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RESERVE (832)

THE 'LABOUR ARISTOCRACY' IN INTERPRETATION OF THE
AFRICAN WORKING CLASSES.

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The 'Labour Aristocracy' in interpretation of the
African Working classes.

Inequalities between different sections of each national working class as well as between different national working classes have produced a series of theories based upon one or another variants of the labour aristocracy hypothesis. This is widespread in all schools of social science literature but is more clearly theorised in the radical tradition.

Thus,

'The key to the internal structure of Kuwaiti society was the fact that almost all physical labour and many white collar^{jobs} were carried out by Non-Kuwaitis who formed a deprived proletariat within Kuwaiti society. What distinguished this body of migrant workers from similar forces elsewhere in the Gulf was that by the 1960's they formed the majority of the population. The total of Kuwaitis in employment that is, the least privileged citizens was estimated at 43,000 in 1970; of these 36,000 were white collar workers of some kind or another... While class differences existed within native Kuwaiti society the major differences throughout the system was between Kuwaiti citizens as a whole and the opposed, imported proletariat who performed menial labour. ...non Kuwaiti's were excluded from trade unions; they were not allowed to join Kuwait unions, nor were they allowed to form their own!

F. Halliday. Arabia without Sultans. Penguin, 1974. pages 5, 434 to 437.

'Not every mine worker in Australia was a wage slave. Miners worked in South Australian Copper or the Victorian gold mines for thirty years on terms by which they were paid a share of the value of the ore they mined. Even when wage slavery could not be avoided the wages were usually quite highthis gave everyone the possibility of becoming a homeowner and often a surplus for dabbling in investments'.

H. McQueen. A New Britannia. Penguin Australia, 1971. page 145.

"After the political apparatuses of the Tsarist regime had been destroyed power in most Moslem borderlands passed into the hands of the well-to-do peasants, the skilled urban proletariat above all the railroad workers, the Russian garisons, and the lower echelons of the old Tsarist colonial bureaucracy. These groups utilized the Soviet government and party machines to intensify the economic and political exploitation of the native populations.

The 1917 Revolution therefore, brought to the Moslem areas not the abolition of colonialism but colonialism in a new form; it established a regime..which may be called proletarian colonialism'.

R. Pipes. The formation of the Soviet Union. Atheneum Press, 1974.
Page 191.

'There is usually a big disproportionate gap between the wage levels of the skilled and unskilled, the settled and migrant workers in general, and between the more concentrated and organized workers of industry, mining harbours and railways, on the one hand, and the dispersed unorganized workers of agriculture, the building industry trade and especially the domestic workers, on the other. This gap is also connected with the fact of the missing links in the sectoral structure of the economy (particularly of industry) and even in the educational pyramid. This justifies - at least temporarily - to make an approximate distinction between a small group of settled workers skilled in a higher (foreign) technology, of a quasi-'labour aristocracy' with wages usually adjusted to a imported income level, on the one hand, and the wide masses of unstable, unskilled, badly paid and only semi-proletarianized and migrant workers, on the other. The intermediate strata and mainly the socio-politically decisive and well organized and class conscious army of the workers of the large scale industries are lacking or hardly developed'.

T. Szentcs. The Political Economy of Underdevelopment. Akademia Kiado, Budapest, 1971. page 277.

Vulgar marxism is not simply Marxism made 'popular' but one that takes marxist categories and turns them into mere descriptive analogies thus robbing marxism of its power to penetrate the surface appearance of phenomenon. Marxist categories are related to the methodological core of marxist theory. It follows that such terms as '-labour aristocrat', 'Lumpen-proletarian' etc., are analogies which only become scientific if their polemical content is destroyed. The history and trajectory of the analogy 'labour aristocracy' would illustrate how marxist social science and political debates gave it a specific formulation which produced over-simple, reductionist explanations for the class politics of many national working classes.

The expression 'aristocracy of labour' was widely used in mid and late 19th century Britain. It was applied to the highly skilled and consequently, strongly unionized strata of the working class which was socially and politically allied to the 'middling' class of the time. In 1858 Engels referred to the English working class as becoming more and more bourgeois and in 1892 Engels referred to the skilled artisans in the trade unions as forming a 'aristocracy among the working class'. In this context he referred to the working class as a whole as having shared to some extent in particular benefits of Britains industrial monopoly:- thus explaining why ' since the dying out of Owenism, there has been no socialism in England.' In a letter to Marx in 1889 during which the analogy 'aristocracy of labour' is specifically used, Engels referred also specifically to the 'bourgeois respectability' of the socialist leaders of the new unskilled workers union. The status of the analogy is uncertain as Engels did not construct a theory of the labour aristocracy, he took the term over from the everyday language of the debate on English trade unionism. Indicative of its lack of precision is the elasticity of the stratum of the working class referred to. For Engels, with no disagreement from Marx, it meant the organized trade union movement of the mid-Victorian period. However, Engels is uncertain of the cultural ideological levels of determination of working class 'respectability' and in the main stresses the material base of the skilled workers and artisans. It is difficult to know how seriously such comments as the following should be taken. 'Even Tom Mann who I regard as the finest socialist of them, is fond of mentioning that the will be lunching with ~~the Labour Party~~ ~~the Labour Party~~'.

By Lenin the analogy of labour aristocracy was variously applied to trade union and social democratic leaderships, the 'upper' skilled strata of the working class and even at some points during the First World War, the whole of the working class in the imperialist social formations. Since the Russian Revolution, in addition to its more traditional definitions the term labour aristocracy has also been used in conjunction with critiques of bureaucracy inside working class organizations or as a description of the relationship between a indigenous metropolitan working class and immigrants as well as the relationship between a 'metropolitan' working class and a working class in

1. See K. Marx and F. Engels. On Britain. Moscow, 1972, for these points by Marx and Engels.

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backward capitalist social formations.² One of the premises of unequal exchange theory in the work of Arrighi, Emmanuel and Samir Amin is that workers of developed capitalist social formations 'benefit' from imperialism to the extent that antagonism between rich and poor countries is likely to prevail over that between classes.³ According to unequal exchange theory the exploitation of producers in backward capitalist social formations has two moments. Firstly they are exploited by their own capitalists, and secondly, through the mechanisms of unequal exchange by the capitalists of the advanced capitalist social formations. Kay and Bettelheim in their critique of unequal exchange theory argue in opposition a seemingly paradoxical argument based upon Marx. A rise in real wages therefore does not necessarily mean a fall in the rate of exploitation. Almost invariably highly paid workers will be the most exploited 'A low paid worker, illiterate, poorly housed, unhealthy and poorly equipped is much less productive than a skilled, highly paid worker who is well fed and well equipped. It takes him longer to produce the equivalent of his wage and therefore the proportion of the working day he is able to give away free is much lower. The more productive highly paid worker, on the other hand produces his wage in a much shorter time and is therefore able to perform much more surplus labour'.⁴ By implication, therefore, the 'affluent' workers theorised in the sociology in the developed capitalist social formations are much more exploited than badly paid workers in backward capitalist social formations. Bettelheim argues 'the more the productive forces are developed, the more the proletarians are exploited, that is the higher the proportion of surplus labour to necessary labour...this means that in spite of their lower wages the workers of under-⁵ developed countries are less exploited than those of the advanced countries'.

2. See S. Castles and G. Kosak. Immigrant workers and class structure in Western Europe. Oxford University Press, 1971. J. Berger and J. Mohr. A. Seventh Man. Penguin, 1975.

3. See A. Emmanuel Unequal Exchange. New Left Books, 1972. page 176. S. Amin's formulations which are sometimes contradictory can be found in Unequal Development. Harvester Books, 1976, and Accumulation on a world scale. Monthly Review, 1975.

4. See G. Kay. Development and underdevelopment. Macmillan, 1975. pages 53 to 54.

5. See A. Emmanuel. Unequal Exchange. New Left Books, 1972. Appendix 1. Theoretical comments by C. Bettelheim page 302.

This potentiality of 'high' wages is not the automatic reflection of the level of development of the productive forces but is determined at the political level through class struggle, and as well as by the relationship between capitals!

