Claim 5: Black Wellbeing

That black South Africans are materially better-off in economic terms than blacks elsewhere in Africa.

The Facts Although this issue is irrelevant to the real contention about apartheid, since the central issue is the disparity in rights and conditions between racial groups in the same country, the claim that South African blacks are economically better-off than people elsewhere in Africa is frequently made by Pretoria's propagandists and surrogates. It also appears to carry some weight in Western business circles. Since this claim serves Pretoria at least as a confusing or distractive tactic, it should not merely be dismissed as irrelevant but branded as untrue.

The ascertainable facts indicate that in terms of earnings per capita South African blacks are materially worse off than the citizens of at least 12 other countries in Africa — Kenya, Gabon, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Niger, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe and Botswana. The device through which Pretoria inflates the relevant statistics is to take the earnings of blacks in the predominantly industrial 'white-zoned' regions of South Africa, which though low are in some cases higher than in a number of other African states, as the representative sample and to present these averaged out, excluding the figures relating to many rural and Bantustan regions which it has declared 'foreign territory'. In this way it deducts the real poverty of most of South Africa's blacks, who are regarded as 'non-citizens'. The result is a grossly inflated image of black earnings. But if the real total of black South Africans is included in an economic analysis, South Africa scores far lower in black earnings than would be expected of a country with rich mineral resources, advanced agriculture and developed industries.

The same use of selective arithmetic is discernible in Pretoria's claim that more than a million foreign Africans come to South Africa for employment. According to *South Africa Report* (March 22, 1985) detailed figures given by Minister Gerrit Viljoen reveal that 944,440 of these 'foreigners' are in fact black South Africans deemed to belong to the 'independent homelands' of Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana.

The Physical Quality of Life Index also gives South Africa a low rating. This index, devised as a truer measure of a country's economic performance in terms of its citizens' living standards than per capita gross national product, measures infant mortality, literacy, education, and nutrition standards. *In terms* *of this index, black South Africans are worse off than people in more than 20 African countries.* Indeed, although South Africa has the most developed infrastructure in Africa, it has in the international context one of the lowest PQLI ratings in its comparable group of countries, coming second-last to Turkey.

In 1984, the Carnegie Corporation published the findings of a comprehensive two-year survey of poverty in South Africa, carried out by more than 300 academically-supervised researchers under strict scientific disciplines directed by Dr Francis Wilson.* The survey established that blacks in South Africa's rural areas have among the world's highest incidences of the malnutrition diseases, kwashiorkor and marasmus; that nearly half South Africa's 25 million blacks live below the minimum subsistence level; that one-third of black children under 14 years of age are underweight and stunted in growth, and that in percentage terms *the infant mortality rate is higher in South Africa than in such countries as Mozambique, Mexico and Cuba.*

Conclusion **While there is widespread international knowledge and concern over the political suppression of black South Africans, there is insufficient knowledge abroad of their economic suffering.**

* *Survey on Poverty in South Africa, Carnegie Corporation, New York, 1984*