

https://dspace.org/

The Fighting Port: capital accumulation, working class struggle and the making of apartheid, 1946 - 1963

Minkley, Gary

1990-02-06T08:07:41Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/8017

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
HISTORY WORKSHOP



STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE MAKING OF APARTHEID

6 - 10 February 1990

AUTHOR: Gary Minkley

TITLE: The Fighting Port : Capital Accumulation, Working Class Struggle and the Making of Apartheid, 1946 - 1963

AFRICANA LIBRARY

On the 17 May 1946, East London [E.L.] witnessed the start of its biggest strike in 15 years. 'Don't offload the ships' was the call, low wages the initial issue, and the key actors were about 400 'casual' workers at the E.L. docks. On a piece of open ground overlooking the port, their 'union hall' for the next month, the workers held day long meetings, reinforcing and emphasizing solidarity and unity under the auspices of a flexible and dynamic strike committee. Loading and off-loading at the Buffalo Harbour was brought to a standstill.1

During the course of the strike attempts to replace the striking workers with graving dock construction workers, and thereafter, with other locally employed S.A.R.& H. workers, failed. These workers, who refused to replace the striking workers, demonstrated a remarkable degree of collective identification and support, themselves being dismissed and joining the strike.2 Attempts to divide and break the strike by the Harbour Administration, through offering regular employment to 80 of the strikers, were also rejected and defeated. The 21 May saw a march to the Systems Manager's office in town, extending the activities and action of the strike. In June, links between the strikers and the local Communist Party, and with CNETU, were established. But links also existed between some of the workers and Kadalie's ICU.3 At a C.P. meeting in the East Bank Location on the 9 June this link with the strikers was voiced, and thereafter meetings in the location called for 'solidarity with our comrades', and a desire to extend both the strike, and through it, worker organization in E.L. Flyers calling on strike-breakers not to 'scab' were also issued by the C.P. 4

We have here the 'classic' ingredients of working class consciousness, action, and organization. And yet this event falls into E.L.'s history as a 'festival of the oppressed', it is not repeated, sustained, or even apparently extended and deepened. There is not another strike of its size, scope, or duration for another 20 years. The strike ends by the middle of June, with re-instatement and a limited wage increase. CNETU, despite 1946 claims of 10 unions and a 15 000 worker membership, appears never to grow beyond 'a few thousand', and by 1951, it, together with the local C.P., has collapsed.5 Despite significant support for the ANC in the 1950-1952 period, it too suffers significant setbacks and massive decline in it's organizational expression after the '1952 riots'.

But does the lack of organization, and class-based collective action mean that E.L. was silent for more than a decade? Was there no struggle, no resistance, no motor-force of development and contradiction in E.L.'s workplaces?

In examining the nature of East London's social and economic history during the 1950's ,the problem of it's regional specificity, against national processes becomes apparent. Economically East London developed as a trading port, and up until the 1930's was

---

1 Daily Dispatch, East London, 17 May-11 June 1946.
2 Daily Dispatch, 20 May 1946.
3 Smith,H.H. ; The Development of Labour Organization in East London, 1900-1948. M Econ Thesis, Rhodes University, 1949. pp.185-201
4 Ibid. p.204.
5 Border Chamber of Industries [BCI], File 26.

HWS 284.

dominated by commercial capital. This economic dominance was reflected in local politics and refracted in the local state, which was seen as 'strongly traditional, ... caught in a time-warp', as it actively opposed 'the unsightly curse of the modern factory'.6 The subsequent lack of 'industrial facilities' meant that the 1940's and early 1950's was marked by a weak industrial locational structure, a hostile local state caught up in tourism and trade, and active discouragement of investment, whether local or international, by the resident dominant class. These barriers were underpinned by a practically non-existent raw material base, and a weak regional market structure, tied into the Ciskei and Transkei 'reserves'.

The period c1940 to c1963 was marked by the transitionary nature of East London's economy from a commercial and small workshop manufacturing centre to a city reflecting the dominance of manufacturing capital, albeit hesitantly, haltingly, and tenuously. In order to examine this process and draw out the nature of local class formation, the historical local meanings of work, and to suggest the manner in which East London was shaped by these material changes [and continuities], however, we first need some still-life structural photographs of this economy, [in terms of growth of manufacturing and decline of commercial capital, sector dominance, employment and wages, output, and capital intensity].

In East London the number of manufacturing industries increased from 135 in 1945/6; to 223 in 1959/60. In the same period net output increased dramatically [by 211%, 92% in real terms], as did the value and extent of capital investment in land, buildings, and machinery.7

By the mid-1950's E.L. was dominated by four main sectors - food, textiles, chemicals, and construction. Together they accounted for 72% of net output in 1960 [102 firms [46% of all firms] of which 54 were construction, 31 food, 12 chemicals, and 5 textiles], and together employed 68% of the industrial workforce.

The labour force in private industry increased from 6 325 [2 526 white] in 1946 to 13 002 [4 281 white] in 1960. The black labour force had increased from 3 800 to 8 721, and many of these workers were located in operative and semi-skilled jobs. At the same time employment in commerce, while still significant, had only increased from 2 730 to 4 450 black workers. Members of the emerging black working class employed in the S.A.R.&H.[2310 in 1960] and by the local state [2130 in 1960] remained relatively stable through the 1950's. This trend in employment patterns, while indicative of the growing dominance of manufacturing industry, should not mask the continuing importance of the commercial and state sectors in shaping local class relations.

The design of manufacturing capital shows a further internal sectoral division of labour in the dominance of the four sectors, three of which [the exception being construction] demonstrate

---

6 BCI, Box 8, Correspondence.

7 These statistics that follow are drawn from the following sources: Barker, J.P. , Industrial Development in a Border Area, 1966 ; Hobart-Houghton, D. [ed.], Economic Development in a PLural Society, 1960 ; from unpublished census statistics, and from BCI and Company records.

significant growth in the period up until 1957, but in different ways and with different consequences. The food industry was the most stable, and the most long-standing, developing in the 1920's and 1930's. In 1946 it accounted for 27% of total net output, and in 1960, 30%. Concerned more with processing than actual manufacture [with the notable exception of Wilson Rowntree and the milling companies], the period reflected processes of expansion amongst existing 'factories' rather than significant new factory investments. The labour force increased from 1 715 [795 black] in 1946, to 3 932 [2 987 black] in the sector by 1960, largely consisting of unskilled packers and labourers, but also operatives on sweet and other smaller processing production lines.

The second key sector was the textile industry, whose output value equalled 23% of E.L.'s total in 1960 [increased from 9% to 23% in the period 1950 to 1960]. In the textile sector the level of concentration was reflected in the presence of 5 large [monopoly] firms [as against 28 in the food sector] together with it's output and employment importance. What was significant in textiles was the recent development [post 1945] of three of the five firms, all involving international capital investment, and their relative advancement in technological capacity and production processes. This impacted on the nature of the labour force which increased from 881 [570 black] in 1946 to 2 048 [1 559 black] in 1960, all located in semi-skilled operative positions.

