serious threats of violence against Africans using buses. . . . Police protection will be given to travellers and firm action will be taken against offenders."

But we knew who had won the first round. The response had been magnificent.

People were to go on walking.

"But these shoes! They have holes already. The cobbler Matlou must have used paper not leather."

Just around that bend and over the bridge and along the flat, then turn left over the railway bridge. "We are not far from my house now, only two-and-a-half miles."

"My foot hurts but it is not bad. I wish the wind would not blow so hard, it makes walking more difficult."

Wednesday. The wind howls and swirls around the flat open space where the police have their check points. There are fourteen policemen ahead stopping people and reading their passes, and searching them.

Orders are shouted. Cars are stopped and the occupants get out, not too quickly, or too slowly.

Men jump off their bicycles and wait in a queue to be checked. All riding bicycles are ordered to stop. Some of the older men cannot ride against the wind.

It is getting late. People are getting hungry. They are tired. Still they must wait.

They have found something wrong with the Milton Galube's pass.

He looks very tired when the policeman tells him to "Wait!" Just now they will order him, together with the others, to get into the van. He might have to stay the night in the cells.

His eyes become rounded with fear. In the right hand pocket of his coat is a bottle of medicine.

It is for their sick child who is very ill.

Milton Galube explains this to a friend and asks him to drop the medicine at his home.

As he is handing the medicine to a friend a policeman seems to misunderstand and dashes the parcel out of Milton's hand. The bottle falls and breaks.

The thick liquid lies spilled like clotted blood on the grey-blue road.

"Police protection, says the mayor, will be given to . . ."

"The A.N.C. should now be boycotted," said a hopeful in a letter to the Editor.

"P.E. Boycott hits business. Industrialists said to-day that they were losing manhours."

City trade with Africans has fallen off.

"The handling of cargoes at the harbour has slowed down."

In Uitenhage the boycott is one hundred per cent. effective.

On Thursday. On Friday. On Saturday . . . To-day they still walk.

Their strongest weapon, their unity.

Then the letter, written to the Editor and published in the "Evening Post" by "Common Sense" which explained the boycott at the coast to the general public.

It stated: "The Government thus succeeds in converting every economic issue between Black and White into a 'trial of strength' in which it is considered a 'weakness' to acknowledge the existence of a genuine grievance.

"To those of us who know in our hearts that the present rigid White-domination set up is morally bankrupt and indefensible, the boycott challenges our sympathy and understanding.

"Those who walk ask to-day that a particular injustice in Johannesburg be rectified.

"If that is not done, inevitably they will demand the radical reform of a system which denies them fair opportunities and a living wage.

"We owe them a positive answer."

Along the roads, across the footpaths, endless columns walk.

They walk for YOU. They walk for ME. They walk for US. Whether you are a University professor, a doctor, a factory owner, whether you are a housewife or a clerk or a houseboy, whether you are Black or White. Whether you are a policeman or a politician. Whether you speak English or Afrikaans or a Bantu language. They walk as a protest.

Africa stirs . . . Africa challenges . . . She calls to us in the North, in the South :

BE NOT AFRAID; SERVE ME TOGETHER; BUILD ME JOINTLY.

- . . . The penny fare increase was the trigger that fired the bus boycott, but all the pent-up bitterness . . . constituted the rest of the charge.
- . . . Every intrusion of the Government and its police served only to make victory over the penny less important to the boycotters, and the vindication of their nationhood more.
- . . . In the negotiations to settle the boycott the vital factor was forgotten. . . . There were the people.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PENNY BOYCOTT

By L. BERNSTEIN

WHEN the good citizens of Johannesburg opened their afternoon newspapers on Friday, 1st March, it seemed that the Alexandra bus boycott was all over except the shouting. The buses which it had been repeatedly said were withdrawing permanently at the month's end had, apparently, magically, reappeared. A new offer by the Chamber of Commerce had, apparently, been favourably received by the boycott leaders, and gangs of men worked overtime erecting the new kiosks where, for three months, used fivepenny bus tickets could be cashed in for a penny a piece. Honour, it appeared, had been vindicated all round. The boycotters would end up by riding for fourpence; the PUTCO losses would be turned into profits; the Road Transportation Board's ruling that fares be raised to fivepence would stand inviolate; the uneasy conscience of Johannesburg's employers would rest easier by their contribution of £25,000 to refund the pennies.

According to the newspapers, the boycott was virtually played out and settled. Outside of the townships where the boycotters live, people slept easy. But by morning there came the awakening. The posters screamed, hysterically, the news that yesterday's "settlement" had been rejected by the boycotters. Along Louis Botha Avenue and Perth Road, again the familiar trails of foot-sloggers, unchanged. The same empty, pathetic PUTCO buses, trundling back and forth on their familiar "operation decoy." All the well-laid schemes of yesterday had vanished. Alexandra and Sophiatown were back to the normal of the past seven weeks. Somewhere in Friday night's newspaper reckoning something had gone wrong. Somehow they had overlooked the people.

THE PRESSURES OF POVERTY

IT is hard to explain the spirit of a people. In the blue-books it can be proved that the ephemeral "average family" of the boycott areas lives below the bread line; to such families a penny increase in the bus fare can only be met by eating a pennyworth less. That explains something of the motives that set the boycott into motion; but it cannot explain it all. There are always those with flat feet and fallen arches and rheumatism who would rather eat less than walk eighteen miles a day. There are always those who would rather sleep another hour of a morning and forego a portion of their cigarette ration; and those who would, improvidently, borrow the extra penny from small savings earmarked for a new pair of trousers next May, and let the future look after itself. These are the human beings that do not figure in the "average family" notions of a blue-book. And yet they make up a large part, probably a majority, of the people of Alexandra and Sophiatown. These, in fact, are the boycotters. They are concerned with the pennies; but the penny is not all of their story.

It has been said that they have been "intimidated"

by nameless, unidentified "thugs and gangster elements." Yet there is no evidence of it. In Evaton last year, during a bitter and long drawn-out boycott, buses were burnt, stones were thrown, rival factions beaten up and houses fired. But in Alexandra, where the boycott has been most complete and unanimous from the very start, there has been nothing to justify the State Information Office's "terrorist" allegations. There are fifty thousand men and women in Alexandra. And in seven weeks, when policemen have been clustered around the area like bees around honey, there has been only a single case brought to trial—that of a woman allegedly struck by a man for breaking the boycott.

Until Friday, March 1st, there were many amongst the good-hearted, liberal White citizens of Johannesburg who were prepared to brand the official charges of "intimidation" as outrageous lies. If there was evidence of intimidation it was in the practices of the Government—in the pass raids, the stopping of cars and measuring of seats, the deflating of bicycle tyres and the petty, trumped up charges of crossing against the red traffic lights. And Johannesburg was not hesitant to say so, in letters to the press, and in defiant gauntlet-running by motorists. Until that date, the defenders and sympathisers of the boycott appeared satisfied that the blue-book statistics explained everything. When the Government charged the boycotters with political motives, there was the answer that Alexandra's poverty explained everything. When the Government spoke of a "trial of strength," onlookers countered with a passionate conviction that the boycott was a simple matter of bread-and-butter economics. Until March 1st, when the "penny refund" plan was turned down simultaneously at mass meetings in Alexandra, Sophiatown and Moroka. *Somewhere the well-meaning, the "simple economic" explanation of the boycott had shown itself to be too simple, too wide of the truth to fit the fact any longer.* Somewhere there was a wide gap between the understanding of the well-meaning, democratic and humanitarian supporters of the boycott, and the thinking of those who walk.

