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Title: Work and Control in a Citrus Packhouse: Zebediela Estate 1926-1953.

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# WORK AND CONTROL IN A CITRUS PACKHOUSE : ZEBEDIELA ESTATE, 1926-1953.

An earlier paper discussed the social origins of white women workers at Zebediela. These women were young, Afrikaans-speaking, and came largely from small farms in the Northern Transvaal.[1] Their social characteristics - age, gender, 'culture' - profoundly shaped the experience of work at Zebediela. It is on this experience that this paper focuses. The paper decribes the labour process in the Zebediela packhouse, concentrating specifically on control and stabilisation of labour. It examines changes in the nature of work as production increased and the availability of young white women workers declined. These two processes intensified labour in the packhouse, and transformed management's strategies of control.

The estate's new packhouse commenced operations in 1927. 'The last word in citrus packing', the *Rand Daily Mail* called it, 'probably the largest of its kind in the world.'[2] The packhouse was built according to Californian design, and used machinery manufactured in California. A representative of the manufacturers arrived to demonstrate techniques for protecting oranges against decay. Furthermore at least two of the estate's managers, Redvers Blatt (c.1927-1929) and P. J. Quin (1935-1967) received their training in citriculture at the University of

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1 Van Niekerk, A. 'Social Origins and Kinship of White Women Workers at the Zebediela Citrus Estate, 1926-1953', paper presented at the U.W., African Studies Institute, March 1986.

2 *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 June 1927. The estate began packing for export in 1926, but a single photograph constituted almost the only evidence found about this earlier operation. This depicted a rough and somewhat dilapidated building, rather like a converted farmhouse, not even remotely resembling the huge factory building of the new packhouse. See Combrinck, A. J. *Potgietersrust Centenary Album, 1854-1954* (Potgietersrust 1954).

3 California was in many ways taking the lead in the citrus world, and in addition, the chairman of the holding company that owned Zebediela,

California.[3] Unlike the Californian packhouses, however, which employed Chinese and later Chicano workers, Zebediela used white packers and graders, specifically Afrikaner women drawn from nearby farms.[4]

The decision to employ white workers in the packhouse seems at first glance surprising, given that the estate had initially been located at Zebediela due in part to the proximity of black labour. A booklet advertising the estate in the early twenties noted that 'it is estimated that 30 000 to 40 000 natives are at present residing in locations and government reserves within 25 miles of the estate, thus assuring at all times an abundance of cheap labour. These natives are quiet, intelligent and industrious. They are eager to engage in work on the land near their homes, and this constitute a great asset to development undertakings in the district.'[5] The estate drew on this source for most of its unskilled labour: irrigating and fumigating the orchards, and making, strapping and loading orange cases.[6] Why then did Zebediela use white women in the packhouse?

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I. W. Schlesinger, was himself a man with American origins. *Jaarboek van die Piet Potgieter Hoerskool*, 1949, p.15.

4 It was not possible to determine how many women Zebediela initially employed, but by 1931 150 graders and packers worked there. This figure remained the same until 1935. University of the Witwatersrand (hereafter U.W.), Church of the province of South Africa Archive (hereafter C.P.S.A.), Zebediela Collection (hereafter Z.C.), File Aa 1, Minutes of a meeting of the estate's management committee, 24/4/1931, and File Acf 3, Packhouse report for the navel season, 1935.

5 State Archives, Department of Agriculture, LDB, Vol. 2120, File R 3809/2, booklet entitled *Zebediela Estates - Presented by the African Realty Trust*, undated.

6 A 1926 report on the citrus industry declared 'European woman labour was only employed in exceptional cases for the purposes of grading and packing of fruit.' Van den Hoek, M. and Pretorius, W. J. *An Enquiry into the Factors of Production in the Citrus Industry of South Africa, for the year 1926*, Department of Agriculture Bulletin, 62, (Pretoria 1929), p.24.

In part the impetus for using white labour came from the 'civilised labour' policy introduced by the new Pact government in 1924.[7] A 1925 Department of Labour report welcomed 'the decided attempt' to employ 'Europeans' throughout the northern provinces, a tendency 'especially noticeable in food factories.'[8] The image of food touched only by the whitest of hands became a marketing device, ''n soort van 'n reklame idee', in the words of the Estate Secretary.[9] In the case of Zebediela, the Pact gave concrete support to its policy of employing white labour. In 1925 the Railway Administration agreed to build a railway link to Zebediela through the Springbok Flats, a project which the previous government declined to undertake in 1923.[10] At the opening of the railway line in 1928, C. W. Malan, the Minister of Railways, paid tribute to Zebediela for giving employment to whites. 'Action, and not talk', he said,'was what was wanted in respect of the white labour policy...', adding in passing that the government had employed only white workers in building the line.[11] For its part, the estate seldom missed an opportunity to stress its role as '...a big outlet for female unemployed [which has]

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7 When the Pact government came to power in 1924 it attempted, through its 'civilised labour' policy, to provide employment for poor whites by as far as possible replacing blacks with white workers.

8 *Department of Labour Annual Report for the Period 1924-1925*, U.G. 21-1926, p.501.

9 '...a kind of advertising gimmick.' Mr. A. Van Blerk, interviewed at Potgietersrust, 12/6/1984 (statistical clerk 1935-1940, Estate Secretary 1940-1975 - In every case the occupation and the period that the person worked at Zebediela, will be indicated). O'Meara noted, in his study on Afrikaner nationalism, how the Rembrandt Tobacco company used the idea of cigarettes 'untouched by black hands' in promoting its product. O'Meara, D. *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Johannesburg 1983), p.204. Also Davies, R. *Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa 1900-1960* (Sussex 1979), pp.74 and 209.

10 State Archive, Department of Railways, MVE, Vol. 449, File 16/113, Notes on the visit of the Minister and Railway Board to Zebediela and Potgietersrust, 1/8/1923. U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Ad 29.1 ii, Indemnity signed between African Realty Trust and the Railway and Harbours Administration, 10/7/1925. In return, the company had to guarantee any loss on the line for the first five years.

11 *Star* 3 July, 1928. Allegations of collusion, not only on the railway line, but also on the granting of a broadcasting monopoly, linked Schlesinger to the government in 1929. *The Star,* May 1929.

done a great deal in helping families in this district keep their heads above water.'[12]

Ultimately, however, the decision to employ white women in the packhouse reflected less the dictates of 'civilised labour', than the absence of suitable alternatives. Management did consider using black packers, especially in time of depression. Experiments done on black men on the estate in 1930, judged black men 'of comparatively high order of intelligence' and 'long experience in various capacities in the packhouse', to be suitable for packing and grading jobs.[13] Unfortunately, the report went on, all sufficiently intelligent 'natives' were already used for 'very important jobs', such as strapping orange cases. In fact, the real obstacle was not the 'low order of intelligence' of the bulk of black workers, but the unavailability of sufficient numbers of black workers with industrial experience.[14] Experienced black males frequently deserted the estate for work on the mines - indeed, by 1936 Zebediela was increasingly forced to rely on black women pickers.[15] Nor could the estate

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[12] State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 475, File 69/24, Report by the Department of Social Welfare's Welfare Officer at Nylstroom on 'Onbevredigende behuising van blanke vroulike werkers: Zebediela Estates, Potgietersrust', 15/12/1937.