The same pattern can be identified in the third important sector, chemicals. Geared more towards the consumer goods, than the capital goods market, and centred on twelve concerns, [but dominated by five], the sector was responsible for 15% of output in 1957/8. This importance needs to be situated in the context of two processes; the closure of an industrial chemical plant in 1956, and a drastic decline in productivity in the post 1957 period where by 1960 this sector only accounted for 8% of E.L.'s net output. This was reflected in employment patterns, where in 1960 only 512 people were employed [286 black] as compared to the 352 [181 black] of 1946. The early 1960's witnessed significant 'administrative changes and industrial restructuring', and productivity increased dramatically to pre-1956 levels by 1963/4, however, as did employment, climbing to 952 in that year. Importantly though, this was one of only two sectors where white and black employment size remained relatively equal.

The construction sector on the other hand, while centrally related to the massive post-1945 boom, was dominated by over fifty small competitive and sub-contracting firms, and was extensively labour-intensive and vulnerable to economic fluctuation. Its percentage of net output declined from 16% in 1950, to 10% in 1960, reflecting the correlation of the sector to declining and stagnant growth in the industrial sector generally, as the 1950's progressed, and in the post 1957 period in particular. The number of workers increased from 1 115 [819 black] in 1946 to 1 661 [1 137 black] in 1960, and engaged in heavy and demanding manual labour, experientally very different from the textile and even food sectors. But in other important respects it was comparable, especially in racial terms of definition.

A fifth major growth sector was that of transport, equally dominated by small-scale service competitors [46 establishments in 1954], except for C.D.A [and John Brown Tractors], which as a major

automobile producer, became one of E.L.'s key manufacturing industries in the late 1950's.

Lastly the weakness of the engineering and metal industrial sector needs to be identified. Together the general engineering [dominated by electrical engineering and two battery companies-Raylite and Chloride], and the metal products industries contributed only 13.6% of total net output in 1960 in E.L. This reflected an increase of less than 1% from 1946, and in reality a significant decrease, given the importance of the two battery factories established in the 1950's. This absence of any real local capital base influenced E.L.'s industrial and class structure in particular ways. These industries were important employers of labour however, with the 1946 figure of 865 workers [494 black] increasing to 1 631 [1 069 black] in 1960, many of which were new semi-skilled operatives.

Two important processes need to be identified out of the employment and wages statistics. The divisions of labour in racial and gender terms underwent significant change. A dramatic process of substitution and incorporation of black operative for white artisanal and operative labour took place. Male white workers moved significantly into supervisory positions [increasingly through the 1950's and rapidly after 1956] and female white workers moved rapidly into [after 1945] and out of [from the mid 1950's] the productive labour force. This impacted regionally in a very high percentage of black [almost exclusively male] workers located in operative, skilled and semi-skilled positions, as well as constituting a larger percentage of the industrial workforce than in other regions, and nationally. Racial class tensions marked every step of these processes of giving content, structure and meaning to manufacturing work in East London, particularly as the 1950's progressed.

Wages and wage levels in the manufacturing industries were also starkly divided in racial terms. Black wage levels were lower than national averages by about 20%.8 Although this percentage decreased in the 1955-1960 period,it stabilized at this 20% level again after 1963. This meant that wages, while significantly higher than 1945 levels, were still extremely low, while comparisons to white work and white workers wages generally, made them glaringly inadequate and discriminatory.

Behind these statistics, are three trends that need exploration: East London's position in the South African economy, the uneven nature of industrialization, and its weak structural base. In terms of manufacturing production, E.L.'s position nationally is marginal. In 1960 it produced barely 2% of national output, despite having registered the highest growth rate in S.A. in the 1946-1954 period. This weak base meant that patterns of industrialization occuring in East London were at once more responsive to local conditions, and less integrated into national and central state interventions promoting manufacturing development.

Essentially East London's manufacturing sector developed in stops and starts. It did not clearly reflect a simple or automatic linear progression of a declining commercial, and emergent manufacturing capital, becoming increasingly concentrated and dominant. Rather, accompanying the decline of the 'vested wholesale in-

8 Drawn from the same sources as note 7 above.

terests', which had continually dominated in the boom periods of the 1930's and 1940's [1934-1946/7] was an intense and at times contradictory conflict over the shape of the local economy, and control of the local state. This was important as the local 'lords of the seas' ruled against import substitution industries on any significant scale in this period. The textile, motor assembly, food, chemical and other industries which did locate in E.L., did so in spite of a fragile local base and infrastructure, and an unsupportive politically organized dominant commercial class.9 And part of their necessary project of establishing the 'right conditions for modern business', was a political project of re-drawing lines of class and ensuring that beyond the concerns of electricity, rail links, water, and industrial land [the landscape of manufacture] there was a 'sympathetic mayor...[and]...a council of industry.'10 Objectives, however, proved easier to write in reports and communicate in board and chamber meetings, than to create on public platforms and establish amongst the fragmented manufacturers, let alone the 'loyal citizens of trade'

The particular trend of industrialization then, meant secondly that East London was characterized by a highly uneven pattern of development. Simultaneous to the investment of Rowntrees, C.D.A., Johnson and Johnson, and other largely British multi-nationals, was the emergence of a host of small workshop and individual manufacturing concerns in the food, footwear, clothing, wood, transport, electrical goods, and construction sectors. In between, and ranging in size and productive capacity were the local, national and international factories, largely competitive in the textile, chemical, food, furniture, transport and engineering markets, and relatively labour intensive in production. While levels of local integration remained weak, it is important to locate the combined nature of E.L.'s industrialization process which provided the markets, labour-power, infrastructure and capital access for small manufacturers to mushroom, in the post 1945 period.

In terms of economic growth, E.L.'s manufacturing sector expanded dramatically in the 1946-1956 period, but thereafter, in the 1957-1961/2 period, there was 'a decline in the average value of industrial output for establishments'. The stagnant nature of the manufacturing sector was reflected in declining net outputs, marginal investments in plant and machinery, a largely unsuccessful drive to expand consumer markets, and centrally a problematic and uncompetitive local productivity of labour.11 This period exposed [in all of the above ways], the real weaknesses of this phase of E.L.'s import substitution industrialization, centred on light semi-manufactured and non-durable consumer goods, and largely labour -intensive relations of production. The regional market was 'rapidly saturated... despite the enormous potential market of the Kaffir Territories ' and the 'unwillingness of the native to secure a decent livelihood ...through industry's wide open doors'. This was but the entry point to struggles over the nature and meaning of work and labour productivity.12 Issues of control, discipline and consent were all pervasive in the consciousness of the

9 BCI, Box 8, Correspondence.
10 BCI, Box 10, Unsorted.
11 BCI, Reports for the years 1940-1961; Company Archives consulted in December 1986 and 1987.
12 BCI, Box 10, Letter to the BCI from local textile manufacturer, March 1948.

manufacturers as they struggled to regulate wages and ensure increasing output, and attempted to enlarge and 'create' textile, food, soap, furniture and glass product markets.13

The picture that emerges is one structured around a weak consumer goods industry susceptible to market fluctuation, the lack of a capital goods sector and heavy industry, the dominance of competitive capital, and the necessity to restructure relations of production, especially in the context of the late 1950's stagnation, and the related lack of a 'suitable' manufacturing working class.