THE PENNY REFUND PLAN

PERHAPS only the Government and its Information Office publicists drew any real satisfaction from the rejection of the "penny refund" plan. The plan, had it been accepted, would have been acclaimed everywhere as a triumph for the boycotters; but the Government has determined that the boycott shall end in abject defeat, as a salutary lesson to Black people in the foolhardiness of resistance. Outside of these bitter, vengeful circles of Nationalism, there was little satisfaction. It would be idle to deny that the seeds of doubt have crept in. Amongst the people of Alexandra and Sophiatown themselves there are some—perhaps a minority, but still a section of the people—whose enthusiasm has begun to run out. The

"penny refund" plan, they feel, should have been accepted. Amongst the supporters of the boycott outside those areas, there are many to whom the rejection came as a thunderbolt, tearing them loose from all their stoutly-held beliefs, uprooting all their preconceived ideas, and alienating much, if not all, of their sympathy. Perhaps, they now ask, the leaders have been shown to be wildly unreasonable, preferring probable defeat to partial victory? Perhaps, after all, the leadership has passed out of the hands of the sober and serious, into the hands of the "tsotsi" elements? Perhaps, after all, the people are being led by the nose by a fanatical African National Congress minority?

Sometimes it is possible to leave such doubts as these to be answered by experience, and for truth to be revealed by history. *But not today. The truth about the boycotters needs to be understood now.* Not because the boycott's success or failure will be decided by whether sympathetic European motorists continue to offer lifts on the same wide scale as before; not because its success or failure will be determined by whether the formerly sympathetic English press becomes more chilly and hostile. These are secondary matters. *The success or failure of the boycott will be determined, eventually, by the steadfastness, unity and courage of the boycotters themselves.* But still the truth about the boycott needs to be understood, because what is happening amongst the boycotters tells of a ferment and development that is taking place everywhere amongst the Non-European people in every corner of the country; because here in embryo, are emerging the forces that will shape a new South Africa; and also because, in their correct and courageous support of the boycott, the White South Africans have, up to now, made a more powerful and important contribution to good race relations than all the tracts and pious platitudes of a hundred political meetings.

THE HATED SYMBOL

IN a general sense one can speak of the bitterness of the African people against the system that has become known as "apartheid"; of their bitterness against the deliberate disregard of their comfort and their convenience; of their bitterness against the deliberate reservation of only third-class services for them; against the repeated, insulting refusal to consult them about any of the things vital to them; against the poverty and squalor which have grown out of a national system of segregated jobs and segregated townships. And in a general sense one can explain that these are the products of a system of white baasskap and black subjection, existing independent of the benevolence and kindness of individual rulers. But only in a general sense. The mine worker holds responsible for his miserable wages the mine captain whom he sees, and not the shadowy remote Director, whose office is in Throgmorton Street. So too, the bitterness of the African in the city grows up against the policeman, who demands his pass and raids his house and calls him "kaffir!" and only later, with the development of consciousness, against the system of which the policeman is but a pawn.

So, too, with PUTCO. It is futile to point, as PUTCO does often and truthfully, to the benevolence of the Company, the high wages it pays African drivers, and the sports meetings it endows. The man in the street sees not the system but the symbol of the system—not the benevolence and paternalism of PUTCO (real or alleged), but the interminable queues, the third-rate service, the decisions handed down without discussion in contemptuous and lordly fashion. It is the tragedy of PUTCO—perhaps inevitable—that in providing a necessary and

useful service to the African inhabitants of many areas, it has become a symbol for the people of the system that they hate to the core of their being, and a focus for their resentment. When bitterness against the Government reaches bursting point, stones are thrown at police pick-up vans. And when bitterness against inferior, segregated, European-controlled services reaches bursting point, it would not be unreasonable to expect buses to be stoned.

BURSTING POINT IS REACHED

THE raising of the PUTCO fares to fivepence was the bursting point. But no stones were thrown. Instead, overnight, whole communities of tens of thousands of people decided: "Azikwelwa!" "We will not ride." This in itself is a measure of the maturity and sobriety of the people. *The issue flowed far beyond the matter of a penny on the fare. That was the trigger that fired the boycott, but all the pent-up bitterness against a system of inferior, apartheid services, constituted the rest of the charge.* The boycott was never, at any time, just a protest about a penny. It was more than that. It was a declaration to PUTCO, and through PUTCO to the White people and the government and city councils they had elected, that the cup of bitterness was running over. It was an assertion by the African people of their manhood; and of their determination to be considered and consulted on matters that concern them. In such a movement, no intimidation is needed to ensure the full support of all the people. When a people declares its manhood as a challenge to those who oppress it, only the pariahs and the outcasts—those whom the Chinese call "running dogs"—can be expected to dishonour the declaration.

Perhaps it came as a shock to many good White citizens of South Africa, wrapped up as they are in their petty disputes about flags and senatorships, to discover the extent of the national consciousness and national pride that has developed amongst Africans. In Alexandra, even amongst the rheumatic, the lazy or the well-to-do, the numbers of those who would dishonour the boycott decision were too few to count. This was the measure of the new force in South African society; and if the African National Congress can be held responsible for anything in the boycott movement, it is for its sterling work in planting the seed of national pride, of nationhood in the minds of the African people of all classes.

ABOVE ALL ELSE—THE PEOPLE

HAD the Government not intervened against the boycott, events would have shaped themselves differently. PUTCO, left to itself, and moved only by considerations of profitable return on its investments, would doubtless have found a basis of settlement. *But every intrusion of the Government and its police—every pinprick under the pass laws, or the Motor Transportation Act, served only to make victory over the penny less important to the boycotters, and the vindication of their nationhood more.* Clearly under heavy governmental pressure, PUTCO spoke to the boycotters in the well-hated manner of the great White father, Dr. Verwoerd. "Return to the buses by March 1st," said the declaration, "or we will remove them for ever." For those who had not lost all touch with reality, it was clear that this final "white lord to naughty black boy" approach could lead to a final breach between PUTCO and the people.

And so it came as no surprise that on Sunday, February 24th, a meeting of some five thousand Alexandra citizens solemnly paraded past the PUTCO depot to wish PUTCO farewell for ever. National pride had been challenged, and popular feeling had answered. Right to the

The Nationalists are finding parliamentary democracy a hindrance. "What was once a convenient mantle for deception is now a straitjacket," say the writer of this article on this session of Parliament.

THE Nationalists in Parliament have entered a period of what can be described as galloping fascism. The outstanding feature of this Parliamentary Session is not the Government's arrogance and viciousness — which is nothing new — but the way in which the last pretences of "Parliamentary democracy" are being dropped.

Parliament is an alien institution to the purified Nationalist mind. To him it is a British-Jewish-Liberal institution designed to promote the interests of the enemies of Nationalism. In the halcyon war years, when the Nationalist Party brought its planning up to date with the New Order in Europe, these things were said openly: Mr. Strijdom and Mr. Louw shouted it from public platforms.

One no longer hears this kind of talk, not because the Nationalist leaders have had a change of heart, but because they have learnt the simple lesson that behind the Parliamentary facade they can get up to almost as much evil as they could in their one-party Republic.

