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1975-07
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A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW
4.00pm JULY 1975

Title: The North Randfontein Chinese Miners' 'Strike' of 1905.

by: Peter Richardson

No. 030

20.7.75

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The North Randfontein Chinese Miners' 'Strike' of 1905

by

Peter Richardson

S.O.A.S.

On the 1st April 1905, on the North Randfontein gold-mine in the Transvaal, a simmering dispute between the Chinese indentured labourers and the mine management erupted in open violence. The whole of the Chinese work force on the mine premises was involved and mounted European police were used to quell the outbreak. As a result of this incident, described by the Conservative Colonial Secretary as a dangerous dispute over wages, (1) fifty-three Chinese were arrested and charged with public violence and assault with intent to do harm.(2) Following these arrests the Chinese returned to work. On the 4th April, however, they received a wage offer which formed not only the basis of the settlement at the North Randfontein, but was to serve as a model upon which the Transvaal Chamber of Mines based its wage policy towards all Chinese, for the latter's remaining period on the Rand.(3)

The importation of indentured Chinese labourers to work in the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, which began in 1904, was a major part of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines' response to an acute shortage of unskilled African labour. The shortage, the severity of which was much disputed, was considered a general problem in the Transvaal between 1903 and 1907 whose most serious repercussions were to be found in the gold-mining industry.(4) After a heated campaign, both in South Africa and Britain, the gold mine owners finally succeeded in winning the acceptance of their demands for the importation of unskilled Asiatic labour in February of 1904.(5) Following the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Labour Convention in May 1904, importation began in earnest in July. The complement of the Chinese on the North Randfontein consituted some of the earliest mining immigrants in the Transvaal, and developments in connection with their work performance were clearly of considerable importance as a result. The events at North Randfontein between 22nd March and 4th April were given the urgent attention of the Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Agency (CMLIA) largely because of this time factor: a 'satisfactory' solution at North Randfontein would not jeopardize wage policy in respect of the increasingly large numbers of Chinese who passed out of their six months' 'probationary' period prescribed by the contract after April 1905.

This incident outlined above, sometimes misleadingly referred to as a strike,(6) together with the events which surrounded it, are more than an important event in the development of the post-Anglo-Boer war gold-mining industry's wage policy. They indicate, firstly, the considerable problem of source material in dealing with certain aspects of the use of Chinese labour on the Transvaal gold-mines. Secondly, events on the North Randfontein mine between August 1904 and April 1905 highlight the manner in which economic and extra-economic control was utilized by the gold-mining industry to ensure the profitability of low-grade ore mining on the Witwatersrand. Thirdly, within the limits of the evidence, an understanding of the nature of the Chinese miners' response to their environment, in a more localized context than has been given in the past, (7) is made possible by an examination of this sort.

The North Randfontein mine formed part of a block of twelve mines whose claims derived from the sale of mining rights by the Randfontein Estates Gold Mining Company on the West Rand.(8) Both the original prospecting and developing company, and the twelve subsidiary Randfontein mines formed part of the larger Robinson

Group of Companies. The directors and general manager of Randfontein Estates and North Randfontein, who were in effect the same people, were under the personal chairmanship of J.B. Robinson himself. The North Randfontein mine in 1905 comprised 195 claims on the farms of Uitval-fontein and Randfontein, situated close to the township of Randfontein, (9) within the judicial district of Krugersdorp.

The Randfontein section of the Main Reef, equal to 220 claims along the strike of the Reef, was characterized by mines whose majority of pre-war work had not proved highly payable. North Randfontein actually made a loss on its crushings of 9s.9d. per ton in 1898 and went out of production in 1899. The highest recorded pre-war profit on the Randfontein Section was that of South Randfontein which in 1898 returned a profit of 9s.9d. per ton. This bears unfavourable comparison generally with other mines on the Main Reef in 1898/99 right along the outcrop as far east as the New CometMine, with the exception of the Langlaagte Staar-Paarl Central Section, an acknowledgly unsatisfactory part. These results were based on the yield from the reef known as the Randfontein Leader, which, although rich, was very thin, varying from a few inches to about a foot in thickness. However, just prior to the war, prospecting operations uncovered a new reef described as the "Number 2" or "West Reef". This reef was proved and increasingly developed along the whole six-mile stretch of the Randfontein properties. The high average assay value of the new reef gave a combined milling width at the Randfontein section of five and a half feet, and increased the expected average profit from 5s. to 13s.4d. per ton.(10)

Against this enhancement of value, and easing of profitability constraints must be set several factors, some peculiar to the North Randfontein itself and some general to the mining operations of the Robinson group at Randfontein which formed the general background to post-war mining on the West Rand. In the first instance a small percentage of sorting was undertaken at the Randfontein properties. This had the effect of lowering the grade of recovery, and increased the inter-mix of waste on which the stamp batteries were working and thus raised the working costs of the mines. It was estimated that the grade on the assays could have been raised by sorting from 41s. to 60s. per ton or more, with a similar gold value over the whole section, with increased profit. Secondly, the Randfontein mines were hampered by the additional development cost of extracting gold from the No. 2 Reef recently discovered over and above the low profitability returns of operations conducted on the Randfontein Leader. Thirdly, the dip of the Reef at the outcrop at Randfontein was steep, and though in depth it averaged out at 35°, it meant that Randfontein companies were likely to be quickly drawn into the increased costs of deeper level mining. It is clear, in fact, that the North Randfontein experienced this problem reasonably quickly, for, between 1899 and 1905, the company increased its claim areas south of the outcrop from 183 to 195.(11)

North Randfontein was not a large mine, either by the standards of the Robinson group or the Witwatersrand as a whole. Nevertheless, after 1905 it formed part of that relatively select group of Witwatersrand mines which paid dividends to its shareholders.(12) The North Randfontein's chief asset after the proving of the West Reef was the consistency of its ore, the number of fine ounces won therefrom and the size and value of its declared ore reserves. For example, in 1906 the average grade of ore milled on the North Randfontein was 34.72 shillings per ton. This put the mine firmly in the third, or 30-40 shilling category of average grade-ore estimates, which in 1906 produced 47.1% of all tons milled on the Witwatersrand in that year.(13) The ore reserves at December 1905 were estimated at 375,074 tons, an assay value of 11.14 dwts per ton.(14)

In another important respect the North Randfontein indicated its moderate size. The labour complement on the mine was about average size for the mines on the Reef, both before the advent of the Chinese, and in the course of the experiment.

In December 1904, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association estimated the total complement of the mine to be about 2,500 average for the whole year. In December 1905, the complement annual average had declined, but was still about average size for the year - 2,128.(15) In December 1905, 35 mines were employing Chinese labour representing varying proportions of their total complement; of these, seventeen were mines whose total complement was 2000 or over. More significant, in the context of the events of the later part of 1904 and early part of 1905, is the composition of the complement on the mine. Here there can be no doubt that the North Randfontein conformed to the pattern of only a minority of the mines employing Chinese labour. In the WNLA report of 1905 complement details of 32 out of the 35 mines employing Chinese are given. Of these 32, 18 retained an African labour complement of 10% or more whilst only 11 retained an African labour complement of less than 10%.(16) Three returns on percentage of complement were not given. In 1906, complement details of 29 mines employing Chinese were given, in which 15 retained an African labour complement of more than 10%, 9 retained an African labour complement of less than 10%, and three returns on percentage of complement were not given.(17) Within the 0-10% range of 1905, only three mines had a lower percentage complement of African labourers than the North Randfontein, whose 51 African labourers accounted for 2.4% of the total work complement on the mine.(18) Thus, out of a total average work complement of 2, 128 during 1905, the Chinese, as representatives of the so-called unskilled category of workers on whom the main physical burden of production demands fell, constituted the overwhelming proportion of the labour force on the mine. This work force composition is of crucial importance in understanding the events between August 1904 and April 1905.