CHEAP LABOUR, AND THE QUESTION OF 'THE NATIVE WORKER'

> "There exists at present [c1950] a class of non-white industrial labour which is cheap, hard-working, courteous and efficient. Present conditions indicate it is available in unlimited supplies and is a great boon to the economic attractiveness and growth of the city."14

Local investment and industrial expansion had followed the perceived advantages of a growing infrastructure and improved port, but central to practically all the entrepeneurial spirit of 'profit with progress' expressed by big and small manufacturers alike, was the expectant exploitability and readiness of a 'job hungry mass of cheap kaffir labour ..., who will learn to spend their earnings in the proper manner'.15 This presumption of docile, but willing black workers eagerly, learning new skills and values, and thankfully taking home small pay packets, dominated industry and company consciousness in the 1946-1956 period.In part this was shaped, and conditioned by the hard reality of the

> "weakness of the white in numerical strength in East London...his attachment to his craft...and his unwillingness to work below his dignity...The future of the white must lie in the overseeing of new kinds and a different form of labour"16

Equally significant, though, was the nature of the ideological struggle amongst the varied brokers of differing industrial 'camps' about the form and meaning of work in racial and occupational terms. The company records paint a picture of tension and and contradiction in this period. While some of the larger companies, and most of the new ones, attempted to implement mass production using African labour [and some Coloured workers in the food sector] from the beginning, many of the smaller and longer established firms grappled with the ideas of re-drawing racial lines of work. The regard was that the 'honest, hard-working craftsman will be no more', replaced by 'a mob of no-works natives'. At the same time, opposition and anger would be effected from unemployed, threatened and replaced white workers. The process of 'uplifting the native and giving him the basis to demand more and more' also opened the

---

13 BCI, Box 10.
14 Brochure published by the City Council and the SAR&H Administration, 1950.
15 BCI, Files 23 and 24.
16 BCI, File 25.

way for higher wages, unions, and 'a stake in the city', all undesirable repercussions of employing 'native labour'.17

The ranks of industrial and manufacturing capital in E.L. were split around sympathy and support for one of three broad positions, although not in necessarily exclusive and hardened ways. The grouping which supported and most actively articulated a free labour capitalist ideology, materialized around mass production and the labour of black workers, and was located in the new and larger textile, food, electrical goods and automobile factories. It was these factories which were acutely sensitive to the form and need of low cost labour, despite their size and high comparative level of technology/investment. A second less coherent grouping emerged around smaller firms concerned with competitive expansion and new market penetration, but constrained by lack of capital and white semi-skilled high wages, and by the weak 'purchasing power' of 'the natives'. A number of spokesmen took the stage, arguing for substitution and the need of black labour in almost the same breath as seeking to protect 'jobs for whites' in strict racially hierarchical workplaces. Lastly, the small workshops and service industries, the artisanal preserve of E.L., together with the construction industry, represented the most racist and exclusive, yet ambiguously materially distilled position of defending the use of black labour. It was 'cheap' and 'ideally suited to dirty and hard manual work', and also in the context of white labour shortages, black workers could do the jobs of whites, but for lower wages and with far less workplace power.18

At the same time the pressures for keeping the labour force white was historically rooted in the 1930's and sustained in the 1940's and early 1950's in E.L. Conceptions about the advantages of, and pressures from white labour shaped the way management thought, initiated and organized production on a basis that continued to prioritize their role. The notions that white labour was best were strongly and articulately held; it was more disciplined, intelligent, and responsive to management's needs, while black labour was the reverse for many industrialists. In particular, small, local, and transforming capital in manufacture sensed and argued that with white labour, relations were not only exploitative, but importantly 'filled with agreement and acceptance'. Consent and mutual benefits patterned production undertaken by white workers, craft and operative, in terms of higher wages, job protection and security, transport, canteen, and housing facilities, pensions and insurance.19 In return, the factory and the workplace where white labour dominated, was stable and productive, at least in the 1940's. But the consent of the 1940's began to fragment in the 1950's, from both sides, with the pressures of limited availability of white labour, expansion and new production techniques, the need for new consumer markets, and the necessity of cutting production labour costs. These were all felt, and experienced to various degrees by the majority of local white workers in the workplaces as increasingly new faces and hands were black.20

---

17 BCI, File 24.
18 BCI, Boxes 4-6. Company archives, 1987.
19 Company archives, Dec.1987; Interviews with companies Jan.1987.
20 Company archives, Dec.1987., BCI Box 5.

The question of the local labour market, and the employment of black labour as necessary, and for mass production as it began to take shape, vital, implied an acceptance that was at best, amongst the other two groupings, partial and incomplete. It was opposed, questioned and restricted around the issues of what constituted 'native labour'and its employment and skill level, how to answer the problems of a limited white labour force, and the extent of moral obligation and productive value to protect 'poor whites' and 'white work',as well as how divisions of labour in workplaces should be organized. Integrated against rigidly hierarchical, entirely white or black factory floors, and supervisory and operative divisions, all were optionally debated and loudly proclaimed as solutions by local capitalists.

So too was the issue of white worker opposition, fear, and hostility, and the power of union organization in the 1950's, influential in creating discord and preventing the emergence of a unified capitalist ideology and strategy in E.L.21 Resignations based on the employment of 'kaffir labour' in firms, the threatened walkout if a newly hired black worker was not dismissed in an assembly plant, and the actual physical assaults on African workers all indicated the way power flowed in the factories, as did the cross-racial threats, the sabotaging of black workers' machines, and the demands for segregated work-areas, toilets, breaks, and starting and ending times.22 This all made production, and control of the labour-process tense and demanding, and substitution explosive. The fear of black workers was structured in broader political terms, expressed through the ANC, the defiance campaign, and in the impermanence of community life in the townships. It was generally accepted that 'East London was not a city of strikes and disputes'23 and it was the question of migrancy that was of deeper concern, as it was recognized by the 'free labour capitalists' that

> "the full commitment of native labour to an industrial society as is developing in E.L. requires and demands a complete break with tribal affiliations and the system of migrant labour...The presence and perpetuation of a dual society is an obstacle in the path of rapid development."24

But the ideologues of mass production, who by 1952 dominated the Border Chamber of Industries, were not magicians and a statement of intent did not carry locally universal desires. For many firms migrancy was the 'most suitable form of native labour' throughout the 1950's, and as such defended 'tooth and nail', in chamber meetings and at work.25

An equal number of 'industrialists', and in particular the small firms, were also opposed to 'permanent native residents', as were the commercial brokers. Migrancy enabled greater control, lower wages and reproduction costs, and a 'clean and trouble-free city', as well as a 'more humble and obedient servant'.