I say "almost" advisedly, because *a stage has been reached now where the system of "Parliamentary democracy" is becoming a hindrance.* The essence of the Parliamentary system is that it relies on the participating political parties observing the customs, the conventions, the trimmings.

Keeping Up Pretences

Look at it this way: A Government under the Parliamentary system is entitled legally to abolish the Opposition, but if it did so it would no longer be a Parliamentary Government. Now, the Nationalist Government is advan-

cing as far along this path as it can without breaking finally with the Parliamentary system. It has sought, at all costs, to maintain the facade of Government and Opposition. But there comes a time when no further progress can be made by this method, and the dictators-in-all-but-name have to ponder on the next step — they have to accept the name "dictator" as well.

I recall reading an article in which this theory was put forward in respect of the Group Areas Act: that what was aimed at under the Group Areas Act was so fundamentally undemocratic and in conflict with the whole framework of our existing law, that the Act could never be made to work properly without some additional fundamental changes.

The Group Areas Act started off with a promise by the Minister of the Interior that it would be administered with justice to every section. But with every shift forward along its bumpy course it has moved farther and farther away from this promise; and before long, without doubt, the Nationalists will toss aside the mask and stand up and scream: "Throw the coolies on to the veld!" It is the logical, inevitable conclusion.

And so it is with Parliament. This institution has served as the formal, pious place where laws are manufactured—laws to eliminate opposition. But somehow this law-manufacturing has not kept pace with the rebellious human spirit, let alone outstripped it. What now? I cannot see that Mr. Strijdom has any alternative than to stand up and scream: "Shut up!" to the entire nation, and to try to enforce this directive with all the machinery of his

A HIGHER POLL TAX

THE poll tax is to be raised. This was announced last month by the Governor-General in his opening speech to Parliament.

He spoke only of the "general tax paid by Bantu males." In September, 1956, however, official quarters in Pretoria gave out the news that women as well as men would have to pay in taxation "for the welfare services they receive."

The strength and unity of the bus boycotters may have induced the Government to drop any intention it had of taxing the women. This article will therefore deal only with the proposed increase in the existing tax. This, we know, consists of a general tax of £1 paid yearly by men between 18 and 65 years, and a hut tax of 10s., paid by married men whose homes are in the reserves.

Reasons

level of income has been attained in the meantime."

THE official explanation is that the tax has not been changed since 1925, whereas a "considerably higher

Another factor is the strong and growing pressure in the Nationalist Party (and among some United Party adherents) for a policy of making Africans "pay for their own services," particularly education.

A third purpose, seldom mentioned but probably the most decisive of all, is the relief of the chronic shortage of workers on the farms, whose demands are not satisfied

even by the drafting of hard labour prisoners and men denied permits in the towns.

Taxes and Incomes

Workers are certainly paid more in money than 20 years ago. This is so even on farms. Labour tenants in the Transvaal-Orange Free State maize belt, for instance, are being paid an average cash wage of from £12 to £15 a year, which is about three times the amount paid in £1938. The average wage of Africans employed in industry increased from £45 in 1938 to £137 in 1955.

But prices also have gone up. The purchasing value of the pound is less than half of what it was in 1938, according to the government index of retail prices. Actually, the working class has suffered much more from inflation than the index suggests. It does not allow for the steep rise in rents and transport charges, or the heavy cost of fines and unpaid days spent in jail, that apartheid imposes on urban Africans. The real value of their pound is surely far below the official figure.

Both official and private investigations show that the majority of workers—69 per cent. in Johannesburg in 1952—get an income that is below the minimum needed for good health. In that year more than two families in every five had an income of less than £15 a month, which is the point where the Native Affairs Department expects tenants of municipal houses to pay the full or economic rental.

The bus boycott is a clear indication that the people will not accept any addition to their economic burden.

Other People's Taxes

The argument that taxes should go up if incomes increase will appear logical to some people. I don't think it is logical, when applied to people who are so poor that

THE END OF THE LINE . . .

modern police state.

The mask *must* be dropped, sooner or later. The Parliamentary conventions must become too restrictive. *What was once a convenient mantle for deception is now a straitjacket.*

No Right to Disagree

I am not suggesting that the Parliamentary system as such will be abandoned. No, it will be retained; but what will be abandoned is the pretence that it allows **any** one but the Strijdom clique **any** say in the government of the country.

The Senate, at the present stage, illustrates my argument more vividly than the Assembly. Just look at it: 77 Government Members on the one side, 12 Opposition Members on the other side. There is no disguise here, no pretence. And when **one** Opposition Senator (Rubin) spoke a little too cheekily, the 77 walked out.

Daily, hourly, the 77 Government Senators furnish proof that the only right they concede to the Opposition is the right to agree with the Government. Heavily-built, impatient Government Senators lumber to their feet and wag the finger of doom at their impudent critics.

The End of the Line

This mood has now spread to the Assembly. It is my firm belief that the reason for the new mood of impatience and irritability in the Assembly has been the bus boycott. The Nationalists came up against something for which they could find no answer. Threats failed, bullying failed, tricks failed, everything failed. They began to brood on the efficacy of Nationalist rule.

The truth is that the Nationalists have come to the end of the line. Either they flounder along, getting progressively weaker, or else they must bound forward to new extremes, new excesses, all-out fascism. They will venture the latter, of course. The Nationalist Party has by no means exhausted the possibilities for fascism.

Abandoning the mask of "Parliamentary democracy," therefore, becomes almost a trivial preliminary. This is life or death for the Nationalists!

Their task will be simplified, too, by the United Party, which has developed a pre-election strategy involving surrender of its function to oppose. "Die Burger" described the U.P.'s rôle accurately:

"They (the U.P.) do not want to fight the General Election over one or more big principles. They want to make it a grievances-election. Every little bit of annoyance or friction must be exploited—twenty votes here, ten votes there, over a dam, or a licence, or a tax, or a price increase. They believe that is how the Government came to power in 1948. Avoid therefore all big issues of principle. Avoid emotional issues."

That sums up the U.P.'s strategy precisely. Avoidance of issues of principle are going to lead the U.P. into all-out, sickening surrender of **all** its major principles and policies—and this is no exaggeration.

In abandoning the last vestiges of "Parliamentary democracy," therefore, the Nationalists have the U.P. on their side! And saddled with this unholy combination, South Africa enters the last, grim phase of the struggle for human liberty.

C.P.E.

to pay any tax they must go hungry and cold. But let us see if the principle is applied to all persons.

We need not consider the increase in income tax, since Africans are as liable to pay this as anyone else. A sounder comparison would be between the poll tax and the provincial personal tax, from which Africans are exempted.

This personal tax is payable by non-Africans who are 21 years or more. Married women are exempted, unless they pay income tax. In the Transvaal and Cape, persons earning £250 or less a year are also exempted, if married. Those with a bigger income are taxed on a sliding scale, on which the lowest notch is £1. In Natal a married man pays 10s. if his income is less than £150, and £1 if it is between £150 and £250.

The Transvaal and Natal rates are actually more favourable to the low-income groups than they were 20 years ago. Then the income limitation did not apply: everyone, on reaching the age of 21, had to pay the tax, which was £1.10s. in Transvaal, and £1 in Natal. Only in the Cape has there been an increase, from 10s. to £1, in the tax of persons with an income of just over £250.