The 1,988 Chinese on the North Randfontein were all Northern Chinese from the province of Ho-bei (or Chih-li).(19) It is also likely that the majority were or urban origin, coming from the city of Tien-tsin, and its neighbourhood, and that a significant proportion of these men were also regular urban wage earners working within the established labour market structure of the city.(20) They were all of good health, 74% of the complement having natural immunity to smallpox, and a high resistance to pneumonia.(21) It is apparent that these men had not only the physical attributes necessary to conduct highly strenuous mining work, but had already acquired a level of disciplined activity which made them capable of sustaining high levels of productivity. The Superintendent of Foreign Labour, W. Evans, formerly protector of Chinese in Perak, reported on their arrival in Durban that the 'men look well and strong ... They were very orderly and respectful of their headmen.'(22)

In his reports on the condition of these men Evans omitted to mention, or was probably unaware at the time, that their 'excellent organisation' had already been demonstrated in another capacity - that of mass action. During the preliminaries of recruiting and embarkation at Tientsin a serious dispute had broken out between two groups of Chinese, one of which later formed the whole complement on the North Randfontein mine.(23) The groups had been recruited by separate agents working for the Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Agency, and had been housed in separate parts of the city. They came to blows over the death of one prospective emigrant in a brawl. Another man died during the course of fierce hand-to-hand fighting. It is quite clear from reports of the incident that amongst both groups of men, the ability to organise into larger groups capable of conducting co-ordinated and pre-arranged manoevres was somewhat developed even at this stage.(24) This feature which is of real importance in understanding the Chinese response on the North Randfontein in March 1905, is hard to attribute to a particular source. Geographical homogeneity, indeed, what one might term urban localism, was certainly a factor.(25) Important also was the considerable delay between recruitment and embarkation, a period of six to seven weeks, in which the common locale of the recruiting depot aided the breakdown of barriers to communication. Further, the existence of two rival groups in separate depots, in which an element of competititon was present, and even encouraged it seems,(26)

must have heightened the sense of common identity and group interest. Given the normal recruiting and shipping policy of the C.M.L.I.A. and these particular circumstances, it is both curious, and of some significance that one of these groups should not have been broken up on their arrival in South Africa and allocated to different mines(27).

The complement of Chinese who finally arrived at the North Randfontein mine, 1,988 men in all, and one child aged between 9 and 10 who accompanied his father, a headman, (28) represented a diminution of 34 in the contracted work force. 32 men had apparently deserted during the process of embarkation which took four days to accomplish, between 29th June and 2nd July 1904.(29) The group was further diminished by the death of a man from pneumonia contracted during the embarkation, and the disappearance of another.(30) The men arrived on board the S.S. 'Swanley' at Durban on 1st August 1904, after a journey which was notable for the quietness and health of the emigrants. After spending a few days at the 'reception' depot at Jacobs, Port Natal, the men travelled by rail, in groups of 400, direct to the North Randfontein mine, arriving over a period of five days between the 6th and 10th of August 1904. (31) It is clear that, from the first the majority of these men were employed on work underground. In September 1904, for example, on average throughout the month 1,965 Chinese were at work, of whom 1,366 were underground, but on unspecified duties.(32) As the mine commenced crushing in November 1904, it seems that the proportions of underground workers increased slightly, though it is not clear in exact terms.(33) Of the total number of Chinese employed on the mine it is difficult to estimate what proportion were headmen, although reports suggest between 50 and 60 in March 1905.(34) This would have given an average [redacted] gang size of between 22 and 23 men between August 1904 and April 1905. Underground and surface men both worked a 10-hour day, six days a week, day or night shift, Sundays and specified holidays excluded, in accordance with Article 9 of the contract. (35)

Apologists for the mining houses have been anxious to explain the great numer of confrontations between the individual mine-managements and their respective Chinese work forces, as the inevitable result of misunderstandings (36), or by the application of blame to the Chinese as a racial type guilty of a particular type of moral weakness.(37) The enormous number of these disputes, their manifold causes, and characteristics, make such simplistic judgements very suspect. Indeed, the degree of simple linguistic incomprehension tended to decline over time. It is possible that its importance has been overestimated. The events at North Randfontein, an early incident taking place at the height of Foreign Labour Department understaffing and deficiency in language skills, suggest that this was of marginal importance. 'Misunderstandings' is an inadequate term for expressing disputes which covered such a multiplicity of circumstances, especially when it is clear that the directness of Chinese action in many cases indicates that they at least were under no misconception as to what their grievances were. Moral disapproval and racial explanations likewise tend to conceal more than they reveal, especially as one may see similar patterns of response in African mine labourers as in Chinese.(38) Nor can it be effectively maintained that moral turpitude or a propensity to resort to violence were the monopoly of the employed in many of these cases. The real causes of these disputes will be better understood in the context of the constraints of low-grade ore gold-mining, and more particularly in the manner in which these constraints became articulated and institutionalised, and the responses which these generated amongst the Chinese work force on individual mines. The efficacy of revealing areas of particularly actute tension amid the totality of relationships and problems of the South African gold mining industry is clearly demonstrated by the events at the North Randfontein mine. The locus of these tensions at North Randfontein is not hard to find. In November 1904 the mine resumed crushing

after an interval of over five years.(39) The increased production pressures consequent upon this restarting are obvious, but it must also be appreciated that these pressures were falling upon a work force unused to the intensity and consistency of the rigours of producing gold mines. The Chinese had only been on the mine two and a half months at this stage. This situation must not, however, be over-emphasised. The Southern Chinese on the New Comet Mine also experienced a similar early baptism without showing any marked propensity towards dissatisfaction, although they were men of distinctly inferior physique, in many ways unsuited to their task.(40)

The natural discomfort of men relatively newly subject to long periods of hard unhealthy labour was made more acute on the North Randfontein mine by a decline in the size of the work force over a period of increasing productive pressure. Further, this was a work force in which nearly the whole force of these pressures fell directly, because of the small number of native labourers employed at the mine. For example, the size of the work force declined steadily from 1,979 in August to 1,899 in December of 1904, showing only a slight rise in January 1905 to 1,906.(41) Thereafter, it seems to have remained fairly constant around this figure until a further decline occurred in April 1905. This relatively small decline was more than offset for the employers by an increase in the average number of working days per man per calendar month, coupled with a decline in the average wage of the men. The average number of working days per Chinese labourer per calendar month rose from 16.54 in August (a short month) to 23.79 in January 1905, showing an increase in every month except November. Over the same period the average wage for all Chinese in the mine rose from 1/0.77 pence per day of ten hours in August to 1/6.89 pence per day in November. From then on wages declined to 1/4.56 pence in December 1904, and rose slightly to 1/5.39 pence in January.(42) Thereafter, it appears that the rates remained fairly constant, at a level below the 1/6d daily average until April, when the day's pay system was largely abandoned on the mine.(43) As far as the men were concerned then, for some considerable time before the outbread of serious trouble on the mine, they were asked to do more work, with fewer hands and for a declining or static amount of money.

At North Randfontein, the intensity of exploitation was increased through management ore-extraction policy. As has been mentioned already, the assay value of the declared ore reserves of the North Randfontein in 1905 was 11.14 dwts to the ton.(44) However, at no point in 1904 or 1905 did the mine process ore, or even tailings, appraoching that value. Concentrates were the most consistently valuable, with a monthly yield value of between 5.28 and 7.63 dwts to the ton, although their volume was very small.(45) Milling was, of course, by far the largest constituent of the yields at any time. Yet the highest declared assay value for milling in any one month between November 1904 and August 1907, when the majority of the Chinese left the mine, was 5.38 dwts per ton in November 1904.(46) This is hardly surprising. The initially high figure is probably attributable to a desire to return a high fine ounce yield in the first month of production when a small number of tons of ore were hoisted. In general it is apparent that the management adhered closely to the policy of not 'picking the eyes' of the mine in order to push up its fine ounce yields throughout the time the Chinese were working at North Randfontein. In terms of the work force this had important consequences.

