CHAPTER 11

"THE CONSTRAINTS OF EVERY DAY LIFE: WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND PROLETARIAN POLITICS IN MKHUMBANE, *1950-1958*"

Daily Household Routines

The struggle to maintain as secure a life as possible in the face of increasingly difficult circumstance assumed a primary importance for the Mkhumbane proletariat. Having neither security of tenure, suitable residential facilities nor the required material and technological means to improve residential life, residents were compelled to focus directly on the pressing tasks of shack life. As a consequence, daily life became structured around a set of daily routines whereby residents endeavoured both to maintain shack life and gain an increasing measure of social stability within the shantytown. These routines assumed primary importance and produced an social unity based on the commonality of daily experiences. It was these experiences which provided the basis for the many, often contradictory, ideas so vital to both working-class and proletarian culture.

Within these structures of everyday life lay the roots of an emerging sense of working class unity and struggle within the shacklands. The working class of Mkhumbane rapidly realized that their relationships to both others within the shacklands and in the city at large were characterized by an enduring exploitation. It was not just that others in Mkhumbane, the municipality and employers were vindictive or domineering. Tstosi bands were a menace and the shacklords were predatory. Likewise municipal officials and employers of African labour had little regard for the wishes of ordinary shackland residents. But for the working class of Mkhumbane the issues were seen in far more fundamental terms.

Within the proletarian populism of the later 1940s, Mkhumbane residents had attempted to sustain a level of community unity based around the desire to establish an alternate society within the city. The ability of any unwanted external authority to exercise power over the shack residents was to be opposed. Within this shackland area, the residents were determined to establish their claim to ownership of both land and property, but on terms very much of their own making. Their attempts to accomplish these aims had failed. The visible manifestations of this failure were the rise of the new entrepreneurs and the increasing role of the municipality within the shacklands.

However, within a developing working class consciousness, the rising power of entrepreneurs and the municipality were simply some of the indications of more deeper structures of exploitation. Central to this consciousness was an awareness of the very many ways in which working class life in Mkhumbane was linked directly to structures of capital accumulation and power in the city. Mkhumbane was not separate from the city. Further, in many ways both the state, capital and African workers were struggling over their ability to exercise control over the very same issues. On the one hand, the African working class had accepted their permanent involvement within the industrializing city, but sought to gain further advantage within the city. For the state

and capital the issues was viewed in very similar terms: both wanted to restructure African residential and working lives so as to create a new African working class.

Further the manifestations of this struggle were clearly apparent both in the shacklands and the city in general. Within the city, both the state and capital were in the very process of altering conditions of work, pay, residence and legal city status. In Mkhumbane, the municipality had acquired ownership of the land and made it very clear that Africans would not be given future land and housing ownership rights in Mkhumbane. Within the Emergency Camp the municipality had fostered the growth of a trading class. Whereas during the later 1940s housing ownership and tenancy relationships and customer and seller relationships had been highly complex and ambiguous, social relations within the shacklands during the 1950s were certainly more straight forward. Land was owned by the municipality, housing mainly by shacklords and selling conducted by a new entrepreneur class.

As a result, rooted in the very nature of everyday life in the shacklands came a growing sense of working class unity and a desire to both defend and promote the interests of this African working class. However, again from the very nature of everyday life in Mkhumbane came the contradictory forces which both constrained working class perceptions and seemed to impel all shack residents to unite in defense of Mkhumbane.

There were many sturdy shacks in these settlements, but most were haphazardly constructed. Residents recall that builders would often use "as few nails as possible and so the walls would start to move around."[1] Former residents remember seeing the shack builders making deals with itinerant African hawkers, who with their horses and carts would enter the shantytowns and sell to shack-builders the sheet iron and planking, often stolen from construction sites, and dumped debris. James Sithole recalls that "we would look at this and the next moment we would be living in all of that same stuff. It was too terrible."[2] Most rooms were poorly ventilated, rarely having more than one small window. In some cases shack rooms only had windows which faced into another room.[3]

As a result of the need to erect dwellings quickly, the low level of expertise, and inadequate building materials, shacks required constant maintenance. Shabalala recalls that "over the weekend you could see all the men getting boys to help them with the rooms. Putting this right, putting this in and digging pits. We needed to keep making the houses right and nice."[4] The most important tasks were to maintain the earth banking and drainage culverts around the house, replace defective wall or roof material, often rotten or riddled with white ants, and to block gaps between wall panels and between walls and roofs. The earth banking and drainage culverts were particularly vulnerable to erosion during summer rains, and if not effectively maintained could

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1. Interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 21 April 1985.
2. Interview with Mr J Sithole, 29 November 1985.
3. See for example MNAD; H/2 CM, vol 4; diagram of shacks on Sub 101 of MB4 of Cato Manor 812.
4. Interview with Mr T Shabalala, 31 June 1985.

