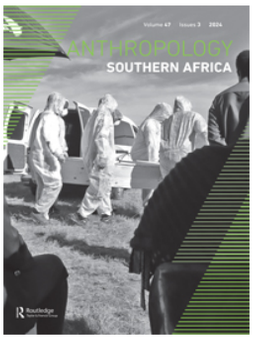

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Memorandum on the problem of farm labour (1937)

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In 1937, Max Gluckman submitted a memorandum to a commission of inquiry into the shortage of farm labour in South Africa. In the memorandum, he criticised the presumption that the government should induce African male migrants from the reserves to work on white-owned farms and sugar plantations as "wrong". Gluckman observed that African men preferred more prestigious and better paid work in the mines and towns. Rather than increase the number of farm workers, he recommended that farm owners improve the conditions and productivity of labour tenants already resident in these farms. This required providing better nutrition and health care, more courteous treatment, the efficient coordination of labour and mechanisation. This intervention had no impact on the Commission's report, and Gluckman's outspokenness might well have contributed to the Native Affairs Department's decision to revoke their permission for him to do further fieldwork in Zululand. This article reproduces the memorandum with only minor editorial corrections. In the introduction, Niehaus outlines the historical context in which Gluckman wrote the memorandum and shows how it provides crucial insights into his early career and his later pessimism about the prospects for applied anthropology.

Em 1937, Max Gluckman apresentou um memorando a uma comissão de inquérito sobre a escassez de mão de obra agrícola na África do Sul. No memorando, ele criticou como "errada" a presunção de que o governo deveria induzir migrantes africanos do sexo masculino oriundos das reservas a trabalhar em fazendas de propriedade de brancos e em plantações de cana de açúcar. Gluckman observou que os homens africanos preferiam trabalhos mais prestigiosos e bem remunerados nas minas e nas cidades. Em vez de aumentar o número de trabalhadores agrícolas, ele recomendou que os proprietários das fazendas melhorassem as condições e a produtividade dos rendeiros já residentes nessas fazendas. Isso exigia fornecer melhor nutrição e assistência médica, tratamento mais cortês, coordenação eficiente do trabalho e mecanização. Essa intervenção não teve impacto no relatório da Comissão, e a franqueza de Gluckman pode muito bem ter contribuído para a decisão do Departamento de Assuntos Nativos de revogar sua permissão para fazer mais trabalho de campo na Zululândia. Este artigo reproduz o memorando com apenas pequenas correções editoriais. Na introdução, Niehaus descreve o contexto histórico em que Gluckman escreveu o memorando e mostra como ele fornece insights cruciais sobre o início de sua carreira e seu posterior pessimismo sobre as perspectivas da antropologia aplicada.

Keywords: farm labour; history of anthropology; Max Gluckman; South Africa

Introduction

Over the past six years, significant strides have been made in comprehending the life, work and intellectual legacy of Max Gluckman (1911–1975).[1] Notably, Gordon's (2018) and Macmillan's (2024) exceptional intellectual biographies and Werbner's (2020) account of the Manchester school have shed light on his contributions. These works illustrate how he grappled with the conflicting demands of colonial situations during fieldwork and endeavoured to incorporate processes and broader political and economic frames in his ethnographic writings. They also underscore Gluckman's efforts to synthesise universalist and inter-contextual understandings of the human condition. Gluckman, arguably South Africa's most influential anthropologist,

courageously opposed settler colonial policies at a time and place when it was not expedient to do so. This earned him the respect and admiration of his peers.

However, these studies do not fully explore Gluckman's forays into applied anthropology. Here, I believe an analysis of the written memorandum he submitted to a commission of inquiry into the farm labour shortage in South Africa in 1937 is a useful point of departure. With the Royal Anthropological Institute's kind permission, I reproduce this unpublished document, with only minor editorial corrections, to make it available to a broader readership. I suggest that the memorandum provides crucial interests into Gluckman's early anthropological career, his vision of South Africa as a single social field and his subsequent pessimism about the potential of anthropological knowledge to shape the policies of (colonial) governments.

Max Gluckman was born during 1911 in Johannesburg's northern suburbs to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. His father, Emanuel, earned a reputation for his egalitarian outlook. As a lawyer, he sued Tshekedi Khama, the paramount chief of the Ngwato, on behalf of the Birwa people who had been forced to abandon their homes in Bechuanaland (Werbner 2020, 19–29). Emanuel also represented the well-known African trade unionist Clements Kadalie. Max's mother, Katie Cohen, devoted her energies to the South African Zionist Council.