[13] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 1, Report by the Packhouse Manager on 'Native Packers', 4/12/1930. The Great Depression of 1929-1932 saw a decline in world prices for agricultural products.

[14] Van Blerk, 'Zebediela', Part I, p.16. In February of the same year Zebediela needed to employ 1000 male black workers to pick the fruit and irrigate the orchards. U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 1, Minutes of a meeting of the estate's management committee, 20/2/1931. By 1936 the figure rose to 2500 workers by 1949 3000 workers. Letter from the Estate Manager to the Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, on 'Native Labour Scarcity', 4/12/1936, and File Ad 28, Historic Overview of Zebediela Estate, by P. J. Quin, 10/9/1949.

[15] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 1, Minutes of the meeting of the Estate Management Committee, 20/2/1931. In 1936 the manager reported that 'male labour strength is decreasing and it is believed that these boys are moving down to the Mines. Labour conditions are causing grave concern. A serious effort is being made to establish friendly relationship with neighbouring Native Chiefs with an eye on female labour. The Chief of Zebediela location has been to see me to express his friendly feelings. Substantial increase in female strength this week and a promise from the Chief to increase next week.' U.W.,

easily recruit further afield: the report noted that as for 'raw, newly recruited native boys', 'some difficulty will probably be experienced in recruiting a sufficiently large number of even this type of native ... and there is also the problem of accommodation to consider'. Experiments conducted in the same year on black women, were even less promising. Such labour, according to the Packhouse Manager, was 'utterly unsuitable' for packing, not only because of their 'low mentality', but also because black women had an inherent 'dislike of this kind of work'.[16]

The final comment of the Packhouse Manager reflected the fact that black labour was not only difficult to obtain, but also difficult to control. Citrus spoilt easily, and the estate therefore needed a stable workforce to get the fruit packed and sent off in the shortest possible time. Citrus producers also required disciplined workers, as poorly packed oranges became bruised and rotted during transit. In the opinion of Zebediela's management, black workers, male and female, were neither stable nor disciplined. 'The native', complained W. R. Hosking, the Packhouse Manager in 1930, 'is practically independent of his earning capacity and little or no control can be exercised through threats of dismissal nor is he likely to respond to any appeal to his sense of loyalty or intelligence. The control of natives is always a difficult problem, but is especially difficult where transient labour is employed, and if natives are to be employed as packers, this problem threatens to become a very serious obstacle.'[17] He argued that the problem might be

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C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 4, Manager's report for the week ended 31/7/1936.

[16] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 1, Report of the Packhouse Manager on 'experiment in teaching native maids to pack', 3/11/1930, and minutes of a meeting of the estate's management committee, 4/11/1930.

[17] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 1, Report by the Packhouse Manager on 'native packers', 4/12/1930.

solved by using black and white women together, but 'reasonable grounds' existed for believing that white women may 'object'.[18]

On the other hand, white women workers were both available and relatively easier to control than black workers: coming from impoverished Northern Transvaal farms, they were dependent on cash wages; they had few employment options in the thirties and forties; and finally, for reasons discussed below, they proved relatively amenable to industrial discipline.

The labour process at Zebediela started in the orchards where black workers picked the fruit. Light railways transported the citrus to the packhouse according to a well regulated schedule, minimising interruptions in the flow of oranges. On arrival in the packhouse, specially designed machinery washed, dried, brushed and waxed the fruit. White women then graded the and packed the oranges. Finally, machines operated by white men, placed lids on the cases, which black men strapped.[19] A railway line next to the building transported the cases to Durban or Cape Town.

White women in the packhouse were divided into packers and graders. Graders lined up next to six tables, where they classified the fruit ac-

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[18] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 1, Report from the Packhouse Manager to the Estate Secretary on 'native packers', 4/12/1930.

[19] Management maintained a strong racial division between packhouse workers. One interviewee stressed that 'ons het altyd veilig gevoel en geweet daar is manspersone rondom ons'. '...we always felt secure and knew that there were men around us.' Mrs. A. Grobler, Steynsrus, 4/3/1985 (packer, 1937-1939). In 1938 a white woman nevertheless lodged a complaint with J. G. Strydom, M.P. for Nylstroom, about such racial contact in the packhouse. The subsequent investigations proved these allegations groundless, since black men worked at least 15 feet away from the white women and did not even talk to them, 'daar die naturelle te bang is om 'n wit vrou aan te spreek.' '...because the natives are too scared to address a white woman.' State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 295, File SW 47/13/44, Report by the Inspector of Factories on 'Klagte - Zebediela Estate', 28/6/1939.

cording to quality. These women were divided into several categories. Standing at the top of the table, learner graders simply seperated out the rotten fruit. Further down the table, the job became progressively more refined: graders sorted out the first and second class oranges, and the fruit of indifferent quality moved outside where black women filled pockets destined for the local market. At the end of the table, more experienced women, the 'checkers', ensured that no bad oranges passed for export. As workers became more experienced, they moved further down the belt with a commensurate increase in wages.[20]

Grading was neither complicated nor interesting, simply exhausting. An ex-grader complained that 'die lang ure se staan was vermoeidend, die werk eentonig en oninteressant, elke dag presies soos die ander.'[21] Graders suffered from tremendous eye-strain because, as one informant recalled, 'hulle mag nie opkyk nie. Hulle moet hulle oë net op daai lemoene hou.'[22] The constant concentration induced mental fatigue and dizziness, and a woman remembered that 'baie keer as jy so stip konsentreer, dan lyk dit of daai lemoene een geel streep hier voor jou is.'[23]

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[20] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aba 1, 'Preliminary Survey at the Zebediela Estate', by the Bedaux company, 4/5/1950. Bedaux was a management consultancy called in to investigate the possible rationalisation of production at the estate.

[21] '...standing up for long hours was tiring and the work monotonous and boring, each day exactly like the other.' Letter to A. Van Niekerk from Mrs. J. Horn, from Vredefort, 3/3/1985 (grader, 1938-1941). The industrial psychologist, Blauner, noted that the most unsatisfactory job is one which 'is not intrinsically interesting and yet requires rather constant attention.' Blauner, R. *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and his Industry* (Chicago 1964), p.29.