threaten the stability of the house itself. Residents were reluctant to cut into long sheets of corrugated iron to create window spaces and would constantly try and block up, either with sacking or newsprint, the gaps between roof and wall paneling. Charles Khumalo remembers the hardship:

> When Mr Shum and then Mr Loquet ... came on visits they would tell us that 'This place is too stuffy. You cannot live like this. And look at the smoke! And you smoke too. No!' Mr Shum was right but you see ... you are foolish to cut a nice piece or iron up and if you leave the holes in the iron then the wind comes right in and this is not good, especially if you have babies sleeping.[5]

Residents would also often attempt to effect certain basic modifications to the rooms. Constructing chimneys, placing glass in open windows and raising the door levels so as to prevent rain and mud from seeping into the rooms, homes could be made more habitable.[6] During Colin Shum's period as superintendent of the Emergency Camp, residents were given supplies of paint which they were encouraged to use in painting shack exteriors. A booklet drawn up by Colin Shum and intended for distribution amongst residents referred to this:

> The (Cato Manor Welfare and Development) Committee arranged for lime to paint and make fresh your homes. Everybody must by now have seen the houses painted especially at Draaihoek, Paton Road, Thusini, Mjafete and New Look. All the houses in Umkhumbane will be painted in time. How soon depends on how quickly you make use of the lime and the brushes which have been placed at you disposal.[7]

Residents recall this assistance with unqualified praise. To many residents the provision of paint "served as proof that we were living, that Kwa Muhle was there for us", and that through painting their houses "we could have houses which looked like the European houses in Durban. All painted and nice."[8] However, because the Native Administration Committee refused to allow expenditure on paint to be charged against the Native Revenue Account, provision of paint and brushes was halted after only a few areas had been supplied.[9]

Along with the tasks of daily or weekly shack maintenance came the need to maintain pit privy latrines. With the poor absorption of the ecca shale ground formation, pit privy latrines were constantly having to be relocated. As Khumalo remembers,

> We, the men had to dig lots of holes. Now it is not like on the farms where you can leave your shithouse a long way from the house and it can just stay there. No in Cato Manor these things had to be watched carefully otherwise they would fill up quickly. And it was close to the house because there are lots of people living around it.[10]

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5. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 7 July 1985.
6. PNAD, photographic archive.
7. Shum Papers; Notice to the Residents of Mkhumbane, n.d.
8. Interview with Mr M Mcanyana, 19 July 1985.
9. Personal communication, Mr C N Shum.
10. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 7 July 1985.

As the settlement grew more dense, it became progressively more difficult to locate pit privy latrines at a reasonable distance from the shacks. However, with the paucity of municipal ablution and toilet facilities, the municipality was never able to eradicate pit privies which, because of the overcrowding inside the Emergency Camp, would continue to pose a serious threat to health in the area.

Despite the appalling living conditions in the shantytowns, to the best of their ability residents strove to "make things as comfortable as possible", and sought ways to improve housing conditions."[11]

The interior fittings in many shack rooms reflected this desire. Floors were invariably made out of compacted mud which was continually polished. The walls would be papered over with newspaper, stuck on with a mixture of flour and water. Furniture might comprise a steel divan, small table, bench, storage space constructed from bricks and wooden planks, and radios or gramophones.[12] Furnishings could be purchased from commercial concerns who, whilst charging exhorbitant "easy terms", provided a service which facilitated the rapid establishment of residents' domestic arrangements.[13] Furniture could also be purchased from the various tinkers and carpenters operating in the area, or be made from off-cutts of wood. Clothing would be hung from rope or wire lines strung between walls. In addition to the normal eating and cooking utensils, space would often be made for "special crockery": "It was important for us to have our china for important occasions. It should be put in a place where people could see this and then they know that we are a proper house." Walls would be adorned with pictures of marriage photographs or the "very popular pictures of us men in our uniform from the war."[14] Mrs Phewa explains the significance of such adornments in a way which expresses the desire for dignity and respectability within what is clearly a working class perspective:

> You can have pictures from Drum on the wall. And old calendars. Pictures of ships, and us 'Bantu' ... in the hills, but if you want to be proper you must have your marriage, your children and your daddy during the war. People must see this, you are not tsotsi. And when the man comes in the door he must see it so that he does not go after other women![15]

Residents were antagonistic towards the municipality for refusing to provide improved facilities and highly critical of local African shackowners.

