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# **The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States<sup>1</sup>**

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For a capitalist economy to function, its labor force must be maintained; that is, workers must receive a historically determined minimal day-to-day subsistence. It must also be renewed; that is, vacancies must be filled. A system of migrant labor is characterized by the institutional differentiation and physical separation of the processes of renewal and maintenance. Accordingly, migrant labor entails a dual dependence upon employment in one place and an alternate economy and/or state in another. In addition, the separation of migrant workers from their families is implied. It is enforced through specific legal and political mechanisms which regulate geographical mobility and impose restrictions on the occupational mobility of migrants. These mechanisms in turn are made possible by the migrant workers' powerlessness in the place of employment, in the labor market, and under the legal and political systems where they are employed. One consequence of a system of migrant labor is the externalization, to an alternate economy and/or state, of certain costs of labor-force renewal—costs normally borne by the employer and/or state of employment. This framework is developed and applied to migrant farm workers in California and migrant mine workers in South Africa. The differences between the two systems are highlighted and analyzed in terms of the broader features of the respective social structures. Finally, the implications of the theoretical scheme are discussed and extended to an interpretation of race relations.

Traditionally, studies of labor migration have adopted the perspective of the individual migrant. This has involved the examination of two questions: the reasons for migration and its consequences at the level of the individual or group. In answer to the first question, it has generally been assumed that individuals respond to the “push” and “pull” factors associated with the market. With regard to the second question, attention is directed to prob-

<sup>1</sup> This paper originated with the ideas and work of Jaap van Velsen and was later stimulated by Harold Wolpe. I owe the greatest debt to Adam Przeworski, who read and criticized successive drafts and helped in placing the analysis in a broad theoretical framework. I am also grateful to a number of persons who were kind enough to comment on various versions of the paper, forcing me to reformulate many aspects of the problem: Manuel Castells, William K. Cummings, Terence Halliday, Ida Susser, William J. Wilson, and two anonymous referees.

lems of adaptation, assimilation, and acculturation of the newly arrived migrant. In each instance, individuals are conceptualized as actively responding to environmental forces, maximizing their individual interests, and in this sense exercising control over their own destiny. Although these formulations are important, they are too restricted to clarify the functioning of a *system* of migrant labor either in its broader social, political, and economic contexts or where the flow of labor is regulated to a greater or lesser extent to suit dominant political and economic interests.

The shortcomings of conventional analysis are particularly apparent with regard to migrant laborers in the fields of California or the gold mines of South Africa, where specific political mechanisms regulate their movement between industry and "home." Accordingly, what is of interest is not how migrants adapt to their new environment but how structural, particularly political and legal, constraints make permanent "integration" impossible. The issues are not ones of assimilation and acculturation but of enforced segregation through such "total" institutions as the compound and labor camp and the corresponding persistence of race and ethnic differentiation. The individual cannot be conceived of as a rational actor maximizing interests under market forces. Instead, the flow of labor is directed by supramarket institutions beyond the control of an individual or even a group of migrants. For these reasons, the analysis of such systems of migrant labor requires a different perspective: one focusing on the nature of external coercive institutions and their mode of organization. The development of such an approach is the purpose of this paper.

## THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

For an economy to function, a labor force has to be maintained and renewed. In other words, workers have to subsist from day to day, and vacancies created by their departure from or by the expansion of the labor force must be filled by new recruits. Under capitalism the distinction between these two elements of the reproduction of labor power is normally concealed.<sup>2</sup> The same institutions simultaneously perform both renewal and

<sup>2</sup> The concept of "reproduction" is central to this paper and will be used in two empirical contexts, those of labor power and systems of migrant labor. In each context, reproduction presupposes the existence of what is being reproduced. It expresses a preoccupation with continuity, persistence, and above all repetition. The concept is motivated by the view "that nothing which exists is natural (in the nonhabitual sense of the word), but rather exists because of the existence of certain conditions, whose disappearance cannot remain without consequences" (Gramsci 1971, p. 158). Social relations, labor power, systems of migrant labor, etc., do not merely exist but have to be produced again and again—that is, *reproduced*. Analysis of the conditions of reproduction entails examining how different levels or regions of the social structure interconnect so as to ensure the repetition of the particular process of "producing" labor power,

maintenance functions. For example, the distinction between the rearing of children and the day-to-day sustenance of the productive worker is not normally inscribed in the organization of the family. On the contrary, domestic work simultaneously provides for both maintenance and renewal requirements of the labor force. Equally, in the provision of welfare, housing, and urban amenities such as transportation, the state simultaneously performs both maintenance and renewal. Only in a few institutions such as the school are renewal processes clearly separated from those of maintenance. As indicated in the distribution of family welfare benefits, even the industrial enterprise tends to treat the day-to-day maintenance of the labor force and the creation of a future one as though they constituted a single process.

By contrast, the organization of migrant labor not only makes the distinction apparent but is even defined by the separation of the processes of maintenance from those of renewal. How does this separation manifest itself? First, the two processes take place in geographically separate locations. Second, at the level of the institutions of reproduction, the institutions of maintenance may be very different from those of renewal, or a single institution may continue to engage in both processes. To take the family as an example of the latter possibility, geographical separation of the two processes is reflected in a corresponding division of labor and internal differentiation of the family unit. Thus, for Mexican migrants, processes of renewal are organized under the Mexican state in the Mexican economy and those of maintenance in the United States. Yet the kinship group remains a single cohesive unit despite its internal differentiation. What is important for this paper is that the activities of maintenance and renewal are separated.

They remain, however, indissolubly interdependent, as reflected in the oscillatory movement of migrants between work and home. Under capitalism the binding of production and reproduction is achieved through economic necessity: for the laboring population, work is necessary for survival; under feudalism the unification is achieved through coercive regulation. A system of migrant labor contains elements of each. On the one hand, renewal processes are dependent on income left over from maintenance, which is remitted home by the productive worker. On the other hand, productive workers require continued support from their families engaged in renewal

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systems of migrant labor, etc. While what is being reproduced has invariant characteristics, the conditions for its reproduction may have to be modified. Thus, as we shall see, while the definition of a system of migrant labor entails the specification of a set of invariant features, the conditions of reproduction will vary between societies and over time. In addition to Marx's treatment in *Capital*, an important discussion of reproduction is to be found in Balibar (1970, chap. 3).

at home, because they have no permanent legal or political status at the place of work. In other words, the state<sup>3</sup> organizes the dependence of the productive worker on the reproductive worker, while the economy organizes the dependence of the reproductive worker on the productive worker. The interdependence establishes the cohesion of the family. Similar ties link the state supplying labor and the state employing labor: the former requires revenue and employment for its population, the latter requires labor at low wage rates.

In the following sections, I explore two implications of the separation of the maintenance and renewal processes. The first concerns the functions of migrant labor. Under such a system costs of renewal, normally borne by the employing state and economy, are to a considerable degree borne by another economy or another state or a combination of the two. Furthermore, the employer of migrant labor is neither responsible politically nor accountable financially to the external political and economic systems. In other words, a proportion of the costs of renewal is externalized to an alternate economy and/or state. The second implication concerns the conditions for the reproduction of a system of migrant labor—namely, the reproduction of its defining characteristic, the separation of maintenance and renewal processes.

The two systems of migrant labor were chosen not for their similarity but for their contrast, with a view to highlighting the invariant characteristics they share. Furthermore, I hope to show that an analysis founded on examination of the conditions for the reproduction of the invariant characteristics leads to a better understanding of the peculiarities of the individual system; that is, differences arise out of the interplay between the under-

<sup>3</sup> The notion of the capitalist state used here derives from Poulantzas (1973) and Przeworski. For our purposes, the capitalist state is constituted of formal institutions, each with an internal coherence and relative autonomy, which in combination possess the monopoly of universally binding rules to which force may be applied. Throughout the paper I associate the state with the organization of the reproduction of systems of migrant labor, thus unavoidably conferring upon it a monolithic quality it does not in practice possess. Although this is no place to elaborate on a theory of the capitalist state, two points are in order. First, I do not regard it as necessary that the capitalist state be an “instrument” of the economically dominant class. Though there are instances, particularly in the case of migrant labor in California, in which the state does indeed appear to be an instrument of the economically dominant class, this is not *implied* by our definition of the capitalist state. On the contrary, it is the relative autonomy of the capitalist state which is central to its operation. Indeed, the discussion of migrant labor in South Africa mentions significant occasions when the state clearly acted in opposition to the interests of the mine owners. Therefore, I propose a tentative formulation of the function of the capitalist state: in normal times it preserves the cohesion of a society as a whole. Second, it is a state in which a society is divided into classes; therefore, it reflects to some extent the interests and struggles of *all* classes, if only to preserve the stability of the whole.

lying structure and the particular political and economic context. More specifically, I argue that observed patterns of relations among races, classes, and fractions of classes emerge out of an interaction between the organization of the separation of maintenance from renewal processes and certain features of the particular industry and the particular state.

#### MINE WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African gold mines, first commercially exploited in the last decade of the 19th century, have relied on two types of migrant labor. On the one hand, unskilled tasks have been and continue to be performed by African labor recruited from the rural hinterland and surrounding territories (see Wilson 1972*a*, p. 70, for exact distribution by geographic location). Once cajoled into selling their labor power by expropriation of land, imposition of taxation, and similar nonmarket inducements, African workers became attracted to wage employment as a way of making up or supplementing their means of subsistence (Horwitz 1967, chap. 2). On the other hand, white labor, initially recruited from Britain, was employed in skilled and supervisory positions. Just as craft unions at that time had a powerful monopoly of a sector of the British labor market, so the white workers of South Africa, in part influenced by their experience at home, formed a union to protect their positions from competition from black labor (Simons and Simons 1969, chap. 3). Although mine owners wished to advance blacks into more skilled occupations, their efforts were obstructed as early as 1893 by the legal enforcement of the color bar which reserved a range of jobs for white workers. As the mining industry expanded, the color bar became an entrenched feature of the occupational structure, barring blacks from advancement into skilled and even semiskilled jobs and stipulating an upper limit to the employment ratio of blacks to whites (Wilson 1972*a*, pp. 110–19). On a number of occasions, most notably during the Rand Revolt of 1922, management attempted to breach the color bar, but the power and determination of white workers to protect their monopolistic position proved insurmountable.