[22] '...they could not look up. They had to keep their eyes on those oranges.' Mrs. E. Lamont, interviewed at Potgietersrust, 12/2/1985 (matron 1941-1953).

[23] '...when you concentrated so intently, the oranges seemed like a yellow stripe in front of you.' Mrs. A. Hugo, interviewed at Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (grader 1952). Miss B. Groenewald, interviewed at Naboomspruit, 3/4/1985 (grader, office employee 1944-1952).

From the grading tables conveyor belts carried the oranges to the packing section. A system of sieves divided the fruit into 13 different sizes. Smaller oranges fell into the bins of workers at the top of the packing lines, while larger oranges continued further down. Movements of packers all down the line became 'mechanical - grasp an orange with the right hand, thrust it into the paper wrapper waiting in the left hand, these two movements were almost simultaneous, twist the paper around the orange, place in box, over and over and over again, hundreds and hundreds of time they made the same movements.'[24] The wooden cases in which the fruit had to be packed, contained partitions in the middle to prevent the fruit from tumbling about. The packer filled one side of the case which stood on a stand in front of her, slightly elevated at the back, twisted the case around, and filled the other. If the fruit was badly packed the required number of oranges did not fit into the box and the worker had to repack it. Finally, the packer manoeuvred the stand around and shoved the 70 pound packed case onto the belt. The process was then repeated.

Packing was the more arduous job. Like graders, packers had to remain on their feet. As one ex-packer commented, 'ons het nie die eer gehad om te sit nie'.[25] When the oranges flowed very fast, the funnels into each bin became clogged, and the packers had to scrape the fruit in by hand. 'Dan kom hulle so vinnig', one explained, 'jy kan nie so vinnig pak as wat hulle daar inval nie. Dan krap jy dit maar af, en jou arms is so lam.'[26] To keep the pace, packers tended to throw the oranges from one

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[24] Bremner, Y. 'The Packers', an undated and unpublished manuscript in the possession of S. Gray of the English Department of the Rand Afrikaans University, p.6. This manuscript dealt with orange packers at Letaba, Zebediela's sister estate.

[25] '...we did not have the honour of sitting down'. Mrs. A. Greyling, Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor, 1930-1951).

[26] 'They kept coming so fast ... that you could not pack as rapidly as they fell in. Then you had to scrape them off, and your arms were so tired.' Mrs. A. Greyling, interviewed at Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor 1930-1951).

hand into the wrapper in the other quite hard.[27] The constant movement of packing and the exertion required to squeeze the oranges into place caused aching arms and swollen fingers and wrists, especially in the first weeks on the job.[28] One woman recalled that 'baie aande as ek so die pyne in die arms gehad het, het ek gehuil...'[29] Finally, the heavy cases had to be pushed onto the conveyor belt. One informant contended that 'om daardie swaar kas lemoene op daardie waentjie te stoot is sommer al amper 'n man se krag nodig. Dit het my verbaas dat hulle vroumense (gebruik het)...Jy het 'n man nodig vir daardie dinge.'[30]

Packers devised remedies to ease their pains. Some held their wrists under cold water until the swelling subsided.[31] Others applied a mixture of paraffin and salt, or bandages dipped in brandy, to blunt the pain.[32] Most simply had to persevere: 'dit was maar uitputtend en jou hande en gewrigte het baie geswel, maar jy het net aangehou en uitgehou want jy wou die geld hê.'[33]

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27 Mrs. E. Johnson, Alberton, 7/3/1985 (grader 1939-1941).

28 Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936). Mrs. A. Greyling, Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor 1930-1951). Mrs. E. Barnard, interviewed at Bulge River, 27/11/1984 (packer 1937-1938). Mrs. A. Hugo, Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (grader 1952).

29 '...many evenings my arms ached and I cried...' Miss Lucy Byrne, interviewed at Zebediela, 14/6/1984 (packer, supervisor 1939-1978).

30 '...you almost needed a man's strength to move that heavy case of oranges on the stand. It surprised me that they used women...you needed a man for those jobs.' Mrs. K. Botha, interviewed at Boksburg, 12/9/1984 (packer, grader 1941). Mrs. A. S. van Niekerk, interviewed at Pretoria, 2/10/1984 (grader 1939-1941). Mrs. A. Hugo, Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (grader 1952).

31 Miss de W. Riekert, interviewed at Zebediela, 14/6/1984 (packer, supervisor, chief floorwoman 1930-1983).

32 Mrs. C. G. Ferreira, interviewed at Johannesburg, 25/3/1985 (packer 1939-1941). Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. C. M. Snyders, from Alma, 14/11/1985 (packer 1928-1933).

33 '...it was tiring and you arms and wrists were swollen, but you persevered because you wanted the money.' Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. E. C. du Preez, from Laersdrif, 25/4/1985 (packer 1939-1941).

Workers were allowed to choose whether to pack or grade, but those who were unhappy in their job were allowed to change if circumstances permitted. Apparently this defused potential conflict, for there is no evidence of contention about the issue. Workers chose between either doing the less strenuous job of grading, or earning more money as packers, as the latter received piece-rate wages. Thus, argued one ex-packer, 'meisies wat meer geld wou gekry het, hulle het gepak.'[34] Another explained that 'ek het daardie geld nodig, ek wil kyk wat ek kan pak.'[35] In fact, those who chose to pack often dismissed graders as either vain or lazy. At least one ex-grader concurred: 'die stadsmeisies het lateraan meestal uitgewyk na die gradeerstoor - daar kon hulle hulle mooi maak.'[36] Another said that 'daar was deftige gradeerders.'[37]

While graders had the security of a fixed wage,[38] packers could increase their earnings through hard work. Each packer had a number which she kept for the remainder of the season. She left slips of paper in each case which identified the packer and showed the number of oranges in that case. At the end of the day office employees counted the slips and tabulated the number of oranges handled by each worker. In the first ten years that Zebediela operated, packers were paid a flat rate of 1.25d.

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[34] '...girls who wanted more money, packed.' Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust (1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936).

[35] '...I needed the money, so I wanted to see how well I could pack.' Mrs. S. Heystek, interviewed at Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, 1939-1952, supervisor 1953-1961).

[36] '...most of the city girls went to the grading shed - there they could spend time to make themselves pretty.' Mrs. E. Johnson, interviewed at Alberton, 7/3/1985 (grader 1939-1941).

[37] '...there were smartly dressed graders.' Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, interviewed at Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936).