At the £250 level and under, then, tax rates have not been raised. Few Africans earn more than £250 a year. To exclude them from the benefits of the unemployment insurance fund, parliament during February of this year adopted the figure of £273 as the minimum wage, including C.O.L., at which they become eligible for membership. That income is evidently regarded as well outside the reach of the great majority.

If Africans were taxed on the same basis as other people, they would benefit greatly. Firstly, they would become liable to pay tax at 21 years, instead of at 18; secondly, most of them would be exempted in the Cape

and Transvaal, and be called on to pay only 10s. in Natal.

Financial Segregation

As regards the second line of argument used to justify an increase in the poll tax, it is an old theory that Africans should be made to pay for "their services." But neither principle nor effects have improved with time. The poor members—at the Natal congress in 1955—that Africans paid indirect taxation on everything they bought, and also contributed to the State by the services they rendered. White is not made to pay, in taxation or fees, for his education, medical attention, or other services. The discrimination against the African is unjust and harmful to all of us.

But it is a standing rallying ground and war cry at Nationalist conferences. Even Dr. Verwoerd thought it necessary to object to this pressure, and tell his party

He might have been more specific, and for instance have shown that very little of the £36 million paid to the State by the mining industry would have been forthcoming if African miners were not grossly underpaid.

Logic and justice do not however prevail in these matters. Although all the evidence shows that the Africans is about as old as White settlement and administration in simply cannot afford to pay more, the Minister of Finance insisted in his budget speech in 1954 that they would have to make a bigger contribution to the costs of their education. Accordingly, the following year saw the creation of a Bantu Education Account into which parliament pays £6½ million, this being the maximum amount paid from

(Continued at foot of Page Ten)

Israel's Labour Party Defends Her War Policy

OBVIOUSLY shaken by the almost unanimous condemnation by progressives all over the world of Israel's invasion of Egypt, the United Workers' Party of Israel (Mapam), which was, at the time of the aggression, part of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's Cabinet, has in the past three months been very active sending material to progressive organisations everywhere putting forward Israel's case.

Mapam claims the right to do this as the most important, at least in numbers, of the organisations making up Israel's peace movement, which is affiliated to the World Peace Council, and of her youth movement affiliated to the World Federation of Democratic Youth.

Three essential factors which must be borne in mind to prevent a one-sided appraisal of the rights and wrongs of Israel's actions, says Mapam, are these:

First, there is the refusal by all the Arab States to recognise the existence of Israel or to enter into any discussions or negotiations with her at any time. In particular there is the insistence by these countries that a state of war has in fact existed between themselves and Israel ever since that country's foundation.

The Israeli port of Eilat, on the Gulf of Akabah, has been kept closed by Egyptian guns, and Israeli ships have been forcibly prevented from passing through Suez. The Fedayeen have been waging continual operations against the Israeli border settlements, killing hundreds of people.

Secondly, says Mapam, foreign states have pursued their own ends in the Middle East regardless of the interests of the people themselves. The situation has been made more easily inflammable by the actions of the U.S.,

By LIONEL FORMAN

Britain and France on the one hand, through the Bagdad war pact, and by the Soviet Union on the other hand through her arms aid to Egypt, without making any proviso that the arms should not be used for an attack on Israel.

Thirdly, there were the speeches of official spokesmen of every one of the Arab States that as soon as the time was ripe they would march on Israel and destroy that country.

In spite of these things, says Mapam, the party struggled to save peace and opposed the idea that war in the Middle East was inevitable, taking the view that an unstable peace was better than war.

At all the sessions of the World Peace Council the Israeli delegation consistently called for meetings with the delegations from the Arab countries, so that at least the most advanced sections of the nations—those united in the peace movement—could show their goodwill to one another. But the Arab delegates refused to have anything to do with the Israelis. Even at conferences of the World Federation of Democratic Youth or the Inter-

national Union of Students the position was the same.

And at the Asia-Africa conference in Bandung, Israel was not invited, and a resolution affecting Israel was adopted in her absence.

Until the very morning of the attack on Egypt, says Mapam, the party tried to preserve the peace. But once the die was cast and Israel was at war with her existence at stake, "our party decided to remain in the government and to share in the responsibility for the fate of the nation."

Whatever justice there may be in the above explanations, Mapam discredited itself completely in the way it allowed itself to be swallowed up in the wave of chauvinist hysteria which accompanied the attack on Egypt.

Only the six Communist Party representatives in the Israeli Parliament condemned the attack as unwarranted aggression which would solve none of Israel's problems but would, on the contrary, make infinitely more difficult the task of winning acceptance for Israel as one of the Asian family of nations. No matter how just were Israel's grievances against Egypt—and of course, the Israel Communist Party has also expressed its opposition to the ban on her shipping through Suez and the Eilat blockade—an aggressive war against Egypt was a criminal act which no progressive party could condone. All the more was this the case when the Israeli attack

Continued from Page Nine

general revenue for African education. The balance is supposed to come from poll tax collections.

Compulsion to Labour

The use of the tax to force tribesmen into wage earning Africa. To mention a few examples: the Natal government raised the tax in 1857 from 7s. to 11s. in the case of men who had not worked for a specified period for a European; Rhodes' Glen Grey Act of 1894 imposed a labour tax of 10s. on men who had not worked outside their districts for three months in twelve; and the Transvaal Republic at one stage exempted servants of White masters from the £2 poll tax.

Is the attitude of employers today very different from that adopted by George Albu when giving evidence before the Industrial Commission of 1896? He wanted a reduction in wages from 2s. 3d. a shift to 1s. 6d. for skilled work and to 1s. or less for ordinary labour. When told that this would lead to a shortage of workers, he proposed the use of a tax: "Why should a nigger be allowed to do nothing?" he asked.

Albu denied that these tactics could be called slavery. Yet that term, or something like it, has been applied by authoritative bodies like the International Labour Office

A HIGHER POLL TAX

to taxation, pass laws, deprivation of land, and other measures when used to force workers into employment for private persons.

The desirability of applying some pressure was considered by the Tomlinson Commission. It deplored the fact that the migratory peasants only "spend 62 per cent. of their working lives in active employment, and 38 per cent. in unpaid work or inactivity."

It calculated that "there are always on the average, 660,000 man years of labour available which are not economically applied. Provided employment were available, and the Bantu could be persuaded to change their working habits, this unused labour force could become a most important source of production." (p. 96.)

The Commission did recommend an increase in taxation. Its stated reasons did not include the aim of increasing the supply of workers. Whether or not this is the government's conscious aim, however, an increase in the tax will tend to "change working habits," and speed up the "integration" of the peasant in the modern economy. But if the farmers get the workers they clamour for, who will worry over the contradiction between the professed aims of apartheid and its actual results?

could be converted into one prong of an imperialist attempt to overthrow the independent Egyptian regime, said the Communists.

South African readers were disgusted by the crude arrogance and racialism which marked the presentation of the local Zionist press of its news of the attack on Egypt, and the way Israel's cause was identified with that of Britain and of France. Mapam did little to dissociate itself with this type of approach.

Speaking in the Israel Parliament on November 7th, the general secretary of Mapam described the "liberation of Gaza" as a "brilliant military operation, the like of which is difficult to find in the history of the world." Gaza would never be given up again and the only people in Israel who would advocate that were the Communists, "the one faction in this house which is beyond recall," he said.