Once the color bar was accepted as irrevocable, management sought to offset the costly protection of white labor by externalizing the costs of renewal of a black labor force. This process was made possible by the reproduction of the system of migrant labor. Initially a response to the insecurity of employment in industry and the lack of provision for permanent settlement near the place of work under colonial rule, migrant labor continues to be an institutionalized feature of the mining industry. Just how the system has been perpetuated and how certain labor costs are reduced under it will be examined in subsequent sections.

The Economic Functions of Migrant Labor

Earlier I was careful to define a system of migrant labor in institutional terms. Others have defined it in economic terms, and I now propose to consider some of the difficulties of these formulations. Wolpe (1972), Castells (1975), and, with some qualifications, Castles and Kosack (1973, chap. 9) all assert that a system of migrant labor lowers the cost of the reproduction of labor power; Wolpe goes so far as to claim that it constitutes a system of cheap labor power. However, the assessment of the costs and benefits of migrant labor and of its effects on the rate of profit is far more complicated than even Castles and Kosack (pp. 374–75, 422) indicate and requires considerably more substantiation than any of the writers provide.<sup>4</sup> First, they fail to distinguish among the institutions whose costs are reduced, preeminently between the state and the employer—though, of course, the two sets of costs are not unrelated. In other words, they do not address the question, Cheap for whom? (Castles and Kosack, however, do discuss the implications for domestic labor.) Second, they do not adequately examine which aspects of the costs of the reproduction of labor power—maintenance or renewal—are reduced. Third, while it is true that migrant labor does lead to some economic savings for employer and state, the reproduction of a *system* of migrant labor in itself represents a cost which may outweigh the economic benefits based on the externalization of renewal. None of these writers considers the costs (political as well as economic) of the reproduction of a system of migrant labor.

What evidence is there to suggest that black mine workers receive little more than the costs of maintaining themselves from day to day? Virtually all black workers in the gold mines migrate between the reserves<sup>5</sup> or surrounding black countries and their places of employment. In other industries, migrant labor is less prevalent, and Wilson writes, “The mining industry would have to double the wages if they hoped to compete with the manufacturing sector for labor” (1972a, p. 153). His calculations appear to be based on the average earnings of Africans in different sectors, and while they do not take into consideration skill differential and pay-

<sup>4</sup> When migrant labor is referred to as “cheap,” the issue is not whether a single migrant worker costs less to hire than a single domestic worker in any specific context, although that meaning is frequently conferred upon the term. Like the other writers cited here, I am considering the cost of the *system* of migrant labor. I am concerned with an institutional rather than a marginal economic analysis.

<sup>5</sup> The reserves are those geographical areas where the black three-quarters of the South African population are allowed to acquire permanent domicile and landed property. They represent approximately one-tenth of the area of South Africa. Bantustans are the theoretically self-governing reserves. In practice, however, the degree of self-government is so limited by their poverty that, except concerning some internal matters, Bantustans depend upon the South African government in Pretoria.

ments in kind, these factors alone cannot account for the observed difference. The mining industry pays less by virtue of its access to isolated labor supplies, because some proportion of the costs of renewal is assumed to be borne by a subsistence economy. But it should be noted that people in these subsistence economies (particularly the reserves) may be so poor that they are largely dependent on income remitted by kinsmen working in urban areas. Through a frugal existence in town, savings are made from what are essentially maintenance wages.

While the extraction of produce from a precapitalist mode of production redounds to the benefit of the employer of migrant labor, reliance on an alternate state or its functional equivalent redounds to the benefit of the South African state. Functions normally performed by the state, such as provision of welfare facilities, education, and social security, are transferred to the communal context of the precapitalist economy. The provision of urban amenities is therefore limited to those necessary for the single productive worker.

But pointing to the existence of "excessive exploitation" and the externalization of costs of labor-force renewal is not the same as demonstrating the existence of cheap labor. In one sense all labor is cheap simply because it is exploited.<sup>6</sup> In another sense, it is a more difficult concept to grapple with. *Cheap with respect to what?* It is conceivable, for example, that the reduction in the costs of reproducing labor power through access to a subsistence economy would be outweighed by the latter's replacement by a capital-intensive agricultural economy. (In fact, given the state of soil erosion in the reserves, this is unlikely, but it is the sort of question involved in examining whether a particular system of labor is cheap.) So far, I have highlighted the *economic* benefits for state and capital of a system of migrant labor, but there are also political benefits. A series of political costs are externalized to the reserves, costs associated with the residence of a large, stable black population under a white supremacist state. Indeed, the system of migrant labor is often perceived in political terms.

We cannot, however, ignore the *costs* associated with migrant labor, such as high rates of turnover, recruitment expenses, and the more general set of costs experienced by the state and arising from the political and legal conditions for the reproduction of a system of migrant labor. When all these are introduced, many of them intangible, the balance sheet becomes so complex that the notion of cheap labor, in practice if not in principle, may become impossible to handle.

<sup>6</sup> "Exploitation" refers to the existence of a "surplus value" remaining when the value of a worker's wage and the value of the means of production consumed by a worker are subtracted from the value of a worker's produce. The rate of exploitation is the ratio of this surplus value to the value of the wage.



One way of circumventing the problem is to dispense with the notion of cheap labor altogether. An alternative approach is to adopt the tautological argument that migrant labor exists because it is cheap and it is cheap because it exists. This is not as unenlightening as it might appear, for tautologies are useful if they lead to the formulation of important questions. For example, we may be led to ask what is cheap about migrant labor and thus to generate new insights.

Finally, it may be that "Cheap with respect to what?" is less appropriate than "*Cheap for whom?*" While migrant labor may be cheap for industries that rely extensively on unskilled labor and have facilities for the recruitment of migrant laborers, the smaller industry which uses skilled labor and has little access to isolated labor supplies finds a system of migrant labor more expensive. If industry bears a small minority and the state the majority of the costs of organizing a system of migrant labor, the former may find it cheap compared with other systems of labor, while the latter may find it more expensive than systems relying more on market institutions for the regulation of labor supplies. Yet at the same time, one must not forget that the state does not finance itself but relies on industry to support its activities. Thus the question of whether migrant labor is cheap for a particular industry involves not only an examination of the direct costs experienced by that industry but also secondary costs, such as taxation appropriated by the state. While "Cheap for whom?" may appear to simplify the problem, it still remains inordinately complex, and the problems of comparison—that is, Cheap for whom with respect to what and under what conditions?—are still with us.

I have argued elsewhere (Burawoy 1974) that the appearance of migrant labor in South Africa must be sought, not in its specific or general cheapness, but in the historically concrete circumstances of the articulation of different modes of production and the corresponding superstructures. At the level of function, there is nothing necessary about the system of migrant labor. It is not what Castells (1975) refers to as an "organic" part of capitalism at a particular stage in its development. Instead, it is a conjunctural feature which acts as a functional substitute for other modes of organizing labor under capitalism.

### Dependence on a Capitalist Economy

I turn now to examine the conditions for the reproduction of a system of migrant labor. They naturally revolve around the separation of the means of renewal from the means of maintenance of a labor force. Two aspects of the reproduction of this separation can be delineated. First, there is the reproduction of a twin dependency upon the capitalist economy on the one hand, and upon a subsistence economy and/or alternate state on the other.

Second, there is the (coercive) separation of the family from the worker (in such a manner as to preserve their mutual dependence) through a series of legal and political measures and institutions.

What is the basis of a dependence on the capitalist economy, and how is it reproduced? Originally, the imposition of taxes upon the Africans living in the rural areas dislocated them from their subsistence livelihood and required them to seek employment in the emerging extractive industries. This was so, for example, for Malawians who trekked to the South African gold mines and the Zambian copper mines. In South Africa, the movement of blacks to the towns was further compounded by the state's expropriation of land, making subsistence existence increasingly difficult and reliance on an additional source of income increasingly necessary. With regard to Mozambique, Harris (1959) shows how the colonial administration forced able-bodied males into the system of migrant labor by conscription, where necessary. Even where subsistence livelihood could still be eked out, Africans have supplemented it with income from employment in the urban areas. Arrighi (1973) shows how Africans who began to respond to the demand for agricultural produce with the development of Southern Rhodesia at the beginning of this century were priced out of the market through discriminatory subsidies favoring the European farmer. Accordingly, the rewards of remaining in the rural areas and accumulating surplus produce were arranged to be less than those of entering wage employment. In this way, the colonial administration managed to generate a commitment to and, to a certain degree (taxes still had to be paid in cash), a dependence on the capitalist economy. In all these cases, Africans who engaged in productive activities in the towns were able to send home a portion of their income out of which taxes could be paid and on occasion "luxury" items bought. The broadening commitment to the South African wage economy and in particular the gold mines stems largely from the inability of the reserves in South Africa and, to a lesser extent, the rural areas of Malawi and Mozambique to support the reproduction of a labor force.

### Dependence on a Subsistence Economy

Wages earned by African mine workers on the Rand are calculated on the assumption that they supplement the produce of a subsistence economy (Bettison 1960; Harris 1959). To provide some material basis for such an assumption and to ensure continuing dependence on a subsistence economy, the economy must be capable of providing for some needs. It must be continually recreated in the face of the eroding tendency of capitalism (Lenin 1960, pp. 40–41). It is necessary in this discussion, there-

fore, to examine the impact of an industrial economy upon the subsistence economy in the surrounding rural areas.