Unequal exchange theorists do not turn to Lenin's writing on the labour aristocracy but to categories of centre-periphery which are now widely accepted. Certain convergences do exist thus Lenin in the 1920 preface to his imperialism states 'capital exports yield an income of eight to ten thousand million francs per annum, at pre-war prices and according to pre-war bourgeois statistics now of course they yield much more, obviously out of such enormous super profits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists can squeeze out of the workers of their own country) it is possible to bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy. And this is just what the capitalists of the advanced countries are doing, they are bribing them in a thousand different ways direct and indirect, overt and covert' What is clear is that Lenin nowhere considers this bribes as passing through and deriving from the process of production in the metropolitan countries. High wages do not come from the workers position in the capitalist production process; they are purely the dividend of parasitism. Polan states acutely that here 'the labour aristocrats have become the couponclippers of the working class'⁶

In Lenin's arguments he oscillates between political-ideological determinations and a crude materialist sociology. In his writings colonial superprofits make it possible to bribe 'labour ministries', 'Labour representatives 'work belonging to the narrow craft unions', 'office employees' etc. Parliamentary democracy makes it necessary that 'political privileges and sops' are granted, such as lucrative and soft jobs in the cabinet, in parliament and on diverse committees, on the editorial staff of substantial legally published newspapers or on the management councils of no less substantial 'bourgeois serving' trade unions. This allows for all sorts of reforms and blessings to the workers', 'fairly-large sized sops for

6. See T. Polan, The Leninist conception of reformism. Unpublished paper, 1976. This excellent paper is a fine critique of Lenin. Two recent orthodox statements are the labour aristocracy published by the Communist Unity Organization 1973 and Y Varga's essay The Labour Aristocracy after the 2nd World War in his political Economic Problems of capitalism Progress books Moscow 1968. This essay admits, indirectly, the weakness of Lenin's writings on this subject.

obedient workers in the form of social reforms'(insurance, etc).⁷

Thus 'labour aristocrats' could apparently be either the totality of the working class, a section of the working class (skilled artisans), white collar workers, members of certain unions or trade union and other labour leaders. Earlier crucial distinctions between the labour aristocracy as a strata inside the working class and the trade union and political leaderships have a tendency to vanish in Lenin's latter writings. Furthermore the concept has been used to explain both the 'conservatism' of a working class and 'conservatism within a working class'. Clearly there is no definite materialist theory of the 'labour aristocracy' and it is questionable whether there could be such a theory. For it is not evident what sort of questions such a theory would answer. If it is designed to explain the non-occurrence of revolution it is simplistic because any working class when analysed has never been an undifferentiated mass of wage slaves nor has there ever been any simple correlation between a degree of privileged and political and industrial behaviour (what matters after all is not the fact of differentials but what type of differentials and above all in what political and social context they operate. Two of the most interesting marxist historians of the 19th century English working class, Gray and Foster, by no means ignore the cultural ideological level of determinations inside the working class but ultimately are forced to accept Lenin's sociology of the labour aristocracy thus isolating the question of the ideological mediations of bourgeois hegemony in all strata of the working class.⁸

Hobsbawm, perhaps more than any other marxist historian, has been at pains to emphasise the sociological differentiation inside the 19th and 20th century working class. His work has situated a labour aristocracy without reference to the importance of cultural levels of determination and continues the tradition of Lenin's trajectory into a crude materialism.

7. See V. Lenin On Britain Lawrence and Wishart 1972 for these quotations. A disappointing account of Lenin's positions is in M. Nicolaus the theory of the labour aristocracy vol.21 No.11, April 1970. Monthly Review.

8. See R. Gray the labour aristocracy in Victorian England Oxford 1976 and R. Gray Styles of life, the labour aristocracy in 19th century Edinburgh in International Review of Social History 18, 1973 J. Foster Class struggles in the Industrial Revolution Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1975. Mid-Victorian skilled working class union politics are analysed in R. Harrison Before the socialist Routledge Kegan Paul 1965. Critiques of Foster are J. Saville in Socialist Register 1974 Merlin Press 1974 and G. Stedman-Jones in new left Review no 90 March - April 1975.

positions in labour history have deeply influenced a whole generation of socialist historians. In *Industry and Empire* Hobsbawm estimates that 'in 1867 the labour aristocracy accounted for not more than 15 per cent of the labour force'.⁹ He also states that 'during the years 1851 to 1881 the number of employees in engineering, machine and machine tool manufacture, and in ship building doubled. This indicates that demand for such workers was in excess of supply as the trade unions fought to maintain long apprenticeships and opposed the erosion of training standards'.⁹ The sociological defence of Lenin allows the formation and strength of working class reformism to be isolated at the level of skill differentiation inside the work situation. While Gray and Foster are aware of the need to examine the relationship between working class ideology as a variant of bourgeois ideology Hobsbawm essentially, unlike EP Thompson, is uninterested in the forms and content of working class culture and ideology. Yet in his interpretative essays on *Revolutionaries* and in *The Age of Revolution* he shows himself to be aware of the crucial importance of French Jacobinism and English artisan radicalism as political movements. It is not Hobsbawm but Gray who can argue 'the appeals of Gladstonian liberalism, freedom, formal legal equality, individual dignity and social recognition were familiar themes in upper working class ideology before 1867'.¹⁰ It is a liberal historian Pelling who unknowingly partially presents a 'marxist' critique of the assumptions behind the labour aristocracy conceptualisation which Foster and Gray do not fundamentally challenge in their clarificatory work.

Foster argues from his case studies that in Oldham in 1860 that the labour aristocracy was a third of the adult male work force. This stratum was

9. See E. Hobsbawm *Industry and Empire* Penguin 1972 pages 244-5 and E. Hobsbawm *The Labour Aristocracy in 19th century Britain* in E. Hobsbawm *Labouring Men* Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1964 and E. Hobsbawm *Lenin and the aristocracy of labour* in *Monthly Review* vol. 21 No. 11 April 1970 10R. Gray *Critical notes on Moorhouse the political incorporation of the British working class in sociology* vol. 9 No. 2. January, 1975 page 102 see also discussion in S. Meacham *English working class unrest before the first world war* in *American History Review* vol. 727 no. 4 1972.

10. See H. Pelling *Popular politics and Society in late Victorian England* Macmillan 1968 page 45 to 46.

surrounded by a cocoon of new institutions—adult education, temperance, the co-operative society, methodism etc., which linked the labour aristocrat to his employers. Foster argues that it was the creation of this stratum that was the key component in the mid-19th century stabilization. This new stratum is identified with the use of sub-contracting and pace-making following the elimination of craft control and is obviously seen as a fundamentally new form of capitalist social control now operating in the work situation itself. Foster's use of the concept thus implicitly rejects Engel's identification of the labour aristocracy with that part of the trade union movement which retained craft control. While the engineering industry has been the classical example of the labour aristocracy thesis it is difficult to locate this new strata in a similar way in other industries. Thus in spinning the relationship between the pace making stratum and its unskilled assistants was predominantly a relationship within the family. Hobsbawm uses as significant indices of the Victorian labour aristocracy 'prospects of social security' 'conditions of work', 'relations with social strata above and below him', 'general conditions of living', 'prospects of future advancement', and most importantly the 'regularity and level of earnings'. Using these indices he states that until the beginning of the twentieth century the labour aristocracy lived closer to the lower middle class. Pelling response is that the location of a labour aristocracy is an over simple explanation of non-revolutionary ideas among the English working class. Pelling faults Hobsbawm for defining the labour aristocracy almost exclusively in terms of their wages and their structural location in industry. The variations of ideas on reformist politics cannot be mechanically reduced to work situation. On the contrary Pelling suggests, it was in most cases . . . labour aristocrats, engineers like Burns, Mann and Mahon, who were the most militant reformists and socialists'. Hobsbawm and Pelling both discuss the blurring of internal differentiation as mechanization 'down graded' separate crafts and labour skills. Pelling states 'the process of change gradually invaded separate crafts, one after the other, reducing them all to a situation in which the skill of the workers was something that could be readily 'picked up'.¹¹ Hobsbawm maintains that 'the competition of machinery and the threat of down grading compelled some of the most 'aristocratic' Unions to affiliate with the Labour Representative Committee'.¹¹ The continuing introduction of new technology brought with it a breakdown of the apprenticeship system. It meant that the 'unskilled' when

11. See E. Hobsbawm the labour aristocracy in 19th century Britain in E. Hobsbawm *Labouring Men* Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1964 page 289.

out to work at a machine became to that extent 'skilled' and therefore indispensable. Standardization, subdivision and mechanization drew skilled and unskilled ultimately together. The new 'labour' aristocracies' of the twentieth century had a totally different location in production in comparison with the Victorian 'labour aristocrats'. Thus in engineering the new forms of skill's were based upon literacy and technical instruction and also included quasi supervisory functions. The control over production possessed in an earlier period of engineering was lost.