(Months later Ben-Gurion was to bow to world pressure and agree to hand Gaza back, reluctantly bringing himself into line with the Communists—while the "anti-imperialist" Mapam was to break from the Cabinet on this issue and join with the fascists in refusing to quit Gaza.)

Mapam discredited itself further by the utter inconsistency of its stand on the question of the seizure of Egyptian territory. In one breath it insisted "we do not desire areas and regions which do not belong to us." In another it boasted: "The addition of the Gaza Strip to our homeland has increased the population of the Arab minority to almost half a million."

As the desert sands of the Middle East settle and the British, French and Israeli invaders pull out of the last inch of territory they so ill-advisedly attempted to seize, the problem of Israel's future looms larger than ever on the horizon.

She has been regarded by the Arab countries, ever since her foundation, as an imperialist outpost in their midst, to be used by the West as a willing instrument for crushing any Middle East moves to independence.

There have been two paths open to her. She has adopted the path of Ben-Gurion and his right-wing Labour Party—that of identification with the West, reliance on and subservience to the United States, and with her military forces serving as an advance guard for the British and French attacks on Egypt she has shown the Arab's worst suspicions to be correct.

The other path—that advocated by the Communists almost alone—was the path of identification with the people

TREASON TRIAL PROFILE

Mary Ranta: Women's Leader



THE fourth daughter of a family of five, Mary Ranta was born and grew up in the Pretoria district. She was nine when first she went to school but many days she stayed away to herd her father's cattle in the fields. She grew up the hard way, as so many leaders of note do. The churlish chiding of the winter winds which blew till she shrank and froze with cold did not harm her, nor did the scorching heat of summer. The rough and sometimes cruel games which herd boys play hardened her.

After school she found work at the Pretoria Mint as a "tea girl." Here she saw piles of coins, in trays, bins and iron cases and it struck her that here was so much money while her people were starving for lack of it. (The new South Africa says: "The people shall share in the country's wealth," but tarry a while.)

Mary was still working when her father, as of old African custom, told her the time had come for her to get married.

Always it rankled with Mary that when Africans asked for houses they got prisons; they got police baton charges and assaults when they asked for wage increases; bullets and teargas if they demonstrated against in-

of the Middle East, alliance with the socialist and anti-imperialist camps, so that in the course of time the hostility and suspicion of her neighbours could be overcome; just as the Soviet Union through her policy of co-operation has overcome the violent antagonism to her which was a feature of the policy of the Middle East governments of the past.

Today the Arab people suspect

justice; and death on the potato farms when they asked for food. In short, a snake for a fish.

So it was in 1946, after the shooting down of the African miners, that she became a typiste in the office of the African Iron and Steel Workers' Union. Three years later she was a union organiser. The sparks of hope for a better life were kindled these years by what she saw of the sufferings of her fellow Africans, and in 1948 after watching a huge Congress demonstration through the streets to welcome Dr. Moroka to Johannesburg, she took out a membership card. That year she was arrested for the first time, during a General workers' Union strike for higher pay. She was cautioned and discharged by the court but Mary had no thought of retreat or adopting a "hamba kahle" attitude.

By 1954 she was a shop steward of the Garment Workers' Union and the same year she was elected to the Transvaal executive of the African National Congress Women's League. The women's protests against pass laws started up and Mary was here, there and everywhere. During the demonstration to the Fordsburg Native Commissioner Mary engaged the Commissioner in public debate in front of the huge crowd of demonstrators . . . and won the argument. Yes, he said, he would receive the deputation, and convey its views. Yes, he would remain behind while the woman sang the freedom anthem. Fordsburg, George Gogh and Germiston, the women carried their protests across the Reef.

In 1955 Mary Ranta was elected national secretary of the Congress Women's League. She was one of the proud 20,000 women who made Strijdom look not like the lion but the lamb of the North. New plans were being laid, new protests prepared. Mary Ranta was writing her annual report to the 1956 national conference of the Women's League when at dawn, on December 5, the police swooped on the report, on all her papers, her private letters . . . and arrested her. Now, there she sits at the Drill Hall, one of the 156, that goodly company of the bold, while outside the country and the world watch.

JAMES HADEBE.

Israel more than ever before, but even now it is still possible for there to be a peaceful future for the Jewish nation in Israel. If the lesson of the past months is learned and the policies which led her to disaster are scrapped and replaced by a determined anti-imperialism, a whole-hearted alliance with the socialist and colonial people, Israel will once more find strong hands held out in friendship to her.

This is the second of two articles (the first appeared last month) showing that recent wage trends have not brought about a narrowing of the gap between European and Non-European wages.

WAGE INEQUALITIES

NOT only is the Non-European worker falling behind the European in terms of wages, but his standard of living is also steadily being reduced.

For prices, as well as wages, affect the cost of living and a person's standard of living depends upon the relationship of the two factors. One can have a high standard of living, even if prices are high, provided wages are commensurate with the price level. A low standard of living must surely result from high prices and low wages.

Cost of Living Index

The cost of living is measured by the official index of average retail prices of certain commodities and services in the nine principal towns of the Union, published in the monthly Bulletin of Statistics. 1939 prices are equated to 100 points; the present index of 206.9 (October, 1956) indicates that the price level has risen by 106.9 points, or that the cost of living is more than double what it was in 1939.

This index shows an increase of 32.3% between 1938 and 1945, and a further increase of 45.5% between 1946 and 1953, the sharpest increase being between 1950 and 1952.

European wages increased by 50.2% during the first period, and by 74.4% during the second period. Their sharpest rise was just after 1950/1. One can conclude therefore that (a) wages for European workers have been sufficient in both periods at least to keep up with the increase in the cost of living, (b) the increase in wages after the war was greater than during the war period, and (c) the sharp increase in wages which followed the sudden rise in prices is a natural procedure where workers are free to practice collective bargaining.

It is often argued that increases in wages push up prices. If this is so, **the European wage increases have been at the expense of the Non-Europeans, for the latter have had to pay the higher prices without having enjoyed the increases on their own wages.**

The increases in the Non-European wages during the war and after the war were as follows—quite a different pattern from the European:—

	African	Asian	Coloured
1938/9 to 1944/5	97.8%	113.2%	73.2%
1945/6 to 1952/3	40.0%	51.3%	46.8%

It is appropriate here to refer to the origin of the "index of retail prices—all items" as the official measurement of the cost of living.⁽¹⁾

It is used by the Wage Board in deciding wage recommendations, by the Government in legislating cost of living allowances under War Measure 43 of 1942 and other allowances, by employers in arguing against the granting of wage increases. While it is a useful guide to general price trends, it is based on middle class living standards and is not a good measurement of the cost of living of lower income groups. In fact, the Industrial Legislation Commission goes so far as to say that "the South African retail-price index cannot be accepted as an index of the cost of living of Non-Europeans."⁽²⁾

It is based on a study of European family budgets conducted in 1936 in the nine principal urban areas of the Union. The commodities and services included food, fuel and light, rent and rates, other housing (washing, cleaning and replacements), tobacco, clothing and footwear, transport, amusement and sport, medical and toilet, life insurance, direct taxes, miscellaneous.

(1) For full details see Wage Board Report—year ending 31/12/1951. U.G. 45—'53, p. 34, 35.

(2) Report, op cit. para. 247.