The rural economy in the South African reserves has been under continual decay, as soil erosion and overpopulation make the extraction of a viable existence there increasingly difficult. The South African government's recognition of this fact and its desire to prevent the further decline of the rural black economy lead Wolpe (1972) to interpret the policy of "separate development" as an endeavor to re-create the subsistence base of the migrant labor force. So far, the actual resources invested in the Bantustans are meager compared with what will be necessary to reverse the trend. One factor in the slowing down of the accumulation of land in the hands of a few Africans in the reserves and the dispossession of the majority has been the government's active policy of reproducing a system of communal land tenure and the corresponding precapitalist relations of production. How much the reserves are able to produce is a matter for some debate. In any event, the numerous prosecutions under the pass laws suggest that the dependence is more an artifact of the legal and political institutions forcing Africans back into the reserves than a result of a commitment to a viable economy.

The situation in surrounding black territories like Malawi is somewhat different. While the impact of migrant labor in some areas has contributed to the erosion of the subsistence economy, in others it has reinforced that economy. The crucial variable would appear to be the reliance of the subsistence economy on able-bodied males. Where the economy is such that the absence of males does not prevent the cultivation of crops, the earnings remitted by those absent serve to bolster the rural political economy (van Velsen 1961; Harris 1959; Watson 1958). By contrast, those economies relying on male labor for cultivation, as in "slash and burn" techniques, have tended to be adversely affected by the system of migrant labor (Richards 1939).

### The Regulation of Circulation

The twin dependency on two modes of production does not reproduce itself without recourse to noneconomic institutions. We have already noted how attachment to the capitalist economy was generated by the intervention of colonial administrations in the subsistence economies and how dependency on the latter is perpetuated by preventing their erosion through supramarket intervention. The thesis I am about to outline is that the twin dependency can be better seen as a *reflection* of a set of political and legal arrangements designed to separate the means of renewal from those of maintenance and at the same time to ensure a continued connection between the two.

The separation of family from worker is organized through a set of laws restricting urban residence, with few exceptions, to those who are gainfully employed. The enforcement of pass laws externalizes the supplies of unemployed labor and the processes of labor-force renewal to areas where those not gainfully employed are legally permitted to reside—namely, the reserves or Bantustans and the surrounding black territories. Influx control and pass laws also ensure that, on termination of a contract with an employer, a worker returns to the “home” area before being allowed to gain further employment in the urban area. Should a worker become unemployed owing to retirement, physical disability, or simply scarcity of opportunity, he can have no legal residence outside the reserves or wherever his home may be. Such arrangements compel the worker to maintain close ties with the remainder of the family in the reserves or surrounding territories. Equally, these measures lead to the remittance of a proportion of wages earned in town and thereby supply the domestic unit with necessary commodities for the renewal of the labor force. In other words, influx control and pass laws preserve the separation of renewal and maintenance functions, prevent the stabilization of families in the urban areas and the surrender of subsistence existence in the reserves, uphold the continued interdependence of worker and family, and, finally, regulate the circulation of labor between the place of work and “home.”

### Restrictions on Occupational Mobility

Participation in a system of migrant labor has tended to be incompatible with employment in skilled positions (Arrighi 1973, pp. 216–18) for at least two reasons. First, for jobs requiring both training and experience for their effective performance, high rates of labor turnover could be prohibitively costly.<sup>7</sup> Second, entry into the more skilled occupations in any considerable numbers could result in the development of power based on the possession of a relatively scarce resource. We may conclude, therefore, that the preservation of the color bar is not merely a matter of safeguarding the interests of white workers but also represents a major factor in the reproduction of a system of migrant labor.

In this condition, we have the possible seeds of the erosion of a system of migrant labor. With its superior recruitment facilities and extensive use of unskilled labor, the mining industry has successfully adapted itself to the exigencies of a system of migrant labor. However, as manufacturing assumes an increasingly important role in the South African economy, and as the color bar is removed from increasingly higher skill levels, a greater

<sup>7</sup> This need not be so when the turnover arises from fluctuations in the level of employment, e.g., in the case of migrant coke workers in England at the turn of the present century (Hobsbawm 1964, chap. 9).

number of Africans will be engaged in skilled and supervisory positions. This is perhaps the major contradiction between the reproduction of a system of migrant labor and the development of the South African economy.<sup>8</sup>

### Migrant Labor Powerlessness

The reproduction of a system of migrant labor hinges on the inability of the migrants, as individuals or as a group, to influence the institutions that subordinate them to the other fractions of the labor force as well as to the employer. Domination of the migrant labor force takes place in three arenas: the labor market, the industrial organization, and the state.

I shall deal with the state first. Under the capitalist state, the migrant is treated as an alien without rights of citizenship. In the South African colonial superstructure, the differential incorporation of races leaves the subordinate race with no formal power to modify fundamental institutions. The migrant has no significant political rights and only limited legal rights in the urban areas. Only in the Bantustans or reserves can Africans exercise rights of citizenship, and because of their very limited resources such participation is unable to affect their lives materially. Protest by blacks directed at the South African state has been dealt with violently, and the rise of a police state makes combination almost impossible (see, e.g., Simons and Simons 1969; Roux 1964; Kuper 1957).

In cementing the system of migrant labor, the role of ideology is not unimportant. The coincidence of racial characteristics and participation in a system of migrant labor has a number of consequences. All dominant ideologies under capitalism tend to conceal the underlying class structure; if an ideology has a strong component of racial supremacy, class differentiation is masked by the prevailing racial perspectives. This remark applies equally to the consciousness of the dominant and the dominated classes. As a result, the dominant ideology pays little attention to the economic role of migrant labor and the manner in which its exploitation is organized. Behavioral characteristics due to participation in a system of migrant labor are portrayed by the dominant ideology as racial characteristics. Migrant labor is seen as a voluntaristic form of participation in the South African economy, upholding the integrity and indigenous culture of the African people. It is considered the natural and

<sup>8</sup> In this connection it is interesting to note the emergence of the border industry program (Bell 1973). The South African government has tried to promote the movement of capital to labor, rather than the reverse. Industries established near the borders of the reserves enable black laborers to commute to work. Mayer (1971, "Postscript") describes the development of a township in the reserve near East London and the government's attempt to reunify productive worker and family. The Border Industry Program promoted by the Mexican government (Baerresen 1971; Briggs 1973, pp. 44-47) represents a similar movement of American capital to an external labor reservoir.

inevitable form of black labor. It purportedly reflects the strength of tradition pulling the African from the foreign and corrosive urban area to his natural environment and thereby solidifying his so-called tribal allegiances. Instead of there being an inherent conflict between the dominant ideology and the system of migrant labor, the former reinforces and legitimates the coexistence of two structurally different modes of organization of labor distributed according to racial characteristics.

Domination within industry is enforced with the cooperation of the state, as when strike action is suppressed. Though not actually illegal, trade union organization among blacks has been thwarted through "racial discrimination in the law and in labor practices; government obstruction and intimidation; and colour prejudice among white workers" (Hepple 1971, p. 72). Only 2% of black workers in South Africa are organized into trade unions. The structural conflict between migrant labor and organized nonmigrant white workers redounds to the advantage of the employer. The conflict is based on competition over the distribution of income *within* the working class. Concessions extracted from the mine owners by one group are granted, to a considerable extent, at the expense of the other group. For example, the restrictive practices and development of a strong white trade union led to the institutionalization of a system of migrant labor incorporating an ever-increasing earnings gap between black and white workers (Wilson 1972a, p. 46). Not surprisingly, white workers have assisted management in the subordination of black workers within industry, for example, through the breaking of strikes. Equally, white workers are ever conscious of management's interest in breaching the color bar and advancing black workers into more skilled positions. This reinforces divisions within the working class. In addition, the black labor force has been the victim of collusion among the different mining companies in wage fixing. With the development of the Chamber of Mines to coordinate policies of the industry in areas of common interest to the various companies, there arose a common wage policy based on the principle of "maximum average" (Horwitz 1967, p. 27). Such industrywide policies prevented competition for labor from redounding to the advantage of the black migrant workers.

Finally, I turn to the domination of black workers in the labor market. The superior recruitment organizations of the mining industry give it monopolistic access to such labor reservoirs as Malawi and Mozambique and even more distant territories. In 1973 foreign labor accounted for 80% of the blacks employed. Since pass laws preclude the development of a labor reservoir within the urban areas, they favor industries with effective recruitment organizations which employ black labor in primarily unskilled occupations. With a weaker recruitment capacity, manufacturing industry has to restrict itself to a labor supply from the reserves, for which

it competes with all other employers of black labor. Overpopulation in the reserves and diminishing subsistence levels have led to increases in earnings necessary to supplement rural incomes. Being less dependent on South African labor and drawing extensively on foreign labor reservoirs where subsistence levels have not declined, the mining industry has managed to maintain the real earnings of its black workers at approximately the same level over the past 60 years (Wilson 1972*a*, table 5).