As a socialideological phenomenon the labour aristocracy existed but it did not coincide in any simple way with any particular strata of the working class. The anti-war movements of 1916-18 and the splits inside social democracy can largely be written in terms of the leadership provided by the metal workers. The Belin shop stewards Merckheim's union in France, the British shop stewards, the Putilov works in Petrograd, the Manfred Weiss works in Budapest, the Turin and Milan metal workers - all formed those sections of the labour aristocracy of Europe which rejected social democratic forms of class collaboration. The early German communist party in the 1920's had a cadre which rested largely on the basic rock of skilled proletarians, especially the metal workers.¹² Borkenau argues that in one sense the German Communist party in spite of its theory was a party of the 'workers aristocracy' with 40 per cent of the total membership skilled workers and 28 per cent of the membership unskilled workers.¹³ Varga argues when in Hungary in 1918-19 a sharp inflation plucked down the living standards of the workers it was skilled workers, who were receiving the highest rates, who reacted far more vehemently...than did badly paid workers. They joined the communist party'.¹⁴ The role of the labour aristocracy depends upon the precise political conjuncture and not crude economic determinants. In England during the Boer war it was the lower strata of the working class that gave the greatest support for national chauvanism.¹⁵ In Germany it was among the skilled workers that the opposition to the 1914-18 war found its base support.

12. See E. Hobsbawm *Confronting defeat: the German Communist Party in* E. Hobsbawm *Revolutionaries* Meridian Books 1973 page 45.

13. See F. Borkenau *World Communism* University of Michigan Press 1971 pages 364 - 365.

14. See Y. Varga *Political Economic Problems of capitalism* Progress publishers 1969 page 127.

15. See R. Price. *Imperial War and the British Working Class* Routledge 1972.

The labour aristocracy thesis in sub-saharan Africa has somewhat diverse and eclectic roots. Historically the first exponents were the colonial administrators themselves who both feared the early African working class as a 'disruptive' element politically and publicly stated that any advance of urban wage rates would be at the expense of the peasants.¹⁵ In South Africa it was sections of the Communist Party who have argued that the white working class was a 'labour aristocracy' from its origins and oscillate between locating it as a strata inside the working class or as a strata 'bought off' and incorporated into the new petit bourgeoisie.¹⁷ In post independent Africa the labour aristocracy thesis has been utilized by both 'radical' and 'conservative' social scientists and has also been used by post colonial states to eliminate or lessen the organisational autonomy of their national working classes. Social scientists articulating the nationalist ideology of 'nation building' have not been reluctant to speak the language of populism in expressing 'concern' over the tendency which existed in the immediate post colonial period for the organized and semi-skilled working class to raise the value of their labour power. For Frantz Fanon theorizing from his Algerian experience the unionized urban workers are 'the most comfortably off fraction of the people'. The significance of their privileged position Fanon believed is that the urban workers and their unions form alliances which allow them to maintain their position in the post colonial state.¹⁸ Worsley, while generally following with approval Fanon's belief in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat in comparison with urban unionized workers does not qualify the sharpness of Fanon's formulations. 'Only in exceptional cases, such as the African miners in the towns of the Copper Belt do proletarians have a highly privileged position, both in terms of income and 'job property', strongly

15. See A. Layton and D. Savage Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963 Frank Cass 1974 for illustrations of this and P. Gutkind The emerging of African proletariat Mc Gill University 1974.

17. See H.J. and R.E. Simons Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950 Penguin 1969.

18. See F. Fanon The Wretched of the Earth Penguin 1967 pages, 86, 86, to 98.

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defended by trade unions'. However like Fanon he does not locate the income differentials between different strata ~~from~~ ^{ata} the process of production and indirectly, is forced to accept the bribe formulation.¹⁹ 'Radical' African populists parties in power have echoed the colonial government attacks on organized trade unionists when they articulate wage demands as 'labour aristocrats'. Fitch and Oppenheimer in their interpretive study of the political economy of Ghana in the era of Nkrumah, register a dissent from this. 'Bad working conditions, low conditions, low wages and high unemployment all undermine the theory that the Ghanaian worker is part of a labour aristocracy'.... 'It was not until 1958, seven years after Nkrumah became Prime Minister, that real wages rose above prewar levels. Independence brought a temporary increase in real wages, but by 1963 they had again fallen below the 1939 level'.²⁰

Saul and Arrighi, two influential radical social scientists, have published a series of articles on African social development in which the 'labour aristocracy' formulation receives its most systematic theorization. In their analysis, urban workers could be internally differentiated into two categories. There was, firstly, the lower stratum of workers, those who received minimum wages or slightly more than minimum wages. These were labour migrants and a unproletarianized stratum of mostly semi-skilled urban workers who were employed by multinational corporations and earned between three to five times more than the lower stratum. These 'privileged' workers were stabilized and permanently committed to wage labour but too far removed from the conditions of the lower stratum to have any common working class consciousness or characteristics. Arrighi and Saul argue that this stratum of workers was produced by international capital which could offer higher wages to the relatively few workers employed in its capital intensive units of production. Thus Saul and Arrighi infer that this stratum is merely the 'passive agents' of international capital in its alliance with the 'educated elite' and in fact indistinguishable from the latter. It is for this reason that both social categories are called 'the labour aristocracy' and denied in this analysis any location as a strata inside the working class. At the same time Arrighi and Saul do not allow them

19. See P. Worsley Fanon and the Lumpenproletariat in Socialist Register 1972 Merlin Press pages 225-228.

20. See B. Fitch and M. Oppenheimer Ghana: end of a illusion Monthly Review Press Chapter 7 Politicians and labor aristocrats' pages 96 and 98.

any location inside the various fractions of the African petit bourgeois class.²¹ A latent antagonism to the 'labour aristocracy' in its contradictions with the ruling classes of such states as Tanzania and Zambia also form an important aspect of Saul and Arrighi's formulations. The labour aristocracy formulation allows and legitimates the state control of the working class in many African social formations as long as the state rhetorically claims to guard the interests of both the peasants and the lower strata of the working class against the wage claims of the 'labour aristocrats'.²²

As Samir Amin has noted 'Saul and Arrighi have been too quick to place their confidence in the work of Turner'.²³ Much of their empirical data as well as the essential method of H.A. Turner structures the Saul and Arrighi formulations. Turner, a well known social scientist, argued in England in the 1960's and 1970's against both the conservative and labour governments attempts to control strikes and hold down wages. Turner, in a series of publications, argued that trade union wage demands were not primarily responsible for inflation, that 'wild cat', unofficial strikes were the result of the bureaucratization of the trade union organizations and that wages in the United Kingdom were significantly lower than in the majority of western European capitalist countries.²⁴ Significantly Turner was almost isolated in his arguments inside the industrial relations establishment. In Africa, however, Turner undertook a series of investigations into wages, incomes and prices in both Tanzania and Zambia for the International Labour Office from a rather different perspective. In Turner's calculations the average yearly earning of a semi subsistence peasant in Zambia in 1968 in both cash crop and subsistence production was worth about 145 kwacha. An African mine worker in the Zambian copper belt would earn 1300 kwacha in a year and a wage earner outside the mines would earn 640 kwacha. Turner implies that the

21. See G. Arrighi and J. Saul *The Political economy of Africa* Monthly Review Press 1973 and J. Saul's *The Labour Aristocracy thesis reconsidered* in R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen editors *The development of a African Working Class* Longmans 1976.

22. See D. Rosenberg *Theories of the African Working class* to be published in *African Review* 1977.

23. See S. Amin review of J. Saul and G. Arrighi *The Political Economy of Africa* in *Monthly Review* Vol 25 October, 1973.

24. See H.A. Turner *Labour Relations in the motor industry*. Allen and Unwin 1967. H.A. Turner *Do Trade unions cause inflations?* Cambridge University Press 1972.

high costs of labour are the result of the expropriation by the mine workers of all or nearly all the surplus value produced in the copper mines. A further implication is that 'unequal exchange' of commodities between the rural and industrial 'sectors' of the economy allows urban mine workers to keep their level of wages high by not permitting the peasantry any increase in their basic income.

One marked feature of Tanzania economic history has been the rise in employee incomes; another the fall in their number. The number of employees fell from 417,000 in 1960 to 334,000 in 1965. In the main it was such categories as sisal workers who experienced the most radical decline in their numbers. While the Tanzania economy, unlike the Zambian, is not based on the export of minerals which have historically been associated with high labour costs in terms of wages, Turner's method of investigation is similar. In his report he finds that the trends are objectionable on four counts. Workers' incomes have been rising at the expense of the peasants. The rise has resulted in maldistribution of income among workers themselves. It is major cause of the decline in employment. It is about to cause a inflationary spiral.²⁵

A major conclusion is that price controls on basic commodities should be institutionalized. WETA the official state trade union should be streamlined so that its function of control over the workers should be integrated into its productivity function more successfully. Strikes and lockouts should continue to be illegal as long as disputes are liable to statutory conciliation and arbitration. The strike prohibition should be extended to go slow movements. The Turner report was published and largely accepted by the state in Tanzania in 1967.