On the factory floors of East London these debates and conceptions played themselves out in a different dynamic, supplying significant

---

21 Company records, Dec.1988., BCI File 38.
22 BCI Files 38-40 'Details of industrial conflict'.
23 LIE EL 4/8/7/3.
24 Industrial report, BCI File 27.
25 BCI Boxes 11-13.

shaping pressures on the nature of capitalism locally, from below. The broad acceptance of using and abusing 'cheap native labour', if in markedly different forms and dimensions amongst capitalists, did not mean black workers flocked through the gates, stabilized and skilled themselves, and got on with the job. Neither did it mean white workers felt secure and protected, simply 'going with the waves of change'.26

The newly discovered black worker was, in the early 1950's, unresponsive to the moulds laid so difficultly by management's ideological brokers. There was no 'easy' second or third generation workforce, no pre-existing pattern and culture of capitalist work and skill, no clear-cut seperation from the land, no unambiguous conception of private property, not even the necessary acceptance of alienated industrial time, in East London in the 1950's.

The Market Square Bus Terminus on any Friday afternoon in the early 1950's: jostling queues of people and parcels, overcrowded buses, the destinations of Kwelegha, Keiskammahoek, and Mount Frere reaffirming old and generating new contacts and unities, discussions and realities. Of these migrants, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly E.L. workers going 'home' to the Ciskei and Transkei for the weekend, many would return 'in time', but many would not be outside the factories and workshops on Monday mornings, taking advantage of 'our time, not the whitemans''.27

For many of these migrants, wage labour was an attempt to

> "...get enough to get back to what was important for me... I grew up on the land and then I worked here at different places to earn money to plant and build up my farm... later that all changed and I had to work here to earn a living and I lost sight of the land"28

In this sense wages, their value and their relationship to the nature of work, were constantly played off against not just the remembered, but the actual possibilities of rural production, making dipping-tanks as important as drive-shafts for more than 50% of E.L.'s workers in 1952/53. The imprecise, convoluted, and tenuous links that characterized the seperation of about 85% of E.L.'s workers from rural realities as 'partial', were felt directly in the workplaces. 29

> "Ninety percent of the natives are worse than useless... they should be kicked out...their attachments in the Kaffir Terratories, their concern with their fields... and ploughing holidays, as well as the irregular and constant movement to and fro makes them the worst workers I've ever come across...the respect held for a job in town is nothing compared to the worth shown their rural existence...I cannot run my business like this and I am not alone, not by any means."30

The problem was not so much migrant labour itself, which suited many businesses in E.L. in wage and reproductive cost cutting, but

---

26 LIE EL 4/8/7/3.
27 Interviews, June and Dec. 1987 with a number of workers of the 1950's.
28 Interview 3, E, June 1987.
29 BCI File 27.
30 BCI File 28.

in its unstable and uncontrollable nature. This was reflected in a massive labour turnover, where 25% of workers had been employed for less than three months and 56% for two years or less, 31 in the dominant form of weekly migration [as opposed to monthly or longer] out of the city, in 'absenteeism', and in that

> "the native has no understanding of modern time...he will arrive late, leave early, not work on Mondays...the time spent on work is probably only half of what it should be"32

The contradictory nature of structuring the black working class in E.L. was acutely felt in the distance with which many black workers valued the workplace. Workers changed jobs because of a myriad of indetectable reasons, but two broad processes emerge as major explanations: bad working conditions and low wages, and the sustaining [if declining] realities of rural life. Workers complained that work 'starts too early and coldly', that work was too exacting and treatment was 'bad, like rubbish' and of being paid 'nothing wages'. One worker left work because he became tired of riding a bicycle, another because of the 'language of the sjambok', a third because he 'needed a rest at home',and others because they had to plough, harvest or marry.33 These worlds of labour, the factory, the railway shed, the backyard, and their unsuitability and instability of occupation, meant that the pick and shovel railway worker was as likely as the engineering machine operator, the weaver as likely as the stevedore worker, to share the designs and engage in the patterns of resisting proletarianization. The perceived black working class did not materialize to fill even those factories where they were accepted and expected.

For the white working class the whole nature and direction of struggle had assumed a different character. The 1920's and 1930's had seen the occupational and 'traditional' craft based working class 'opened up' by small-scale industrialization in E.L.34 By the second World War all skilled and semi-skilled work in industry was held by white workers. This was to change. A key process was the ability, often linked to necessity, of white workers to redefine their position in the workplaces of the 1950's.35 This meant that while some of the joiners, moulders, and cutters held onto their skills in food, engineering and clothing, others, increasingly, were forced to accept or initiate re-definitions which involved de-skilling and the uneasy transition from artisan to industrial worker with different skills, responsibilities, and workplace experiences.

A different process of white working class formation, centred around recently proletarianized, largely Afrikaans speakers, struggling into E.L. from the Transkei and Ciskei in particular, also took shape. Many in desperation, found themselves shoulder-to-shoulder with African manual workers 'like ants ' in the construction of the new port facilities in the 1930's.36 Gradually this

---

31 Ibid.
32 Letter dated Jan.1951, Company Records.
33 Interview 3, G, June 1987., Daily Dispatch, Feb. 1951. See also Mayer, P., Townsmen or Tribesmen, Oxford, 1961, pp.24-25.
34 Hobart Houghton, op cit, ch.10.
35 Company Reports Dec. 1986., also Smith, H.H., op. cit. chs.1-3.
36 Daily Dispatch, October 1937.

contact began to break in the manufacturing and commercial spheres, but as more open competition and hostility for a place in the new labour markets.37 The fight for segregated workplaces and protected jobs voiced in the unions, in local Afrikaner Nationalist bodies, and in the homes, churches and clubs, pressed on pressurized craft workers, and on local capitalists in the 1940's and early 1950's. The gradual inter-facing of declining artisanal and rising manufacturing, service, and commercial work, redefined work expectations. The implications of this re-making of the white working class in the 1950's meant that workers began to 'weigh the relative advantages of employment in commerce and unskilled work', in 'positions conveniently located in matters of wages, welfare, and employment policies, in security prospects, in attractiveness or otherwise of general working conditions, and in various social aspects attached to particular employments'. Centrally, factory employment became identified as 'beneath the dignity and standing' of both white male and female workers. To be an operative or a manual worker was to be black. The 'correct position' for white male workers was in 'the overseeing and supervising of native labour'38

This increasing rigidity with which white work was being defined, from below, meant that

> "employers have to face the fact that they are unable to entice white labour into such activities as sweetmaking, or the manufacture of clothing or textiles or shoes on the scale they would like and the decreasing numbers means adapting their production accordingly. White women are better, more industrious and self-disciplined than men, and are more reliable because they don't need supervision the way other races do. But they don't stay long in their jobs...In a word jobs are looking for workers rather than workers looking for jobs.The answer lies in native replacement."39

Significantly, though, this re-definition was uneven and far from complete by the mid-1950's. Workers, white men and women, continued to find themselves in food, chemical, clothing, and in engineering, paint and timber works as semi-skilled and operative labour. This entailed that their workplaces simmered with tensions and conflicts. Poor work quality and ineffeciency, absenteeism and drunkeness, as well as open racial antagonism became expressions of deeper class frustations of 'stagnation and immobility'. These white workers forced into factories and operative/manual positions were often seen as 'the desperate and unintelligent... weak in head and spirit', entering into unwanted and lowly-defined jobs by their fellow workers, and this hurt and angered. As they came increasingly under the varied strengths of capitals' spotlights in the mid-1950's, employers big and small began questioning the viability of unsuitable and untrained workers, and the fact that 'progressive upward movements of whites enabled less qualified white labour also to move upward'.