Unrepresentative Groups

The families studied all fell within the £225 to £450 income group. But the average annual income for all races in that year was £117 (the African's annual wage averaging only £42).

Living may be more expensive to-day for the middle than for the lower income group, or it may be the other way about; but in either case, the fact that the cost of living calculations are based on a comparatively small, well-off, unrepresentative group, and not on the vast, poor group, is quite unsatisfactory.

According to the survey in 1936, these families spent 34.7% of total expenditure on food. Surveys dating from 1939 to the present day of Non-European family budgets show an expenditure on food of from 55.6% to 78.1%.⁽³⁾ Clearly, then, an increase in the price of food hits the low paid wage earner very much more than the income group on which the Government has based the cost of living index. And it is mainly food which has sent up the general cost of living. For example, the food index for 1952 was 32 points above the index figure for 1951.

Not only is the low paid worker worse off because of so large a percentage of his income being spent on food, but the price of the food he buys has gone up much more than the price of food consumed by the higher income group.

Bread, which was 3.52d. per lb. in 1939, was 4.9d. in November, 1955—an increase of only 40%. But mealie meal, the basic diet of Africans, rice and potatoes, increased during that period by 177%, 346% and 284% respectively.

This increase in the cost of food alone, is sufficient to show that **the low-paid Non-European worker is worse off now than he was ten years ago.**

To what can the striking differences between war and post-war periods in relation to wage levels and prices be attributed?

Trade Union Pressures

During the war, and prior to the Nationalist Party's political victory, in 1948, the trade unions, and in particular those unions with African, Coloured and Indian membership, were in a much stronger position to use their power of collective bargaining than to-day.

Although excluded from the Industrial Conciliation Act the African members of trade unions had recourse to means other than conciliation boards in order to push up wages and improve their conditions. They could apply for wage board investigations which resulted in determinations, and they made full use of War Measure 145. In fact, between 1942 and 1945, no less than 43 awards were made under this war measure. In 1953, one was made!

African workers also are covered by agreements negotiated by registered unions. During this period there was a strong feeling of solidarity between African, Coloured and Indian workers, and there were leaders whose aim was to improve the lot of the lowest paid workers. The requirements of the African workers were not neglected, even though they were not represented directly on boards and industrial councils. Industry was expanding, new workers finding employment in factories for the first time, and trade unionists were busy organising them. Wage agreements naturally followed.

Government policy was not altogether opposed to improving the material welfare of the lowest paid workers—always excepting

(3) Experiments at Edendale: Department of Economics, University of Natal, 1951, p. 115.

Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the operation of bus services for Non-Europeans on the Witwatersrand and in the districts of Pretoria and Vereeniging, 1944, U.G. 31 '44, p. 18.

The family budgets of Coloured people, by Mrs. B. Helm, Race Relations, Vol. XVII No. 1-2, 1950, and others.

(4) Saamtrek, 6th July, 1956.

the lowest paid of all, farm labourers and African miners. In its report of 1940, the Wage Board specially welcomed investigations which had as their object the fixation of a minimum wage for unskilled workers. By 1946 the Board was able to report with some satisfaction that unskilled workers, mainly Africans, in all principal urban centres had now been covered by wage determinations.

Apartheid and Low Wages

Ten years have passed since then. The present Government is far from sympathetic to raising the level of the Non-European wages, nor does it favour bringing the European and Non-European standards of living closer together.

The close relationship between repressive legislation and low wages is evident. The Government's attack on the Trade Union movement followed the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. From May, 1952, one trade union official after another was removed from his post. This attack was carried out especially against those trade unions working for the lowest paid workers. There was also intimidation, police interference with trade union meetings and naturally a stiffening on the part of employers.

The Native Settlement of Disputes Act is designed to discourage trade unionism among Africans. Labour Department officials are to put the case for them. How does this work? We learn that during negotiations in Port Elizabeth this year for increased wages for unskilled workers, whose wages were £1.7.6 a week, the Mayor recommended a 10/- a week rise. But Mr. S. D. Mentz, Chairman of the Central Native Labour Board, said that he could "not subscribe to revolutionary measures" and believed in a "gradual evolutionary uplift for workers in dead-end occupations."⁽⁴⁾

The Native Building Workers' Act is, perhaps, the

clearest evidence so far of the Government's attitude towards wages. **For the first time, the law itself has provided for a different wage rate based on race.** The rate laid down for African building workers on skilled work averages 2/2 per hour, less than one-third of the earnings of the European artisan, namely 7/4 per hour. No matter how skilled the African may become, or whether he is doing the same work as the European, his standard of living is to be kept lower.

My figures have shown that, contrary to previous opinions, the "narrowing of the gap" during the war years did not constitute a reversal of previous tendencies, but an interlude of short duration. There has been a steady fall in the proportion of Non-European wages between 1945/6 and 1952/3 and in the absence of later figures we must assume that there has been no recent change in this trend.

I have also tried to show that the increase in the cost of living since 1945/6 has caused much greater hardship to the Non-Europeans than to White workers.

Wages of the workers in South Africa are affected by the political pattern: in other countries there is a much greater evening up of wage levels; here, **as long as the Non-European worker is regarded as an unskilled worker, denied the opportunity of advancement because of the industrial colour bar and refused equal pay for equal work, the disparity must continue.** It must, unhappily, be added, that the White worker shares the responsibility of perpetuating this disparity. The artisans will negotiate agreements for substantial increases for themselves, while accepting nothing, or a mere fraction of their own increase for the lowest grade employee.

Yet the demand for equality which grows out of inequalities must eventually overcome both the disparity of the wages and the disunity of the workers.

THE PEOPLE AND THE BOYCOTT

Continued from Page Seven

end, PUTCO, under the menacing tutorship of Mr. Schoeman, persisted in its folly, threatening to withdraw its buses, only to find its threat hurled back in its teeth. And on Friday, March 1st, came the final act of folly. During the day, boycott leaders, PUTCO representatives and members of the Chamber of Commerce met and discussed the "penny refund" suggestion. The suggestion was to be put by the boycott leaders to their people at mass meetings in the evening, for their acceptance or rejection.

But old habits die hard. The White aristocracy of the Chamber of Commerce and PUTCO had reached agreement; the boycott leaders were prepared to consider the matter. But before ever the meetings had been convened, statements had been given to the newspapers telling of the "settlement" of the boycott. Kiosks for paying out the refunds were being erected, and the pavement for the bus queues were already being reconstructed. *But the vital factor had been forgotten. There were the people.*

And the people are no longer to be dictated to. They have staked their right to be consulted. And they will neither be browbeaten by threats, nor stampeded by press and overlords. If the leaders had agreed to any settlement, they had no right to do so without consulting the people. At Moroka and Sophiatown the people spoke. There were drawbacks to the proposal; there would be queues for refunds at the end of the ride; there would be refunds for three months, and what thereafter? Could promises of goodwill be accepted, especially in Moroka, which was officially promised to be "temporary" for five years, and had already existed, insanitary, wretched and

flyblown, for over ten? At Moroka and Sophiatown the proposals were discussed, and turned down, soberly, calmly, and yet overwhelmingly.