To discern the Turner paradigm in Zambia and Tanzania is to turn to his earlier 1965 publication. Some of the formulations are openly explicit and structure the later recommendations. Thus '...the recent rise of real wages in Africa have been accompanied both by reports of a ~~benefit for labour~~

25. See H.A. Turner Report to the Government of Zambia on Incomes, wages and prices in Zambia International Labour Office Geneva 1969 page 10 to 11 and Report to the Government of Tanzania on Incomes Wages and price policy International Labour Office 1967 see also H.A. Turner Wage trends, wage policies and collective bargaining: the problems for underdeveloped countries University of Cambridge Press 1965.

saving methods by enterprises, and by an increase in the continents labour'. 'The emergence of a dual society with raising productivity and living standards in a limited modern sector, and a traditional sector where services are kept down or depressed'. Large firms are vulnerable to pressure while small establishments may escape even minimal legislative regulations'. 'Wage-earners are commonly two to three times better off than those in the agricultural sector.' There seems no doubt that there is a very large discrepancy between the living standards of the average wage earner and the average small holder, and that this discrepancy has substantially increased in recent years'. 'Development plans are not compatible with the pursuit of organized sectional interests// of what may be a privileged labour aristocracy'.²⁶ Turner's empirical data and its interpretive value as well as his classical wage fund theory have been strongly attacked by Routh. It is remarkable that Turner's defence of the right to strike in the English context of industrial relations is repeated by Routh against the trajectory of the Turner report in the Tanzania context of industrial relations. 'It is of primary importance that workers should have a union that they regard as theirs. They will not to regard it if it acts primarily as an instrument of government policy, in which case they will make other arrangements for the expression of their hopes and discontents.'²⁷ Turner obviously accepts that the labour theory of value and its organizational, trade union expression is relevant to the understanding of the state, capital-labour relationship in England but not relevant to African social formations. This difference of analysis has never been articulated by Turner other than through a concept of 'national interest' which for Turner exists in Africa but is not acceptable in the English context. Turner's work in spite of the critiques made of it strongly influenced not only the analysis of such radicals as Saul and Arrighi but the basic guide-lines of more conventional economists who might reject a particular aspect of his work while finding the

26. See H.A. Turner Wage Trends, wage policies and collective bargaining the problem for underdeveloped countries University of Cambridge Press 1965 for quotations.

27. See G. Routh Incomes Policy in a Developing Country: A case study of the foreign expert at work. Unpublished paper University of Sussex 1969.

bulk of it as well as its conclusions 'valuable'.²⁸ It may be stated that Saul as well as Turner (Arrighi is now silent) has never fundamentally questioned the Tanzanian state's repression of the class autonomy of Tanzanian workers. In a very recent defence of his past formulations, he can still argue his support for the Tanzanian state's system of industrial relations. 'In Tanzania struggle within the petty bourgeoisie and the attempt by the more progressive tendency within this strata to mobilise the workers and maximise the likelihood of their making a positive contribution to the country's move towards socialism has been, if anything, even more important than any pressure for radical solutions arising from the working class itself'.²⁹

Saul and Arrighi have extended their influence into the 1970's. In a analysis of the social base of the Ethiopian military regime which had its origins in the 1974 revolution Ottaway is quick to locate both the opposition to the military as coming from the OELU trade unions which are seen as a 'labour aristocracy' and the regime as benefiting this category. Her opinion of the white collar workers, technicians and other skilled workers is quite clear. 'The OELU demand for more urban jobs, for minimum wages and insurance, and low food prices, would perpetuate an economic policy which favours the urban population at the expense of the peasants'. 'In the context of Ethiopia's dual economy, the oppressed class of the modern system is still a very privileged group. ... Demands that would appear radical...are, in fact, quite elitist when set forth by the labour aristocracy of one of the least developed countries in Africa'.³⁰

28. See J.B. Knight, Wages in Africa in Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics, Vol. 37 No. 2 May 1975 and J.B. Knight, Wages and Zambia's economic development in C. Elliotts (Ed.) Constraints on the Economic development of Zambia Oxford University Press 1971 as an example of this.

29. See J. Saul The labour aristocracy thesis reconsidered in R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen The development of an African working class Longmans 1975 P.307. See also M. Bienfeld's similar formulation on industrial relations in Tanzania while Bienfeld concentrates on the wave of unofficial strikes in the early 1970's for which he obviously feels some sympathy he is unable to accept the class content of these strikes as the state, if not industrial relations, is still being seen as 'progressive' in his analysis. M. Bienfeld socialist development and workers in Tanzania in R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen, The development of an African working class Longmans 1975.

30. See M. Ottaway, Social classes and corporate interests in the Ethiopian Revolution in Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 14 No. 3 Sept. 1976.

In the context of Kenya Leitner argues 'the sectionalisation of industrial workers according to skill, remuneration, security of employment sectionalises their interests too, and has its bearing on their political consciousness'. Leitner argues, following Saul and Arrighi, that skilled workers located in the units of production established by international capital are 'mostly concerned with promotion within the existing employment system could be categorised 'as forming the labour aristocracy.' She compares this stratum with the 'unstable unskilled, badly paid and only semi proletarianized migrant workers'.³¹ Leitner, in her analysis of Mombasa dockworkers, (a 'privileged' sector), in which she found that dockers serving less than five years were entitled to two months fully paid and one month half pay sick leave compared to less than half that number of days for workers in the agricultural sector is one indice of how she understands the differentiation inside the Kenyan working class. These 'labour aristocrats', who retired at the age of 65, with an equivalent sum of between 13 to 15 months pay as severance from union insurance schemes are obviously 'privileged' in comparison with other categories of workers. The dock workers of Mombasa are not produced, as Arrighi and Saul would argue, from the capital intensive units of production established by multinational companies in Africa but by the historical struggle to control recruitment and wage rates of labour in the port of Mombasa in both the colonial and post colonial periods. Leitner also interviewed a sample of dockers on how they perceived retirement at 65 and reports 'that the most common feature of all replies was the obvious acceptance that they would have to start another working life after they had retired'. 'Having been a worker gave a good chance for self employment, but certainly not for entering an income level which was above the natural reproduction costs of a family as material resources and consumption needs were too close to allow any surplus saving!'³²

Stichter, in an article on the Kenyan working class, records the shift from a mass of semi skilled migrant workers in the 1950's to an increasingly stable working class with significant skills differentiation. 'While in the colonial

31. See K. Leitner, Workers, trade unions and peripheral capitalism in Kenya after independence, Ph.D. 1975 Free University of Berlin.

32. Ibid, page 152 and page 155.

period the main social division lay between the stabilized white collar workers and a few artisans on the one hand and the unskilled and unstabilized on the other. By the 1960's the main division was between a salariat and a 'labour aristocracy' of employed workers of all skill levels in the modern sector of the economy, and the semi- and unemployed urban and rural poor.³³ Stichter argues that between 1955 and 1964 the level of employment decreased from 515 thousand to 547 thousand in context of an annual rate of 3 per cent population growth. The decrease was both in the state and private capitalist sectors and mainly affected the least skilled. Expanding output in the context of falling employment necessitated upgrading the skill level of the work force. The category of semi skilled and factory workers expanded from 3 per cent of the employed population in 1947 to nearly 13 per cent in 1974. Between 1955 and 1964 the average wage doubled while prices rose 3 per cent annually. Real wages continued to rise until 1972. Stichter does allow for inflation cutting sharply into real wages since 1972 with an effective devaluation of skilled labour power. The 'labour aristocracy' is located beneath the salariate of professional, technical, managerial and administrative occupational categories and above the urban and rural poor. Skilled manual workers bridge the gap* between intermediate level job including some sections of management, technicians and professionals but also clerical, sales, supervisory, and other white collar work. The lower end of the labour aristocracy, according to Stichter, touches the ILO's recommended minimum standard necessary to avoid actual deprivation. The 32 per cent of the enumerated non agricultural work force earning less than the minimum wage are not incorporated into the labour aristocracy but the urban poor. Perhaps Stichter's 'labour aristocracy' hypothesis is rather distant from Lenin or even Saul and Arrighi who argues that this category earned in wages between three to five times the average income but perhaps too Stichter reflects the difficulty of imposing arbitrary political, ideological and economic contours on internal differentiation inside wage labour thus diluting the concept of a proletariat. The conclusion of this study that 'local production has concentrated on replicating expensive imported goods to meet the tastes of the salariate and the labour aristocracy rather than on substituting for these items mass produced ones' is rather difficult to understand with one pole of the category located at the minimum wage of 120 Kenyan pounds and the upper pole on 600 Kenyan pounds in context of a decline in real wages since 1972. The radical, Stichter, is merely repeating the conservative Berg

33. See S. Stichter, *Imperialism and the rise of a 'labour aristocracy' in Kenya 1945-1970* in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXI, 1976-1977.

who could write with reference to Nigerian workers that 'they enjoy more of the benefits of modernization and growth than any African social group. They have available more and better medical care, and a larger share of the conveniences and amusements of modern life—from supermarkets to cinemas.³⁴ It is hard to believe that Berg has minimum wage earners in mind for while they certainly work in supermarkets they do not shop there and cinema prices are relatively high in Africa. Stichter, then, basing herself on Saul and Arrighi's writings, doubts the long term goals of 'militant economism' of the Kenyan 'labour aristocracy' and argues implicitly that in spite of forming a section of the working class they are still 'junior' partners in Kenyan capitalism. The methodology of locating minimum wage workers as 'junior partners' has the support of all ruling class blocks in all capitalist societies who have attempted to argue this position, with somewhat slighter conviction, than many radicals.