[38] Unfortunately the exact wages of graders until 1938 are unknown. State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 295, File SW 47/13/44, Report by the Inspector of Factories on 'Klagte -Zebediela Estate', 28/6/1939.

for every 100 oranges.[39] Workers actually earned more by packing smaller oranges than larger ones though, since less time had to be wasted on setting up empty cases or disposing of the full ones. In addition, neither the very small nor the very large fruit handled easily. Supervisors moved the women to different size fruit, either every hour or after every shift, to ensure equal earning opportunities.[40] With the piece rate constant, packers' real wage fluctuated with inflation: in real terms, piece rates increased by 15 percent over the deflationary years until 1933, levelling off and declining slightly to 1937.[41] Packers' actual earnings also fluctuated with the vagaries of the crop. In 1933, for instance, drought reduced the number of exportable oranges, and packers earned very little. In that year, according to one woman, 'het meisies wat hier was, weggegaan.'[42]

Piece-rate wages had important implications for the control of workers. Packers realised that as a seasonal workforce they had to earn as much as possible while the season lasted. 'Ons het geweet', said one woman, 'as die pakseisoen verby is, was daar nie ander werk nie.'[43] As a result packers tended to be self-disciplining, rendering the prominent 'No Talking To Employees' sign in the packhouse superfluous. As one

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[39] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 2, Memo from the acting Estate Secretary on 'Packers' Wages', 17/2/1939.

[40] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 2, Memo from the acting Estate Secretary on 'Packers' Wages', 17/2/1939. Mrs. C. G. Ferreira, Johannesburg, 25/3/1985 (packer 1939-1941).

[41] These figures were kindly compiled by Harry Zarenda of the U.W. Economics Department, with 1926 as base for packers' wages and using the price statistics in *Union Statistics for Fifty Years: Jubilee Issue, 1910-1960* (Pretoria 1960).

[42] '...girls who were here, left.' Miss de W. Riekert, Zebediela, 14/6/1984 (packer, supervisor, chief packing floorwoman 1930-1983). Mrs. R. du Preez, Krugersdorp, 11/6/1985 (packer 1931-1936).

[43] 'We knew ... that when the packing season was over, there was no other work available.' Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. A. Grobler, from Steynsrus, 4/3/1985 (packer 1937-1939).

informant noted, 'jy het nie gesêls nie, want dan verloor jy tyd en geld.'[44] Piece rates also affected the quality of packers' work, and ensured that women worked carefully. A badly packed case caught by a supervisor had to be repacked, which wasted time. An ex-worker explained that 'as jy verkeerd begin pak het, wil die lemoene nie in die kas wat moet in nie, dan moes jy uitgooi en oor begin, en jy mors tyd en jou loon is minder en jou kop word gewas want jy mors papier waarin die lemoen een vir een gedraai was.'[45]

More subtly, piece rates tended to shift the onus for responsibility for low wages from management onto the workers themselves. Women came to believe that they 'moes tevrede wees, want elkeen het gekry wat hy verdien het, self verdien het, as jy lemoene pak.'[46] In fact, many workers came to internalise the judgements rendered by piece rates. 'Jy skaam jou as jy baie minder as jou maat gekry het,' recalled one.[47] Another ex-packer remembered looking at packers who earned more than she did and thinking 'ek is ook so goed, ek kan dit ook doen.'[48] Packers often interpreted the low wages of colleagues as negative reflections on the industry of those women. They expressed little sympathy for those who

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[44] '...you did not talk because then you lost time and money.' Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. A. Erasmus, from Thabazimbi, 28/2/1985 (packer 1939-1940). Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. M. M. le Roux, from Leslie, 16/4/1985 (packer, grader 1948-1952).

[45] '...if you began to pack wrong, the oranges did not fit into the case that they had to go into, so that you had to throw them out and start over, and you wasted time and your earned less, and you were scolded because you were wasting wrapping paper.' Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. I. M. S. Ferreira, from Vanderbijlpark, 4/3/1985 (packer, grader 1946-1947). Mrs. A. Derksen, interviewed at Pretoria, 27/8/1985 (packer, grader 1935-1939). Mrs. S. Heystek, Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, supervisor 1939-1961).

[46] '...had to be satisfied, because when you packed each got what she earned herself.' Mrs. S. Heystek, Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, supervisor 1939-1961).

[47] 'You were ashamed if you received a lot less than your friend.' Mrs. C. M. Snyders, Alma, 14/11/1985 (packer 1928-1933).

[48] '...I am as good, I can also do it'. Mrs. A. van Zyl, Potgietersrust, 12/2/1985 (packer 1938-1945).

grumbled about their pay, believing that 'hulle het darem te stadig gewerk'.[49]

Piece rates, however, could at times become counter-productive from management's perspective. In their attempt to work faster and earn better money, some packers resorted to not wrapping oranges properly, disguising their work beneath a neat top layer. One of the fastest packers at Zebediela in the early thirties explained that 'as jy nie knoei nie kon jy nie so vinnig gewerk het nie.'[50] When caught, she continued, 'ek voel ek sink in die aarde om so lelik te werk.' It was ''n vreeslike skande om vorentoe geroep te word [to repack]', but, she added, 'die oomblik as hy van jou wegstap, dan doen jy dieselfde ding weer.'[51] Piece rates could also cause conflict between workers. Many refused to share their loads of oranges with anyone else, lest their bins ran empty. Instead they tried to scrape as much fruit as possible from the conveyor belt into their own bins. One such worker was Mrs. Heystek, consistently the fastest packer at Zebediela. Throughout the forties, Mrs. Heystek earned the £5 bonus management awarded each season to the 'baaspakker.' Most interviewees remembered her with a mixture of admiration and resentment. 'Dit was 'n groot eer om baaspakker te wees,' one conceded.[52] Others complained though that the 'baaspakker' 'het jou nooit kans gegee om haar

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[49] '...they did work too slow'. Mrs. A. van Zyl, Potgietersrust, 12/2/1985 (packer 1938-1945).

[50] '..if you did not cheat you could not work as fast.' Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer, 1929-1936). This interviewee subsequently became 'champion packer' at Letaba Estate. Bremner, in her story on the life of orange packers, described one fictional character as 'a sloppy packer. She packed with great speed, her boxes, inside, were an untidy mess of paper and oranges. She took pains with the top rows, however, these very neat, and a casual observer could never guess what was underneath.' Bremner, 'The Packers', p.5.

[51] '...I felt like sinking into the earth for working so badly', '...a terrible disgrace to be called to the front [to repack].' '...the moment that she walked away you did the same thing again.' Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936).

[52] 'It was a great honour to be champion packer.' Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936).

te help pak nie. Sy het jou lemoene opgeraap, dit voor jou weggepak, want sy het verskriklik vinnig gepak.'[53] Heystek often arrived at the packhouse long before the first shift started at 5 a.m., and proceeded to pack away all the oranges left over from the previous day. This led to complaints by other packers because when the shift started, they had to waste valuable time waiting for more oranges to arrive.[54] On one occasion, two sisters cheated by packing under one number, in an effort to dethrone the reigning champion.[55] Management, perhaps sensitive to the conflict the system could cause, kept the bonus low. One year, after Schlesinger paid Mrs. Heystek her bonus, Quin, the Estate Manager, informed her 'as hulle my so baie betaal, dit breek die ander se moed. Hy wil nie graag he hulle moet my baie geld gee nie.'[56]

The responses of these women to factory work reflected both their backgrounds and expectations. The majority came from patriarchal Afrikaner families in an impoverished countryside, and carried certain assumptions about work and authority.[57] The experience of poverty had

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[53] '...never gave you a chance to help her pack. She snatched your oranges and packed them away before you could because she packed extremely fast.' Mrs. B. Barendse Roodepoort, 11/6/1985 (packer, supervisor 1949-1963).