Increased fine ounce yields could only be won by working out higher grade ore reserves more quickly, or by increasing the amounts of low grade ore milled. In short, by increasing worker productivity. That the North Randfontein chose the latter policy, or was forced into it by the necessity of returning adequate dividends over a sufficiently lengthy period to make

up for the eight years of productive operations without dividends, is clear from the crushing returns of the mine. One feature of these is the contrast between the consistency of the assay values and the constantly upward trend of gold-ore tonnage milled in 1905: in November 1904 10,350 tons of ore were actually milled; in January 1905, 14,700 tons; in May, 15,246; in October 15,322 tons. Thereafter, something of a plateau is reached. This is best indicated in the fine ounce yields from milling which were as follows :

date	total yield (fine ozs.)	yield from milling (f. ozs)
November 1904	4,401	2,785
January 1905	5,255	2,949
May 1905	5,542	3,073
October 1905	6,126	3,314
January 1906	6,230	3,647
June 1906	6,000	3,581
September 1906	6,138	3,476

In 1905 the mine yielded 68,407 fine ounces of gold from all sources; in 1906 73,101 fine ounces from all sources.(47) Thus, the greatest pressure from rising output was coincidental with the decline in the Chinese work strength and poor wage position in the period November 1904 to April 1905.

An additional management policy also contributed to turning this potential source of discontent into an actual grievance and dispute by two decisions on wage policy. In the first place, as part of a general wage strategy, the Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Assocation, of which the North Randfontein was a member, initiated a drive to hold up productivity under the day's pay scheme of the Chine labourers' contract. This was made politically acceptable by characterising it as an attack on loafing or as a request for a fair day's work for a liberal day's pay.(48) On the North Randfontein this appeared to take two forms, of incentive and penalty. As an incentive scheme for the tactically important hammer-men, it was decided to pay a bonus over and above the basic rate of one shilling per day of ten hours (the standard pay for the first six months of duration of the Chinese labourers' contract) for hammer work over twenty-four inches, with an additional bonus on the completion of three feet. Regardless of the amount drilled, between nine and twenty-four inches, the one shilling basic rate applied. As a penalty, it was decided to reduce by half a penny the basic rate of one shilling, for every hole drilled which was under nine inches.(49) From the evidence it is not exactly clear when this scheme came into operation at the North Randfontein. It seems that it was probably introduced, as on other mines, piecemeal: the first part to be initiated being the incentive scheme, whilst the more contentious penalty clauses were introduced somewhat later. It is likely that the incentives for hammer-work came in with the commencement of crushing in November 1904. The sharp downward turn in wages indicated earlier, followed by a slow rise and levelling out is possibly indicative of a change in work patterns followed by gradually increasing ability and productivity, under incentives. Penalties came later, most likely towards the end of February 1905. Quite why they would have come in then is problematical. It might have been the management's response to a temporary decline in the tonnage milled, which was occasioned by February being a short month, and one in which the Chinese New Year fell in 1905. The latter meant the loss of three full days, or six shifts.(50) There are indications that loafing was on the increase also, as the pattern of dissent amongst Chinese was changed from that of large scale desertion.(51) It might also have been the direct result of the agreement between the Foreign Labour Department and the Chamber of Mines, the C.M.L.I.A., and the

Committee of General Managers and Consulting Engineers to allow individual mines to mulct 'shirkers' of their wages. This was finalised on March 3rd 1905, although it did not become offical policy until after the dispute at the North Randfontein.(52) In any case it was certainly in operation by March 7th 1905.(53) Although the stipulations of Clause 6 of the contract of service probably allowed for incentive-type additions to the basic day scheme, the penalty-type deductions were a far cry from the protective intent of this minimum wage clause.(54)

Secondly, the North Randontein mine management also allowed itself to go into breach of contract with all the Chinese workers at the mine in respect of Clause 6 of the contract. The minimum wage clause of the contract did not stop at the provision for the day rate for the first six months of work under the three year agreement. It also provided that in the event of the average wage of a particular gang of Chinese workers being below fifty shillings per month, then the basic rate of pay to be given to each man must thenceforth be a minimum of one shilling and sixpence per day. It is clear from the response of the mine management to the Chinese petititon of the 22nd March 1905, that the basic day rate had not at that time been raised to one shilling and sixpence - that is over seven calendar months after the arrival of the last Chinese on the North Randfontein.(55) The fact of breach of contract still applies even if the basis of thirty working days is taken as the basis of monthly calculations. The importance of this becomes clear when even the Transvaal Government was forced to admit that the average rate for the Chinese on the North Randfontein appeared to be under the stipulated minimum of fifty shillings per month.(56)

It is apparent from the timing of events at North Randfontein that it was this breach of contract by the mining management which set in motion the events which ended with the arrest of fifty-three so called ringleaders on April 1st. Up until this point Chinese discontent with their working conditions had taken the more usual forms of desertion and simple unwillingness to give of their best - 'loafing' in mining house terms. (Genuine cases of poor performance should also not be discounted, especially as this was still a relatively early stage of the Chinese term of employment). Desertion from the North Randfontein mine had become so bad by January 1905 that the Foreign Labour Department requested and obtained the restriction of all Chinese to the North Randfontein's mining premises (as opposed to the premises of the licence holders, Randfontein Estates, which would have included the eleven other Randfontein mines).(57) Combination as a means of defence had also been tried as early as August 30th 1904, but the severity of the management's response possibly proved a deterrent to immediate repetition of this type of action.(58)

In this context, therefore, it is clear that the decision of the Chinese to resort to combination for a second time is indicative of a fairly acute level of tension between management and labour over the whole range of production and wage problems.(59) The absence of any statement in either direction makes it impossible to be certain whether the decision of the Chinese to combine without striking was in any way effected by their initial experience of the management's sharp way with dissent. The high degree of tactical skill displayed by the Chinese throughout the dispute suggests that it was a possibility. In any case, this second Chinese combination at Randfontein took the form, initially, of a mass petition in response to the breach of contract position adopted by the mining management. On the 22nd March 1905, one hundred and forty days after their arrival, the Chinese petitioned that all members of their gang should receive a minimum monthly wage of fifty shillings

in accordance with Clause 6 of the contract.(60) In answer to the petition, the Manager explained, correctly, that the clause stipulated that the average wage of the gang should be fifty shillings per month, not that fifty shillings be the basic rate for each individual Chinese. As to the question of the one shilling and sixpence day rate, he said that he could not inform them at that moment as the mine management was in communication with the government, but he hoped to be able to give an answer in two weeks. It is apparent that the manager, through his interpreter, had considerable difficulty in getting the Chinese to understand the difference between 'average' and 'individual' pay. Nevertheless, the Chinese eventually seemed to accept the explanation and for the next six days work on the mine went on as usual pending settlement of the claim.

On March 28th 1905 the mine manager countered the Chinese petition with an offer of his own. He offered the headmen the following:

> 'In addition to the one shilling per ten hour shift, the boss boys should receive the sum of one penny for each hole of twenty four inches or over drilled by any member of their gang, plus a bonus of sixpence per shift if all coolies in their gang drilled thirty six inches or over.' (61)

No mention is made in the Superintendent of Foreign Labour's report, of any offer being made at this stage to the members of each hammer-gang. Indeed, in view of the management's offer of 4th April which specifically applied bonuses to all members of the gang on a more equitable basis, it seems that no particular offer was made to members of hammer-gangs or other Chinese on the 28th March except to raise the rate for day work from one shilling to one shilling and sixpence in contradiction of the management's earlier position.(62) The Superintendent declared this offer to the headmen to be "most reasonable", as, indeed financially speaking, it was. As a considerable number of Chinese on hammer work were drilling two feet or more (63), despite claims by the C.M.L.I.A. of widespread loafing, they stood to make a large amount of money out of the arrangement. As far as the management was concerned it was not only a reasonable offer, insofar as it did not open up any prospect of large scale increases in wages, it was also an extremely ingenious one, for if it had been accepted, it promised to settle a troublesome wage claim at the same time as it gave important and influential members of the Chinese work force a vested interest in rooting out loafing without the need to resort to the rather cumbersome procedure elaborated by the Foreign Labour Department and the Chamber, earlier in the month. It was just this aspect of the whole settlement which made the offer unacceptable for headmen and hammermen alike. For the former, it would have put them into a position analoguous to that of the hated compound police. For men whose moral and material position depended to a large degree on the extent to which they were integrated into the general working experience of the Chinese miners, this was obviously an impossible offer. For efficient and inefficient hammer-men, the offer was likewise unacceptable. For those who were productive within the C.M.L.I.A.'s meaning of the term, it was unremunerative and insulting. For the inefficient ones, although it held out the prospect of increased money for little work, it threatened to add a second, and potentially more effective weapon to the attack which had already been mounted against them by the C.M.L.I.A. Indeed, it may be fairly stated that the offer was more calculated to unite the group against the management, rather than divide them which appears to be the intention. The headmen had little choice but to refuse the offer, and did so in a manner calculated to demonstrate their solidarity with their fellow workers, whilst keeping within the bounds of legality: by resigning their positions as headmen en masse and requesting to revert to the positions of hammermen.(64) In so doing they avoided laying themselves open to a charge

of refusal to work. The management refused to accept their resignations.(65)