8. Stichter integrates theoretical positions from Saul and Arrighi with empirical data interpreted by Stewart, Ross, Ghai and the ILO report on employment, incomes and equality in Kenya.³⁵ The coupling of different variants of dependency theory with a neo-Ricardian critique give the following policy proposals. The presence of international capital with its given set of technical production relations (advanced capitalist choice of techniques) necessarily produce commodities which require an increase of money wages to support the consumption of these commodities. The relatively fast rate of increase in money wages which produces an unequitable distribution of income inside the labour force, arises then merely from the given structures of the techniques of production. Thus the subordination of 'international' capital to 'local' capital (though both categories are fluid) is interlocked with

34. See E.J. Berg Urban real wages and the Nigerian trade union movements 1939-1960; a comment in Economic development and Cultural change 17, 1969.

35. See F. Stewart Kenya. Strategies for development in U. Damachi G. Routh and A.R. Taha eds. Development Paths in Africa and China Macmillan Press 1976. M. Ross The Political integration of urban squatters Northwestern University Press 1973, D. Ghai Incomes policy in Kenya: need, criteria and machinery in East African Economics Review Vol.4 (1) 1968, International Labour Office Employment Incomes and Equality Geneva ILO 1972.

a policy for the redistribution of income which would be realised by the removal of those techniques of production which produce both a 'salaried' strata and a 'labour aristocracy'.

It has been pointed out by Cowen and Kinyanjui that in Kenya the trade union leadership is heavily recruited from skilled, clerical and professional workers, 78% of 16 sampled unions. Both Leitner and Stichter following the Arrighi and Saul hypothesis, are forced to argue that the union leaderships at the political and ideological level support the units of production established by international capital. In fact, as Cowen and Kinyanjui argue, two major class determinants contradict this argument. At the political and ideological level the trade union leaderships, are subordinated to the radical 'critique of not only reformist academics who have a ambiguous anti-capitalism in their attacks on international capital but the local petit bourgeois class of which large sections, both inside and outside the state apparatuses, express strong antagonism to international capital. Moreover it is precisely the strata of skilled, clerical and professional workers whose positions (labour power) is now being devalued by the penetration of international capital into the process of production. This has effected categories of workers who in the past have occupied relatively high wage positions.³⁶

The subordination of the organized working class and the political ideological determinants of its leadership's articulation as a fraction of a petit bourgeoisie are not unique to Kenya, but reflect a common phenomenon in Africa. Thus the KANU - KADU political conflict in Kenya was internalized by conflicting factions of the railroads union in East Africa and skilled workers, who formed a factory leadership in a tailoring factory in Zambia, were also local officials of the governing UNIP party.³⁷

Not only at the political ideological level does the Kenyan trade union leaderships express a sharp hostility to international capital but they are forced, by pressure from their rank and file, to fight against the

36. See M. Cowen and K. Kinyanjui Some Problems of Income Distribution in Kenya. Unpublished Paper 1977. They give examples from bank workers and agricultural estate supervisors.

37. See R. Grillo African Railway men University of Cambridge Press 1973 and B. Kapferer Strategy and transaction in an African factory, University of Manchester Press 1972.

devaluation of their labour power. In the periodization of the beginnings of the process of the devaluation of the labour power of the 'labour aristocracy' not only the changes in production have to be noted but the emerging hegemony of the Kenyan bourgeois class itself at the political level and the decrease of the political weight of the organized working class in the 1970's. Stichter records that the average real earnings dropped from 279 Kenyan pounds in 1972 to 247 Kenyan pounds in 1975 but is unable to offer an explanation at any level. The devaluation of the labour power of the 'labour aristocracy' is by no means limited merely to Kenya. In Zaire, for example, the real wages of the proletariat fell by forty per cent between 1960 and 1968 and still have not recovered the 1960 level in 1977.³⁸ Resistance to the devaluation of their labour power by workers has a long history in Africa. In 1897 the Lagos General Strike took place in protest against Governor McCallum's attempt to alter the working conditions to the disadvantage of the workers.³⁹

Unlike Kenya, both Rhodesia and Zambia possessed a white skilled and white collar working class. Thus the so called 'racism' of the white working class at the economic level, long attacked by liberals, the colonial state and international capital, largely reflected the its location in production and attempts by international capital and the colonial state to use African labour to cheapen white labour power. The 'privileges' of this white working class were based partly on its quasi-supervisory function in production, its trade union strength built on artisan traditions, and a high percentage of technical skills. In their resistance to the devaluation of their labour power they were often supported by class alliances of European petit bourgeois fractions. Manufacturing interests in Rhodesia, which grew in importance after 1939, sought to increase the size of the African market and therefore supported moves to increase African productivity and wages. Many industrial capitalists also favoured increased competition in the labour market to reduce labour costs held high by the white artisans monopoly of skilled work. For the mining companies, dependent on export, a rise in African wages could be met either by increased automation and a reduction in the work force, or

38. See B. Ryelandt *L'inflation Congolaise 1960-1968* Mouton 1972.

39. See A.G. Hopkins *The Lagos General Strike of 1897 in Past and Present* Vol. XXXV, 1966.

by fragmenting 'white' labour positions and filling them with Africans at lower rates of pay.

The inter war depression increased European working class insecurity and gave them a bloc of class alliances in the European petit bourgeoisie. Ranger notes the concern voiced during the European railway workers strike in Bulawayo in 1929, and quotes a contemporary writer: 'what about the natives if the white population starts rioting?'⁴⁰ The armed rising by white miners on the South African Rand in 1922, in protest against attempts to lower white labour power by recruiting African workers to skilled labour positions was one path of white working class response. In 1934, elections brought into the open a new class alliance. The position of white workers was assured by the introduction of the 1934 Industrial Conciliation Act. Prime Minister Huggin's biographers comment: 'The machinery of law now swung into operation on their (the white workers) behalf, the first prosecution ever under the statute actually being directed against an employer who underpaid a white South African immigrant.'⁴¹ The government accepted the premise that 'in the white area, no European engaged in the agricultural mining or other industries should be affected by the lower civilization and economic standards of the natives'.⁴²

In Northern Rhodesia, (Zambia), the political weight of the European classes was rather less than in Southern Rhodesia. Consequently the personnel of the colonial state and the mining companies were perceived, throughout the colonial period, as more willing to use and train African labour to devalue European labour power. Mining experts were brought from America; skilled miners were imported from there and from Britain, Yugoslaviaⁿ timbermen were engaged to help line the mine shafts and many other workers were recruited from the Transvaal. By 1931 mining accounted for 31.1 per cent of the European work force compared with 41.1 per cent in the public service sector of the colonial state and only 7.3 per cent for agriculture⁴³. On the railways a 'colour bar' was firmly established by the European Railways Workers Union founded in 1916

40. See T. Ranger *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia* Heinemann 1970 page 153.

41. See L.H. Gann and M. Gelfand *Huggins of Rhodesia* Allen and Unwin 1964 P. 98

42. See, C. Leys *European politics in Southern Rhodesia* Oxford University Press 1968 page 192.

43. See: P. Dean *Colonial Social Accounting* Cambridge University Press 1953 page 20.

and the Southern Rhodesian policy that Europeans be used for all skilled and semi-skilled work was the principal upon which the Rhodesia Railways, a private company, recruited its labour force. The Colonial Office attempted to alter the situation but as a Governor Sir Hubert Young argued before the 1938 Bledisloe Commission: 'It is all very well in principle to say that a native should be trained up to any point, but supposing I started school to train natives to drive railway engines the only effect would be a strike on the railways, until the scheme was abolished; the railway communities are very strong'.⁴⁴