[54] Mrs. J. Bekker, interviewed at Bulge River, 28/11/1984 (packer, grader 1939-1945).

[55] Mrs. S. Heystek, Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, supervisor 1939-1961).

[56] '...if they paid me so much, it would break the spirit of the others. He did not want him to give me a lot of money.' Mrs. S. Heystek, Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, supervisor 1939-1961).

[57] In his classic study on the Protestant ethic, Weber argued that the Calvinist Reformation produced an attitude whereby any lawful occupation became a Godly-inspired vocation to which workers had to apply themselves with complete absorption. Weber, M. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London 1935). An Afrikaans novel by H. Johannsen, *Die Onterfdes* (The Dispossessed), published in 1944, expressed a similar spirit when the old father of the main character, Sjakkie Portjee, told his son that there had to be poor people, and that God never forgot them. He urged Sjakkie that 'natuurlik moet jy werk dat dit bars. Dis waarvoor die Here jou gemaak het.' '...of

conditioned most to hard work. 'Daar was min meisies wat lui was', said one, 'want almal was gewoond aan werk. Ons moes almal veg vir 'n bestaan.'[58] Few questioned the discipline of supervisors. 'Jy het maar aanvaar dis reg, want daarvoor is hulle...aangestel,' one said.[59] These conceptions were specifically gender-based as well.[60] The career expectations of most young women made their spell in employment seem temporary, to end with marriage.[61] In the meantime, young women could enjoy a measure of autonomy by earning money. One woman expressed her happiness about earning wages simply: 'Dit was darem geld van jou eie wat jy met jou eie

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course you have to work as hard as hell. That is why God created you.' Johannsen, H. quoted *in* Coetzee, A. *Marxisme en die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, Kampen Taal-en-Politiekreeks No. 2, (Cape 1984), pp.53-63.

[58] 'There were few lazy girls ... because everybody was used to hard work. we had to fight for an existence.' Mrs. I. M. S. Ferreira, Vanderbijlpark, 4/3/1985 (packer, grader 1946-1947).

[59] 'You accepted that it was right because that was what they were appointed for.' Mrs. C. G. Ferreira, Johannesburg, 25/3/1985 (packer 1939-1941). This suggested that what Gersuny referred to as a 'zone of compliance', as the limits within which obedience was habitual, was very wide for the majority of these women. Gersuny, C. *Punishment and Redress in a Modern Factory* (Massachusetts 1973), p.11.

[60] Kesler-Harris showed how women workers had their subordinate and secondary position in society reinforced in the context of wage labour, which called on women to show the same obedience to male-dominated managements as they traditionally showed to their fathers and husbands. Kesler-Harris, A. *Out To Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford 1982), pp.36-37. At Zebediela men occupied all the senior and permanent managerial posts, like Estate Manager, Estate Secretary, Packhouse Manager, Section Managers, and Fruit Inspectors. Industry in the twenties generally accepted the notion that white women workers required male supervision. Freund, B. 'The Social Character of Secondary Industry in South Africa, 1915-1945', paper presented at the U.W., African Studies Institute, April 1985, p.19.

[61] Dublin, *Women*, notes that 'women who planned to work only a short time ... before marriage, had little incentive to improve working conditions. (p.88). See also Gutman, H. G. *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York 1977), p.29. The Department of Labour reported in 1938, that 'there is evidence to show that the differences in the wages of males and females are not always based on differences in efficiency and output...It is frequently asserted that the lower average earnings of females are due to their lower cost of living and that women are not responsible for the support of others to the same extent as are men, who are the heads of families and therefore, require a higher income.' *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for 1938*, p.73.

hande verdien het.'[62] Finally, the women at Zebediela were seasonal migrants, who spent limited stretches of time at the estate. As migrants the majority 'had rural farms to which they might return and thus were not totally dependent on ... earnings for self-support'.[63] All these factors contributed to the relative ease with which these women accepted industrial discipline.

Management, however, did not rely solely on women's acquiescence. It had various means to ensure discipline and output. Firstly, it could dismiss workers. Interviewees recalled that 'mense wat oortree kon afgedank word, maar die meisies het maar in hulle spore gebly want almal was daar om geld te verdien, en kon nie bekostig om afgedank te word nie'.[64] The initial abundance of white women seeking work at the estate enabled management to employ more workers than it required. This allowed for 'the weeding out of any that are incapable after a reasonable test. It is uneconomic to give space at the bins and hostel accommodation to inefficient packers.'[65] Threat of dismissal acted as a powerful stimulus to efficiency. Said one: '... as hulle nou gese het, Kyk, jy gaan uitgesit word, dan het hulle verbeter. Jy kon dit nie bekostig om dit [the job] te verloor nie'.[66]

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[62] 'It was money of your own which you earned with your own hands.' Mrs. M. Thorolt, Westonaria, 26/2/1985 (grader 1939).

[63] Dublin, T. *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York 1979), p.199.

[64] '...people who transgressed could be dismissed, but the girls watched their steps because they were there to earn money and could not afford to be sacked'. Mrs. T. Venter, Thabazimbi, 29/3/1985 (packer, 1938).

[65] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aca 1, Review of operations, October 1927 to August 1929, by Redvers J. Blatt.

[66] '...when they were told that they would be dismissed, they improved. You could not afford to lose that job'. Mrs. L. Smit, interviewed at Roedtan, 3/4/1985 (packer, examiner, 1950-1953).

To further increase output, management introduced a split shift. Initially the packhouse worked in two eight hour shifts.[67] In 1931, management divided the two shifts, so that each women worked four hours on and four hours off.[68] The split working hours allowed workers to rest before their next stint, thus increasing their efficiency. To further increase conformity and discipline amongst workers, management also made the wearing of white overalls in the packhouse compulsory in 1932.[69] Management rationalised this imposition by arguing that the black belts and wooden cases ruined the private dresses of the workers, and that uniforms allowed women from different socio-economic backgrounds to look equally presentable. In reality, however, many women struggled to obtain the overalls. One informant recalled that 'ons was maar almal wat gesukkel het, en moes met gebleikte linne oorrokke tevrede wees.'[70] On these uniforms workers wore collars, the colour of which signified the job they did, packers, graders or floorwomen.[71]

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[67] Initially the first shift lasted from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the second from 4.30 p.m. to 11 p.m. U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aca 1, Review of operations, October 1927 to August 1929, by Redvers J.Blatt.