This was the crisis of the dispute. By resigning, the Chinese headmen had indicted their rejection of the management's offer. This was a defensive gesture in that it was not coupled with a new claim or even a reiteration of the petition of 22nd March. It was also an offensive of a kind in that it removed the whole basis of the management's offer of the 28th March. This meant that as far as the management were concerned, they either had to make a completely new offer and accept the superior bargaining position of the Chinese, or they had to force the acceptance of the original scheme. In view of the very tight control over the wages bill which a day scheme with limited application of bonuses of this kind offered, especially if the penalty scheme of the C.M.L.I.A. and the control functions of the headmen were fully utilised, and in the general absence of piece work amongst Chinese gangs at this moment (66), it is hardly surprising that the management opted for the forced acceptance of their scheme. That the Chinese were aware that the refusal of their resignations meant the management's refusal to make a new type of offer is clear from their subseqent action.

To understand the import of events that followed it is necessary to emphasize that the management, from the date of their offer, were operating from a very powerful position. Their offer on basic rates had effectively removed them from their position of breach of contract. They were quite within their rights in making the offer to the headmen alone. They were quite within their rights also in refusing to accept the resignations: the management under the contract could require a man to remain in a position assigned to him.(67) The legal position of the Chinese headmen on the other hand was a very tenuous one. They could not simply refuse the offer without running a very real risk of being arrested for refusal to work. This was no unlikely thread: the management had already successfully prosecuted fifty headmen for disobedience to orders in August 1904. Thus, management power and intransigence, if it was to be resisted at all, had to be resisted with a high degree of defensive skill, used within extremely tight limits. It is the complete success of the Chinese in this respect which gives the North Randfontein dispute its peculiar flavour(68). It also demonstrates clearly, despite the almost overwhelming hostility of the evidence, that this particular group of men had a very real awareness of their bargaining position, which they were prepared to use.

The question then arises: why were the Chinese prepared to embark upon such a path which seemed to hold out so little prospect of success? The answer must be that the deliberateness with which the management went into breach of contract and then made an offer which threatened to destroy the only source of real strength, their solidarity, crystalised and made explicit all the mounting discontents with working conditions which had been accumulating over the past seven months. That these discontents were the result of constraints imposed by the necessities of profitable exploitation of the low grade ore reserves of the Witwatersrand, heightens rather than diminishes the importance of this whole incident at the same time that it demolishes the crude thesis of simple misunderstanding which was such a favoured excuse of the mining houses.(69)

Thus the second stage of dispute was an intensification of the characteristics of the first part, and followed logically from the position of the Chinese that they had no choice between total acquiescence to a wage system which they hated and which would be introduced by default, and continued resistence. The headmen simply accepted their enforced retention of their positions and turned it to their own account. Contemporaries referred to the consequences of the Chinese action as a strike. Today we should refer to it as a work-to-rule.

From the night shift of 29th March, until mid-way through the day shift of April 1st, no Chinese hammer men drilled more than thirteen inches of rock or drilled less than twelve inches.(70) It seems that the solidarity of the hammer men was total and at times enforced violently by Chinese on their few fellow dissidents.(71) Naturally, the dispute affected other men on the mine as failure to realise advance material to facilitate crushing brought the mine to a standstill.(72) It is evident that in this situation the headmen wielded great power over their fellow workers. This, it will be recalled had been a feature of this particular group even at the time of their arrival in South Africa. In circumstances which had so markedly increased their moral authority, this characteristic became accentuated. This flow of power downwards amongst the Chinese, reinforced by the management's unwitting support of the headmen's position, throws doubt upon the Superintendent of Foreign Labour's suggestion that the

> 'old gamblers and opium smokers, who are too debilitated to do more than twelve inches, and who cannot earn sufficient by means of their work to enable them to compete when gambling against coolies earning large sums at the end of the month, have frightened the 'boss' boys into demanding this minimum wage of fifty shillings.' (73)

Wolfe Murray, the Superintendent, asserted himself that the headmen had their comrades 'entirely in their power'.(74) Furthermore, given the premium placed on productive capacity, it is unlikely that such debilitated men would have been retained as rock drillers in any proportions likely to be effective or significant. Indeed it seems that poor performance on the stope face was more likely to come from capable men unwilling to apply themselves - i.e. loafers. No one plausibly suggested that it was these men who had the ability to frighten the headmen into making minimum wage demands.(75) The popularity of the eventual settlement, based on the wide application of piece work rates which were inimical to debilitated men and loafers alike, suggests that the real driving force behind the dispute was simple dissatisfaction with management wage and production policy, and not unprincipled demands for a minimum wage without any corresponding effort from one section of the Chinese work force. This is also consistent with the defensive character of the Chinese resort to direct action which followed not as a direct result of the management's offer of 28th March, which was in effect a rejection of the petition of 22nd, but as a consequence of the management's rejection of the headmen's request to resign.

There is no indication that direct action in the dispute involved, at this stage, any more than the hammer gangs. This is not suprising in that the wage offer which was being protested against was aimed at these men, who were in any case the great majority of the men on the mine. Furthermore, the dependence of surface men on the productivity of the men on the stope face, meant that for tactical purposes, in the successful prosecution of a work to rule, it was not an important area of active support. That these men gave tacit support is evident from the fact that only one man out of nineteen hundred turned evidence against the headmen, and even then not until the second day of the work-to-rule.

The high degree of tactical sophistication implicit in a work-to-rule of this kind has been emphasized. This was operative at two separate levels. In the first instance it was of sufficient power to effect the production on the mine. In the second instance, in that it was peaceful and at no point represented a breach of contract by the Chinese, it was sufficiently formidable a weapon to force the management to negotiate, in itself a significant concession. As Wolfe Murray ponted out "there is....no provision either in the Labour Importation Ordinance or in the laws of the Transvaal, for

for punishing them." (76) That this was no mere chance, and that the Chinese on the North Randfontein and other mines had a clear knowledge of their rights and powers of which they were prepared to make use, was admitted by Lt. Governor Lawley when he stated that considerable difficulty was caused by Clause 6 (the wages clause) "which is clearly understood by every Chinaman and which is a very powerful weapon in their hands..."(77) This was also an implicit admission in the response of both the mine management and the C.M.L.I.A. to the situation at the North Randfontein.

The details of the management's activity on the 30th March are not clear, except in that they endeavoured to negotiate a return to normal working by the Chinese, apparently without success.(78) On 31st March the Mine Manager called in the General Manager of the C.M.L.I.A., Bagot and its Chinese adviser, Baldwin, who had accompanied these Chinese from Taku on the S.S. "Swanley",(79) to help with negotiations (80). These continued throughout the day, and despite the management's success in getting one man to turn evidence against the headmen, they failed to reach a settlement with the Chinese which would restore production on the mine. It was, therefore, decided by the C.M.L.I.A. and the mine management jointly, to take the offensive even though this involved measures of doubtful legality. Firstly, they decided not to credit the tickets of any of the hammer men because, the management maintained, none of them had drilled more than twelve inches.(81) Secondly, it was decided to take advantage of the information supplied by the collaborator and arrest the ringleaders for "refusal to work". As these charges were easily open to challenge in court, as all prosecuting parties to the dispute tacitly admitted by not laying them subsequently, this action must be interpreted as one of provocation on the part of the management. There can be little doubt that the calling in of mounted European police to effect an arrest for which there was no legal case, was unlikely to pass off without serious disruption. The manager of the mine admitted this himself to the Sergeant-in-Charge at Randfontein on the 31st, when he requested police to effect the arrests as "trouble was anticipated" at the mine.(82).