In relation to mining, the colonial state believed that this industry could easily collapse, a view only abandoned in the late 1930's, and was committed to a policy of non-stabilized migrant African labour which gave Africans few chances to learn industrial skills. The inter-war depression years weakened the position of European workers and allowed some retraining of Africans to take skilled labour positions. As Berger comments though African skills increased, wages did not follow suit. 'In 1929 starting pay on the mines had been 12s 6d for a thirty day ticket for surface labour and 17s 6d for underground work. During the construction boom the demand for labour pushed the rates up to 17s 6d for surface and 30s for underground workers, but in 1932 they were reduced to 12s 6d and 22s 6d respectively'.⁴⁵ After the depression years the mining industry re-expanded and employed South Africans who were used to the class balance that had effectively blocked the use of 'cheap labour' on the Rand. The proximity of the Katanga mines to the copperbelt was a constant reminder that African labour, if permitted, could undertake skilled work for very low wages.⁴⁶

The 'labour aristocracy' hypothesis has been widely accepted in social science literature on Nigeria. Kilby argued that 'real wages in the organized sector have increased at more than twice the rate of per capita DP' and further clarifies his position. 'Rather than being an exploited group, organized labour is already a highly privileged minority. Whether initiated by

45. See Ibid, page 48.

46. See J. Peemans Capital accumulation in the Congo under colonialism in P. Dugnan and L. Gann editors, Colonialism in Africa Vol.4, Cambridge University Press, 1974.

modernizing nationalists or the departing colonial benefactor, the full range of welfare measures contained in the ILO conventions.....have now been implemented in the unionized sectors.....There is much labour unrest, but it has little to do with the absolute wage or conditions of work; rather it is, as in Nigeria, an expression of the relative deprivation of the 'haves' vis a vis the even smaller minority of the 'have mores'.⁴⁷ Warren argues that the political strength and alliances of the organized trade unions have enabled the Nigerian working class to become a 'labour aristocracy' though he too does not use this concept.⁴⁸

These arguments have not gone unchallenged. In a case study of textile workers in Kaduna in the North of Nigeria Hincliffe found that in the period 1960 to 1972 'consumer prices for the lower income groups rose, on the average, by 4.5 per cent every year allowing the textile workers a real annual growth of wages of 3.3 per cent'. Hincliffe emphasises that the particular firm of textile manufacturing studied was paying well above average wages in that industry.⁴⁹ Lubeck in his study of workers in Kano argues 'with regard to Arrighi's theory of the labour aristocracy and his hypothesis of cleavage between skilled and semi-proletarianised labour the empirical situation suggests the opposite: increased deprivation of the urban industrial workers and considerably less differentiation between those employed in modern capital intensive industries and those in more diffuse wage employment'.⁵⁰ Rimmer's study of wage politics in West Africa calculated a 40 per cent decline in the real income of the minimum wage earner in 1960-1965. On the basis of the Ghana Economic survey, Rimmer also argues a further decline of some 20 per cent in real income might be calculated for 1966-1971.⁵¹ Pearce adds a further well

48. See W. Warren Urban real wages and the Nigerian trade Union movement 1939-1960 in Economic Development and Cultural Change XVI, 1, October 1966. See the qualifications expressed in R. Cohen Labour and Politics in Nigeria Heinemann 1975 and C.O. Nwanunobi Wage Labour and the politics of Nigeria and Kenya in African Studies Review, Vol. XVII No.1 April, 1974.

49. See K. Hincliffe Labour aristocracy: a northern Nigerian case study in Journal of Modern African Studies, 12, 1, 1974.

50. See P. Lubeck Unions, Workers and Consciousness in Kano in R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen editors The development of an African Working Class Longmans 1975 page 142.

See D. Rimmer Wage Politics in West Africa University of Birmingham Mimeograph 1970 pages 533 to 35.

known argument: 'urban wage earners form the focal point of rural and urban networks comprised of kinsmen who constitute a serious drain on whatever financial savings skilled workers may accumulate'. From his case study of Lagos workers in Nigeria he adds that 'wage earners express a sense of generalised social injustice- social categories such as traders and the lumpenproletariat support and follow the Lagos proletariat'.⁵² Waterman has also been interested in the ideological complexity of skilled, white collar and supervisory workers in Nigeria. In one study of the specificity of ideological conservatism among Nigerian workers Waterman shows the ambiguous trajectory of the Nigerian workers deferential attitudes and how the assumption of Arrighi and Saul of worker identification with the class alliances of the post colonial state is over simple.⁵³ Waterman suggests the co-existence among Nigerian trade unionists of two sets of attitudes. One set is either individualistic or deferential 'apparently implying acceptance of the status quo and a set of critical ones implying class opposition and supporting the necessity for collective action'. Not only are these two to be located in status and income differentials inside different strata of the urban working class but they also exist together in the individual worker. Lagos workers, when interviewed, reflected the strength of the Nigerian working class in Lagos. Lagos is the major port, the centre of commerce and industry and political life and the historical base of the Nigerian labour movement. Lagos workers were consistently more able to provide a socialist critique of Nigeria and commitment to trade unionism than similar categories of workers in Kaduna. Kaduna was created as an administrative centre in the colonial period with significant industries only established since 1960... 'Conservatism', in Waterman's sample, seemed to be more marked 'amongst the very top occupational category in the large modern sector (of industry), amongst the poor workers in the small capitalist

52. See A. Pearce Industrial protest in Nigeria in Edekat and G. Williams eds. *Sociology and Development* Tavistock 1974 and A Pearce in Sandbrook and Cohen.

53. See P. Waterman Conservatism among Nigerian workers in G. Williams editor *Nigeria : economy and society* Rex Collings 1976 See also P. Waterman *The labour aristocracy in Africa: introduction to a debate in Development and Change* 6, 3, July 1976. Unfortunately Waterman's paper while making correct points about the 'labour aristocracy' concept suffers badly from superficiality.

sector owned by Nigerians, amongst northern workers and amongst the moderate trade union tendency'. He correctly adds that 'this conservatism' is not necessarily either of the same degree or of the same kind'. Values and ideologies of deference ^{that} express, in mystified form, the social relationships of pre-colonial societies perhaps carry increasingly less weight inside the working class in Nigeria than what industrial sociology in England has entitled 'instrumental' attitudes. Waterman is not sufficiently analytical in perceiving this distinction in 'conservative' attitudes and as the 'affluent worker' debate in English social science literature has shown instrumental attitudes to the labour-capital relationship do not automatically provide support for the particular balance of any capitalist society.⁵⁴ It is a truism that the breakdown of the wage contract in which the instrumental worker is entwined can lead to militant trade unionism in both a reformist and a revolutionary direction. Even the 'conservatism' of the deferential worker in Nigeria is ambiguous as it can represent a claim on state and capital that they should protect 'their poor', a demand which even the 1970's corporatism of the Nigerian state may not be able to fulfil. Paradoxically it is the failure of the Nigerian bourgeoisie to control and restructure the Nigerian state which allows the personnel of the state to announce a corporatist industrial relations policy while ultimately blocking the possibility of achieving it by the failure of the state to move decisively in support of capital accumulation in Nigeria.⁵⁵

Whereas the debate on the labour aristocracy in England has taken place with few exceptions inside marxist historiography and with reference to changes in the social relations of production, the debate in Africa has mainly been carried out at a more polemical level with little or no connection with marxist concepts but with a concentration on income differentials. Arrighi's formulations over the capital intensive nature of the new forms of international

54. See J. Westergaard *The rediscovery of the cash nexus - in Socialist Registrar* 1970. Merlin Press for a useful discussion on the weakness of the conceptual framework of the affluent worker project in England.

55. See P. Collins, T. Turner, G. Williams *Capitalism and the coup* in G. Williams editor *Nigeria: economy and society* Rex Collings 1976 for examples of this.

of the new forms of international capital investments after 1945 are not a basic break with the variants of neo-classical economic orthodoxies which underpin these debates.