Much has been made of the fact that at Alexandra's meeting there was neither discussion nor debate. Feeling ran high. Cries of "Azikhwela!" and "Goodbye PUTCO" drowned the attempts of the speakers to make themselves heard. Perhaps it would have been remarkable if, in the face of the insolent press and PUTCO assumption that the people do not count, tempers had not run high. *What, in any event, was the urgency for and answer to Friday's offer by, at latest, Friday night?* Was it not, apparently, an attempt to stampede the people into a hasty acceptance? And was not the following day's withdrawal by the Chamber of Commerce of the £25,000 refund pool, just another high-handed and contemptuous attempt to panic and brow-beat people they do not, even now, accept and understand as men—conscious, articulate and reasoning men? Old habits die hard. But die they must if there is to be a settlement of the boycott.

Perhaps now, in cooler atmosphere, there is room for further negotiation around the March 1st suggestion; there is room for counter-proposals by the boycotters, and for re-discussion by PUTCO and the Chamber of Commerce. But for negotiations to succeed there is needed above all one thing—the realisation that the people count! Sometime, unless they are determined to go down to bankruptcy in hidebound and dogmatic apartheid blinkers, PUTCO and the Chamber of Commerce will have to awaken to that fact. As Mark Twain once discovered of the Jews, today "Africans are also people. Only more so!"

MY COTTON COMES FIRST

These dialogues are not imaginary encounters but re-creations of conversations heard or told to the author, LAWRENCE GELLERT, in the Southern States of the U.S.A.

1

I brought back them shoes, 'cause they's too tight.

How do you know they're too tight? Did you wear them?

No, sir. I ain't wear 'em none. You can see they's spankin' clean—same's like you gave 'em to me.

I told you when you first came in here, we can't take back into stock shoes you put on your feet.

But I didn't wear 'em none. And I can't use 'em nohow if they don't fit me.

Why not try to sell them to somebody else?

Mister, nobody give me hardly nothin' for 'em.

That's too bad.

But I needs me shoes I can wear.

I'll sell you another pair.

I ain't got me no more ready made cash money, white folks. I done give you all I had. Please take these here back in 'xchange.

I can't do that. If my regular customers found out I let n-----s walk around with my stock of shoes on their feet—how long you think I'd last in business here?

But I can't go 'round in my bare feet, mister—and after paying you my last lovin' dime for pair of shoes.

I can't help you. And don't park here. You've wasted a lot of my time already. . . .

2

I want to see the Postmaster, sir.

What about?

I'm not gettin' my mail regular, sir.

How do you know?

Well, sir, I wrote 'way back to Bellas Hess from catalogue and sent 'em cash money to pay for some things my woman want and it ain't come.

How long is it since you sent?

Reckon 'bout three weeks—

And your name?

Robert Dale, sir.

Hey, George, got somethin' back there for Robert Dale?

I remember it knockin' around here. Wait a minute. Yeah, I found it. Here it is.

Uhuh! What did you say your name was?

Robert Dale, sir.

Well, this isn't for you.

Yes, 'tis. There's my name—it's the very bundle my woman waitin' for.

No, this ain't for you. Your name is Robert Dale. And it says on this package MISTER Robert Dale. And that's why it didn't get delivered to you.

But please, sir. . . .

Shall we give it to him this once, George? Well, all right—save us the trouble of sending it back. But don't you ever again dare get somebody send you anything addressed MISTER. Understand?

Yessir, but how I goin' to stop 'em?

Next time you write for somethin' tell 'em you ain't no mister—see. Or maybe go up there after it yourself and let 'em look at you so they'll know.

3

You been avoidin' me, Mose.

Nossir. I just ain't had me no chance to stop 'round—that's all.

Well, I can't spend me no time chasin' after you.

That all right, Mr. Graves. You don't has to chase 'round after me none.

You know I wouldn't if I didn't need you. And seem like you're gettin' biggity for your britches.

No sir.

Well, what I want you for is to clean up that growin' field near the creek.

Can't now, Mr. Graves.

And why not? You goin' to get paid for it.

That's what you say me last time.

Oh, yes, I forgot I owe you somethin' for last year. But I'll pay you when you get through this time.

Oh, I ain't worryin' 'bout that, Mr. Graves. I got me my own crop to look after.

Ah hell, you ain't got you no stand of cotton 'longside of mine. And with rain bound to come along anytime now, I got to get that cotton stored.

That's 'zactly same reason why I got to get my own cotton in.

You think your cotton just as important as mine?

No, sir, but . . .

Maybe you think you're just as good as white folks, too . . . ?

No, sir.

I done told you already, Mr. Graves, I can't—

If you want to hold on here, you got to be more co-operatin'.

Yessuh, but . . .

No buts about it. My cotton comes first. Yours can wait.

I done told you already, Mr. Graves, I can't—

It's settled. Tomorrow morning before sun-up. And you Goddam well better be there.

books

IF there is anything about Guy Burgess' life and actions that could inspire a biography, it is his sudden, and quite exceptional decision, to emigrate from Britain to the USSR. Up till that moment he had been, one feels, a fairly commonplace specimen of the younger British colonial office official—clever to the point of brilliance; extremely well educated and fairly well financed; objective and idealistic in his work but troubled in his conscience. Like so many others of the species he had rubbed shoulders with the brilliant and the talented—David Guest, John Cornford, John Strachey, Hector McNeil. Like many in the anti-fascist thirties, he hobnobbed with Communists, and joined the Communist Party for a short time. Unlike so many of them, he remained a professing "Marxist" to the end. But even this aberration, interesting though it is, is not enough to justify a biography. Burgess' big and unique story is the one of his migration to Moscow.

Snap Decision

And though the explaining of this momentous decision is, without doubt, the reason for Tom Driberg's biography of Burgess, it is precisely here that the book is at its flimsiest. It is hard to blame Driberg for the weakness. He has told the story as Burgess gave it to him; but if there had been, perhaps, less eagerness to be first off the press with the straight facts, less haste and more time for probing and questioning, the result would perhaps have rung less hollow. We are told that, without much warning, Donald Maclean says: "Look here, Guy, I think I'm going to clear out and go to the Soviet Union. Will you help me?" To which Burgess replies: "I think you're right. I don't see why I shouldn't come too." That, and no more.

Now it is true, as Driberg pertinently says, even if strange ". . . that those who leave Britain to live in other countries for private reasons of gain—to seek their fortune in America, to dodge taxes in Bermuda — or simply because they prefer another climate or way of life, should be deemed to have behaved in a natural, and even, sometimes, creditable way; whereas those who, for the sake of principle and at great cost to themselves, go to live in another country in the earnest hope of doing something, however small, to secure world peace should be abused as traitors." But that still does not, satisfactorily, explain why even a pro-

THE LONE WOLF

fessing "Marxist" should suddenly uproot himself, tear himself away from wife and family and background, in the Burgess fashion.

No Going Back

A crank, it might be argued, could have a sudden rush of blood to the head. But from Driberg's picture, Burgess is neither crank nor fanatic. He cannot have been unaware of the sensation his departure would create, or of the fact that, political passions of the day being what they are, there can be no going back on the decision for some time to come. Grand though the gesture for peace may well have been, the reasoning behind it remains obscure and perplexing.