At this point it must be made clear that there are grounds for believing that the C.M.L.I.A. was guilty of duplicity. In his report to the Lt. Governor of the Transvaal, Wolfe Murray claimed that he did not intervene on behalf of the Government in the dispute at this stage because of assurances from Bagot, the General Manager, that "there was no danger of a riot and that the police had simply to be called in to arrest the ringleaders who had been discovered." (83) Although this does not exonerate the Superintendent from the charge of almost incredible naivity, especially as he had been aware of the trouble at North Randfontein for at least thirty-six hours previous to his interview with Bagot, it does explain why no officer from the Foreign Labour Department appeared on the mine premises until after the serious riot of 1st April. Bagot's assurances were simply directly at variance with the message given by Bulman, the mine manager, to the Randfontein police. Yet in the final analysis this is a detail. Wjat was really at stake at this point in the dispute, was the ability of the mine-managements to call in sufficient state power to coerce the Chinese into accepting a wage settlement that was favourable to the mining-houses. Wolfe Murray and his small team of Inspector and Interpreter were of little use in this case, despite the fact that the Foreign Labour Department concurred at every point with C.M.L.I.A. policy. The troopers of the Randfontein and Krugersdorp Constabulary promised to settle the matter much more effectively. As Bagot himself said when requesting Wolfe Murray not to intervene:

> 'the principle involved (of extracting a fair day's work for a fair day's pay) was of such vital importance to the mining industry that he considered it advisable to try and allow the employers to show the coolies that they had power enough to settle the matter for themselves, without the intervention of the Government.' (84)

At first everything went according to the plans of the C.M.L.I.A. and the management. Thirty-six of the fifty-three earmarked headmen were in the compound on the morning of 1st April. Their arrest was effected by half of the police force of twenty-two without difficulty, around 10.00 a.m. A lull of about two and a half hours followed, pending the arrival of the other shift from below ground. Throughout this time all the police remained inside the compound amid the thirteen hundred or so Chinese without incident.(85) At about 12.30 p.m. the working shift was called up. On their arrival at the shaft head, they "scented danger" and instead of returning to the compound, they took up a position on the South Dump of the mine, some eighty feet up. Bulman failed, once again, to persuade these men, numbering over six hundred, to come down and allow the ringleaders to be arrested.(86) During these conversations contact was established between the group in the compound and the group on the dump. This seems to have prompted the police to remove what prisoners they had, outside of the compound gates.(87) As this was being done, all the Chinese in the compound attacked the police with sticks, stones, bottles and drills, and attempted to cut off their means of escape. The police managed to extricate themselves but at the cost of their prisoners. They also failed to keep the Chinese inside the compound, because of the enormous barrage of missiles which rained down on them. "The police then took up a position at the corner of the compound to prevent the party on the South shaft joining those on the compound, who were at this time climbing a big stone dump about eighty feet high close to the compound gates. Several charges were made at both parties to prevent them joining, but without success. The determination shown by the coolies at this stage of the fight being too great for the police, the troop withdrew and allowed the seven hundred coolies on the South shaft to join those on the dump near the compound." (88) The Chinese remained on the dump for about two hours, giving the police time to communicate with Flordia for more men. In the early afternoon they descended the dump and made off in a large mass for the Lancaster mine, presumably with the intention of enlisting the help of the seven hundred Chinese employed there. The police allowed them sufficient time to get away from the Randfontein group of mines, and then gave chase by way of the railway line in the direction of Krugersdorp. They met up with the line of Chinese near the Horsham-Monitor mine. They were joined there by police reinforcements from Krugersdorp. "With repeated charges" through the line of Chinese they were able to turn them homeward and eventually disarm them. With the arrival of more police from Florida, Roodepoort, and Luipardsvlei, the arrest of the fifty-three 'ringleaders' was effected. The remainder of the Chinese were marched back to Randfontein, whilst the captives were set to Krugersdorp to be charged.(89) On Monday 3rd April the mine was reported to be working normally. (90) and the fifty-three headmen had been charged (91), with public violence and assault with intent to do harm, for which they received three months hard labour on the first count, and six months on the second. Even Wolfe Murray had the grace to admit that it was

> 'by the merest chance that the offenders took part in the riot, which might never had occurred and in which they might have refrained from taking part.' (92)

There can be no doubting that the action of the management and the C.M.L.I.A. in bringing in the police precipitated an explosive demonstration of total solidarity amongst the Chinese, which also reiterated the consistently defensive nature of the action of these men. It also gave further indication, if one was needed of the degree of support enjoyed by the headmen in their opposition to the management's offer of 28th March. The Commissioner of Police in Johannesburg described the incident as the "most serious disturbance we have had", (93) despite the fact that no loss of life was recorded. This was the seventeenth disturbance amongst the Chinese since their arrival, which had necessitated the

calling in of the European police. (94) The Inspector-in-charge at Krugersdorp admitted to being greatly surprised by the determination of the Chinese as well as by their tactical skill:

> 'Each time we charged them they waited for us and threw their missiles when we were almost on to them. All the horses and men were hit several times.' (95)

Indeed, the fighting on April 1st confirmed and emphasized all the characteristics of the Chinese mine workers on the North Randfontein which had been observable over the past months: their capacity for disciplined mass action, their tactical appreciation, and their determination to resist some of the worst excesses of the management's exploitative techniques.

What were the consequences of this affair? In respect of the North Randfontein mine in particular, it secured the rejection of the offer of 28th March and its substitution by a much more equitable bonus system. For on the 4th April the management made a new offer to the Chinese hammer men as follows :

> 'All coolies on piece work or desiring piece work to be offered the opportunity of accepting a supplementary agreement in terms of Clause 6 of the contract of service, at the following rates: ½d. per inch drilled, with a bonus of threepence per shift if 36 inches or over were drilled.' (96)

On 14th April the agreement was settled in its final form:

> '½d. per inch up to 36 inches, with bonuses of threepence for 36 inches to 47 inches; fivepence for 48 inches to 59 inches and so on up to nine pence maximum.' (97)

Thus for the temporary loss of approximately sixty headmen the Chinese had secured considerable improvements. Those on piece work had secured the removal of the penalty limit, had secured a more favourable bonus system, and had it extended to all concerned with hammer work. This in addition to the instigation of the one and sixpence day rate for all others, which had been in operation at North Randfontein since 28th March. Selborne believed that this was a significant improvement in the position of the Chinese and recommended its extension to all Chinese working in situations to which piece work was applicable. (98)

More generally, after the North Randfontein dispute and as a consequence of it, piece work contracts were rapidly extended wherever possible. Furthermore, offers of the type made on the 28th March at the North Randfontein were never repeated on any mine. In fact bonuses to headmen became subject to considerable scrutiny by the Transvaal and British governments for fear of an embarassing repetition of a North Randfontein-type situation.(99) This was undoubtedly a great gain for the Chinese. Why was the Chamber of Mines prepared to go along with, and introduce so quickly, a new type of wage system for the Chinese working after the expiry of their first six months of contract?

In one sense the North Randfontein dispute only highlighted problems, and did not provide answers for the Chamber. It indicated clear that incentive and control mechanisms could not be transmitted safely through the Chinese themselves. Piece work became a necessity if the twin needs of rising production and consistency were to be implemented without provoking a similar kind of disturbance again. North Randfontein then, symbolised the inauguration of a more sophisticated and externalised system of labour management which also had the appearance of considerable gains for the Chinese who worked under it.

Obviously in its initial phases the new arrangements were not without their 'defects', and the Chamber was forced to move rapidly in its attempts to plug these loopholes and tighten control.

This process was paralleled by another. The North Randfontein had not effectively answered the problem of how to eradicate loafing under day's pay rates. The particular group of Chinese under consideration at the North Randfontein were at the end of their initial period of six months and so the problems which faced the management thereafter were somewhat different. Yet many Chinese on other mines had varying parts of their initial six months still to run, or were under day rates under jobs listed in Schedule 2 of the contract of service.(100) North Randfontein, moreover, was a dispute in which loafing and associated problems had played a large part. Thus the events of March 22nd - April 4th added greater urgency to attempts to find a definitive solution to the control mechanisms under day rates.

The extension and refinement of piece work contracts and the search for a solution to the day-rates problem advanced together. Briefly, what were the main features of this process?