### A System of Migrant Labor Which Failed to Reproduce Itself

So far I have argued that the distinguishing feature of a system of migrant labor is the separation of processes of renewal from those of maintenance. Further, this separation is not a natural or voluntaristic phenomenon but must be enforced through a set of political and legal mechanisms which presuppose that the migrant is without citizenship rights and has only limited power in the state of employment. Therefore, when the specific mechanisms that enforce the circulation of labor, restrict its upward mobility, and establish the migrant's powerlessness are relaxed or disappear, if my thesis is correct, we should then expect the system to fail to reproduce itself. In this context the decline of migrant labor in Zambia is pertinent.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the Labour Government's assumption of power in Britain after the Second World War, the pattern of migrant labor between the Northern Rhodesian (now Zambian) copper mines and the rural hinterland followed that just described for South Africa. Until the postwar period, the colonial administration actively organized the political and legal mechanisms that separated the worker from his family. Subsequently, the administration retreated from the performance of these functions for reasons related to Zambia's status as a British protectorate. First, Africans were not merely allowed to organize trade unions but in some instances were actively encouraged to do so. Later in the 1950s, political parties representing the African population began to appear. At the same time, the colonial government became less resolute in defending the color bar in industry (particularly the copper industry). Without support from the colonial administration, white workers were unable to prevent the removal of the color bar from jobs which they had previously monopolized. As restrictions on African advancement were being relaxed, regulations on the geographical movement of black workers began to disappear also. Significantly, in the early 1950s the mining companies began to dispense with their "pole-and-dagga" huts and to build family accommodations for their black employees.

<sup>9</sup> Epstein (1958) and Burawoy (1972, chap. 2) describe these changes as they occurred on the Northern Rhodesian copper belt.

Thus, the separation of renewal and maintenance functions was being slowly and even deliberately undermined. Finally, shifts in ideology from white supremacy to evolutionary movement to African self-determination further weakened the legitimacy of migrant labor and the regulatory mechanisms necessary for its reproduction. Therefore, we may tentatively conclude that, unless separated by a specific set of political and legal institutions, the processes of maintenance and renewal tend to coalesce. In other words, economic factors by themselves cannot enforce the separation of worker from family but must be supplemented by structures of coercion.

Systems of migrant labor, as they have existed or continue to exist in southern Africa, may be regarded as "pure" types. State organization of the separation of maintenance from renewal is transparent. Further, I have shown how a system of migrant labor dissolves when the state no longer performs this function. But the framework developed is of limited interest if it can be applied only to southern Africa. The question before us now is: Can the framework be extended to shed light on the nature of migrant labor in other, radically different countries?

#### FARM LABOR IN CALIFORNIA

The discussion here is complicated by the more variegated history of seasonal agricultural labor in California. I will endeavor to highlight the aspects most relevant to comparison with South African mine workers and to the development of a more general framework for the analysis of systems of migrant labor in capitalist societies.

Because California is the United States's largest agricultural producer, farm labor has assumed a critical role in its development. The history of farm labor is the history of a succession of labor reservoirs. Each group entered as a domestic migratory or alien migrant labor force, but, before stabilizing, voluntarily left agriculture for employment in other sectors of the economy or was removed forcibly and succeeded by a new group of migrants.

The Chinese were the first immigrant group to respond to the seasonal demands of California agriculture. They were rendered occupationally immobile by discriminatory practices, and their stabilization coincided with increasing demands for Chinese exclusion by domestic labor during the last two decades of the 19th century (McWilliams 1964, chap. 2). With the eclipse of Chinese labor, whites affected by the depression of the 1890s were recruited for work in the fields; but with the return of economic prosperity, a new reservoir was tapped—the Japanese (*ibid.*, chap. 4). By the end of the first decade of this century, the Japanese had superseded every other group, only to lose their dominance to Mexicans by 1915. After the First World War and increasingly until the Second, white domestic



labor was again recruited for farm work. Although attempts to settle the dust bowl migratory workers of the 1930s into camps were made, they were never very successful (McWilliams 1971, chap. 16). Many laborers were recruited from the skid rows of California cities for temporary jobs in agriculture (Fisher 1953, pp. 51–57; Anderson 1923; Parker 1920).

The wartime demand for labor outside agriculture threatened the supply of domestic labor. The governments of Mexico and the United States signed an agreement providing for the use of Mexican labor under contract in farm employment. Known as the *bracero* program, this was the first governmentally administered system of migrant labor in agriculture. At the same time as *braceros* entered legally under contract, illegal migrants, referred to as “wetbacks,” were also crossing the border from Mexico in search of employment. Their numbers have varied according to such factors as the state of the Mexican economy (Gamio 1930, chaps. 1, 12), the stringency of border controls (Samora 1971), and the availability of jobs in the United States (see Frisbie [1975] for a statistical analysis of economic push and pull factors). Although the actual number of illegal Mexican entrants is not known, the number apprehended annually rose steadily from the early 1940s to a peak of over a million in 1954 (Galarza 1964, chap. 8). Recent studies indicate that with the termination of the *bracero* program in 1965 the number of illegal entrants has again risen, while commuters who live in Mexico and work in the United States have assumed a new prominence in the border states (North 1970, chaps. 1, 3). Meanwhile, domestic labor has organized itself in an attempt to prevent competition from labor recruited legally or illegally from foreign labor pools.

### The Economic Functions of Migrant Labor

Castells (1975) indicates that, in addition to suffering excessive exploitation, migrant labor functions as a regulator of capitalist crises, cushioning the impact of the expansion and contraction of capital. When industry faces a recession, for example, migrant workers are particularly easy to lay off. The nature of agricultural production, rather than capitalist crises, gives rise to fluctuations in the demand for farm labor. Nonetheless, migrant labor performs the same “regulatory” function in California agribusiness, providing for seasonal labor requirements.

The basic dilemma faced by farm employers, particularly those with farm operations requiring seasonal hands in large numbers, is this: They want a labor supply which, on the one hand, is ready and willing to meet the short-term work requirements and which, on the other hand, will not impose social and economic problems on them or on the community when work is finished. This is what is expected of migratory workers. The de-

mand for migratory workers is thus twofold: To be ready to go to work when needed; to be gone when not needed. [U.S. President's Commission on Migratory Labor 1951, p. 16]

The more generic function of a system of migrant labor—namely, the externalization of the costs of labor force renewal and low wage labor—is complicated by the coexistence of three different labor systems in California. First, there are migrants who circulate between Mexico and California. They constitute a system of external migrant labor. Second, there are aliens who reside in California throughout the year. They constitute a system of internal migrant labor. Finally, there is a domestic labor force which migrates from place to place in search of employment. It does not constitute a system of migrant labor as defined here. I shall refer to this fraction of the labor force as migratory labor. At different periods in the history of California agriculture, different systems have been dominant.

The migrants from Mexico bear the closest resemblance to Africans from Malawi or the reserves working in the South African mining industry. In both cases the system of migrant labor facilitates the externalization of the costs of renewal and the provision of earnings at a level commensurable with the day-to-day existence of the farm laborer.<sup>10</sup> A system of internal migration has no obvious parallel with the South African situation. Japanese, Chinese, and many Mexican aliens who worked in the fields during the harvest period did not return “home” in the off-season but eked out an existence in California towns. As a result, they became a potential burden upon the state where they were employed. At the same time, because they were mainly single, able-bodied men, the processes of maintenance were separated from those of renewal, which took place in their country of origin (see, e.g., Fuller 1940, p. 19824).

Domestic migratory labor distinguishes itself from migrant labor by the fusion of the functions of labor-force renewal and maintenance. The employer and/or state must bear all the costs of reproducing labor power. Other techniques are adapted to compensate for the inability to externalize costs in the case of domestic migratory workers. The prevailing adaptation has been the exploitation of family labor in picking crops, so that earnings of the *individual* can be maintained at inordinately low levels. If we look

<sup>10</sup> According to the 1960 census, over half the Chicano families living in the rural areas had an income below \$3,000 and 14% received less than \$1,000 (Briggs 1973, p. 23). Another survey showed that commuters from Mexico were being paid average hourly rates of \$1.65 (if they were Mexican nationals, i.e., “green card” commuters [see n. 12]) and \$1.45 (if they were U.S. citizens) (North 1970, p. 114). The corresponding annual incomes were, respectively \$3,910 and \$2,984 (ibid., p. 117), both falling below the poverty line. Illegal migrants from Mexico were paid at rates between those of green card commuters and U.S. citizen commuters (ibid., p. 116). According to Samora (1971, pp. 98–102), in the El Paso region in 1969 the going wage for wetbacks was between \$0.75 and \$1.10 per hour—far below the national minimum wage of \$1.60.

upon wages as the costs of maintaining and renewing the family, the greater the number employed within each family, the less each individual member has to be paid. In this way, the earnings of domestic labor are kept at the level paid to internal and external migrants. However, with domestic labor the state of employment has to bear a set of costs, such as welfare for the old and young and education, even though these may be small as compared with costs for other sectors of the national labor force.

Although there is evidence to suggest that growers prefer a system of migrant labor to a system of migratory labor (U.S. President's Commission on Migratory Labor 1951, p. 16), there have been periods in California history, particularly during economic depressions, when migrant labor barely existed. More recently, the organization of migratory labor in the United Farm Workers Union and the eclipse of the bracero program have led to an increase in the use of domestic labor. Clearly the interests of the state, as defined by such factors as the level of employment and the political power of domestic groups, interact with the interests of the growers to determine the relative importance of each system of labor.

The issue of cheap labor arises in the California context, just as it did for South Africa. The immediate economic gains to growers from the use of migrant labor may be more apparent in the case of farm labor. First, migrant labor is a common form of adaptation to seasonal fluctuations in the demand for unskilled work. For example, in the first half of the 19th century, Irish migrants traveled to England to work as farm laborers during harvest periods and returned to Ireland during the slack seasons (Redford 1926, pp. 122–29). They were also paid less than domestic labor. Second, the system of migrant labor is not such a “total” institution in California as it is in South Africa, and it may require fewer resources for its reproduction. It appears to be less a response to government intervention than a direct reflection of the economic interests of the growers. It may be argued that in South Africa political costs as well as economic costs are being externalized, whereas in California the economic costs are paramount. So long as migrant labor was readily available, the need for capital substitution was not urgently felt. But with moves in the direction of effective union organization of domestic migratory workers and the dissolution of the bracero program, growers have turned increasingly to picking by mechanization.