To those who ask: What possible purpose could Burgess have imagined would be served by adding one lone Britisher to the already formidable Soviet movement for peace?" it must be answered that here at least the act is in character. For Burgess, from first to last, is the lone wolf. When he

breaks with the Communist Party, it is because he believes that Burgess, the independent radical in the Foreign Office, can more effectively influence Britain on the road to peace and against appeasement than can Burgess, rank and file member of the Party. In the end, as he himself came to realise, his individual influence against the massed forces of class and tradition amounted to nothing—an irritating flea-bite on the Tory body politic. But, despite the disillusion, the lesson failed to be understood. And so, perhaps, the lone, spectacular "flight to Moscow," again attempting so much and accomplishing so little.

Firm Faith

Driberg paints a vivid picture of Burgess, the lone wolf, disillusioned not with Moscow, but in it, disillusioned with his own failures to shake the world single handed, clinging pathetically to the volume of Jane Austen he carried with him on his travels, lonely for his own country,

living in Russia but cut off by language from the Russian people. But, even through that pathetic picture, something of the profound honesty and sincerity of the man glimmers, even in the moments of his disillusionment, even in the midst of the slanders and the libels that have been freely spread about him in the Western world, Burgess keeps faith in socialism and in Marxism. "I prefer to live in a Socialist country," he tells Driberg. "My inadequate Russian is the main thing holding me back from applying to join the Communist Party again." Perhaps now at last, when it is almost too late to count, Burgess has learnt that the lone wolf does shake worlds. But if so, it is another of those vital facets of the man and his doing which Driberg, always a readable, sympathetic and concise narrator, fails to probe and analyse in his "Portrait with background."

GUY BURGESS: A portrait with background. By Tom Driberg. Published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson. Price: 12s. 6d. L.B.

THE SECOND IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON AFRICAN WRITING

AMONG THE SOTHOS

By HENRY G. MAKGOTHI

THE first works in the Sotho literature were either written by missionaries who had learnt the language, or by persons under the influence of missionaries. And so was produced a species of literature that in content, at any rate, might be likened to the type of literature that flourished in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Just as mediaeval literature was made subservient to the paramount aim of spreading the Christian ideology, so in very early Sotho literature, the object of the writer was definitely other-worldly; it was to teach the reader how to lead the "good life" so that he could find his reward in Heaven. Translations from English classics such as Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress"—**Leoto la Mokroeste** were produced and original works such as **Fokisi** also saw the light of day. The latter purports to be a biography of a young shepherd who is mystified by the phenomena of nature—the sun daily rising in the East and pursuing its unerring westward course; the rhythm of the seasons—to Fokisi these are manifestations of the Supreme Being. He makes up his mind to renounce all earthly ambitions and to go on a pilgrimage to "The East"—**Ntsoanatsatsi**, where he hopes to find the Cause behind all

these things.

First Translations

This type of literature did not flourish long, for South Africa was being drawn rapidly into the orbit of the capitalist system. The rapid industrialisation after Union and the consequent proletarianisation of the African became the decisive factor in rescuing literature from the blissfulness of the other world, and imparting to it its secular character. Significantly so far as Sotho literature is concerned, this new trend was ushered in by, amongst others, Solomon T. Plaatjie, the first secretary general of the African National Congress. His contribution was a superb translation of the works of Shakespeare into the Tswana language. In rendering the great tragedies and comedies into Tswana, Plaatjie experimented with the potentialities of the Sotho language in a manner that few after him have ever dared attempt. If it ever becomes necessary to argue the capability of African languages to serve as vehicles for the best expression of human experience and feeling, many will no doubt draw inspiration from Sol Plaatjie's works.

With the advent of secular literature, the African began to discover himself,

as it were. He began to develop an interest in his past. Histories in the vernacular were produced, and with them the stories of the exploits of the Kings. This was the period in which Mofolo's **Chaka** was produced, as also much of the praise poetry.

New Themes

At this time, also, and as a further development in African literature, young writers, obviously influenced by English models, started to write novels with simple love themes such as **Pit-seng**, the story of the courtship of a young village couple. What appears important in writers of this period is the contradiction between rural and urban life. The hero is beckoned by the new life in the Golden City, **Gauteng**, which he reaches through the offices of the ubiquitous Native Recruiting Corporation; works for some time in the mines, and is gradually drawn into the vortex of urban life. At first the hero is pictured making a fool of himself trying to assimilate Western ways, but gradually, after a painful process he succeeds in adjusting himself. Such, for instance, is the theme of **Rammone wa Kgalagadi** (Rammone the Kalaharian) and Matlosa's **Molablehi**. In the latter, however, the evils of city life prove too powerful for the hero, whose life eventually comes to a tragic end.

The literature of this period is, naturally, strongly didactic and it is not uncommon for the writer, in the

(Continued on Back Page)

midst of unfolding the story, to address a lengthy sermon for the edification of the reader. As for character development, this is yet an unknown art. The writer's air is no longer to point out the "straight and narrow path" but in a world which is still the domain of the devil, he attempts to show the snares and give gratuitous advice as to how they can be avoided, as for instance in Segoe's **Monomo ke Mohuli ke Monoane** ("Riches are like the dew or mist that disappear before the rising sun.")

In his introductory article on African writing, Joe Matthews observed that there is a marked tendency towards escapism in African literature. However correct this might be with respect to the other vernacular literature, it does not appear to be true of Sotho literature. On the contrary. Here we find a genuine attempt to grapple with reality, and if the writers fail to give a convincing portrayal of life, it is only because they are themselves poorly equipped to write about the life about them. The Sotho writer is not yet disillusioned to the point where he wants to seek refuge in a world of his own making.

The nearest the Sotho writers have been able to get in producing "escapist" literature is in such works as **Pitso ea Linonyana** (The Conference of the Birds) and the various African folk tales. A further work which might possibly fall under this classification is **Sebogoli sa Ntsoana Tsatsi**.

Pitso ea Linonyana is a highly humorous description of a mass convention of birds which has been summoned to work out a plan to liberate the birds from the "oppression" they suffer at the hands of animals. The "Credentials Committee" was faced with the difficulty of admitting to conference certain friends who, whilst being feathered, nevertheless could not fly.

The folk tales and animal stories normally relate some fantastic story in which the small animal, usually the hare, outwits a stronger animal, the lion for example.

Sebogoli sa Ntsoana Tsatsi is a work in which the writer attempts to dramatise the primitive customs and superstitions of an African tribe. The writer, however, proves himself unequal to his task, and the story ends in a rather abrupt and confused manner.

But even such literature cannot properly be described as escapist. It is a way of life that belongs to the dying past. Perhaps a more satisfactory description of such literature is romantic.

Today's Challenge

There is a crying need for a progressive Sotho literature that portrays the struggles of the people of South Africa for a better life and freedom. This is the fundamental fact of the period we live in. This means that the writer must open a new front in the general struggle of the people led by the African National Congress. It is possible to explain, as indeed Joe Matthews did, why literature in the African languages does not flourish. Not only are the Africans politically and economically oppressed, but their culture is oppressed too. Dr. Verwoerd and the Nationalist Party are making desperate attempts to halt the march of the people to freedom. With the publication of such journals as N.A.D. orientated "Bantu-Bantoe" and the introduction of Bantu Education, the Nationalists have launched a major offensive on the cultural front. We can explain the reasons for the lack of a genuine peoples' literature in the vernaculars. But we cannot explain away the urgent needs of a genuine progressive literature and the need to consolidate the struggle on the cultural front. If our aim is to work for the translation into practical life of the Freedom Charter, then we can no longer afford to remain indifferent to the challenge facing us on the cultural front.

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