The only exception to this general level of debate is the argument posed by marxists working on the South African social formation though even some of these contributions share common characteristics with the debates which relate to the other social formations of Africa. Wilson, a non-marxist economist, using non marxist categories produced by neo-classical economics has argued that in South Africa, 'until the recent wage increases, the position of African gold miners had worsened in relation both to their past real wages and to the wages paid to European miners.' He implies that 'African gold miner's earnings in 1969 were no higher and possibly even lower in real terms than they had been in 1911. This is the opposite of European miners whose same real cash earnings had increased by 70 per cent over the same period. Moreover the earnings gap ratio between European miners and African miners during the same period had increased 11.7:1 to 20.1:1.'⁵⁶

Wilson's work on mining is used in an early paper by Davies as well as by Webster to support the argument that the 1924 South African pact government of the Labour Party and the Nationalists institutionalised the political foundations of the white working class as a labour aristocracy. The consequences of this was a range of laws that replaced unskilled non-white Labour in both state enterprises and the railways by 'poor whites' at wage levels which were made up by special allowances. High statutory minimum wages in selected occupations protected 'poor whites' from 'unfair' labour competition. In 1926 a statutory colourbar at the mines reserved by law special categories of skilled and semi skilled work for whites. As white employment spread out into secondary industries the colourbar was extended. Webster argues 'the white worker constitute an aristocracy of labour because he shares with the owners of the mines the surplus extracted from African Labour. The white worker.....produces less value than he receives and is not exploited.' Davies too has a similar argument 'whilst African miners had increased, through a raising of productivity, their relative contribution of Labour value, their relative income and their real income position has declined. The reverse applies to European miners. Since the average European wage is a significant amount above the surplus free wage and since it is not based on higher productivity, the inescapable conclusion is that white miners benefit from the

56. See F. Wilson Labour in the South African gold mines 1911 - 1969 University of Cambridge Press 1972 page 46.

surplus created by black miners'. Davies ⁹⁵ go on to state that other South African Industries have a similar pattern ⁵⁷ while Davies and Webster take 1924 as the significant date in the formation of the labour aristocracy. Simons does not.

Simons argues that the white working class was a 'Labour aristocracy' from its origins in the 19th Century. White Labourism has been a primary cause of policies that incite racial hostility, isolate colour groups and dissolve class consciousness in colour consciousness. The British immigrants who founded the Transvaal Labour Movement early in the century aspired to mastery over the African. Starting with the elementary trade union plea for protection against labour dilution and unfair competition, they absorbed the colour prejudices of the colonial order and intensified themselves with every attempt to keep Africans and Asians in subjection. By means of trade union combination, political pressure, strikes and physical violence they secured for white miners and artisans sheltered employment which cut them off from their fellow African worker.⁵⁸

In 1886, with the opening of the Witwatersrand as a gold mining area, the event of 'deep level' mining required the utilization of a complex technology. Skilled experienced miners were therefore to perform a number of production functions and to co-ordinate unskilled workers. The necessary skilled labour power had to be imported from Europe while the necessary unskilled labour was obtained from African migrant labour. The bargaining power of the European skilled miners lay in the fact that they were not easily replaceable. From 1893 certain tasks in the production of gold became defined by law as job to be performed by certificated Europeans only. Davies argues that while European miners approved of such state regulations the new laws were in fact part of the safety regulations which it was in the class

57 See E. Webster Background to the supply and control of labour in the gold mines South African Labour Bulletin Vol.1 No.7 1974 and R. Davies The white working class in South Africa in New Left Review No.82 November/December 1973

58 See H.J. Simons and H.E. Simons Class and colour in South Africa 1850-1950 Penguin 1969 pages 618-619. In this statement Simons and Simons seem to argue for the primacy of the political and ideological 'superstructures.' Earlier their work has recorded the fact that during this period the right to strike and form unions was far from established. These 'rights' were won in struggle and conceded because of the European workers location in the social relations of production rather than because of race attitudes.

interests of mining capital as a whole to promote through state machinery.⁵⁹

The events after the Boer War saw a process of the formation of a 'poor white' proletariat in the urban centres which was mainly unskilled. By the mid - 1920's they had become skilled to the extent that they formed 75 per cent of the European miners in South Africa. Although mining capital was opposed to the extensive employment of poor whites in the earlier period, it considered it worthwhile to employ a limited number of unskilled whites. This was partly because of the strength of the class interests of those who advocated a 'white labour policy' at this stage, various petty bourgeois manufacturers, traders and agriculturalists, ^{which} lay in expanding the market for their products created by the mining industry. On the economic level these social categories favoured a white labour policy as a means to that end and they had no interest, as Davies argues, 'in seeing an expansion of white employment on the mines, accompanied by a marked reduction in overall consumption levels.' The majority of these poor whites were fully proletarianised with no access to the means of production outside of capitalist social relations.

Wolpe has obviously influenced Davies and his work explains the initial differentials between European and African Labour power, at least as far as the 'poor white' category, as being the product of the specific domination of capitalist relations of production over non-capitalist (African) modes of production. Wolpe argued that the domination of capitalism in South Africa took the form of a conservation - dissolution relationship.⁶⁰ The conservation aspect was, Wolpe argues, important because of the production within the non-capitalist mode of production of some or all of the use values necessary for the workforce's replacement (i.e the means necessary for the subsistence of the family structure within which labour power is produced) enabled capital to drive down the value of African Labour power (and hence the wage) to the level of the individual migrant's subsistence. As long as the productive capacity of the non-capitalist mode was to some extent conserved, capital was able to avoid making any allowance in the wage for family subsistence while still ensuring the long term replacement of the labour force. In the case of unskilled white their proletarianization blocked

59 See R. Davies Mining capital, the state and unskilled white workers in South Africa 1901 - 1913 Unpublished paper 1975

60 See H. Wolpe Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa in Economy and Society Vol.1 No.4 November, 1972
The conservation dissolution formulation seem to be derived from C. Bettelheim's Theoretical Comments in A. Emmanuel Unequal Exchange New Left Books 1972.

them from any access to the means of production outside the capital labour relationship. Capital could not, Davies implies even without the class interests of those categories benefiting from a white labour policy being involved, drive down the value of the labour power of the 'poor whites' to the level of the individual workers subsistence and at the same time ensure its reproduction. Capital then had to make some allowance for family subsistence in the wage. The day to day costs of reproduction of white labour power in boarding houses would be higher than for black labour power in the compounds. Van Onselen's work on African mine workers in Rhodesia illustrates the role of the compounds in reproducing the lower costs of labour power.⁶¹

Whereas Wolpe tends to analyse Apartheid as reflecting this early articulation of modes of production, Davies accepts Wolpe's positions while insisting on the determinations of the political level of the South African social formation. In his work Davies allows equal primacy of determinations with respect to the struggle between mining capital and those petty bourgeois and manufacturing class fractions who supported a white labour policy in this period. This oscillation of levels of determination is common to all tendencies inside marxism who have in common an implicit rejection of any conceptualisation of over determination.

Wolpe's arguments assume that the value of labour power can be calculated across modes of production even when articulated. This Williams denies in his critique of Wolpe as well as arguing that Wolpe in his equation of the conservation-dissolution effect of the survival of the pre-capitalist mode with the labour reserves hides the total destruction of the pre-capitalist mode of production even in the early period of South African mining capitalism. Williams then rejects the conservation-dissolution formulation as the answer to the analysis of cheap labour power in the mines and insists purely on the circumstances of the specific balance of class forces in forcing wages below the value of labour power. Williams insists that this is a consistent device of capital, particularly in times of crises.⁶²

61 See G. Van Onselen Chibaro. African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia Pluto Press 1976.

62 See M. Williams An analysis of South African Capitalism in Bulletin of conference of socialist Economics Vol. IV No. 1 Feb., 1975 and reply by B. Bradby. The value of gold in Bulletin of Socialist Economics Vol. V No. 2 October, 1976. A useful discussion of Wolpe is M. Legassich. The analysis of racism in South Africa I.D.E.P. Conference Dar es Salaam 1975.

It is commonly accepted that European workers in South Africa have increasingly become a supervisory strata or at least skilled operatives. The logic of the 'labour aristocracy' argument in the South African context would deny the European labour force any location as a strata inside the working class. The problem of the 'new' middle class or 'new' petty bourgeoisie has become the focus of a considerable debate. Inside marxism the discussion has largely revolved around the question of productive and unproductive labour. There has been little agreement, however, on how these types of labour are to be distinguished. Poulantzas, for example, insists upon productive labour being restricted to the production of material commodities which would restrict the proletariat to industrial workers. Bullock, by contrast, includes the production of immaterial 'commodities' (education, health, etc) which enter into the value of labour power in the sphere of productive work. O'Connor and Wright argue that most labour power in capitalist society has both productive and unproductive aspects and that the productive/unproductive distinction should thus be thought of as reflecting two dimensions of labour activity rather than two types of wage earners. It has been contended by Carchedi that those who carry out the 'global function of capital' by exercising coercion over the labour process in productive or unproductive enterprises comprise the 'new middle class'. Common to all these approaches is the problem of defining the relationship of the division of labour to the production of surplus value and hence to the relation of production.⁶³ It must be conceded that the debate on the labour aristocracy in the context of the South African social formation, while still embedded in a specific polemical ideological content, has attempted to use marxist, rather than merely empirical sociological categories. Simson's paper refers to certain arguments in Poulantzas' work. He states 'the white supervisor-black worker relationship can only be understood if the capitalist had placed the white wage earner in a functionally contradictory position in the production process. They both contributed to the production of surplus value and acted as supervisors of the exploited African proletariat, the latter aspect of their function was determinate with respect of their class i.e. they are not part of the working class'.⁶⁴ Simson's central argument is that the so-called

63 See N. Poulantzas *Classes in contemporary capitalism* New Left Books 1976 P. Bullock *Defining productive labour* in *Bulletin of Conference of Socialist Economics* No.9 1974, J. O'Connor *Productive and Unproductive labor* in *Politics and Society* Vol.5 No.2 May 1975 and E.O. Wright *Class boundaries in advanced capitalist societies* in *New left Review* No.98 July-August 1976, G. Carchedi on the economic identification of the new middle class in *Economy and Society* Vol.IV No.1 1975 and G. Carchedi *Reproduction of social classes at the level of production relations* in *Economy and Society* Vol.IV No. 4, 1975.