### Twin Dependency

In discussing South Africa, I noted that a system of migrant labor involved a twin dependency on two separated economies. This is also true, but in a weaker sense, in California. External migrants—essentially Mexicans—

depend on their own state and to a lesser extent on employment in the United States. In the case of internal migrants, there is an overriding dependency on employment in the United States; and, like external migrants, they have tended to be restricted to such marginal occupations as farm labor. In both instances, there is a separation of the processes of labor-force maintenance from those of renewal, but the connection between the two is stronger for external migrants.

With respect to the migrant's dependency on employment in the South African economy, I noted the deliberate policies of the colonial administration to force the African population off the land and into the labor market to create an industrial work force and also remove competition with white farmers in the commodity market for agricultural products. These goals were achieved through the expropriation of land and the levying of taxes. The dependency of Mexicans on the United States economy cannot be reduced to such terms. The availability of Mexican labor has been contingent upon such factors as the state of the Mexican economy and political change, as in the revolutionary period between 1910 and 1930 which led to the release of many Mexicans from peonage in the haciendas.

However, at a more general level the proximity of the United States has been a factor in the persistent underdevelopment of Mexico, making it difficult for that nation to absorb the full potential of its labor force or to compete with wages available in the United States. Furthermore, the very sale of labor power by an underdeveloped country, such as Malawi or Mexico, to an economically advanced nation serves only to reinforce the relations of economic subjugation and domination. This is so despite protestations by the South African and United States governments that in employing nationals of underdeveloped countries they are doing these countries a service. In a narrow sense, they are doing just that by absorbing surplus labor that could present a political threat to the underdeveloped nation and by providing rural workers with "their only real opportunity for economic self improvement" and the possibility of remitting income home (Hancock 1959, p. 122). In a broader context, however, migrant labor exists only because of the uneven development of capitalism and reflects the economic dependence of Mexico on the United States and Malawi on South Africa.

It should be noted that some Mexicans who cross the border to work do not in fact return to Mexico on the termination of their employment, just as there are many Malawians residing illegally in South Africa. Many Mexicans attempt to find jobs elsewhere in the United States. Being illegal residents in the United States makes them much more vulnerable to arbitrary exploitation by employers. In many respects their position is akin to that of the internal migrant who faces limited employment opportunity and discriminatory practices. The Chinese and Japanese during those

periods when they dominated farm labor were dependent on finding employment in marginal occupations. Unlike Mexicans, they could not easily return home and become the responsibility of another state. However, because they are single, internal migrants can subsist on relatively small incomes.

Finally, brief mention should be made of attempts to establish a system of migrant labor among domestic workers when they dominated the farm-labor force in the interwar period. Apart from increasing exploitation through the employment of family labor, there were moves among growers to create subsistence economies so as to reduce the burden of the work force on the state and to stabilize its movement. Such programs for “land colonization” stemmed from the potential shortage of labor and the costs of armies of unemployed during the slack season, but they achieved little success before growers discovered alternative external labor reservoirs (McWilliams 1971, pp. 92–96, 200–210; U.S. Congress 1940, pp. 230–31, 240, 250). In effect, the programs were efforts to set up a system of “reserves” as in South Africa or a system of workhouses like those which provided a pool of labor for English employers in agriculture and industry during the 18th century (Redford 1926, pp. 21–23).

More common has been the technique of engendering dependence through the distribution of relief. Unemployed domestic labor is maintained during the slack season by the judicious provision of relief immediately suspended when openings appear in the fields. This ensures the availability of labor in the busy season (McWilliams 1971, pp. 285–96). Similar mechanisms for the distribution of relief appeared in England at the end of the 18th century: “. . . the perpetuation of the Speenhamland and ‘roundsman’ systems, in all their variety, was ensured by the demand of the larger farmers—in an industry which has exceptional requirements for occasional or casual labor—for a permanent cheap labor reserve” (Thompson 1968, p. 244). As the study of Piven and Cloward (1971, chaps. 1, 4) suggests, the distribution of poor relief is designed to meet the conditions for dual dependency upon the state on the one hand and the employer on the other, so that labor may be mobilized and distributed to accommodate the changing demands of the economy. Poor relief, therefore, may be regarded as a functional equivalent of migrant labor, in that both perform the same regulatory function, cushioning the seasonal labor requirements of the agricultural industry.

### The Regulation of Circulation

Poor relief and land colonization are designed to control the movement of *domestic* labor, so that it is available where and when it is needed and does not constitute a liability where and when it is not needed. What

mechanisms are available to control the movement of external migrants such as those from Mexico? The work contract, defining the relationship between migrant workers and growers or intermediaries, is by its very nature only for temporary employment; after it has expired, the workers have no alternative but to leave the agricultural areas. They may leave for their homes across the border, move into a California town, or migrate to some other part of the United States.

Just as influx control enforces the separation of maintenance and renewal functions while regulating the return of labor to its home, similar mechanisms operate to regulate the movement of Mexican migrants. Thus, border patrol (Samora 1971, chaps. 1, 2) attempts to restrict illegal immigration into the United States. Immigration laws are designed to separate workers from their families, so that the costs of labor-force renewal are borne in Mexico while the United States employer and government, either at the federal or regional level, are responsible only for maintaining workers during the period of employment (North 1970, pp. 92–93).

Immigration laws and their enforcement by border patrol and other government agencies aim to prevent the emergence of pools of unemployed Mexicans liable to become public charges. At the same time, they provide growers and other employers with adequate supplies of labor. The consolidation of the *bracero* program in the 1950s was accompanied by more stringent policies of influx control. During this period, immigration authorities attempted to restrict migration across the border to workers contracted for agricultural employment by agencies established in Mexico. At the same time, legislative measures in the United States were introduced to prevent *braceros* from “escaping” from farm employment and seeking jobs elsewhere. Accordingly, each worker was given a card bearing a contract number, an employer’s name, and the names of counties in which it was valid (Galarza 1964, p. 83). In other words, it was a species of the notorious South African pass. These types of restriction on migrant employment in the United States and the removal of migrants from the country when the contract expired ensured their continuing reliance on Mexico and a binding connection to the processes of labor-force renewal.

### Restrictions on Occupational Mobility

The return of migrants to their homes after the termination of the employment contract serves to restrict them to unskilled occupations in particular sectors of employment. Under the system of migrant labor found in South Africa, the color bar broadly defines the boundaries between jobs monopolized by migrants and those held as the preserve of domestic white labor. Structural conflict within the working class of the mining industry occurs in a vertical dimension between a white labor aristocracy and black migrant

labor. By contrast, within California agriculture there is no need for the counterpart of a color bar, because virtually all jobs are unskilled. At the same time, the equivalent of a color bar does operate to prevent mobility out of agricultural employment.

The result is that conspicuous conflicts have occurred in the horizontal dimension between migrant workers (Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, etc.) and domestic workers (white depression victims, Chicanos, etc.). Differing relations to the means of production have not been the axis of manifest conflict; on the contrary, the working class has been internally divided as a result of differing relations to superstructural elements—that is, differences of legal and political status in the place of employment. Though weak in comparison with organized labor, domestic farm labor is potentially more powerful than are migrant workers. Thus, during the last decade of the 19th century, domestic labor successfully resisted displacement by Chinese labor. Growers continued to employ Chinese labor after legislation had been passed to provide for the exclusion from employment of Chinese not legally resident in the country. The refusal of growers to bow before pressure from labor organizations led to riots throughout the state between 1893 and 1896, eventually forcing the removal of Chinese from the fields (McWilliams 1971, pp. 74–80; Fuller 1940, pp. 19814–15). Since then, domestic labor has had only limited success in establishing itself as a permanent farm-labor force, reflecting its vulnerability to the political power of agribusiness.

### The Vulnerability of Farm Labor

In discussing the reproduction of the system of migrant labor in South Africa, I contrasted the strength of the domestic white workers with the powerlessness of black migrants who confront a state organized for their repression. The perpetuation of the system turns on the ability of white workers to maintain the color bar at a skill level consistent with migrant labor. In California, the situation is reversed. There the reproduction of the system of migrant labor rests, not on the strength, but on the weakness of domestic labor, its inability to prevent growers from drawing upon foreign supplies of labor. We take it for granted that the migrant—internal or external—has little or no power, few if any rights, and virtually no means of appealing against infringements of his labor contract.<sup>11</sup> There-

<sup>11</sup> This is not entirely correct. Particularly in the case of *braceros* there is a long history of attempts by the Mexican government, under pressure from organized labor in Mexico and anti-American interests, to protect the rights of Mexican nationals employed in the U.S. Southwest. This has sometimes involved blacklisting employers who failed to comply with the terms of the agreement signed between the two governments concerning the working conditions and rights of *braceros*. For a period during the Second World War, the Mexican government refused to authorize *braceros* for work in Texas

fore, what is of interest is the manner in which *domestic* laborers have been systematically prevented from forcing the growers to employ them and them alone, under minimum wage conditions.

Farm labor has traditionally been excluded from labor legislation (Briggs 1973, chap. 5; Myers 1959). For example, the National Labor Relations Act of 1964 excluded farm workers from unemployment compensation. From 1910 to 1956, farm wages ranged from 40% to 75% below factory wages (Hancock 1959, p. 25). In 1966 farm wages were half the average of those in industrial employment as a whole. When domestic labor has threatened to organize, it has been either displaced by migrant labor—external or internal—or violently repressed. Thus, Galarza (1964, pt. 4) describes in detail how the bracero program fostered the replacement of domestic labor with Mexican labor paid at prevailing rates, ones which domestic workers found unacceptable since they were based on labor-force maintenance rather than maintenance and renewal. In this way the braceros came to dominate the picking of a number of crops. The segmentation of the farm-labor force into migrants (legal or illegal) and domestics has obstructed the development of effective union organization. As recently as 1973, strike activity by the United Farm Workers Union was unable to prevent the gathering of the harvest crop by labor recruited from foreign countries.