Max studied anthropology, philosophy, economics, psychology and law at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As a student, he was widely known as a left-leaning liberal. He edited the student newspaper, served on the Student Representative Council and was elected to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) parliament. In the latter capacity, he served as leader of the Liberal Party and Chair of the Bantu Studies Department (Gordon 2014). In speeches, Max praised the Bakgatla people for admirably making social and political adjustments to a barren desert landscape, highlighted appalling poverty in the reserves and called for better education and improved amenities for urban Africans. He also regularly invited black speakers, such as Alfred Xuma, the African National Congress leader, to address students (Gordon 2018, 23–54, Macmillan 2024, 6–17).

In 1934, Max graduated with a B.A. Honours degree in social anthropology and won a Rhodes scholarship to pursue graduate studies at Oxford University's Exeter College. In less than two years, he wrote a 700-page, library-based D. Phil thesis titled "The Realm of the Supernatural among the Southeastern Bantu". But Max learned far more from Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes, with whom he attended Malinowski's famous Thursday seminars at the London School of Economics, than from his thesis supervisor, R.R. Marett. In October 1936, Max was awarded a grant by the South African Council of Social and Economic Research to do two years of fieldwork on the governmental system in Zululand. The Council sponsored general research into administrative problems. Jan Hofmeyr, the most liberal cabinet member in Hertzog and Smut's fusion government, took particular interest in the "interrelation of Zulu and European administration and control systems." Hofmeyr believed that Max's study could give South Africa's national government valuable information if they were prepared to act on it.[2]

Meanwhile, significant theoretical schisms emerged within anthropology, with South Africa as a central reference point. At the University of Cape Town, Radcliffe-Brown's theoretical approach focused on the interrelationship of events, networks of social relations and social structure (Niehaus 2024). Following his reasoning, Isaac Schapera and Winnifred Hoernlé, who taught Max at Wits, argued that South Africa comprised a single social field. Schapera (1935) stated that the colonial administrator, missionary and labour recruiter were essential members of the African tribe. Hoernlé argued that Africans were "being absorbed into a general South African system, which is being changed in the process of trying to absorb them."[3] These views diverged from those of Malinowski, who sought to study discreet cultures and saw the South African situation as one of "cultural contact".

These visions had different political implications. Radcliffe-Brown and his followers saw racial segregation as impossible and undesirable and were united in their opposition to Hertzog's

attempts to detribalise Africans. Malinowski, by contrast, supported the colour bar and was sympathetic to the concerns of Afrikaner nationalist anthropologists, such as his student P.G. Schoeman (Malinowski 1930, 1931; Niehaus 2017).

In her talk at the New Education Fellowship Conference in Johannesburg in 1934, Hoernlé (1934) condemned the South African government for depriving African children of scientific knowledge. She argued that the national educational system should "stimulate a healthy spirit of South African citizenship, which can animate both Black and White citizens." At the same conference, Malinowski called for African self-government. He argued that it is inappropriate to press for schooling, based on systems developed in Europe, "upon people in simple tribal conditions of Africa" (1936, 489). Such schooling estranged children from "traditions still controlling the tribe" (1936, 494) and raised dangerous ambitions that could not be satisfied. Instead, African children should be trained for the capacities in which they are to be employed. Fellow tribesmen should teach them in a manner congruent with traditional pedagogy. Hoernlé wrote to Max that Malinowski's talk was "somewhat of a disappointment" and that "he should be forced to take note of developments going on here in town." She also feared that his arguments might give educated Africans the impression that anthropology was hostile to them.[4]

Max was a firm exponent of the former viewpoint and chose to work in Zululand on Hoernlé's recommendation. Following the Anglo–Zulu war, the country was incorporated into colonial Natal. Zulu people lost large tracts of land to settlers and were prohibited from purchasing or renting land reserved for whites. Given the situation of diminishing rural resources, young men were compelled to secure a livelihood by labouring on white-owned farms and in the gold mines of the Witwatersrand (Gordon 2014, 162–163). During fieldwork, he used Hoernlé's connections. Hjalmar Braatvedt, Native Commissioner for the Nongoma, secured accommodation for him in the compound of Matolana Ndwandwe, a representative of the Zulu king, 19 miles from town. Here, he used Malinowski's method of participant observation. Max spoke Zulu, wore a *beshu* [hide flaps covering the buttocks], and became an accepted figure at law sessions, weddings and the cattle dip. His hut became a place where Zulu men drank beer and philosophised (see Gluckman 2014). To gain insight into the changing position of chiefship, Max studied "up" and "around" his immediate unit of study (Nader 1974, and Gordon 2013). Although only 26 years old, he accompanied Mshiyeni ka Dinizulu, regent for the Zulu king, to official functions and regularly transported him in his car.[5] Max also became well acquainted with the white officials in northern Zululand. He befriended the veterinary officer, Ronnie Rossiter, who had been two years above him at high school. He interviewed all magistrates in northern Zululand and discussed technical issues with stock inspectors and other officials of the Department of Agriculture. Max accompanied an inspector of native schools on his rounds, and an official of the Education Department collected hundreds of essays written by school children for him. He also used the Natal archives in Pietermaritzburg for several months.[6]