The needs and expectations that significantly altered E.L.'s economic development were the apparent availability of cheap and docile black labour. This allowed for significant profitability and

---

37 Interviews 2, D and E, June 1987., BCI Box 13.
38 Hobart Houghton, op.cit., p.219, BCI Box 13, contains the same information.
39 BCI Box 13.

was the central locational/expansion factor for industrialists in the 1946-1953/4 period. The 1950's however, proved that availability was not effort or output, and location not production or profit on any simple one to one basis. Black workers struggled not only for wage increases and political voice, but against their very entry and expected routines and practices of exploitation in the workplaces of E.L.

Pre-industrial work habits had a profoundly contradictory effect on work and the factories of E.L. While the frequent changing of jobs was seen as 'undignified, unmanly, and possibly displeasing to the spirits', the 'heavy, demanding, and lowly paid white work' emphasized necessary avoidance, evasion and opposition to the same work. Caught in the tension between the possibility of 'witch' attacks, focussed on a thriving family and herd [attacks via envy] and translated uneasily into successful wage labour, [which was itself 'breaking tradition and entering an alien white man's world'and therefore opening oneself to attack more easily], and angering the spirits through labour mobility and changing jobs, workers desperately clung to the rural areas in whatever way possible, as a satisfactory link to the ancestors, and as 'protection from harm'.40

Work patterns were also different. The time, speed, and rhythm of seasons and ploughs, was replaced by the sweat, heat, tiredness and strain of mechanized and heavy, repetitive manual work, and it was resisted and evaded as far as possible. Complex arrangements of rest, slow work, managed machine faults and breakdowns, and 'looking for rests in the work' through constant job movement and regular migration, patterned experiences and reflected the alienated nature of 'white work'. The loss of 'managing one's own life' and of having to labour in 'the white man's world' was doubly felt as a removal of independent rural and personal control over work and production, and of having to increasingly rely on those 'who took my life away in the first place and are now doing it again in spirit and manliness in work not fit for men.'41 This, equally, affected the degree of incorporation and acceptance of wage labour in E.L. in the 1950's, and its avoidance.42

The manner in which 'the manliness' of male workers was affected in wage labour, influenced a consciousness of work which was reflective of a deeper reality of the nature of 'industrial' work. No longer directed and controlled by the same men, not only did the nature of work change but also the content. The African men, forced into wage labour, could no longer rely on the labour of wives and 'juniors', as in the rural areas, and found the pressures of long, continuous and seemingly never-ending occupation at the various points of production very different to the gender divided and male controlled practices of the Ciskei and Transkei rural relations of production. More, 'harder' and different work, and diminishing control and ability to influence their own participation in it, engendered a hostility to 'independent women' and 'tsotsi youth' outside of the workplaces, but also their instability inside. Migration, as often as possible, back to the rural areas, and wage labour as a re-entry mechanism to these 'declining patchwork rural slums'in the 'reserves', was also an attempt to control 'the

---

40 Mayer, P. op.cit., ch.9., Interviews, 3, G, June 1987.
41 Daily Dispatch, June 1956.
42 Interviews 3, C, Dec./Jan.1987., BCI, File 43.

women', on whom their power and access to the rural areas rested to a significant degree. So, women were resented and bemoaned as they 'made life more difficult', made work more real, and increasingly they 'refused to listen'.43 The answer lay, in part, in re-asserting patriarchal control, through wage labour,[in order to re-assert production and control in the reserves] and ironically, its avoidance, on a regular and systematic basis in order to retain 'manliness'and not become 'urbanized'.

Expected work routines were also upset by the 'iseti' and 'amakhaya' [home-men] who would live, and work together as much as was possible. The solidarities of kinship extended into a food factory for example, where workers found a member of a rival kin group employed in the processing section and refused to work while he remained.44 More generally, kinship asserted and re-inforced migrant attachments to particular rural areas, encouraged their continuance, and provided an identity that was not easily broken into by the demands of 'stable and permanent native labour' in E.L. The amakhaya also 'provided jobs'as both employers and associated workers, and adopted the practises of 'encouraging family and close tribal connections' amongst their workforces. This enabled job selection, but also made it 'easier to go home and return later and still have your job'.45 It also meant that workers avoided 'heavy work' and 'bad employers', through the solidarities of kinship, when first arriving in E.L., or in desperation, and encouraged 'the discretionary nature of the native job market on a significant scale... bad employers feel their effects in particular... the message goes out and some factories are known to be avoided in some country areas.'46

Low wages were a major issue affecting the workplace and the relations of work in the 1950's. Material work rewards simply did not correspond to effort. Constant complaints and questioning of underpayment, and that wages were not enough to live on, meant a resistance to working that was expressed in as limited a participation as conditions allowed. But it went further. The dishonesty identified with low wages exemplified the differences in material and cultural life between white and black, and meant that

> "a white employer who pays his native employees a small wage is a very bad man; he is no better than a thief, because he takes advantage ofthe fact that if you refuse the pay there is another man who will take the job. With this fact in mind you accept the small wage.The thing to do then is to steal when the chance presents itself.It is not sinful to steal from another thief... You cannot force him to pay you a living wage;all you can do is get your own back somehow...Is it wrong to take that which belongs to you but which is being fraudulently retained by your employer."47

The emergence of the 'isonka' system [of stealing to supplement wages] became widely prevalent in E.L. in the 1950's, and was greatly admired. It also was not seen as illegal, as 'the valuable things that have been taken are not those of anybody I know. They

---

43 Daily Dispatch, Sept. 1955., Interviews, 3, S-U, June 1988.
44 Company Archives, Dec.1986.
45 BCI Boxes 6 and 7., Interviews, 3, R, June 1988.
46 BCI Boxes 6 and 7.
47 Mayer, P., op.cit. p.145.

belong to a white man, whose only connection with me is employment'.48

A CRISIS IN PRODUCTION, THE EAST LONDON WORKING CLASS AND APARTHEID.

In 1956/57 the growth of manufacturing capital slowed considerably and contemporary industrialists began to talk of a crises of production. One industrial report suggested

> "the low quality of labour, a relatively recent development is being experienced by the majority of employers in the city...The results on their economic performance is deeply disturbing...The inability of many companies to reach targets can only have nagative[sic] and far-reaching consequences for the future."49

The flurry of consultations, studies and reports by 'production engineers' and 'effeciency experts' for a number of key manufacturing industries, reflected the need to increase and direct production. Apart from linking 'strong and effective management' to 'labour discipline and control', to low productivity, the generalized conclusion was the necessity to convince 'native and coloured labour' of the attractiveness and advantage of their conversion into 'effecient', 'stable', 'reliable', 'careful', and 'responsible' producers.50

Importantly, this does not mean that capital in general in E.L. responded to the 'crises' of 1956/57 with a cohesive and comprehensive process of transformation. Many of the smaller firms and workshops continued to rely on personalistic and arbitrary forms of attempted workplace domination. There, the working day and its regularization and extension, mattered for black workers, and for the owners and their 'management team of family and supervisory help'. If these firms survived, and at least 30 didn't, they emerged little changed in capital structure, in use of technology and in productive capabilities by 1963.51 In terms of the workplace though, and the nature of its occupation and stability, 'native labour ' was 'more strongly present, and more regularly so'. But, importantly, the response, which saw the 'jelling' of mass production ideology with practice, was the dominant one, and thereafter it was these relations which gave classes in E.L. their particular form.