In other words, the ability of domestic labor to organize itself is severely circumscribed by the power of the growers, who have gained monopolistic access to external labor reservoirs. In achieving these ends, there has been a long history of collaboration between farmers and immigration authorities (Greene 1969) and of collusion between farmers and state police in suppressing labor organizations and labor protest. Where police efforts have been inadequate or ineffectual, growers have shown no hesitation in recruiting “citizen armies” and vigilante groups to combat resistance from farm labor (see, e.g., McWilliams 1971, chaps. 14, 15; U.S. Congress 1940, which was devoted to these issues). While the federal government has been aware of the collaboration of the rich and powerful in California and of the use of the state as an instrument for protecting the economic

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because of instances of extreme racial discrimination. In practice, growers either ignored many conditions of the bracero contract or chose to use illegal migrants when they were available. A historical treatment of attempts by the Mexican government to secure reasonable conditions for contract labor working in the United States under the bracero programs may be found in Scruggs (1960, 1963). The U.S. Labor Department has also tried to enforce conditions laid down in the bracero program. However, in the early 1960s such attempts in the Texas cotton harvest led to court cases in which growers entered suits against the Department of Labor. Where the court's ruling upheld the government, growers rapidly introduced cotton harvesting by mechanization, and the plight of domestic labor was exacerbated (Jones 1965, pp. 131–52). The severity of the growers' reaction attests to the infrequency with which conditions of employment of Mexicans were actually regulated.



interests of large-scale farmers, the strength of the farm lobby in Washington has managed to prevent any effective intervention (Galarza 1970). As recently as 1974, despite opposition from organized labor, the Supreme Court sanctioned the use of foreign migrants on the basis of the administrative fiction that they are legal residents of the United States.<sup>12</sup>

The power of the growers is reflected in their ability to establish common wage rates, and even in times of labor scarcity, these have prevented competition from redounding to the advantage of farm labor. Fisher (1953), McWilliams (1971), Galarza (1964), and others have documented the collaboration of growers in employer associations to define what is in effect a "maximum average," though it is referred to as the "prevailing wage." In theory, the prevailing rates are to be fixed by the free play of the market. In fact, they are established unilaterally by the growers according to the same criteria followed by the South African Chamber of Mines: "... a wage which is fair to one's neighbor in that it is no higher, and a wage which is fair to oneself in that it is no lower" (Fisher 1953, p. 110).

Unilateral wage fixing, monopolistic recruitment, militant antiunionism, and powerful lobbies in central government imply an inordinate concentration of power. For some time commentators have viewed the low wage levels and unhealthy working conditions of farm labor as a consequence of the concentration of land ownership and the vertical integration with the cannery industry, which has engaged in price fixing (McWilliams 1971, pp. 279–80). With the concentration of ownership and the absorption of agriculture into a national food industry, recent years have witnessed the entry of large corporations and industrial conglomerates into large-scale farming. Thus, one discovers that the four leading private owners of agricultural land are Southern Pacific Company, Tenneco Incorporated (the large oil and chemical conglomerate), Tejon Ranch Company (half owned by the *Los Angeles*

<sup>12</sup> Farm workers brought a suit for "declaratory and injunctive" relief with respect to the practice of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in permitting some aliens living in Mexico and Canada to commute to work in the United States on a daily and seasonal basis (October 17, 1974). The Supreme Court ruled (November 25, 1974) by a margin of five to four that "both the daily and seasonal commuters were immigrants who were lawfully admitted for permanent residence and were returning from temporary visit abroad when they entered the United States and were different from those groups of aliens which could be admitted only on certificate by the Secretary of Labor" (*Supreme Court Reporter* 1974, p. 272). The declaration supported the long-standing administrative practice of allowing migrants from Mexico to enter the United States for temporary work (42,000 daily commuters, of whom 25,000 are involved in agriculture, and 8,300 seasonal commuters), on the grounds that such migrants were permanent residents of the United States and therefore not subject to either quota restrictions or certification by the Secretary of Labor (such immigrants use the green card as a reentry permit in lieu of an immigrant visa). Dissenting judges felt the ruling was based on an "administrative construction of a statute which conflicts with the express meaning of the statutory terms" (*ibid.*, p. 283), but it has provided growers with unrestricted access to an external labor supply and as a result has constituted a major obstacle to the effective unionization of domestic workers.

*Times Mirror* Corporation), and Standard Oil of California (see Fellmeth 1971, vol. 1, chap. 1; vol. 2, appendix 1B; Agribusiness Accountability Project 1972). If this were not enough, the problems facing the United Farm Workers Union have been compounded by the intervention of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which has signed "sweetheart" contracts with many of the growers.

Does the dominant ideology exercise a moderating influence on the arbitrary use of this power and in particular on the reproduction of the system of migrant labor? Whereas the South African ideology of white supremacy legitimates the colonial superstructure (Burawoy 1974) that organizes the conditions of reproduction of the system of migrant labor and institutionalizes migrant powerlessness, the dominant ideology in the United States is conditioned by notions of "equality," "justice," and "citizenship." Accordingly, the United States government has frequently appeared to resist the use of migrant labor in agriculture, particularly when subjected to pressures from organized labor concerned to protect domestic farm workers (Hawley 1966; Scruggs 1960). The various bracero programs since 1942 have required growers to provide evidence of a shortage of domestic labor and to make visible attempts to recruit such labor. The agreement between the United States and Mexico also stipulated that braceros had to be paid at prevailing rates, and employers were required to make contributions to insurance schemes, housing, and nonprofit canteen facilities and to offer each worker a minimum number of hours of work every week (see, e.g., Galarza 1964, pts. 2, 3).

While these provisions are to be found in the agreements signed between the governments of the United States and Mexico, their execution has been quite a different matter. To supervise the scheme, the United States government appointed bodies sympathetic to the interests of the growers. Together with associations of farm employers, these bodies worked out ways to circumvent the provisions (Fisher 1953, chaps. 4, 5; Galarza 1964, pts. 4, 5). It was in the administration of the program that the government was able to conciliate the powerful growers opposed to restrictions imposed on their employment practices.

If the dominant ideology does not exercise much constraint over the practices of growers, it does tend to conceal those practices. First, it presents United States agriculture as composed of a large number of small-scale independent farmers who work on their own land. This hides the decline in the numbers of such independent farmers and the fact, particularly significant in California, that the overwhelming proportion of land is owned by industrial consortiums and worked by a migrant or migratory labor force. Second, the dominant ideology tends to obscure the typical conditions of migrant-labor exploitation. Just as in South Africa the racial perspectives of separate development have tended to conceal the position of

particular groups with respect to the means of production, in the United States the combination of an ideology which stresses ethnic pluralism with the coincidence of ethnicity and occupation has had a similar effect. Whereas in South Africa conflict between migrants and nonmigrants is highlighted but seen in racial terms, in California conflict between migrant and domestic labor is masked by their common Mexican heritage.

### CONCLUSION

We have learned that one condition for the separation of maintenance and renewal processes lies in the political status of migrant laborers. It is their relation to the state—the denial of legal, political, and civil rights—that distinguishes migrant workers from domestic workers. The distinction holds for both mine workers on the Rand and farm laborers in California. At the same time, we have observed a marked contrast in relations between domestic and migrant workers in the two areas. In South Africa a caste division in the form of a color bar separates the two sectors of the labor force, while in the United States competition between domestic and migrant labor prevails. In the former country, domestic labor has access to considerable resources of political power, while in the latter it appears relatively weak. What does this discrepancy signify?

### The State and Its Bearing on the Reproduction of Migrant Labor

The fact that unbridled competition between migrant and domestic labor is as ubiquitous in the United States as it is restricted and regulated in South Africa, *irrespective* of the particular industry, indicates that the skill differentials found in the mining industry and absent in agriculture cannot explain the different patterns of relations between migrant and domestic workers in our two case studies.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, it suggests that we must turn to broader characteristics of the two societies in order to understand the differences alluded to in the previous paragraph.

First, there is the simple demographic fact that migrant labor, legal and illegal, is *relatively* insignificant in the United States (though not as insignificant as is commonly supposed) as compared with its central role in the South African labor system. Second, domestic labor in South Africa constitutes a minority segment of the total labor force and as a result is *relatively* undifferentiated as compared with the domestic labor force in the United States. The simple dichotomy between domestic workers with rights of citizenship and migrants with no rights may be a useful simplifi-

<sup>13</sup> Outside the context of gold mining, there is the added complication in South Africa that not all black labor is obviously migrant labor (see, e.g., Wilson 1972*b*, chap. 4).

cation in the South African context, but it is too crude for the United States, where such marginal fractions of the domestic labor force as migratory farm workers are incomparably weaker than organized labor in other sectors of the economy.