[68] Hence workers started at 5 a.m., worked until 9 a.m., went off duty for four hours; they returned to work at 1 p.m., and finally finished the day at 5 p.m. In the meantime the other shift started the same routine at 9 a.m., and ended their day at 9 p.m. Each week the shifts reversed. U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Acf 1, Memo from company headquarters on 'pack staff and management', 24/2/1931.

[69] Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936). Mrs. R. du Preez, Krugersdorp, 11/6/1985 (packer 1931-1936). Crowther, for example, argued that in the confines of English workhouses paupers had to wear uniforms as a method of increasing uniformity. Crowther, M. A. *The Workhouse System 1834-1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (London 1981), p.42. The women were required to supply their own uniforms. Mrs. A. Greyling, Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor 1930-1951). Mrs. E. Barnard, Bulge River, 27/11/1984 (packer 1937-1938). State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 295, File SW 47/13/44, Report by the Inspector of Factories on 'Klagte - Zebediela Estate', 28/6/1939. Mrs. J. Bekker, Bulge River, 28/11/1984 (packer, grader 1939-1945). Mrs. S. Heystek, Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, supervisor 1939-1961).

[70] '...we all struggled and had to be satisfied with unbleached linen overalls.' Mrs. I. M. S. Ferreira, Vanderbijlpark, 4/3/1985 (packer, grader 1946-1947).

[71] Mrs. S. Heystek, Warmbaths, 4/4/1985 (packer, supervisor 1939-1961). Mrs. B. Barendse, Roodepoort, 11/6/1985 (packer, supervisor,

To increase efficiency and discipline in the packhouse, management selected supervisors, or 'floorladies' from among experienced workers.[72] Floorwomen oversaw the packers and graders, so that 'die meisies nie lemoene eet nie, dat die meisies nie te veel gesels nie.'[73] 'Hulle loop heeldag op en af agter jou en kyk wat jy regdoen en nie regdoen nie,' one woman explained.[74] One informant remembered that 'daar was altyd deur, ek sal nou nie sê polisiemanne nie, maar ons het geweet ons word dopgehou.'[75] Floorwomen knew the jobs of the packers and graders well from personal experience, and checked that no affected oranges passed the graders and that cases were packed well.[76] They moved packers to new bins at regular intervals to prevent grievances about inequitable earning opportunities, and impelled idle packers to overflowing bins that needed extra hands.[77]

These women occupied a mediating position between white women and the male Packhouse Manager and overseers. Their role as supervisors was

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1949-1963). Mrs. L. Smit, interviewed at Roedtan, 3/4/1985 (grader, examiner 1950-1953). It is not possible to say whether it is coincidence that these interviewees all worked at Zebediela in the forties, or whether it meant that this 'collar' system was only introduced at the later stage.

72 Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mr. A. van Blerk, from Potgietersrust, 28/10/1985 (statistical clerk, Estate Secretary 1935-1975).

73 '...the girls did not eat too many oranges, that they did not talk too much.' Mrs. P. Erasmus, Bulge River, 2/10/1985 (packer 1937-1941).

74 'They walked up and down behind you all day and checked on what you did right and wrong'. Mrs. M. Thorolt, interviewed at Westonaria, 26/2/1985 (grader 1939).

75 '...there was always - I won't say policemen - but we knew we were being watched.' Mrs. K. Botha, Boksburg, 12/9/1984 (packer, grader 1941).

76 Webster described how productivity was increased in a foundry through the application of the craft knowledge of a moulder for rate fixing. Webster, E. 'Cast in a Racial Mould - Five Faces from a Hidden Abode' paper presented at the U.W., History Workshop, February 1984, pp.3-5.

77 Mrs. E. Oosthuizen, Potgietersrust, 1/4/1985 (packer 1929-1936). Mrs. E. C. du Preez, Laersdrif, 25/4/1985 (packer 1939-1941).

tempered by the fact that they were themselves women and migrants.[78] Moreover, they shared the daily hostel existence with the rest of the workers. This placed them in a very ambiguous position, which tended to obscure the realities of industrial discipline. 'Hulle was streng gewees in die werk', explained one woman, 'maar as jy uit die werk is dan is hulle menslik en dan was hulle baie goed gewees.'[79] Another said that 'ons het geweet in die werk is hulle die hoofmeisies, maar in die kamer was hulle groot maats met ons.'[80] While there were occasional references to instances of conflict, the floorwomen were almost always portrayed as pleasant. One woman remarked that sometimes 'kan jy een kry wat nou katterig is, wat dink sy is baas. Maar...ek het 'n baie gawe vloermeisie gehad.'[81]

Despite these attempts to mould white women into a disciplined workforce, events in the late thirties eroded management's control. These years witnessed the rapid increase in the estate's output. Zebediela was, despite a severe hailstorm, able to export a new record of 95 235 420 pounds of fruit in 1939.[82] At the same time, however, it became increasingly difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of workers to handle the

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78 Letter to A. van Niekerk from Miss B. Groenewald, from Naboomspruit, undated (grader, office employee 1946-1952). Letter to A. van Niekerk from Mrs. J. Horn, from Vredefort, 3/3/1985 (grader 1938-1941). Mrs. A. van Zyl, Potgietersrust, 12/2/1985 (packer 1938-1945).

79 'At work they were strict, ... but when you left work they were human and very good.' Mrs. A. Lotter, Bulge River, 11/2/1985 (grader, checker 1938).

80 'At work we knew that they were in charge, but in the dormitory they were good friends.' Mrs. A. Grobler, Steynsrus, 4/3/1985 (packer 1937-1939).

81 '...you got a catty one, who thought that she was the boss. But I had a very friendly floorgirl.' Mrs. A. Hugo, Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (grader 1952). Mrs. A. Greyling, Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor 1930-1951). In many ways the latter interviewee personified this ambiguity. In certain instances she talked as a packer, and in others expressed the experiences of a floorwoman and a 'headgirl' in the hostel.

82 U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., Statistics of Citrus Production 1926-1945, 4/7/1946.

crop, as more employment opportunities opened up for unskilled white women.[83] In 1937, Quin first complained to the Department of Social Welfare about the problems of recruiting enough workers, and requested that in future the Welfare Officer had to play a role in appointing women.[84] In 1940 the estate still had a waiting list of applicants,[85] but by 1942 it could not recruit the full compliment of white workers.[86] While management might still threaten slow workers with dismissal, the growing labour shortage reduced the ability of the Estate Manager to implement that threat. Instead, supervisors reprimanded packers and graders for poor work. According to an ex-grader, 'as hulle hom [a bad orange] vang, kom hulle na jou toe en sê, Kyk, die goed gaan nou darem baie by jou verby. Daar is nie 'n geraas of geskel nie, of 'n lelike gepraat met jou nie.'[87] Another noted, 'Ek kan nie onthou dat hulle jou kon straf nie.'[88]

Declining numbers of workers together with increased output, increased labour intensity. In 1939 the estate lengthened the working days of packers and graders to eight and a half hours.[89] Work then only ended at

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[83] The former Estate Secretary, van Blerk, dated this shortage to around 1937. Mr. A. van Blerk, Potgietersrust, 12/6/1984 (statistical clerk, Estate Secretary, 1935-1975).