In September 1937, Max accompanied Mshiyeni to a meeting in the Nongoma courthouse, convened by a government commission investigating the crucial farm labour shortage. Mshiyeni complained that his people were being ejected from the farms where they were born and raised. Max submitted a written memorandum based on his research and readings of official reports to the commission. He strongly disagreed with the presupposition that the government should induce migrant labourers from the reserves to work on white-owned farms and sugar plantations. Max observed that because of low wages and bad treatment on the farms, migrants preferred to work in the mines and in town, where there was also a great demand for their labour. He postulated that it would be more feasible to solve the problem by converting labour tenants on the farms into a more productive and skilled workforce than by hiring additional workers. He argued that farm owners should improve workers' conditions, nutrition and pay, coordinate their labour more efficiently and mechanise production operations. When a sudden influx of labour was needed, farm owners could allow workers to arrange work parties, where they consumed sorghum beer. Max also dared to call

for better agricultural techniques and an end to excessive monocropping. In making this argument, Max did not cite but effectively reproduced Marx's classical distinction between "absolute" and "relative" surplus value (Marx 1867, 643–654).[7]

It is insightful to compare Max's memorandum with Malinowski's testimony to a Commission on British and Australian trade in the South Pacific (Malinowski 1916). The Commission contemplated greater use of Melanesian labour after the Chinese and Indian governments ceased to send indentured labourers to the plantations. Malinowski, who had already done a substantial chunk of fieldwork, observed that Melanesians were not keen to work for white men. Married men, who were in the habit of domesticity, were least likely to sign on. Others worked primarily for tobacco, and their adaptation to the plantations depended upon the helpfulness and firmness of their employers. He commented that employers need not provide Melanesian workers with family-based accommodation. Plantation workers liaised with women in nearby villages without annoying anyone. The non-recognition of links between intercourse and pregnancy inhibited accusations of adultery. Malinowski (1916) argued that Melanesians should best be left to their conditions. He nonetheless approved of attempts by colonial administrators to force them to plant coconut trees and make copra. This was in their best interests, as they had little grasp of any future perspective (Malinowski 1916, 8). Max was less inclined than Malinowski to emphasise the cultural otherness of workers and was more committed to modernist solutions.

Max's memorandum had virtually no impact on the commission's report to the South African parliament. The commissioners acknowledged that farm owners sometimes flogged and fined their employees, but absolved them of responsibility for the labour shortage. They concluded that an urban African elite made most allegations of ill treatment. The commissioners also suggested that many farm owners were too poor to improve the conditions of labourers. They recommended a slight increase in wages on the sugar plantations but saw the solution to the labour problem in the strict implementation of influx control, which limited the movement of workers from the farms to urban areas (Gordon 2018, 49–52).

Max's memorandum did, however, ruffle feathers. In 1939, when Max had already returned to Oxford, Harry Lugg, the chief Commissioner for Zululand, informed Hoernlé that he would not be allowed to return to Zululand. Lugg claimed that his department had received numerous complaints about Max's conduct. The complaints alleged that Max lived in a native kraal like a native, which made a terrible impression on both natives and government officials and he allowed students to ask questions about intimate affairs.[8]

Max wrote to Hoernlé that he feared for the future of anthropology in the Union since the government was unreceptive to the message "that something is wrong … with our treatment of the natives. I have argued this with some people who see in anthropology a hope of changing native policy … that the converse will invariably be true: Native policy will change anthropology." Max continued that he believed that the Union government would increasingly rely on Afrikaner nationalists, such as P.J. Schoeman, to justify government policies and train Native Commissioners "because he will lickspittle to the government, and we won't. They can be trusted either to see things in the right way or else to confine themselves safely to formal issues."[9]

Later in life, Max remained pessimistic about the prospects of applied anthropology, particularly in South Africa. In 1947, he questioned whether Malinowski's (1945) scheme for studying "culture contact" could have altered the government's land policy (Gluckman 1947, 105): "A government unmoved by the sufferings of thousands of people," he wrote, "is not likely to be moved by the petty chart of an anthropologist. Knowledge alone cannot make moral policy; it can easily serve an immoral one."

* * *

Memorandum on the problem of farm labour

Submitted to the commission enquiring into the shortage of native farm labour

H.M. Gluckmann, B.A. Hons (Rand.) D. Phil (Oxon.)

At the request of the Commissioners, I have the honour to submit the following memorandum on my evidence as given to the commission at Nongoma, Zululand, on the 15th October, 1937.