At the same time, the numerical and functional significance of migrant labor is contingent upon the state's capacity to reproduce a system of migrant labor. I have emphasized repeatedly that the volume of migrant labor is not something to be taken as given but is *created and recreated by the state*. Within a single nation, the *state* determines the relative importance of migrant and domestic labor. Accordingly, changes in the organization of the state, as in Zambia, can go so far as to transform a numerically dominant sector of the labor force from migrant to domestic status and at the same time deny a minority sector its domestic status. Similarly, in contrast to other European countries, Britain has until recently awarded full citizenship rights to immigrants from other parts of the Commonwealth. Whereas immigrants to France, Germany, and Switzerland have tended to assume the status of migrants, in Britain they became part of the domestic labor force (Castles and Kosack 1973, chap. 11). To what extent the political status of immigrants actually affects their economic status has been an issue for debate, with some playing down the importance of differences (Castles and Kosack 1973) and others giving them greater emphasis (Rex 1974). The point is, however, that the state determines whether an immigrant is to be a migrant or a domestic worker. Therefore, the first two factors considered above—the demographic importance of migrant labor and the differentiation of the domestic labor force—are contingent upon a third: the nature of the state, its organization and in particular the relative autonomy of the economy with respect to the political system.

In South Africa a dual labor market is organized by a monolithic state, so that one sector is largely composed of migrant workers and the other of domestic workers. In the United States, on the other hand, with its less centralized state apparatus, the dual labor market is defined in terms of relation to the economic structure. Low-profit service and competitive industries with an unstable nonunionized or weakly unionized labor force produce the lower income strata of the working class, while high-profit monopoly industry with stable unionized labor accounts for the higher income strata (O'Connor 1973, chap. 1; Harrison 1972). The dominant division in the South African labor market is based on relation to the state, whereas that in the United States is based on industry of employment, that is, relation to the economy. In one instance, migrant labor constitutes the basis of an entire segment of the labor force; in the other, it forms but a fraction of a segment. Yet in both instances, although for different reasons, the reproduction of migrant labor deepens the division

between the two segments. We may conclude, therefore, that the relevant differences between South Africa and the United States turn on the relative autonomy of the economy with respect to the state. In South Africa an overarching state intervenes in the organization of productive and market relations, whereas in the United States productive and market relations are reproduced with significantly less intervention from the state.

What, then, has this analysis of reproduction requirements accomplished? I have assumed that, although the conditions of reproduction may vary over time and between societies, what is being reproduced is defined by certain invariant structures. In the case of migrant labor, the invariant structure was found to be the separation of maintenance and renewal processes. Furthermore, the unique characteristics and consequences of a given system of migrant labor emerge out of the interplay between the invariant structure and a specific economic and political context. In other words the marked dissimilarity of the systems of migrant labor in South Africa and the United States may be attributed to the differing political, ideological, and economic situations in which the separation of maintenance and renewal processes is organized. Thus, reproduction analysis is a powerful tool in comparative analysis, between societies and over time, because it accounts simultaneously for similarity and diversity. Yet the very strength of such analysis is also its major weakness, as is apparent in my treatment of labor power. Throughout, I have assumed that labor power itself is invariant. This is implied by limiting the reproduction of labor power to two processes—maintenance and renewal. The treatment ignored the possibility that labor power, like machinery, may be adapted to the changing demands of capital and technological innovation. In my examples of migrant labor, adaptation is not a significant factor, because the jobs performed remain the same over time. But extending the analysis of reproduction of labor power to an entire labor force over a long period shows that requisite skills, education, and socialization in the broadest sense, that is, the content of labor power, undergo considerable change (Braverman 1974). Changes in the structure of capitalism, such as the consolidation of the dual economy, have repercussions for processes of labor force adaptation (Bowles 1972). In other words, a diachronic rather than synchronic analysis of the reproduction of labor power cannot, in general, restrict itself to the processes of maintenance and renewal but must be extended to include processes of adaptation.

### The Rise and Fall of Systems of Migrant Labor

So far, I have established the conditions for the reproduction of a system of migrant labor, but a complete theory of reproduction should embrace a characteristic dynamics (Cortés, Przeworski, and Sprague 1974, pp. 279–

80). The reproduction of any system in and of itself creates tendencies toward its change and persistence. Moreover, these tendencies can be deduced from the “laws” or conditions of reproduction. Are there any rudimentary processes which might constitute a theory of the dynamics of a system of migrant labor? Or are the changes brought about by the internal structure of the system, that is, by its dynamics, swamped by external exigencies which impinge in an unpredictable fashion upon the system?

I noted that the system of migrant labor in Zambia dissolved primarily because the colonial state disengaged itself from the organization of the separation of the maintenance and renewal processes. To what extent was this the product of a dynamics immanent in the structure of the system of migrant labor and its reproduction? To what extent was it the result of external forces? The expansion of the Northern Rhodesian (Zambian) economy required the expansion of the system of migrant labor. The increased involvement of Africans in wage employment led to their organization initially into tribal associations but also into embryonic and, later, strong trade unions. Organized economic class struggles inevitably led to increased remuneration and consequently undermined the foundations of the system of migrant labor and precipitated its dissolution. Advancing with economic struggles, political struggles eroded another central requirement of the reproduction of a system of migrant labor—migrant-labor powerlessness. In other words, the expansion of the system of migrant labor stimulated and structured class struggles which ultimately forced the breakdown of the system itself. At the same time, however, intertwined with such a “bottom up” view of the dynamics of the system of migrant labor are the “top down” concessions by the colonial government prompted by political changes in Britain and by the general climate in the colonized world. To disentangle the intricate interaction of concessions and struggles in the decline of the system of migrant labor in Zambia would be a worthwhile and challenging task. Suffice it to say here that internal dynamics are but a partial explanation of the dissolution of the system in Zambia.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The system of migrant labor has not completely dissolved. In a survey I conducted among a carefully selected sample of 218 mine workers in 1969, I found that 39% had returned to their home villages within the preceding two years and 71% within the preceding five. Breaking these figures down by age and length of time spent in urban areas (urban experience), I found that the older a worker (controlling for urban experience), the more frequently he returned to his home village, and the greater his urban experience (controlling for age) the less frequently he returned to it. Zambian workers have never had their land expropriated in the manner of the enclosure movement in England. Therefore they retain ties to the rural areas as a form of security, particularly for retirement. This may involve remitting a part of their income home—though very few (7%) claim to do so on a regular basis—or entertaining visiting kinsmen from the home area, as well as returning periodically to the rural areas. As an increasing proportion of the work force is born in the urban areas, with no home village,

Nonetheless, Zambia does illustrate dynamics arising in the place of employment—namely, the weakening of the colonial state and the advance of the political and economic status of the migrant worker. By contrast, for South Africa we stressed the dynamics of the interaction of capitalist and precapitalist economies and the way in which the expansion of the former tended to erode the latter. In its reproductive role, the South African state organizes counteracting influences designed to re-create the precapitalist mode of production. But it is becoming increasingly apparent that, although the system of migrant labor contains its own contradictions that continually threaten to undermine the system, the major threat to the system, particularly as it affects the gold mines, is from relatively autonomous external sources.

Prior to 1950, southern Africa constituted a relatively coherent political unit bound together by various forms of colonial rule and organized around certain focal points of industrial development. The peripheral areas served as labor reservoirs and were made subservient to the economic interests of the extractive industries, most notably the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia, the coal mines of Southern Rhodesia, and the gold mines of South Africa, as well as agriculture in all these territories. Struggles for political independence in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia led to the “autonomization” of the foreign reservoirs that supplied labor for the gold mines. The ban on recruitment for South African industry imposed by the Zambian and Tanzanian governments meant that South Africa would have to become increasingly reliant on its own internal system of migrant labor. Hence there emerged renewed interest in the reserve areas and the creation of Bantustans. With no major industry of its own, Malawi continued to serve as a major foreign labor reservoir for South African industry, particularly the gold mines, reinforcing its own underdevelopment and its dependency on South Africa.

The sporadic but very definite success of guerrilla movements in Portuguese Africa led to a coup d'état in the metropolitan country and to the demise of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, precipitating disturbances throughout southern Africa. The white minority regime of Southern Rhodesia is now under pressure to negotiate with black nationalist leaders, and in 1974 Malawi declared a ban on the supply of migrant labor to South

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and as pension and welfare schemes improve in the economy as a whole, the retention of linkages between urban and rural communities should be expected to decline further. But the most telling statistics concerning the dissolution of the system of migrant labor are to be found in commitment to employment in industry: in 1969 the average length of service of Zambian mine workers was 9.4 years (as compared with 4.3 years in 1955), with a corresponding turnover of 6.4% per annum—an extremely low turnover by any standards.

Africa. With the independence of Mozambique, there is the possibility of another major source of labor withdrawing its supply to South Africa. The reaction of the South African Chamber of Mines has been as follows:

Energetic steps have been taken to attract South Africans and the proportion has increased from 22 per cent at 31st March, 1974 to 32 per cent at 30th April, 1975. It is hoped that it will be possible to increase this proportion even further, and it will therefore be necessary to compete for labour with other sectors of the economy and to provide more housing accommodations for South African workers. Inevitably the bulk of mining labour will remain migratory for many years to come but it is hoped that a core of stable South African employees can be built up on longer-life mines. . . . [South African Chamber of Mines 1975]

The South African state is now faced with the dilemma of choosing either the expanded reproduction of the system of migrant labor within its own boundaries or the dissolution of the system. (For further details, see South African Institute of Race Relations 1975, pp. 281–88; Leys 1975.)

The South African example demonstrates that a system of migrant labor is placed in jeopardy as soon as the external labor reservoir gains political autonomy. The study of Mexican migrant workers in the United States lends some support to such a conclusion. The utilization of Mexican labor to bolster the United States economy has been the subject of considerable political debate within Mexico, from time to time leading the Mexican government to impose controls and conditions on the use of such labor. The *bracero* program, with its elaborate although rarely entirely enforced system of regulations, reflected just such a concern for the treatment of Mexican nationals. In practice, however, political control over the supply of labor is only a minor factor in the determination of the ebb and flow of migrant labor across the border. Indeed, it may be argued that in this instance it is unrealistic to speak of a system of migrant labor at all, because any characteristic dynamics of the system are overwhelmed by a wide range of external factors, such as the state of the economy on either side of the border.