It was the factories, whether dependent on 'the strength, skill, quickness, and sureness of touch of the individual worker, the brute strength and toil of the ganger, or the watchful, repetitive and mechanized regulations of the operative on the line, that came to dominate the industrial map of E.L. by 1963. The shortages of black [and white] labour experienced in E.L. in the 1950's, reflective of the patterns of incomplete and partial proletarianization, and the 'major element in the local stagnation of industry', had been 'resolved' by 1963/64. In this process the emergent nature of local class relations, their stabilization, and their socialization were key.

---

48 Interview, 3, L, Jan.1988.
49 BCI Box 19.
50 Company Records, Dec, 1987.
51 BCI Box 21, Company Archives/Records, Dec. 1987.

The most immediate and apparent response by manufacturing capital to the 'labour problems' of the 1950's was the attempt to initiate 'new methods of organizing production' with new investment. In all the major sectors the level of capital intensity increased in the 1956-1963 period, in places marginally, but in other factories, dramatically. While it was suggested that this involved 'sophisticated and modern machines, comparable to the rest of the world'52 it was more accurately, and largely, second hand machinery, behind the rest of the 'advanced world'.53 Despite the relatively high levels of capital investment, whatever its nature and technolgical capabilities however, production, even in the international companies, was linked to the needs of large and cheap labour forces on a continuous basis. The sustained need for such labour forces, and their productive incorporation and control was a necessity, and in the post 1957 period of 'crises' a hard reality that needed solutions.

For the older established firms, and Wilson Rowntree's is an excellent example, the 'artificial spaces' of labour shortage [of white women and black men], together with the growing pressure of 'competitive advantage', pushed through

> "the necessity to upgrade the factory, introduce labor-saving and modern equipment and become competitive on the national market. Modernization also has distinct advantages in our quest for good native labour... A modern factory will introduce modern and attractive conditions under which it will labour."54

This captures an important dynamic linked to the mechanization and restructuring of labour-processes in factories in E.L., as a response to worker resistance to mass production. The establishment of more capital intensive forms of production entailed not simply the de-skilling of white workers, but also the acquisition and experience of new skills for black workers. And new skills, along with increased wages, benefits, better working conditions, and more systematized and regular hours would mean greater responsibility and a 'sense of belonging in the life of the factory'.

The answers lay in the workplaces, although they appeared in the form of the councillor, the magistrate, the policeman, and the labour bureau official. Historically, segregation, through the local state, and commercial capital, created the conditions for a rigidly racially divided city, township slums, and the conception that the 'native' was a temporary working resident, subject to as much control and exclusion as was possible. Apartheid, after 1948, had changed little of this by the mid-1950's, except for the state to repressively intervene more centrally in the daily lives of E.L.'s black inhabitants. Manufacturing capital on the other hand, had begun to challenge some of these realities, as far as economic concerns of labour markets, employment and labour stability went. Working largely outside the ambit of a national state with a weak institutional presence in E.L., and a paralysed local state caught up in fighting industry itself and reviving a stagnant tourist trade, manufacturers in the early 1950's struggled to find their

52 BCI Box 21.
53 Company Records, Dec. 1987.
54 Company Records, Dec. 1987. The history of Wilson Rowntree's, unpublished manuscript, 1961, at the E.L. Museum.

own solutions. In this they were largely unsuccessful, due partly to internal tensions and conflicts, partly to their weak and 'unattractive' economic base and lack of organizational presence, and partly to their inability to intervene in the lives of black East Londoners beyond the work-gates.55

In 1955/56 the manufacturers' reaching for solutions began to make contacts, sometimes unintentionally, with practices of the apartheid state in the region. The Ciskei and Transkei bantustans both experienced significant decline in the 1950's, and by 1957 were little short of 'rural slums'. The importance of this is perhaps best highlghted in the changing language of African migrant and settled workers. The themes of 'country-rootedness and loyalty to old cultural standards', of cattle, kraals, drought and ploughs, wives and rural ceremonies, began to lose place to wages, work, and township life, of radios and lounge suites, the cinema, the dance-hall and the cricket club.56 Talk of changing needs, realities and commodities suggests a fundamental process and pressure on work stabilization. Jobs and wages became crucial to existence as the decade wore on and as the apartheid state increasingly ensured that alternative forms of access to rural means of production for 'commoners', disintegrated into dust, disease and death. Although migration continued, it became, by the early 1960's, less regular, more demanding and essentially transformed. In Peddie, or Keiskammahoek, or ..., although the work clothes of the week or month were discarded in favour of the 'red peasant blanket', the filth and squalor of the 'worst location in the whole union', together with the 7.00 am hooter were not that easily taken off, washed out, or deafened.57

At the same time as the economic basis of local labour migration was disintegrating, the apartheid state sought to institutionalize migrancy, and 'limit' the permanently settled in E.L. In effect, the local or district labour bureau, although established in 1952 under the 'Native Laws Amendment Act', only began to 'function' significantly in 1957.58 Until then, it seems, despite central directives, the 'underground' or 'at the door' practice enabled the employment of black labour from anywhere, not just the 'local Bantu locations of the E.L. district'.59 The weak functioning of the bureau was also apparent, with local official 'sanction', in the easy avoidance of unnecessarily 'closed' protection of 'indolent local labour at the expense of business effeciency'. After 1956/57, however, 'outside' or 'non-prescribed service contracts', largely applicable to Transkeian migrants in this instance, were dramatically tightened, and selectively enforced, possibly affecting up to 80% of cases arising.60

The processes of far more strictly 'administering' influx control in E.L. after 1957, together with the increasing ability to allocate labour to the 'heavy' and 'bad' industries, had the important effect of stabilizing, selecting and redirecting the migrant, and

---

55 BCI Records, various files, esp. 55-63.
56 References from Mayer, P., Reader, D.H.,'The Black Man's Portion', Oxford, 1961, Daily Dispatch in the 1950's, Pauw, B.A., 'The Second Generation', Oxford, 1963, and Interviews.
57 Interviews 3, C, L, M, Dec.1987.
58 Interviews, 4, A-F, December, 1988.
59 Ibid.
60 Mayer,P., op. cit. p.58, Daily Dispatch, December 1956.

settled black labour market, on a significant scale. 'Sex-ten' [Section 10 of the 1945 Natives Urban Areas Act], based on birth, residence, and continuous employment, and the pass system more generally, formed the basis in E.L. [as elsewhere] of segmenting the labour market between temporary migrants and permanent residents, and securing the reproduction of differentiated forms of labour power.61 But what 'sex-ten' also did, was to reinforce the necessity for wage labour on a stabilized and continuous basis for black workers in E.L., especially after 1956. Section 10 was seen as the 'law that compels a man to remain in his job for at least 10 years', and the law that 'marries us to our employers'.62 For E.L.'s migrants it also took away 'the little freedom we had in choice of job. Nowadays [1957/58] you are liable to be chased out of town if you don't stick to your job, so you have just got to stick to it, even if it is a bad one and underpaid.' The threat of 'endorsement out of town' within 14 days, once a 'work-seekers permit' had been acquired, also hastened employment, forcing migrants to take the first job offered, and to 'stick to it forever'. This perceived 'unholy alliance' between employers and authorities, served to both unify migrant and permanent workers, in their antagonism to the pass system and to local capital, but also to differentiate them in terms of status, work, and their place in township life.63