Before I pass on to my argument, I would like to make clear again my qualifications to give this evidence. Certain commissioners objected to my admittedly incomplete knowledge of conditions on farms and of agriculture. To them, I reply on the first point, that in addition to the sociological work I have done in Zululand[10], I speak on the basis of the long study of government and sociologists' reports (to which I cannot refer to in detail as they are not on hand), of discussions with veterinary and agricultural officers, and finally on what the farmers themselves say to me and are reported to say by the newspapers. To the second point, I finally reply by pointing out that one need not be a farmer to understand agricultural economics. An Afrikaans saying has it that 'even if I cannot myself lay eggs, I can still say why they are bad' [*Al kan ek nie self eiers lê nie, kan ek darem sê wanneer hulle vrot is*].

My main argument is that a labour problem can be solved in two ways.[11] Firstly, the labour force may be increased in numbers, and /or secondly, the output of each labourer may be increased. The productivity of labour can be increased in several ways. The physical condition of the labourer and his skill may be improved; he may be given better or more implements or machinery, the work of several labourers may be co-ordinated or rationalised. I shall deal at some length with both methods.

(1) The government obviously envisages a solution of our present labour problem by the first method as is indicated by the terms of reference of the Commission. It is the solution which naturally occurs to South Africans (as to employers of labour in places like India and China where there is plentiful supply of cheap unskilled labour) in view of the historical conditions under which South African farming, industry and mining have developed, i.e., on the basis of plentiful supply of cheap labour. All resolutions passed by the Farmers' Associations that I have seen reported in the newspapers are concluded in terms of the shortage of native labour.[12] ("Report of a Special Meeting of the Waschbank Farmers' Association" *Natal Advertiser and Daily News* 25/10/1937, Annual Congress of the Free State Agricultural Union, reported agenda *Rand Daily Mail* 12/8/1937). The conditions that allowed this huge supply of cheap unskilled native labour no longer exist, for there is a total shortage. There is a shortage of native labour in mining. In the industry as well as on the farms, this shortage is likely to be greater if Mr P.M. Anderson, Chairman of the Native Recruiting Corporation, is correct in estimating that at the end of 1938, no fewer than 350 000 (native labourers) will be required on the mines. There is no possibility of obtaining these additional natives from any source other than areas north of latitude 22 degrees south. He continues to mention the competition offered "by the increased demand for native labour by other employers throughout the country." (Reported, *Natal Advertiser and Daily News* 27/10/1937).

It is clear, therefore, that attempts to import farm labour from outside the Union will also probably be frustrated by the more attractive conditions to mine labourers, and in addition by the greater ability of the mines to bear the costs of importation.

It may be noted that all Farmers' Associations seem agreed that the main cause (I myself think one of the many causes) of the farm labour shortage is the extra monetary inducement offered to natives to work in the mines and in the towns. No one can deny that no intelligent reserve native would prefer working on a farm to the better wages, better housing and food, and (this is very important) the glamour of working at a labour centre, such as Johannesburg, especially in the mines. In my personal experience in Zululand, natives tell me they only go to the sugar plantations because these are close, and they can work there for a short time and return home. After every one of my conversations with natives on this point, they have concluded by telling me that they want to work in Johannesburg (preferably as domestic servants). They all stated that they did not like working in sugar cane.

The tendency of natives not to go out of the Reserves to work on farms and try to escape from farm to towns and mines has been explained by them as being due to the poor wages they are paid and the bad treatment they receive. I know that natives, like most Europeans, tend to complain whenever questioned but I go not only on what they say to me (and it must be remembered that I live with them in their homes) but also on what I hear them saying among themselves. The Commission heard the native grievances stated by Nongoma, Hlabisa and Mhlabatini chiefs; the contrast between farm and mine labour conditions was brought out for me in a conversation with an important induna. I asked him, "Why don't the Zulu work on the farms?" He replied, "The Boers are angry, they trouble us, they don't pay money." Immediately afterwards, he described with gusto how he worked as a boss boy in the mines and earned £7–10 [shillings]-0 [pence] a month.[13]

The constant complaint of all Zulu I know is directed specially against the Boers (representing the farmers), as contrasted with the English, is that they not only are worse off materially under the Boers, but are also worse treated. I must emphasise this last point: the native does resent strongly bad personal treatment. An important Zulu chief contrasted for me (perhaps incorrectly) British rule for me in the Protectorates and Rhodesia with the treatment of natives in the Union. "We are troubled here. It is all right in Swaziland, Basutoland and Rhodesia. The English rule there. Here a native is good enough to cook the white man's food, to clean his shoes, to brush his clothes. The white people tax the native — his dogs, his women, per head. Why? I see that I must pay allegiance to the white people. The people who did not become subject to Shaka were killed. So, it is with those who do not recognise the sovereignty of the government … It makes no difference who is on top, the King, Hertzog, Smuts, we are underneath, we are killed, we are shot, we are beaten, we are insulted." The climax is perhaps insignificant. This statement of the chief's may be contrasted with a declaration by a Mr Goosen at the Waschbank Farmers' Association Meeting, "that a farmer who handles his natives well and treated them considerately, was never short of labour." How far Mr Goosen's experience can be generalised I cannot say: a similar point of view has been advanced to me by several farmers who claimed that they themselves, and other farmers they know, who treated their natives well were never short of labour.