Parallels with slavery are intriguing and deserve brief mention. In its purest form, slavery is an extreme version of migrant labor in which processes of renewal take place in a distant country (insofar as male workers only are involved) and maintenance takes place on the plantation; the severance between maintenance and renewal is total and final. Indentured labor stands somewhere on the continuum between systems of slavery and the systems of migrant labor examined in this paper. Under a system of worldwide colonialism, such as existed in the 18th century, slaves could be procured readily; but with economic, political, and ideological changes in the system of world capitalism, the movement for abolition established itself. As a result, the survival of the system became



contingent upon the organization of labor-force renewal *alongside* its maintenance. Wallerstein (1976) argues that increased “costs” of slavery in the decades before the American Civil War noted by Fogel and Engerman (1974) and Genovese (1974) were a result of American prohibition of international slave trade in 1807. Further, he argues, slavery was a viable system of labor only so long as a substantial proportion of the costs of renewal were borne in external labor reservoirs, and therefore their collapse spelled the downfall of slavery.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the *specific* cheapness of slavery is to be found, neither in the powerlessness of slaves (though this is an inevitable and necessary condition) nor in their efficiency, but (if it is to be found at all) in the characteristic mode of reproduction of labor power. When monopolistic access to external labor reservoirs is lost, systems of slavery and migrant labor have to be reconstituted or transformed. It remains to be seen whether the South African system of migrant labor is to be successfully resurrected through the intervention of the state or whether it will follow the historic road of slavery in the United States.

### Beyond Migrant Labor

What light does our conceptual distinction between maintenance and renewal shed on systems of labor that are not migrant and in which internal differentiation of the domestic labor force is prominent? One approach to these broader issues is a reformulation of our analysis of the costs of reproduction of labor power. Earlier, the savings generated by a system of migrant labor were expressed in terms of the *externalization* of certain costs. That is, certain processes normally financed by the employer and the state of employment are externalized so that the employer and the employing state assume no responsibility. However, such savings could be viewed in terms of the *reduction* of certain renewal costs rather

<sup>15</sup> Although the heyday of American slavery appears to have come after the importation of slaves became illegal, with the slave population quadrupling in 50 years as a result of natural increase, the increase must be regarded as a consequence of the incorporation of renewal processes into plantation society. The reproduction of a system of slavery involves the reproduction not merely of slaves but also of slave owners. Thus, to show that slavery is a viable labor system at any point in time, it is not enough to show that the “break-even age”—when “the accumulated expenditures by planters on slaves were greater than the average accumulated income which they took from them” (Fogel and Engerman 1974, p. 153)—is less than life expectancy. It must also be shown that the difference reflects earnings greater than the costs of the life-style of the slaveholders. Although Fogel and Engerman (1974, p. 155) do note that the break-even age rose in the decades before the Civil War and imply that life expectancy also increased, they neither tell us the trend of the difference between these two values nor relate the difference to the costs of the reproduction of the style of life of the slaveholders. In other words, the data of Fogel and Engerman do not speak directly to the hypothesis presented here.

than their externalization. That is, it is cheaper to educate and bring up a family, and so forth, in a Bantustan or a Mexican shantytown than in Johannesburg or California, where the reproduction of labor power is organized for higher-income groups and where, as a result, lower-income groups are penalized. Luxuries superfluous to the basic processes of renewal in the Bantustan or Mexican town or village become necessities in Johannesburg or California. In other words, the requirements for a minimal standard of living vary from place to place, according to the level of industrial development. Increases in the level of consumption or, more broadly, the rise of the cost of reproduction of labor power, is a consequence of and a condition for the economic expansion of capitalist societies (Gorz 1967, chap. 4).

Against this background, the significance of migrant labor lies in the separation of the processes of maintenance and renewal, so that renewal takes place where living standards are low and maintenance takes place within easy access of employment. Thus, wages earned by migrant workers are lower than those of domestic workers, because the former require fewer resources to sustain the renewal process than the latter. Where a supply of migrant labor is not available, industry itself may migrate to areas where the costs of the reproduction of labor power are lower. Indeed, the migration of industry may be a more attractive proposition for capitalists, as it relieves them of responsibility for the social and political costs of the maintenance of migrant labor. On the other hand, when a host country assumes responsibility for the regulation and domination of the labor force, the capitalist enterprise is frequently subjected to political and economic uncertainties beyond its control.

Expressing economic benefits in terms of reduction rather than externalization of costs allows us to go beyond migrant labor and examine various ways of organizing the reproduction of labor power within a single economy. The question becomes: Are there areas or institutions within a given society which organize the process of labor-force renewal at reduced costs? If there are, what specific mechanisms perpetuate the coexistence of differing modes of organizing labor-force renewal? Thus, one might ask whether the urban ghetto in the United States is a functional equivalent of the Bantustan in South Africa. Although an adequate treatment would involve a careful comparison of the political economies of Bantustan and ghetto, a few remarks may be made in passing. One striking resemblance between the two places is the importance of the female-dominated household. Liebow (1967), for example, shows how the "matri-focal" family of the urban ghetto is a product of "the inability of the Negro man to earn a living and support his family" (p. 224). Marriages do not last long, and women of the ghetto, like women of the Bantustan and of the villages in British Guiana (Smith 1956), are forced to extend

their sources of income by whatever means they can muster and through alliances with a succession of mates. Liebow's observations suggest that ghetto life is characterized by the separation of the processes of renewal, engaging the mother and her children, from those of maintenance, which concern the "marginal" or temporarily employed lower-class male.

My argument would be that the ghetto, like the Bantustan and the Mexican town or village, is a definitely located institution whose function for the capitalist economy is the allocation of the renewal processes to areas where renewal costs are low. As one exposition of the dual labor market thesis for the United States points out, the reproduction of a differentiated labor force rests on the reduction of renewal costs through segregation in housing, education, and welfare (Baron and Hymer 1968). "Institutional racism" (Wilson 1973, p. 34) or "internal colonialism" (Blauner 1972, pt. 1) may then be understood as the apparatus, coercive where necessary, for the regulation of renewal processes of a particular segment of the labor force and their allocation to specific institutions and areas. In other words, I am suggesting that racism be interpreted as a particular mode of reproduction of labor power and that "powerlessness" is not so much the defining as a necessary condition for racism. Furthermore, distinctions between different types of race relations, such as van den Berghe's (1967) distinction between competitive and paternalistic ones, may be understood in terms of particular articulations of productive and reproductive processes. Thus, where the same elements of the dominant class organize both production of commodities and reproduction of labor power, a system of paternalistic relations emerges, whereas when the two processes are separated, with one organized by the employer and the other by the state, a different system—competitive race relations—emerges.

One may ask one further question: What is the importance of the variation in the costs of labor-force renewal? Low-profit industry is dependent on the existence and perpetuation of institutions which reduce the costs of labor-force renewal for segments of the working class. At the same time, the economy as a whole, but particularly high-profit monopoly industry, is dependent on increasing levels of demand and therefore on increasing the costs of labor-force reproduction. This opposition of short-term need for reducing the cost of labor and long-term need for increased demand is partially resolved through the bifurcation of the working class (both in South Africa and the United States). With the expansion of capital, the opposition develops and the schism within the working class widens (Fuchs 1968, pp. 53, 61; Bluestone 1972). One segment of the labor force devotes more time and money to renewal processes, while the other struggles to maintain itself from day to day. The consequences may be observed in the diverse forms of family organization measured in terms of the relationship between renewal and maintenance activities.

I introduced race into the discussion and could equally well have extended the argument to relations between the sexes<sup>16</sup> to defend the thesis that it is not just the "powerlessness" which certain minority groups share but also their different modes of insertion into the reproduction of labor power which determines their group characteristics. That blacks have had less political power than whites means that they are more vulnerable to excessive exploitation, but this has been realized only through specific modes of reproduction of labor power on the plantation and in the ghetto. What differentiates women from blacks and both from migrants can ultimately be reduced to the different modes of reproduction of labor power in which they are engaged or their different relations to a single mode of reproduction. Interpreting the significance of these various modes of reproduction of labor power thrusts the discussion back to the relationship between the rate of exploitation and the rate of profit. I have repeatedly pointed out that the relationship between exploitation and profit is mediated by an ensemble of structures that reproduce not merely labor power but also the social relations characterizing capitalist production. Intensifying exploitation does not appear spontaneously but has to be created and re-created by modes of enforcement; it requires a more elaborate and costly apparatus of reproduction, or more specifically the expansion of the state, which in turn eats away at profits. Yet at the same time, a reduction in the rate of exploitation may generate greater consent, thereby allowing a relative contraction of the state and conceivably leading to an increase in the rate of profit. Here I can only raise what is a complex empirical and theoretical problem.

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<sup>16</sup> First, the family facilitates the expansion and contraction of capital through its dual function as labor reservoir and reproductive unit. Increased labor demands, as occasioned, for example, by wartime emergency, lead to the expansion of the state's role in the renewal process, as reflected in the increase in day-care centers (Kleinberg 1974) and the release of women for participation in the labor force. The allocation of women to low-paying jobs is premised upon the costs of maintenance and renewal in a family with two sources of income. Second, as with race relations, I would argue that relations between men and women are the *effects* of the articulation of primarily two types of structures: modes of production and modes of reproduction. To be sure, people can be distinguished by their anatomy or their color, but these only become socially significant when they are the basis of the allocation of individuals to specific sets of roles. What are perceived as characteristics of blacks or women are, not some primordial givens, but the effects of the particular positions they occupy in the social structure. A theory of relations between sexes or between races is first and foremost a theory of empty places in the structures of production and reproduction and only secondarily a theory of the allocation of individuals to those places.

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