64 See H. Simson *The myth of the white working class in South Africa* in *African Review* Vol.4 No. 2, 1975.

white working class is in fact composed predominantly of supervisors; there are no productive workers or white workers whose main role is productive. It is true that he concedes that in the 1920's and 1930's a sizeable part of the white labour force was neither skilled nor in a supervisory capacity but apart from the fact that he argues that this section of the white workers was nevertheless, politically and ideologically separated from black workers and never becomes equal on the same production line he implies that in the course of time such workers disappeared entirely or at least, were reduced to a tiny and unimportant fraction of the white population.

A recent very fine paper by Wolpe has further clarified some of the conceptual problems though raising others. Reacting against the analysis of the white working class that begins from the political and ideological levels rather than the changes in the relations of production Wolpe accepts that a major section of the white working class performs supervisory roles. Following the work of Barchedi on the division of labour, Wolpe distinguishes the stage of capitalist production in which the labourer is only formally subordinated to capital in the sense that while he is under the direct coercive control of capital he still retains possession of his instruments of production and control over his labour process. The drive for surplus value effects changes in the relations of production as science and technology are increasingly applied to production. The outcome of this is that the labour process ceases to be the activity of separate labourers but becomes a combined and collective process. The transformation of the production process involved the extension of the functions of labour power from only manual labour to include all those functions which in the productive phase of the circuit of capital, are involved in and necessary to the production of use values. Barchedi refers to this as the function of the collective worker. The collective worker no less than the individual labourer in capitalist production, produces surplus value which is appropriated by capital.

In the transition from private to monopoly capital the individual capitalist too gives way to the 'global function of capital' and in the process the productive work of co-ordination of labour becomes separate from the coercive function concerned with ensuring the production of surplus value.

The emergence of the 'global function of capital coincides on the one hand, with the separation of real and legal ownership, with the former carrying out the work of control and surveillance. On the other hand, this separation, which is itself necessitated by the increasing complexity of production, makes necessary the establishment of a management apparatus for the carrying out of the global functions of capital as well as a restructuring of the state apparatuses. Wolpe feels it important to stress in the context of the debate on the white working class in South Africa that the coercive, supervisory, control and surveillance component of the function of capital is in no sense to be thought of as a political element added, from the political sphere on to the relations of production. On the contrary, control and surveillance is itself an ingredient of the definition of the relations of production, an ingredient which changes its form (from the individual to the global function of capital) with changes in the labour process which are, themselves, produced by the effect of the class struggle on the relations of production! Wolpe adds this has particular importance for the identification of a sector of the new middle class.⁶⁵ Wolpe, following Carchedi, draws a distinction between the possible separation of, the work of co-ordinating and unifying the labour process which is productive labour, and the work of supervision and control which is unproductive and central to the global function of capital. The 'new middle class' therefore stands in a dual position, for insofar as it carries out the productive functions of the collective worker it is paid out of variable capital; a wage, which is determined by the value of labour power, insofar as this class performs the global function of capital it is paid out of revenue and its income represents a share in the surplus. In the sphere of unproductive capitalist production the collective worker is exploited not through the appropriation of surplus value (which it does not produce) but through the appropriation of surplus labour.

65. See H. Wolpe. The white working class in South Africa in *Economy and Society* vol. 5 No. 2 May 1976 page 219.

Wolpe's analysis of the changes in the occupational structure, from the period characterized by a combination of a large scale monopolistic gold mining industry and small scale industrial manufacturing to the present period characterized by a combination of monopoly capital which continues to include gold but is dominated by industrial and banking capital and private industrial manufacturing, is of some importance. He argues that it cannot be assumed that, in either the first or second period of capitalist development, no white were members of the working class. Given the unsatisfactory state of data, following Carchedi, Wolpe states that though there has been a great decline in unskilled white workers who even in 1936 numbered 21.8% of the labour force, the remaining white unskilled workers can be assumed to be predominantly productive workers exercising no supervisory functions. With rather less confidence Wolpe makes the same assumption concerning semi-skilled white workers and even a proportion of skilled white workers. He concludes that in the post World War II period semi-skilled jobs have increased faster than 'higher level' jobs and partly through the devaluation and deskilling of skilled jobs, a substantial (but diminishing number) of white workers have fallen into the ranks of semi-skilled workers. The result is that Africans have entered into skilled work at a faster rate than it has been possible for whites to move out.

In the debate on the scientific status of the 'labour aristocracy' concept aⁿ unsatisfactory polemic of the type of Woddis is current.⁶⁶ A polemical defence of the 'leading revolutionary role of the African working class' against Fanonists, conventional liberals and radicals of the Arrighi and Saul School merely is the idealist and mechanical ideological other face of the 'labour aristocracy' literature. Classes in marxist theory are defined principally, but not exclusively, by their location in the relations of production which is in turn determined by political and ideological criteria. A social class is defined by its place in the ensemble of social practices i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labour which includes political and ideological relations. The relation of different strata of any working class to this ensemble often presents a complex analysis to any political

66. See J. Woddis *New theories of Revolution* Lawrence and Wishart 1972.

economy. Carchedi, perhaps, does not deal with this problem of levels of determination in an unambiguous manner. 'These aristocracies of labour belong, as far as production relations are concerned, to the proletariat. However their political and ideological importance for the reproduction of capital is such that they are given a privileged position (ie. in terms of distribution relations) both as a consequence of the ideological and political role they fulfil and as a presupposition for the performance of this role.' Overdetermination here is the result of the conjuncture of the class struggle. In a manner similar to Poulantzas, Carchedi eliminates the primacy of the relations of production. In practice the ideological and political criteria could become co-equal with the relations of production since they can always pre-empt the structural determinations of class. The theoretical problem in both Carchedi's work and to a greater extent that of Poulantzas is the question of the articulation of the economic, political and ideological levels of determination.

The 'labour aristocracy' debate has mainly emphasised the relations of distribution and wage forms over the relations of production. As is well known, Marx in volume 1 of Capital, as well as refuting the notion that wage levels in capitalist society are directly related to the value of the labour performed, also refutes the notion that wage levels are solely determined by conditions of demand and supply. 'The wage rate is ultimately determined by the value of labour power. The value being the value of the means of subsistence sufficient to maintain (the labourer) in his normal state'. The latter being socially determined and including an 'historical' and moral element, Marx writes this in comparison of the wages of different nations (or between different groups of workers) 'we must take into account all the factors that determine changes in the amount and value of labour power. Such factors include the price and extent of the prime necessities of life as naturally and historically developed, the cost of training the labourers, the part played by the labour of women and children, the productivity of labour, its extensive and intensive magnitude.'

67. See G. Carchedi. The economic identification of the state employees in *Social Praxis*, Vol. 3, 1, 1975.

It is regrettable that Marx, Engels and Lenin in their 'labour aristocracy' formulations were not able to use Marx's work on Capital as the point of theoretical insertion in their essentially ideological statements. The 'bribe' formulation and the elements of a variant of conspiracy theory coupled with a crude sociology which is most obvious in Lenin's writings have blocked and derailed an important theoretical question in 'radical' social science literature. Using Marx's Capital, it is possible to argue that as capitalist production develops, the exploitation of any working class would shift away from exploitation through absolute surplus value towards exploitation through relative surplus value. A rise in the rate of exploitation, in the categories of Marx, can even be combined with an increase of real wages. Lenin acknowledges this possibility in his study of the Development of Capitalism in Russia, but not in his influential work on imperialism. A further implication is that capitalist production is only subsumed by capitalist relations with the dominance of exploitation through relative surplus value. The 'labour aristocracy' formulation which combines a simplistic sociology with a 'populist' conceptualization of exploitation has unfortunately determined the political and ideological practices of many Marxists and 'radical' social scientists, and increased the weight of theoretical populism in revolutionary politics.