Certain members of the Commission objected to my evidence on this point, claiming that it was hearsay and asking me for statistics of how many farmers treated their labourers badly. I replied then that I obviously could not give these statistics, that in my limited knowledge 90% of the farmers I know did not treat their labourers well. A government agricultural supervisor said that at a minimum estimate he would say 60% of farmers treated their natives badly. These Commissioners maintained that the farmer was sufficient of a businessman to treat his natives well. That does not seem to be borne out by Mr Goosen's statement quoted above, which must be made in contrast to general conditions. In any event, I stress here, as I did before the Commission, that even if the natives are incorrect in thinking that most farmers treat their servants badly (and this opinion is held by the Native Economic Commission of 1932 and many Europeans), while only a few farmers, as the natives readily admit, treat their servants well. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that this native opinion as a social belief undoubtedly affects the supply of labour from the reserves to the farmers. The Zulu social belief that most farmers (some Zulu speak of all farmers) treat their servants badly is held by all natives. Actual relationships between farmers and natives take place between individuals, so that, even if most farmers treat their natives well, a particular native will be convinced that a particular farmer is a good master, the belief of other natives about that farmer and of that native about other farmers remains unaffected. They do not, perhaps cannot, generalise from their experienced exception to the socially excepted belief to the conclusion that the socially accepted belief may be wrong. Perhaps I can make my point clearer by a comparison. There exists a belief among many Christians that all Jews, as a class, have an unpleasant, even vicious, character. Every one of these Christians may know a few Jews whom he, significantly, regards as "nice Jews", but he may not therefore think that perhaps, if he knew them, he would find that all Jews could be decent, and that the social legend of Jewish viciousness

is incorrect. Since this is so of native opinion about farmers, it is clear that this is a fact to be considered. It may, even if incorrect, be more difficult to counter than remedying a few actual cases of ill treatment would be.

I maintain therefore that it is in many ways irrelevant whether or not the farm labourer is badly treated. That on the whole he is I still believe. Otherwise why should the farm native hesitate to return from a labour centre to his farm when the reserve native gladly comes back to his farm in the reserve even if work on the farm is harder. And there are so many acts to punish absentee native farm labourers that there surely are many of them.

The above analysis has been made to apply to the flow of native labour from the reserves (Zululand in particular) to the farms. That flow of labour is free. The farmers complain that nearly all of it goes to the mines and towns instead of the farms. Some, we have seen, go to the sugarcane belt because it is close at hand and, of course, natives rejected for service in the mines go there. Mr Braatvedt, Native Commissioner at Nongoma, has mentioned to me privately and publicly stated to the Commission that in his experience, sugar planters who treated their labourers well got a plentiful supply of labour, and this may apply to another individual farmer, especially near reserves. That is, in the competition for labourers offering themselves for farm service, the farmer who treats his servants well gets labour at the expense of the farmer who treats them badly, but undoubtedly in competition with mine and other town labour, the dice is weighed against the farmer. It must be remembered that though we commonly speak of the flow of labour in economic terms, the economic inducements to the labourer to go to a certain place can be analysed into more fundamental needs and desires to be satisfied. The native gets better wages, better food and housing, medical attention etc. at the mines. In addition, he is influenced into going there by such factors as the desire to gain prestige among his fellows by having gone to eGoli (the gold mines), by the tradition of most of his older, as well as contemporary, fellows having been there; by the fact that girls prefer to court with men who have been to the glamorous labour centres; by the facilities offered by the Native Recruiting Corporation; by the desire for change and travel, to see sights and wonders of city life, to do some work other than the agricultural labour he performs in the reserves.

It may therefore be impossible to affect largely this free flow of labour by legislative measures such as those proposed by various Farmers' Associations. For example, a proposal was put before and carried by the Free State Agricultural Union that poll tax on farm labourers be reduced to 10/- (shilling), and poll tax on location natives by increased to 25/- (shilling) per annum. And of course, it may be further questioned whether such measures to affect the flow of labour to most profitable enterprises are economically or nationally sound, i.e., whether it is in the interests of the community as a whole to try to change or to force the flow of labour from enterprises on which our national economy depends into less productive channels. I should therefore conclude this analysis of the supply of labour from the reserves by stating that in my opinion the facts prove that it is not only impossible but also hopelessly wrong, if the interests of the whole South African community are considered, to try to influence reserve natives to go to farm labour instead of to the mines or industries.