[84] State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 475, File 69/24, Report by the Department of Social Welfare's Welfare Officer at Nylstroom on 'Onbevredigende behuising van Blanke Vroulike Werkers: Zebediela Estates, Potgietersrust', 15/12/1937.

[85] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 2, Report by the Estate Manager for the week ended 5/2/1940.

[86] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 4, Minutes of a meeting of the Potgietersrust District Defence Liaison Committee, 23/10/1942.

[87] '...if they caught it [a bad orange], they came to you and said, Look, too many of these are passing you - there was no yelling or abuse, nor did they talk to you in an objectionable way.' Mrs. A. Hugo, Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (packer, 1952).

[88] 'I can't recall that they could punish you.' Mrs. K. Botha, Boksburg, 12/9/1984 (packer, grader, 1941).

[89] State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 295, File SW 47/13/44, Report by the Inspector of Factories on 'Klagte - Zebediela Estate', 28/6/1939.

10 p.m. With the outbreak of World War II, women became even more difficult to recruit, and the estate was able to operate only one shift in the packhouse. The change to a single shift increased the physical discomfort of women who had to work while standing in one place on a concrete floor. One informant remembered the 'lang ure wat jy gestaan het. Agt ure of so het jy gestaan op jou been.' The money, she said, was 'nie regtig genoeg vir al daai ure wat jy moes staan'.[90] While output dropped in the war, the drop was not commensurate with the drop in the labour force. For those left in the packhouse, work pace increased. It became, one worker recalled, a matter of 'baie staan, baie werk'.[91] Another woman remembered, 'daai lemoene het so vinnig gerol op daai belt, jy sweef saam met die belt.'[92]

While labour intensity increased just before and during the Second World War, packers and graders found that their wages were decreasing. In 1937 management decided to rationalise the calculation of piece-rate wages. Packers no longer received a flat rate per 100 oranges, but were instead remunerated according to 13 different rates set for different size

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90 '...long hours you had to stand. Eight hours or so you stood on your feet'. '...not really enough for all the hours you had to stand'. Mrs. C. G. Ferreira, Johannesburg, 25/3/1985 (packer, 1939-1941). This interviewee was hospitalised when a vein burst in her leg at Zebediela. She linked this event to the long periods she had to remain on her feet as a packer.

91 '...a lot of standing up and a lot of work'. Mrs. P. Erasmus, Bulge River, 2/10/1985 (packer, 1937-1941). In his study on the affect of alienation on workers, Blauner argued that 'the pace of work is probably the most insistent, the most basic, aspect of a job and retaining control in this area is a kind of affirmation of human dignity'. Blauner, *Alienation*, p.21. The packhouse came increasingly to resemble the assembly line, which has become the classic example of 'technical control', where 'machinery itself directed the labor process and set the pace'. Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, p.20.

92 '... the oranges moved so fast on the belt, you seemed to float with the belt.' Mrs. B. Barendse, Roodepoort, 11/6/1985 (packer, supervisor 1949-1963).

oranges.[93] In 1938, management reduced it to five tabulations.[94] The net effect of both changes was that packers received less money: Taking all different sizes together, the average rate for 100 oranges fell in 1938 from 1.25d. to 1d., a drop, in real terms, of 27 percent.[95] In 1939 management restored the wage rate to its former level, but real wages, because of wartime inflation, never recovered.[96] Over the following six years, packers' real wages dropped a further twenty five percent.[97]

Graders fared only slightly better. Daily wages of graders remained constant between 1939 and 1943, at an approximate average of 6s./5d. per day.[98] In real terms, wages thus declined by about twenty percent. In 1944 management raised the average wage to 8s./5d. per day, which in real terms returned wages to their pre-war level.[99]

The war, by limiting the shipping space available to export fruit growers, also affected the womens' earning opportunities adversely. The

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[93] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 2, Memo on 'method of calculating packers' earnings - proposed alterations', 18/2/1938.

[94] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 2, Memo from the Estate Secretary on 'proposed alteration to packers' wages', 4/3/1938.

[95] See footnote 41 above.

[96] The change could possibly have been the result of agitation by workers. U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 2, Memo from the Estate Secretary on 'packers' wages', 17/1/1939.

[97] Real wages per 100 oranges declined from 1.33d. in 1939, to 1.28d. in 1940, 1.23d. in 1941, 1.13d. in 1942, 1.06d. in 1943, 1.03d. in 1944, and 1.00d. in 1945.

[98] State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 475, File SW 69/24, Report by the Secretary of Social Welfare, entitled 'African Realty Trust Limited. Zebediela Estates, Naboomspruit', 17/6/1938, and Vol. 295, File SW 47/13/44, Report by the Inspector of Factories on 'Klagte - Zebediela Estate', 28/6/1939. For these years, knowledge of graders' wages are very sketchy, and is essentially calculated using averages gleaned from different documents. These figures merely suffice as very general indicators of trends. Real wages based on these figures were calculated with 1938 as base. See above, footnote 41.

[99] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., 'Packers and Graders' Wages - Messing', 7/3/1944.

estate had to retain a sufficient compliment of workers in anticipation of the command to pack, but in the meantime women were not paid. Management tried to compensate workers to some extent by allowing them free board on non-packing days.[100] All these factors - increased labour intensity, declining wages, and the loss of earnings during the war -- increased the estate's labour turnover. In 1940 a large majority of workers of the previous season gave notice of returning.[101] By 1950, however, the Estate Secretary estimated that raw beginners formed 60 percent of the workforce.[102] High turnover and the loss of experienced workers only exacerbated the estate's labour shortage. In 1939 the estate received approximately 400 mostly experienced women; by 1950 the number of packers and graders had dropped to 300, the majority of whom were coming to the estate for the first time.[103]

In order to halt the growing labour shortage, management attempted to improve working conditions. In 1938 the Packhouse Manager recommended better lighting, the whitewashing of the packhouse roof, and the cleaning of all the windows.[104] He proposed innovations to give graders some relief from footstrain, and suggested coats of bright green and cream coloured paint to improve the interior of the packhouse.[105] A short time later, management finally instituted a regular tea-break.[106] (Previously,

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[100] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., 'Special costs incurred by complying with Citrus Board instructions', July 1943.