In terms of this permanent/migrant unity, the popular local interpretation of the pass system, its origins, and its implementation, was significant. Seen as a 'white device to keep the amaXhosa down', and as the 'cruelty of white people...making these laws specially for us...I hate their way of oppressing us by these passes, permits, and regulations', influx control was interpreted as a deliberate punishment for the '1952 riots', as an outcome to them and to prevent any further political activity that would challenge 'whites'.64 In the day to day realities of life in iMonti the deportations, raids, the lines of thousands of people outside 'the office' renewing their lodgers permits every month, and 'the queues' of arrested pass / permit offenders, swollen by regular additions, forcefully marching behind the policeman to the police station, all reinforced, continuously, the fact that 'you go to jail here for nothing at all...it has made this town a very bad place'. The extent of daily repression, where everyone 'knows someone who has been arrested and fined, or expelled...'if it was not the person themself, meant that the pass system and its enforcers, after 1952, but especially after 1956/57, when these intensified, under a more effecient and stream-lined police and bureau, served to 'stabilize' black labour in jobs and township life. But it was contradictory, unifying a need to 'hold onto a job', while pushing migrants into unskilled and unwanted jobs through harsher and more overt sanction, and bringing together a common opposition to 'white authority', while more systematically affecting and arresting migrant 'temporary residents' over 'permanents'. These divisions suited the needs of a fractionalized local capital in manufacturing, and in commerce and the state, and related to and shaped a necessary fragmented local labour market and allocation of black labour after 1957. And it served to 'stabilize' this labour market and the concerned workers in their workplaces.

---

61 BCI File 15.
62 Muncipal Records, ELM, 16/17/5., Mayer, op cit.
63 Letter from unspecified source to G.O. - personal archive.
64 Ibid., Interviews in Dec.1987 confirmed this interpretation.

If people in Tsolo and Nekeni [sections of Duncan Village] had no problem in identifying that 'the work of a policeman is to raid our homes late at night or early in the morning looking for permits, liquor, passes, taxes, anything',65 there was a similar recognition of political and trade union activity promoting equally widespread responses from the police and authorities. Activists were harassed, strikes declared illegal, and strikers arrested in 1954, and in 1956 / 57 & 58.66 Union activity was also severely curtailed under the Native Labour Act of 1953, which was 'very actively pursued after 1956 in the E.L. Regional Native Labour Council/Committee's and the CNLB's activities'. Works and Liason committees were formed in a number of factories,67 and in particular the 'malpractises of agitators and so-called 'union' leaders' were closely monitored, and stopped 'at all costs, from serving their own selfish needs' and from making trade unionism into 'a profession ...and not a service'.68 The active pursuance of education of 'European employers', and the 'interpreting for the Board the desires and aspirations of native workers ...to settlement by negotiation... but not with strikers who were outside the provisions of the Act', laid the basis for restricted union activity, but also large scale state interventions into the life of the factory.69 Wages were kept down, increases 'negotiated' through the NLC and the 'works committees' were minimal, and strikes made illegitimate, involving prosecution and more importantly, instant dismissal. In this context Mr.Godlo's pronouncement, that 'they were proud of the record of E.L. as compared with other towns and ports, E.L. being the centre where the workers achieved their ends peacefully', was a biting comment on the effectivity of capital and the state to define 'the ends' for workers in the late 1950's and early 1960's.70 And it was a real reflection on how important, and how valued, jobs, and their maintenance, had become by the 1960's, as is the memory of the time:

> "I sympathized with the union workers [SACTU] as did many, I think, they worked very hard, tirelessly, but they were too few and were always disappearing... To join - ha - no, no, that would have been the end ...no work, no money, and standing then, waving the book at the bosses for a job with hundreds of others ...too many people looking for jobs then...If you had employment then you were 'quick' and kept on it... unless you had the assurance of one better ..."71

Unemployment, especially for the youth, but also more generally, became significant in promoting increasing job security and limiting labour turnover. Despite state intervention by the late 1950's, unemployment stood at 'somewhere between 25% and 35%'. This massive presence of 'so many workless' people kept wage levels low and 'tied' workers to the jobs out of a real fear of becoming, and realizing, like Norman Duka, that getting employed rested on 'luck', 'chance', and 'hoping to be seen by the white man with

---

65 Duka, N., 'From Shantytown to Forest', LSM Press, 1974.,p.24.
67 LIE 10 EL 4 / 8 / 7 / 3 .
67 Company Archives, Dec.1987
68 LIE 10 EL 4/8/7/3.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Interview, 3, H, Jan.1988.

power'and thus on the arbitrary selective choice of the manager and his assistant. It was also an experience of helpless frustation to have to look for a job...

> "Once I got the pass I began looking for a factory job. The first day I went to Standard Canners. I found hundreds of men, young boys, and women standing in front of the gates. It was very early and the factory hadn't opened yet... When the manager finally came out he chose people near the front. He couldn't even see those of us who stood and held up our passes at the back of the crowd. I left and ran to another factory. Again, no luck. Then to another, and another - I can't even remember how many. I began to realize how difficult it was to get a job; out all day, running from factory to factory and still no job. I returned home hungry and tired."72

These pressures and pulses placed on black workers to 'hold onto their jobs', from below, were also felt and influenced out of 'shantytown'. The poverty of life in the E.L. townships, and the very real material limits of low and inconsistent wages, placed enormous pressure on leisure and a lifestyle already straitjacketed by a local state concerned with control 'and nothing else'. The shack areas of Mekeni, Tsolo, and Thulandivile were overcrowded and squalid, places of 'great unhappiness and desperation'. Home for a family was usually a single sub-let room, about 10-15 feet square.73 The muncipal housing areas, although less congested, were also sub-let and squashed, earning for Duncan Village, the reputation of the 'worst home in the union'. Even the mining barracks were favourably compared to living in the shack areas of Duncan Village.74 But better, permanent and secure incomes could, after 1957, entail a movement out of the shack areas into the 'groups of plots in selected parts of the East Bank Location [Duncan Village] so that they may arise above the effluvium of slumdom'.[D.V extension was the main site and by 1960, 970 houses had been built and 'sold' there.]75 There, people could live in a house that 'whispers to you that it needs more furniture', and anticipate removing themselves from the curfews and controls of the tsotsi's, the daily raids of 'the authorities and police', and the fear of dying children, the disgust of inadequate sanitation, and the instability of family and community life. Not all that many were successful, but the community desire was strong, and the openings provided by a secure job, and 'respectable behaviour'. After 1963 though, it was to be the lure of Mdantsane, the new Ciskei homeland township, to be 'built' by the central state [and not the responsibility of the local muncipality] that would ensure movement out of the 'ghetto' that was Duncan Village.76

The result for manufacturing industry in the 1960's was a 'world of labour' not made in the pre-determined and anticipated images of the 1940's. The factory floors were 'teeming with native labour' in skilled and semi-skilled positions, as well as in the expected unskilled positions. Job stability had been secured from outside the workplaces, and not in the gratitude of material rewards, or so it seemed. The solid core of black workers, which numbered about

---

72 Duka, N., op. cit., p.37.
73 Muncipal Records, 12/4/T.,Interviews, Jan.1988.
74 Interview, 3, J, Jan.1988.
75 Muncipal Records, 12/4/T.
76 Interviews, Jan.-Feb. 1988.