In the first place it is clear that the absnece of penalty stipulations in supplementary piece work contracts, was no indication of their removal. In truth the reverse was the case. They became intensified as Selborne admitted when he stated it was universal practice on the mines to pay nothing at all for rock drilled of less than twenty-four inches in length.(101) At the same time he stated that men who had been on surface work at rates of less than one shilling and sixpence under Schedule 2 of the contract, would, in view of the rise in day rates which would necessarily accompany the introduction of piece work, be substituted by African labour to whom the minimum wage stipulation of Clause 6 did not apply. Wherever possible the substituted men would be put on piece work contracts. (102) Furthermore, it appears that the penalty system under day rates was systematically extended after the North Randfontein dispute, and on a suitable equivalence scale, applied to other classes of work than rock drilling.(103) This penalty system was further refined by the stipulation that a man who had agreed to do piece work should not be able to claim the basic day rate if he failed to measure up to the stipulated minimum.(104) The mining houses were also officially exonerated from the burden of furnishing particulars of the average pay of Chinese labourers employed for any particular month after the expiration of the six months of service.(105) This was very helpful in concealing embarrassing information about averages which otherwise might come out as a result of the wholesale application of these penalties. The cornerstone was put on this impressive edifice of extractive powers by the simultaneous admission by the Attorney-General's department that there was "no oblication on the employers to maintain the average pay referred to in paragraph three of Clause six after the expiration of six months" (106). The Government only stopped short of allowing the Chamber of Mines to calculate these averages in a manner which would have excluded the great majority of newly recruited Chinese, on the basis that they were inefficient, because of the political impossibility of tampering with the contract.(107) In the event, the economic and extra-economic controls which became built into the piece work system made the resort to barring automatic wage rises by illegal means unnecessary. There is no reason to expect that the men on the North Randfontein escaped any of the refinements of the penalty system, as they were extended to all mines employing Chinese on piece work. (108)

As a system designed to increase the productivity of the labourer without a substantial increase in the relative overall wages bill, it was a great success. Between 31st December 1904 and December 31st 1905 the accounts of the North Randfontein, for example, showed a decline in the debit balance on the profit and

loss account from £102,375 to £1,172, the latter figure including allowance for a dividend payment of £45,000, although a sum of £82,385 development and war expenditure formerly debited to profit and loss account was transferred to the debit of share premium account (which showed a credit balance of £92,426 in December 1905, as opposed to a credit balance of £174,812 in December 1904). (109) Furthermore the yields of fine ounces of gold rose in every month after April 1905 at North Randfontein until Decmber, with the exception of November, when there was a decline of 151 fine ounces on the October figure.(110) More significantly, perhaps, the monthly totals of gold won from milling also rose every month between April and December, with exception of June, when there was a decline of 60 fine ounces on the May figure.(111) No further major disturbances resulting from wage disputes were reported from Randfontein between 1905 and 1907.

The degree of economic control secured by the piece work contract was matched by a similar extension of the extra-economic control over the Chinese. Under the Clause 6 of the original contract it had been clearly stated that piece work should only be undertaken after mutual agreement between employer and employee. However, an examination of the supplementary agreements in force on all parts of the Rand, makes it quite clear that with the signing of these agreements this area of bargaining power was removed from the Chinese: thenceforward employees were to do hand drilling at piece work rates "whenever required by the employer".(112) Given the increased penalties under piece rates, this was a considerable gain for the mining houses and one which took some explaining away. Lyttleton showed concern lest he be politically embarrassed, but let himself be fobbed off with vague assurances from Selborne, on the basis of information supplied by the mining interest. The truth of the matter seems to be that such developments coincided with the increasingly dominant control functions of the Government exercised through the Foreign Labour Department.(113) Jamieson, the new Superintendent of Foreign Labour, outlined this programme quite clearly in August of 1905 when he stated

> 'that it is my duty to do everything I possibly can to co-operate harmoniously with the Chamber of Mines with a view to making their experiment a complete success'.

The measures which he envisaged, which would induce the spirit of harmonious co-operation, were the retention of the right to flog the Chinese, the imposition of collective powers of fining, increasing the Government's powers of repatriation, and resting increased legal powers in this particular area of executive power.(114)

In the extension of this formidable apparatus of control, there was an economic advantage which stemmed from the peculiar conditions under which indentured labour was imported into South Africa. The Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Association had been set up by the Chamber of Mines to control recruiting in China and oversee the distribution of labourers, in a manner similar to that of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association of Africa.(115) In this respect, apart from introducing significant economies of scale into importation procedures and maintaining a balance of supply of indentured labourers amongst the various mining groups, the C.M.L.I.A. prevented competititon amongst the mines from driving up the rates offered to recruits in an attempt to increase the labour supply. This situation was obtained by the use of a standard contract, with previously determined wage rates, which was issued to prospective labourers only at the emigration depots, and only after the C.M.L.I.A. had secured power of attorney from the group of mines importing the labourers.(116) This control of wage rates at source could not be extended, however, beyond the first six months of the contract unless day rates remained in force throughout the length of all Chinese labourers contracts. Yet, as we have seen, the major consequence of the North Randfontein dispute was to encourage the C.M.L.I.A. in an offensive against all forms of "inefficiency", by the widespread introduction of piece work contracts after April 1905. It was, moreover, just this kind of wage payment which was not amenable to control and prohibition of inter-group competition. What was it that encouraged the Chamber

to abandon the tight control over wage rates without the protection of a maximum average clause? (117)

The answer must be sought in the protective clauses of the Anglo-Chinese Labour Convention of May 1904,(118) and clause 2 of the contract of service. Article XIII of the Convention, and the implementing of clause 2 of the contract provided that transference of labourers between one employer and another was only to be undertaken with the consent of labourer, the Chinese consul, the Superintendent of Foreign Labour, and the employers concerned. However, as the editors of the North China Herald were quick to point out, the contract was conspicuous more for what it did not say than what it laid down.(119) Clause 2 and Article XIII were the only mention of the labourer's right of mobility, once in South Africa; that is of mobility in respect of occupational location. The alternative was self-financed repatriation. However, this stipulation in no way altered the bargaining power of the indentured labourers in South Africa given the prohibitive cost of such a venture. (The Liberal Government's repatriation scheme merely substituted the prohibition of costs for that of administrative arbitrariness). Moreover, Clause 2 assumed that the initiative for mobility would come from an employer, not an employee, and simply required mutual consent. It gave no generalised right of mobility to the Chinese labourers. In the situation of labour shortage in which the Chinese were introduced into South Africa it was also unlikely that employers would collude to their own disadvantage by encouraging labourer mobility amongst the groups. Thus unless the employer chose, for reasons other than simple repatriation as an undesirable, the Chinese worker was fixed imovably on his original mine subject to whatever conditions might prevail there. This situation was reinforced by the whole system of Government licensing and penalties laid down by the Importation Ordinance.(120) Thus employees had no fear that widespread deductions for loafing, maximum on piece rates, as existed at Randfontein, or poor relations between the Chinese and their overseers, might drive the work force to seek employment at other mines offering better conditions. What they had to fear in consequence was a determined combination to resist the more the socially devisive and unacceptable conditions of all aspects of mining work. That some of these combinations fell within and some outside of the legal net laid by the power of organised mining capitalism is explicable by the degree of cohesion and consciousness of a particular group of Chinese, in response to a particular level of felt grievance. The North Randfontein dispute showed clearly the serious possibilities which might result when a combination of Chinese was conducted outside the scope of this legal net. The Chamber's activities in the subsequent months must be seen as attempts to rectify affairs so as to prevent the recurrence of a situation similar to that at North Randfontein which had provoked that formidable if short-lived display of worker strength.

Summary

Events at the North Randfontein mine between 22nd March and 4th April 1905 were crucial in determining the nature of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines' wages policy in respect of the Chinese. Despite sophisticated response from the Chinese work force, the greater degree of coercive State power available to the mine owners, either in the form of police power or the Foreign Labour Department, meant that a potentially dangerous situation could be brought under control, whatever the legality of the situation. Furthermore, the collusion of certain state departments with the mine owners answered not only the future settlement of such industrial disputes, but also the satisfactory implementation of wage policies on lines which not only favoured the mining interests profitability requirements but also enabled them to add a greater degree of control over their work force than had existed before. This obviated the necessity of recourse to such dangerous expedients as had been tried at the North Randfontein mine.