However, as contrasted with the flow of free labour from the reserves, most farmers (except for some sugar and wattle planters) largely depend on labour which is bound to the soil, like the serfs of feudal times who are *glebae adscripti*. That is, on labourers who live on the farm and have to give work for various periods in return for the rights of residence, grazing and cultivation. (Most farmers do give their labourers some food, some clothing and sometimes wages.) Many farmers complain today that their labourers try to escape from the farms to the towns, preferring to work there, and suggest more vigorous application of pass laws, the Masters and Servants Act etc., to prevent the loss of labour. Some farmers have even suggested additional legislation to me. I would suggest if all the laws which at present seek to keep labourers on their farms are not successful, applying these laws more vigorously or passing new laws cannot help.

The only explanation for the continued escape from the farms must be that all the measures taken to prevent it do not take cognisance of the facts causing the escape and, therefore, cannot affect it. The farmers themselves admit some of the causes of the escape of labour and should, therefore, admit that only dealing with the causes will stop the escape. It is here, in my opinion, that we must consider statements such as that made by Mr Goosen. Paying some wages and according better treatment in general to the farm labourers is the only effective way (short of enslavement and if enslaved they must get extra goods in addition to the rights listed above) of inducing them to give their period of service on the farms. For finally it must be realised that the farm native does not regard the rights to reside, to graze his cattle and to cultivate land on the farm as a reward; to him they are rights which he inherited from his fathers and to which he is entitled without having to give a return for them.

(2) I have now to consider the second method of solving the farm labour problem, viz., increasing the productivity of each worker and I propose to do so by suggesting several ways in which this can be done.

Firstly, the physical condition of the workers can be improved. Investigations made by a social anthropologist in Swaziland, and by a bio-chemist in Transkei, show that the natives of those territories suffer from malnutrition. I myself think that the Zulu do not have an adequately balanced diet and think I have distinguished some deficiency diseases amongst them. For the observations I cannot claim certitude, as I am still waiting from a doctor to confirm them. But living as I do among the Zulu I come day by day into contact with people suffering from pulmonary and rheumatic troubles, from venereal disease, from intestinal parasites, from malaria and with women suffering from diseases of the womb. Even a layman with but a little of medical knowledge can make these observations. From what I have seem of farm natives their condition is, if anything, worse than that of the reserve natives. It is necessary then, in order to increase their capacity for work first of all to see that they have an adequate diet. (I realise that many farmers themselves do not have an adequate diet.) Clothing and shelter and warmth must be provided to prevent rheumatic and pulmonary troubles, and a measure of medical attention to counter malaria, venereal diseases and other diseases. This would also reduce the number of days when a native is unable to work owing to illness, as well as increasing the worker's vitality. The Europeans in general have an idea that all natives are lazy, unintelligent, untrustworthy, dirty and desire to be drunk. Natives who are not are exceptions, who do not, to the holders of these beliefs, invalidate the general rule, and "the old Dutch remedy" of the *sjambok* (as it is described to me by farmers) may be applied to cure a native who is indolent from disease rather than laziness. Such a cure is calculated perhaps to lower rather than raise his vitality. (On this point of the physical condition of farm labourers medical and dietetic research is still required.)

Secondly, the psychological factors must be improved. Of these the most important is the relationship of master and servant. The most economically satisfying employee-employer relationships have been proved to be those which are cordial in all big enterprises in Europe and in America and if farmers reduced unnecessary interference with their labourer's recreations and social life, and also in their personal dealings with natives dealt more courteously, they are likely to get more willing, and therefore better, work out of their labourers. I have been assured by farmers to whom I put this point that the natives only work for the man who treats them harshly, but I can cite against this farmers and town-dwellers who treat their servants well and get good work out of them. It is significant that the first type of treatment cannot be relaxed. It is, too, an unsatisfactory way of handling labourers to deny them the right to a satisfactory measure of recreation, be it beer drinks (I have never seen a drunken beer party in the reserves) and weddings and other celebrations. Moreover, if farm labourers want to go to church, or to establish a school, they should not be obstructed (*vide* Dr Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest*) (Hunter 1936). The employer should attempt to meet his labourers' reasonable demands. Thus, for example, if the labour tenancy system is continued, provision should be made for a certain proportion to work this six month

and then be free to go to the labour centres, while others return to take their place. Finally, the psychological stimuli for increasing salaries, of bonuses etc., for efficiency and trustworthiness must be employed here as in other industries.