30% of the labour force in the early 1950's, had risen to close on 70% in the early 1960's. By 1962 labour turnover had correspondingly declined to approximately 60%.77 The great diversity in labour process organization which had produced a system of fragmented, localized, and unconnected labour markets in the 1940's and early 1950's, had given way to the mobilization and far more coherent labour market of the early 1960's. Black workers and their jobs were increasingly defined and dominated by a 'semi-skilled' denominator, although this process was also segmented by the continued importance and scale of manual work, and migrant /permanent, and educated/ uneducated divisions influencing employment practices and giving meaning to work.

Significantly though, what was happening inside the factories and workplaces of E.L. did not contradict the practices of the apartheid state in the region. In answer to the question of how black workers were to 'build' the factories and workshops, the answer for capital lay in the ideology of apartheid, which 'corresponded' to patterns already taking shape around the particular emergent racial divisions of labour of the 1950's. The structure of white supervisory and black operative and manual labour was elaborated, deepened, and legitimized through the language of colour. Apartheid provided that framework in a number of ways, and did so, because in the 1950's it was still in the process of formation, ideologically and on the ground.

Manufacturers and managers latched onto the ideas of segregation and racial difference within apartheid and justified building the racial divisions of labour that characterized the workplaces, according to understood 'correct occupational positions for natives in European owned cities'.78 At the same time capital was demanding 'stronger supervision and control' to 'increase the quality of native labour' and the 'quantity of production'. Strong and clear racial division ensured jobs for whites, as supervisors, and that an exclusive and blatant racism from supervisors was not out of place. 'Kaffir' and 'baas' made the workplace easier to control for them, through direct coercion and violence and through a legitimation of characteristic stereotypes of black workers as 'lazy', 'cheeky', and 'too independent', unreliable, careless and ineffecient. 79

For capital, the institutional racism of apartheid, the proximity of 'their own homelands' increasingly realized in 'Bantu Self Government' and in Ndantsane, the notions of 'temporary residents' and the pass system, as well as wider political and community exclusion, all confirmed a 'legimate' separateness of the ownership and control of white industry. In the workplaces this all had a base in the ways in which race patterned relations of production. 'Working' was for 'the white man', the 'expectation' of supervision and direction came from whites, 'natives' did certain kinds of work, were paid differently, had different needs and goals in work, could deal with boring and repetitive work better, and were more suited to hard and manual work.80 This all meant that it was 'kaffir' and 'whiteman', not worker and boss that defined 'objective' class experiences. Racial divisions and stereotypes

77 BCI, Files 41 and 42.
78 Company Archives, BCI, Files 34 and 37.
79 Interviews, 3, D and G, 1987.
80 BCI, Files 37-38.

served the interests of profitabilty through lower wages, through being able to define skills as unskilled work, and through 'displacing ' and avoiding costs of labour reproduction. And it served to stabilize and control the workplaces for white owners and managers as the relations of exploitation were read in racial terms, 'because of being black'.81

At every level race informed, reinforced and effectively fused with class dispositions and practices. The nature and expectation of factory and other employment was pre-defined in racial terms, as were wage levels, working conditions, the content of supervision, the conditions of leisure, and the ability to organize. So too were the elements of shared and collective awareness, located initially in the workplace. In all of this, race predominated. Experience seemed to belie structure, as these processes promoted a racial consciousness largely devoid of tangible class content in the 1960's in E.L.

The significance of this process of identification is that it was largely shaped, at least initially, in the places of work. It was extended, and more coherently 'interiorized' in local class relations from above, as a resolution of the inability of manufacturing capital to socialize its relations of production. But equally importantly, this process of the 'interiorization'of race in local class relations reflected, for E.L.'s emerging working class, the modality in which class was worked and lived. It was the way people, as workers, defined and shaped their own lives, in the struggle to give meaning to work in E.L. especially after c1957. The experience of factory work, and the dominance of manufacturing capital, did not break down these racial realities and conceptions, it rather reinforced them. This had as much to do with the way workers made sense of their changed realities and imposed their conditions on the workplace, as it did to do with 'the desires'of capital, or the pressures of the apartheid state. So,

> "to be called 'kaffir' was to be called a useless uncivilized and accepting worker,... but to call oneself an 'African' was to identify one self with pride and assert one's rights and values as a working person"82

Central, then, was the attempt to make the economic relations of industry in E.L. a human relationship through an assertion of the opposites of capital/ state definitions, in the form of an ethnic and at times national 'African' identity. This formed in practice and in consciousness, but in non-collective and non-organizational forms through the 1960's. Ways of expressing this, while 'oppositional' to the 'temporary resident' or 'obedient kaffir' definition, were situational, assertive, and individualistic, but also in a wider frame of reference, accomodative and consensual. And they had to be, for the very relations of production to be accepted and socialized in E.L. in the 1960's. This can be seen in the recognitions of 'respectability and security' coming with 'hard and reliable work', as did higher wages and better working conditions, which were in turn a denial of 'how the whites could only see you'. The ability to 'prove the white employer' and really 'do the job better than any of them could', the sense in which it became important to 'stay with the job to get your rewards', and recognition that you were not 'lazy and unreliable', as well as

81 Company Records, Dec. 1987.
82 Interview, 3, H, Dec.-Jan. 1987.

less agreeable dimensions of being punctual, of 'working the system' and of 'holding your head up' all reflected this tension.83

These processes, in turn, implied an internalization, an 'acceptance' of apartheid, out of the economic realities of the workplaces, beyond repression and control in E.L. The wheels of industry, and of the state of the 1960's, turned on organizational and union bannings, trials and exiles, on forced removals out of Duncan Village, and on influx controls, pass arrests and 'sex-ten' denials. They turned on the voluntary and forced growth of Mdantsane, on Ciskei and Transkei 'self government', and on the Border Industries Programme as it secured and expanded capital's base in the region and in the muncipality. But underneath, they turned on the 'silent' consent of a working class that had made itself, as much as been made, in racial form, in the content of the workplaces of East London in the 1950's. This is the '...general illumination in which all other colours are plunged, and which modifies their specific tonalities. It is the special ether which defines the specific gravity of everything found in it.'84

83 Company Interviews, and Records, BCI Box 33.

84 Marx,K. quoted in Thompson, E.P.,'Eighteenth-century English society: class struggle without class?' in Social History, 3 [2] 1978, p.151. with obvious apology to both Marx, and Thompson.