Notes

1. Lyttelton to Lawley, April 12th 1905, CO 879/85/761
2. Lawley to Lyttelton, April 18th 1905, CO 879/85/761
3. Selborne to Lyttelton, July 31st 1905, CO 879/85/761
4. See, for example, the majority report of the Transvaal Labour Commission, 1903.
5. For a discussion of the campaign see particularly: "White Labour's responses to the Chamber of Mines decision to import industrial Chinese labour" unpublished research paper given to the African Research Seminar, Univ. of Cape Town, by D. Ticktin; see also D. Denoon "A Grand Illusion" London, Longman, 1973. p.
6. Annual Report of the Foreign Labour Department of 1904-5: return of Chinese riots and disturbances; Cd. 3025.
7. For a more generalised approach to some of these problems, see P.C. Campbell 'Chinese Coolie Emigration to Countries within the British Empire' London, 1923, pp. 189-191. J.A. Reeves "Chinese Labour in South Africa, 1901-10"; unpublished M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1954, p. 208.
8. Randfontein Mines in 1905 were (a) productive companies: Porges, South, North, and Robinson Randfontein; (b) unproductive Stubbs, 'Block A', Mynpacht, West, East, Farguam; van Hulsteyn and Johnstone Randfontein
9. The Mining Manual, 1906 by W.R. Skinner, London 1907, pp. 449; 481-2.
10. Bleloch "The New South Africa", 2nd ed., London 1902, Appendices 1 &
11. Bleloch, loc.cit.; Mining Manual 1906, p. 449.
12. Out of 74 Witwatersrand companies listed in the dividend returns for 1905, 43 actually paid out in that year. Annual report of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 1905.
13. Ibidem for 1906.
14. Mining Manual, 1906, p. 618.
15. Annual Reports of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, for 1904 and 1905 in Transvaal Chamber of Mines Annual Reports.
16. WNLA Annual Report for 1905.
17. WNLA Annual Report for 1906.
18. WNLA Annual Report for 1905.
19. Walter (Transvaal Emigration Agent, Tien-Tsin) to Lyttelton, July 20th 1904, CO 879/85/755.
20. Consular Intelligence Report from Tien-Tsin for the Dec. quarter 1905, FO 228/1594; also London and China Telegraph, Aug. 8th 1904.

21. Report of the Surgeon Superintendent of the S.S. "Swanley", 1st August, 1904, in Milner to Lyttelton, August 5th, 1904, CO 879/85/755.

22. Report by Evans on the arrival of the S.S."Swanley", 1st August 1904, in Milner to Lyttelton, August 5th, 1904, CO 879/85/755.

23. Walter to Lyttelton, 20th July 1904, CO 879/85/755.

24. Ibidem

25. Ibidem; also London and China Telegraph, June 13th 1904.

26. Walter to Lyttelton, 20th July 1904, CO 879/85/755.

27. Coolie Shipping returns in the Annual Reports of the Chamber of Mines for 1904, 1905 and 1906, show quite clearly that it was a definite feature of the arrangements that divisions were maintained not only between Chinese of different areas, but also between Chinese of the same geographic area of origin.

28. Report by W. Evans on the arrival of the S.S. "Swanley" 1st August 1904, in Milner to Lyttelton, August 5th, 1904 CO 879/85/7

29. Report of the Surgeon Superintendent on the S.S. "Swanley" for the formidable difficulties of embarkation from Taku; in

30. Milner to Lyttelton, August 5th, 1904, CO 879/85/755. Ibid.

31. Report by Evans on the Labourers aboard the S.S. "Swanley", 1st August, 1904, in Milner to Lyttelton, 5th August 1904, CO 879/85/755.

32. Ibidem.

33. Chinese wage return for the Randfontein Estates Mines, August 1904, in Milner to Lyttelton, 10th November 1904, CO 879/85/755.

34. Ibidem for September; to February, 1905, also same to same at note 46; Acting Superintendent of the Foreign Labour Department to the Private Secretary of the Lt. Governor, Transvaal, April 5th 1905, in Lawley to Lyttelton, April 17th, 1905.

35. This is problematical because of the arrest of 50 or so "ringleaders" on the North Randfontein on 30th August 1904 for disobedience to orders. It is not clear whether these men were the total number of headmen at the time and were simply replaced or whether the total was actually reduced, and the size of work gangs increased accordingly. Also the connection between the headmen in question in August 1904 and those of April 1905 is a difficult one to trace accurately as the mine was not crushing at the earlier date, and therefore the need for headmen whose duties corresponded accurately to those of 'boss' boys was probably not great. Be that as it may, it does seem that the size of work gangs in April was likely to be large as it depended on the number of Chinese who could make themselves understood to their white overseers, as the Robinson mines had not bothered to employ anyone who could speak Chinese. (Selborne to Lyttelton, August 7th 1905, 879/90/760). Thus the maximum umber of headmen

could have been in the region of 110 - it appears to have been in the region of 50 or 60. See also the London and China Telegraph September 5th 1904.

~~36. Enclosure in Perry to Satow, 6th June 1904, FO 228/1550;~~

37. See Chairman's Report for 1905 in the Transvaal Chamber of Mines Annual Report, 1905; also Selborne to Lyttelton August 7th 1905 CO 879/90/760.

38. See Selborne to Lyttelton August 7th 1905, CO 879/90/760. This has become something of a commonplace among South African's writing on Chinese labour. For example, I.M. Meyer in his unpublished Pretoria University Ph.D. thesis of 1946 "Die Chinese Arbeidsvraagstuk van die Witwatersrandse goudvelde, 1905-10" saw the particular vice Chinese as one of being willing to strike at all, (p. 258). Reeves, op.cit, sees all the disturbances as caused by the "habit of resorting to violence... if anything went wrong", (p. 208). Campbell, op.cit, is more sympathetic, but her enforced reliance on British and Transvaal Government published material, means that her work inevitably reflects their particular biases. Thus there is a concentration on the element of misunderstanding which followed from a natural attempt to reduce the political impact of these disturbances. See for example her reports of the North Randfontein and Princess Estate Mines incidents, pp. 189-190.

39. See for example, C. van Onselen's 'The Wankie Colliery Strike of 1912' in Journal of African History, XV, 2 (1974), pp. 275-289; and 'Worker Consciousness in black miners: Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1920' in Journal of African History, XIV, 2 (1973), pp.237-2

40. Mining Manual, 1906, pp. 618 etc.

41. Farrar Brothers to the Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Association, 18th February, 1905; enclosure in Milner to Lyttelton, 27th February, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

42. Wage Return for the Randfontein Estates Mines, August 1904-January 1905, in Milner to Lyttelton, 27th February, 1905, CO 879/85/761. ~~See also note 38.~~

43. Ibidem.

44. Lawley to Lyttelton, April 8th 1905, Cd. 2401.

45. Mining Manual, 1906, pp. 618 et seq.

46. Transvaal crushing returns for 1905 in Mining Manual, 1906, pp. 618 et seq.; Annual Report of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines 1905.

47. Transvaal crushing returns for 1904-7: Annual Reports of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 1904-7.

48. Ibidem for 1905 and 1906.

49. Lawley to Lyttelton April 18th, 1905 CO 879/85/761; see also William Evans to the Colonial Office, May 14th 1905, CO 879/85/761

50. "The Statist" May 13th 1905, a special report by R.R. Mabson on the Chinese on the Rand. This argument, that penalties and bonuses were essentially parts of the same system to increase productivity, is at variance with Campbell's argument (op.cit., pp. 194-5) that deductions were extraordinary measures indicating the mal-functioning of a system. Such penalties were an integral part of piece work and their extension to daywork is better seen, as are the additions to day rates, as the necessary response of the mining industry to a prevailing pattern of temporary wage payment. For the date at which this was introduced see note 60 below.

51. Annual Report of the Chamber of Mines, 1905.

52. See Note 65 below.

53. See report of proceedings held on February 3rd 1905 between the Superintendent of the Foreign Labour Department, the Committee of General Managers and Consulting Engineers, the General Manager of the Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Association and the Secretary to the Transvaal Chamber of Mines; Secretary of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to William Evans, Superintendent of Foreign Labour, February 28th, 1905; Foreign Labour Department to Chamber of Mines, March 3rd 1905: all in Selborne to Lyttelton June 12th 1905, CO 879/85/761.