Thirdly, the productivity of workers can be increased by giving them better implements and machinery. I appreciate that acquiring these is dependent on capital, and as land in South Africa is overvalued so farming is under capitalised. As a sociologist, I see the problem; it is for the Department of Agriculture, economists and others to solve it. It is clear, however, that the industrial shortage must be partly remedied by entrepreneurs putting in more machinery and not remaining dependent upon pure manual labour. On the farms, for instance, smaller areas, made productive by fertilising, could be ploughed, which would require less labour.

Fourthly, labour can be co-ordinated and rationalised. The problem is another which the sociologist can see, but which must be solved by agricultural experts. The sorts of questions to be answered here are those such as: are three men doing the work two could do, are three men taking two days to do the work two men could do in two and a half days; is the labour planned so as to have a minimum waste of time in moving from one field to another, from one activity to another etc.

Fifthly, the skills of the workers can be improved. They must be taught to plough, to trap, to strip bark more skilfully, etc. There is no doubt that some men work more quickly than others and this depends on skill as well as on strength. Ultimately, the farmer's aim should be to train good agricultural workers instead of the haphazard cultivators most of them employ today, and by paying fewer men more encourage the development of skill by not increasing labour costs unduly.

Sixthly, in order to solve the problems of agricultural work, which requires a sudden impact of labour not required at other times (e.g., at reaping), much can be done by means of cooperation by neighbouring farmers. I suggest that here a lesson might be learned from the reserve natives. They have certain undertakings, such as moving of villages, which cannot be performed without the assistance of neighbours, and other undertakings like weeding, which are more expeditiously performed by working parties. By providing beer after the work, the host makes a social gathering about unpleasant labour which is made more cheerful by songs and social gossip. It is surely possible for neighbouring farmers to concentrate their labourers by them and for the host to provide beef and beer to encourage the workers. I can safely say that after watching these working parties in the reserves, that similar working parties on the farms, with their competitive spirit, the gathering of natives, of friends and relatives, with the provision of meat and beer at the end, would lead to expeditious work. Similar gatherings are successful in Europe.

I conclude therefore, as at the end of my analysis of the method of attracting and keeping farm labourer, that the problem must be approached by paying better wages, and granting the natives better physical and social treatment and, in addition, the skills of the natives must by increased and that they must be given the benefits of technical improvements in agriculture, as agricultural workers are in Europe. The end aimed at now should be smaller better paid and kept, and more skilful labour force.

Here again, when I advanced this solution to farmers, I have been countered by the traditional picture of the natives. He is said to have a different brain from ours, which is denied by modern psychologists and sociologists; to be incapable of acquiring skill which is denied by colour-bar legislation; to be eminently untrustworthy, which belief is defended by all types of reasoning such as that one must conclude that if two trustworthy natives fell from grace after many years of good behaviour, that one lapse invalidates all those years and brands their whole people. There is no inherent bar, though I recognise there are many social difficulties to carrying out the policy I have advocated.

Two further points are implicit in the above argument. The first is that it assumes that the European farmer is efficient. In fact, unfortunately this is not true of many of them. The frequent reply to my argument for better conditions and wages for farm labourers is that the farmer cannot

afford it. If this is ultimately true, if drought, pest, poor soil etc. weigh so heavily on many South African farmers that they cannot pay their way, it might be best to try to divert their energies to other enterprises. But reports of the Department of Agriculture have been borne out for me by discussions with veterinary and agricultural officers: many farmers are not working efficiently. For example, they farm only one crop, or farm in ways unsuitable to their area. Ranching might be extended. For example, Mr Vermaak, President of the Dundee Agricultural Society, said that "it is still questionable whether farmers are justified in exporting such vast quantities of maize when tens of thousands of cattle and sheep die from lack of nourishment in drought years. The income derived from maize export is nothing compared with the colossal losses from stock which are dying from hunger. It is obvious that farmers have not yet learned this lesson, and instead of benefiting by bitter experience, still show a lack of interest in their business." (*Natal Advertiser* and *Daily News* 28/10/1937). The Department for Agriculture has advocated this for many years. In short, the problem with inefficient farm labour is bound up with inefficient farming and its ultimate solution with the solution of our agricultural problems.