[101] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aa 2, Estate Manager's report for the week ended 5/2/1940.

[102] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Aba 1, 'Preliminary Survey at the Zebediela Estate' by the Bedaux Company, 4/5/1950.

[103] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Abj 2, Memo from the Estate Secretary on 'packers' wages', 17/2/1939. File Aba 1, 'Preliminary Survey at the Zebediela Estate' by the Bedaux Company, 4/5/1950.

[104] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Acf 1, Report by the Packhouse Manager on recommended improvements for the 1938 season.

[105] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Acf 1, Report by the Packhouse Manager on recommended improvements for the 1938 season.

[106] Mrs. J. Bekker, Bulge River, 28/11/1984 (packer, grader, 1939-1945).

packhouse workers could only take a break when their work permitted it; packers at least 'doen dit nie graag nie, aangesien dit hulle vervaardigingshoeveelheid en verdienste raak'.)[107] In 1946 another report counselled that dark green grading belt would 'cause less eyestrain and ...improve grading'.[108] With these efforts, management hoped not only to attract workers, but also to improve efficiency.

The installation of a gramophone in the packhouse in 1939 served the same purposes.[109] This venture proved very successful and in 1942 the manager described it as 'distinctly desirable in the packhouse and tends to increase production'.[110] One person in charge of the gramophone, probably a floorwoman, broadcast records with well-planned pauses in between. She played a bit of music before lunch, but played it more frequently in the afternoon when the 'need for "pepping up" is the greatest'.[111] Management had little doubt about the value of music 'of

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Mrs. A. Biddulph, interviewed at Naboomspruit, 3/4/1985 (office employee, 1941-1943). Mrs. B. Barendse, Roodepoort, 11/6/1985 (packer, supervisor, 1949-1963). Mrs. A. Hugo, Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (grader, 1952).

[107] '...did not readily take it because it affected their productive capacity and earnings'. State Archive, Department of Social Welfare, VWN, Vol. 295, File SW 47/13/44, Report by the Inspector of Factories on 'Klagte - Zebediela Estate', 28/6/1939.

[108] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Acf 6, Letter from company headquarters to the Estate Manager, dealing with 'sundry packhouse matters', 30/9/1946.

[109] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Ad 27, Letter from the Estate Secretary to the manager of the Sundays River Citrus Co-Operative, 17/3/1951.

[110] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Ad 27, Letter from the Estate Manager to company headquarters about a loudspeaker for the packhouse, 23/2/1942.

[111] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., Letter from the Estate Secretary to the manager of the Sundays River Co-Operative, 17/3/1951. In his study on industrial music Fox pointed out that 'the idea of exploiting man's innate response to music to increase his work efficiency is lost in the mists of time', although 'systematic studies in the 1930's...began to give an objective basis to the claims in favour of the effect of music on factory output'. Fox, J. G. 'Industrial Music' *in* Oborne, D. J. and Gruneberg, M. M. (eds.) *The Physical Environment at Work* (Chichester 1983), pp.211-212. Thanks to Mr. J. Fisher for his advice.

the right kind'.[112] The music consisted of old-fashioned waltzes and fast marching music.[113] Management acquired copies of the popular songs of the day, and the choice varied from 'Boerland Setties' and 'Mamma, ek wil 'n man hê', to 'Stars and Stripes' and 'The Ballyhooligans Make Whoopee'.[114] The unremitting beat of martial music clearly accorded well with work of a mechanical nature like packing. A supervisor recalled that 'toe se hulle [management] hulle [workers] pak vinniger as hulle vinniger musiek speel.'[115] The music does seem to have reduced fatigue. In the words of one informant, 'as daar nie musiek speel nie, voel jy of jy naderhand geirriteerd raak, maar sodra daai musiek begin speel, dan werk jy darem lekker. Dis of jy meer moed het, dis of daai musiek jou opvrolik...Jy kan darem lekker lam raak in die bene. As daai musiek begin speel, dan raak daai lam ook weg.'[116]

To improve the conditions of workers at the estate further, management upgraded accommodation in 1939. In the place of the overcrowded, uncomfortable barn in which workers had been living, the estate built a modern hostel.[117] As the nature of packing and grading limited the extent to

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[112] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Ad 27, Letter from the Resident Engineer to Estate Secretary on 'packhouse radiogram', 29/8/1947.

[113] Mrs. P. Erasmus, Bulge River, 2/10/1985 (packer, 1937-1941). Mrs. A. Greyling, Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor, 1930-1951). Fox identified both 'background' and 'industrial' music. Background music creates a relaxing environment and is subdued and unobtrusive. Industrial music 'exceed the general noise level,...has varying rhythms, vocals make up a large part of the programme,...should contain well-known popular songs or "hits"' and 'raise morale, give unity of purpose and an emotional impetus to demanding physical effort and drudgery'. Fox, *Industrial Music,* pp.214-215.

[114] U.W., C.P.S.A., Z.C., File Ad 27, List of records, 17/8/1939.

[115] '...they [management] said that the packers worked faster when fast music played.' Mrs. A. Greyling, Zebediela, 12/2/1985 (packer, supervisor, 1930-1951).

[116] '...with no music you soon began to fell irritated, but as soon as the music played you worked well. It was as if you had more courage, as if the music cheered you up...Your legs felt paralysed with tiredness. When the music began to play, that feeling disappeared.' Mrs. A. Hugo, Zebediela, 2/4/1985 (grader, 1952).

[117] See van Niekerk, A. 'Changing Patterns of Worker Accommodation,

which improvements could be made in the packhouse, the hostel became increasingly important in management's attempts to control and stabilise labour.

Thus during the time that the estate employed white women, management tried various methods to discipline and control the workforce, ranging from dismissals to the installation of a gramophone in the packhouse. In addition, management benefited by paying the majority of women piece-rate wages. This system of payment led workers to discipline themselves in order to earn better money. Yet self-discipline of this kind reflected much more than an attempt by workers to maximise their incomes. It also highlighted the influence of workers' social origins - their culture, age, gender, career expectations, stage in the life cycle - in their adaption as factory labourers. In fact, these non-economic factors helped management to maintain a largely non-conflictual relationship between itself and its workers. Over time, however, the precarious financial position of the estate, together with a continuing process of South African industrialisation which opened up more employment opportunities for white women, caught Zebediela in a downward spiral. As more women workers left the estate for greener pastures, the labour process intensified, encouraging more women to leave. Unable to raise wages, management attempted to solve its labour problems by improving working conditions. Hence the forties saw an increasing reliance on the hostel as a strategy of attracting and controlling workers.

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Zebediela Citrus Estate 1926-1953: The Dynamics of External Restraint and Self-Discipline', paper presented at the U.W., History Workshop, February 1987.