54. The "Statist" May 13th, 1905.

55. Lyttelton to Selborne, August 14th, 1905 CO 879/85/761.

56. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to Private Secretary to Lt. Governor, Transvaal, April 5th, 1905, in Lawley to Lyttelton, April 17th 1905, CO 879/85/761.

57. Lawley to Lyttelton, 8th April 1905, Cd 2401; see also Campbell, op.cit. p. 190, for other allegations as to lack of scrupulous honesty by mine managers over questions of wages.

58. Langerman (North Randfontein Gold Mining Company) to Cowie, Secretary of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 19th January 1905 in Transvaal Chamber of Mines Annual Report for 1905. See note 38 above.

59. See Note ~~38~~ 35 above.

60. The absence of any indication of any complicating factors like compound tensions in these events should not be taken as evidence that none existed, but rather that they did not affect the issue at stake in a manner which was considered worthy of report or comment by the various participants.

61. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th.

62. ibidem.

63. Selborne to Lyttelton, July 31st 1905 CO 879/85/761

64. The "Statist" May 13th, 1905.

65. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th, 1905.

66. ibidem.

67. For example both the New Comet Mine and the Witwatersrand Deep, simply raised the basic day rate for the great majority of their Chinese labourers at this time, rather than instituted a comprehensive piece work rate system. See Campbell, op.cit. page 190, and enclosure in Milner to Lyttelton, 27th February 1905, CO/879/85/761 and Lyttelton to Lawley, April 5th, 1905, and Lawley to Lyttelton, 12th April 1905 CO 879/85/761.

68. This is at variance again with Campbell's account of the North Randfontein dispute which implies that the management were not acting honestly. While this is true for the period 22nd-28th March, it is not true of the period thereafter. The offer of 28th March was perfectly legitimate and rectified their previous position of default.

69. That the success was not an unmixed blessing, will I hope, become clear from what follows.

70. See for example the reports of disturbances given in the monthly meetings of the Chamber of Mines, Annual Report for 1905.

71. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th, 1905.

72. ibidem.

73. ibidem.

74. ibidem.

75. ibidem.

76. The only place where this was explicitly stated was in the "Statist" of May 13th, 1905. "Late in March those who were disinclined to make the effort to earn increased pay talked over the more energetic of their companions, and there seems to have been a conspiracy to do as little work as possible." This really misses the point altogether. The problem was that the contract allowed for an automatic increase after six months without provision for a minimum amount. For the management, the essential problem was how best to accommodate to this situation; for the Chinese how best to respond to the management's attempts at accommodation. The baselessness of this charge is fully exposed by the writer's subsequent remark that the object of the conspiracy was to extract the 1/6 per day minimum provided in the contract after six months." As Selborne himself admitted, this was automatically given on 28th March. Selborne to Lyttelton July 31st 1905, CO 879/85/761. See also Campbell, op.cit. p 191 on the riot at the Princess Estate Mine, April '05.

77. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th, 1905.

78. Lawley to Lyttelton, April 18th, 1905.

79. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th 1905. Selborne pointed out a possible cause of the difficulty of negotiating with the Chinese, if not a cause of their immovable opposition to the offer of 28th March, when he stated that "the Robinson Group has nobody who can speak the Chinese language." (See note 35 for other implications of this) Selborne to Lyttelton, August 7th, CO 879/90/760.

79 80. Report by Evans on the arrival of the S.S. "Swansley" 1st August, 1904. (See note 33.)

80 81. The following account is based on the Report of the Superintendent of Foreign Labour, which is the only detailed account of what happened on the mine between 29th March and 31st March; report contained in Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th, 1905.

81. Under the 1/- day rate, this would have entitled the hammer gangs to payment, as the penalty limit was nine inches at the North Randfontein. Whether the Chinese chose the twelve inch hole expecting the old rates to be operative pending a satisfactory settlement, or whether it was simply a convenient measure to avoid prosecution for refusal to work is not certain. What is clear is that the C.M.L.I.A. and the Manager of the Randfontein were acting on the assumption that the new day rate was operative. This, in accordance with Evans' agreement of 3rd March, had raised the penalty limit to twenty-four inches. It was however, an action taken without the inquiry procedure agreed to by the Chamber of Mines.

82. Extract from the daily diary of the Sergeant-in-charge, Randfontein, April 1st, 1905 in Lawley to Lyttelton, April 20th, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

83. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, 5th April, 1905.

84. ibidem.

85. Report by Inspector Comyn of the Krugersdorp police on the riot at North Randfontein Mine, in Lawley to Lyttelton, April 20th, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

86. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th, 1905.

87. Report by Inspector Comyn on the North Randfontein riot (see note 93).

88. ibidem.

89. ibidem.

90. Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour to the Lt. Governor's Private Secretary, April 5th, 1905.

91. Wolfe Murray claims 59; ibidem.

92. ibidem.

93. Commissioner of Police, Johannesburg to the Acting Secretary of the law department Pretoria, April 3rd, 1905 in Lawley to Lyttelton April 20th, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

94. Annual Report of the Foreign Labour Department, 1904-5, Cd. 3025, Appendix IV.

95. Report by Inspector Comyn on the Riot at North Randfontein; [illegible].

96. Selborne to Lyttelton, July 31st, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

97. ibidem.

98. ibidem.

99. Lyttelton to Selborne, October 25th 1905, Cd 2819; Selborne to Lyttelton, November 28th, 1905, Cd. 2819; Lyttelton to Selborne December 5th, 1905, Cd. 2819.

100. Schedule 2 rates were the same as those of the Native schedule of May 1897. This was a reduction of one-third on the rates prevailing in 1896 - see paragraph 254 of the Native Grievances Enquiry of 1913-4; U.G. 37-14.

101. Selborne to Lyttelton, June 12th, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

102. ibidem.

103. C.M.L.I.A. circular no. 504, 28th April, 1905.

104. This was agreed by Evans as early as February 3rd 1905; but was not widely used

until April, to coincide with the spread of piece work contracts generally. The Government agreed to this on 19th April, 1905: see Acting Secretary of the Law Department to the Acting Superintendent of the Foreign Labour Department, 19th April CO 879/85/761.

105. Acting Secretary of the Law Department to the Acting Superintendent of Foreign Labour, 19th April, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

106. ibidem.

107. G. Wolfe Murray to Bagot, March 11th 1905; Acting Secretary of the Law Department to the Acting Secretary of the Foreign Labour Department; April 19th, 1905 CO 879/85/761.

108. C.M.L.I.A. to the Private Secretary of the Governor, August 18th, 1905, in Selborne to Lyttelton, August 28th, 1905, CO 879/85/761.

109. Mining Manual, 1906, pp 449-50.

110. Transvaal Crushing Returns for 1905 in the Annual Report of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 1905.

111. ibidem.

112. See specimen contracts in Bagot to Private Secretary of Governor August 28th, 1905.

113. See Lyttelton to Selborne, July 29th 1905; Selborne to Lyttelton August 28th, 1905 and enclosures from C.M.L.I.A.: CO 879/85/761.

114. Memorandum by Jamieson regarding "The steps necessary to place the working of the Foreign Labour Department on a proper footing." in Selborne to Lyttelton, August 7th, 1905, CO 879/90/760.

115. For the functions of the C.M.L.I.A., see the Transvaal Chamber of Mines Annual Report for 1905, Appendix II, Chinese Labour.

116. Instructions to the Transvaal Emigration Agents, final version in Milner to Lyttelton, 7th November, 1904, CO 879/85/755.

117. For an explanation of the control functions of the maximum average clause see paragraph 269 of the Native Grievances Enquiry of 193-14; U.G.37-'14; and S. Van Der Horst 'Native Labour in South Africa' London, Frank Cass and Co, 1942, pp 208-9

118. For the Anglo-Chinese Labour Convention of May 1904 see Volume 1 of "Treaties, Conventions etc between China and Foreign States" pp 643-651; Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service, Shang-hai, 1917.

119. North China Herald, leading article, April 29th 1904.

120. Ordinance 17 of 1904, Transvaal.

CO = Archives of Colonial Office