The second point implied is that South Africa undertakes a national labour policy. At present, both the government and the Chamber of Mines are opposing this. South Africa is attempting to evade an adaptation which Britain and other European countries, which America and Japan had to make when they became industrialised, viz., converting agricultural and primitive workers into miners and mechanicians. Until it is recognised that we must turn our native labour into skilled specialists (even at semi-skilled labour), our mining industry and farming must be inefficient. It is absurd to try to turn an economy on workers who are half miners and half farmers, not good miners and not good farmers. The end aimed at in mining as in farming should be smaller, more skilful and better paid labour force. As regards the mines, this implies encouraging natives to settle in the mining areas with their families and paying them a wage so that they can support their families without requiring assistance from a rural background, as some are already trying to do. In these settled families there would develop a tradition of mining and a skill handed on to sons, as happened in England. It would pay the mines to employ this skilful labour at higher wages (costs such as recruiting, of feeding etc., could be reduced). The attraction for farm labour to go to the mines would therefore be removed. Ultimately, it also implies a development of a native peasantry in the reserves with no need to go to the labour centres which could not absorb them, subsisting and earning money where they live. Such measures would require an adaptation to the peasantry to our economy into which they have been drawn, an adaptation which they avoid by earning part of the year at labour centres while at home in the reserves they maintain obsolete standards which the government attempts uselessly to combat by suggesting such measures as the reduction of lobola, etc. A further benefit would be that the cessation of the vast labour flow from the reserves would help to check that deterioration of the reserves of which the Native Economic Commission wrote so forcefully. I cannot go fully into this point in this memorandum, but hope that I have made clear that the problem to be considered by the Commission ultimately implies specialisation of better paid native labour on the farms; in mining and industry; rationalisation of our industry and agriculture; and the development of a native peasantry in the reserves. These in my opinion are facts that cannot be avoided whatever legislation government passes and the present policy of segregation should be adapted in the light of them.

This I consider to be the policy which government should encourage as ultimately most beneficial for the community as a whole. I cannot think of intermediate measures to alleviate the present difficulties which have resulted from historical developments. I suggested to the commission that they might investigate, and perhaps recommend, the closing of unproductive channels at present open to native labour. One which immediately springs to mind is riksha pulling. I put this before the Commission in my evidence: it is clear that these are largely wasted labour, much as many London taxi drivers are. Many men sit about for most day doing nothing, and in the end might have taken one load three miles. The work is also said to undermine the men's health.

Other unproductive forms of labour are the present method of transporting material by hand carts pushed by natives; the method of raising bricks on buildings.

In conclusion, I repeat that whilst I see these ultimately beneficial policies, I recognise the difficulties in adopting them. These difficulties exist among both the Europeans and the natives and in history and the geographical conditions of South Africa. Chief of these difficulties is social inertia; others are vested interests and social values; preconceived ideas, prejudices and modes of thought; there are financial difficulties, and the ever-present difficulties involved in social adjustment. But difficulties like these have been overcome in other countries and it is hopeless trying to dodge them. They must be faced. If they are not, the labour problem, and the other problems of which it is part, are then insoluble.

I wish respectfully to submit these facts and suggestions to be considered by the Commission and hope they will be of some value to it.

(Signed) H.M. Gluckmann,

Nongoma, November 1st, 1937

Notes

1. Gluckman changed his surname by deed poll during the late 1930s by removing the second 'n'.
2. See Letter A.W. Hoernlé to H.M. Gluckman, 1 June 1936, Gluckman Papers, Royal Anthropological Institute Archive.
3. Letter, A.W. Hoernlé to H.M. Gluckman, 2 October 1934. Gluckman Papers, Royal Anthropological Institute Archive.
4. Letter, A.W. Hoernlé to H.M. Gluckman, 2 October 1934.
5. At the time, the South African government did not acknowledge Zulu kingship and merely recognised Mshiyeni as acting chief of the Usuthu "tribe".
6. Letter H.M. Gluckman to A.W. Hoernlé, 7 November 1939, Gluckman Papers, Royal Anthropological Institute Archive.
7. Max may have been acquainted with Marx's writings during his earlier economics studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. However, his use of Marx does not imply any ideological commitment, at least not at this stage of his life.
8. Letter A.W. Hoernlé to H.M. Gluckman, 3 November 1939. Gluckman Papers. Royal Anthropological Institute Archive.
9. Letter H.M. Gluckman to A.W. Hoernlé, 7 November 1939.
10. Gluckman's description of his work as "sociological" shows his allegiance to the theoretical approach of Radcliffe-Brown, Hoernlé and Schapera. Following Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown placed social relations — rather than cultures — as the object of study and perceived anthropology as "comparative sociology" (see Radcliffe-Brown 1940).
11. Gluckman included only one endnote to his memorandum, "I have not considered the alternative solution of reducing production."
12. The noun natives was commonly used in South Africa and other settler colonial societies at the time to denote the descendants of Indigenous people who resided in the country prior to the arrival of European and Asian immigrants. Through time, the noun acquired negative connotations. For example, the South African Native National Congress changed its name to the African National Congress in 1923.
13. Until the introduction of the Rand as currency in 1961, South Africa used a non-decimal system of British pounds, shillings and pence. One pound was divided into twenty shillings, and one shilling was divided into twelve pence.

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