Shacklords would often verbally abuse those complaining about the inadequacy of their accommodation. Often shacklords' denial of responsibility seemed to residents to negate residents' desire to have access to those residential facilities available to White residents of Durban. As Thomas Ndlovu recalls,

> When you go to the owner and say 'u Baba, look at this place. Look at the roof, look at the walls. This needs to be repaired. Please could you see to this matter.' Then he just looks at

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11. Interview with Mrs T Phewa, 7 July 1985. See also interview with Mrs E Africa, 16 May 1979
12. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 19 July 1985.
13. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 5 December 1959
14. Interview with Mr C K
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> you, puts his hands in his belt like a swank and talks to you like a child, nice and quietly, but he knows that other people are listening. 'Now look Ndlovu, there are many people living here. None of us are special. If you want to go and live in a hotel, then this is what you must do. If you want to stay here, then you must not complain.You are not a White man.'[16]

Recollections of shacklord behaviour also reveal class tension in the shantytowns. Shacklords "tell you off if you wear pyjamas and he does not. Or if you have a car, or a radio. 'Do not play that thing too loud.' There would be fights over this but you had to keep quiet." The fact that many of the shack leaders were involved with the ANC did not escape critical comment.[17]

For most residents, the basic food staples were cereal products, especially rice and maize meal, legumes, other types of vegetable, fruit, milk and meat and fats. Some of these products were grown in the many small gardens which surrounded some of the houses. Some of the residents had wooden "safes" in which to store perishable goods, but most people purchased perishables on a daily basis.[18] Meat would often be purchased in bulk, cut into long strips, salted and spiced and then hung from the roof inside the shack to dry. Thembankosi Phewa remembers how the meat would be prepared: "Often the meat was not very nice. Tough. Very tough. So you would have to cut it up, hammer it down flat. With a hammer or stone and then put lots of curry into it and then hang it up."[19] Spices could be obtained from any of the general dealers operating in the area or from the spice distributors, known as 'Kwa Curry', who operated from premises located at the corner of Booth and Dunbar Roads.[20]

Many also kept livestock. In the yards around the shacks, residents would erect coops for poultry, and tether pigs, goats and even cattle. The municipality failed in its efforts to eradicate all poultry and livestock-keeping in the area. Poultry and pigs would continue to wander around the dwellings and rummage in the piles of household waste. Even when the Mkhumbane area was densely populated with shack sprawls cattle-keeping continued. Cattle became reliant on domestic refuse and the waste matter derived from beer brewing. In October 1952 a municipal inspector noted that,

> The Acting Manager is correct when he says there are quite a number of livestock in Cato Manor, and it is very interesting to note that whilst they are in a very wonderful condition, very little grazing is available. The answer being of course that they are being fed on 'intsipho' (residue from Kafir beer malt)."[21]

Normally only one cooked meal would be prepared and this would be eaten in the evenings. The meal would comprise rice, vegetables or putu, into which would be cut strips of dried meat sufficient for a single meal.

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16. Interview with Mr T Ndlovu, 14 January 1986.
17. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 12 May 1985.
18. Ibid.
19. Interview with Mr T Phewa, 28 April 1985.
20. Interview with Mr C Khumalo 12 May 1985. See also interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Ms B Naidoo, n.d.
21. MNAD; Managers' File, Chief Superintendent - Manager, MNAD, October 1953.

Tembankosi Phewa explains the format: "if you put too much meat in then you have to leave it for tomorrow and then you have to put more curry in because the meat has been inside the room all day."[22]

In the mornings people would eat putu, bread and maas, with children often receiving milk. Marshia Mtandi recalls that "sometimes my mother would go down to the shop and buy milk. It was a treat. My mother would stand us in a row and pour a cup, give it to one of us, watch us drink, then when we were finished fill it up and give some milk to the other children. Otherwise we had putu."[23] In order to increase their cash wages, workers were reluctant to accept employers reducing their wages and providing them with midday meals at the factory. As a result, by the early 1950s, few of the major employers were providing workers with daily meals. During the course of a working day, workers would either buy bread and "lemonade" or frequent a local municipal beerhall.[24]

Water for cooking came mainly from municipal water standpoints located next to the toilet blocks. Many residents also drew water from the contaminated Mkhumbane stream. Others reportedly obtained cooking water from flushing municipal toilets.[25] The task of collecting and carrying water for domestic use was more often than not performed by women. For domestic energy most residents used either paraffin primus cookers or wood. Some had cast iron stoves, highly prized items among shack-dwellers. These stoves, costing around £15 each, provided not only cooking heat, but "made the room nice and warm and we could do washing quickly in the evening and then put it around the stove. They were very nice but too expensive."[26] In order to avoid purchasing wood, residents would either forage in the surrounding bush, or, as Sydney Nxumalo recalls, "we used to steal it from the factories or from the [municipal] building yard here in Mkhumbane."[27] In the main, wood, paraffin and coal were purchased from either the Indian or African-owned trading stores operating in the Emergency Camp.

In the same way that men would be largely responsible for shack maintenance, the task of purchasing, or procuring, and cooking daily meals was largely the responsibility of women. From their control of the household, and with most employed African men working a fifty-five hour week, African women acquired an influence which was to decisively determine the nature of much of working class culture.[28]

The struggle to acquire sufficient food became structured into a set of daily practices in which women's roles were clearly defined. Charles Khumalo recalls that "if you want mommy to cook for you then you must give her the money so that she can buy while you are working. That is the proper thing that women

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22. Interview with Mr T Phewa, 21 April 1985.
23. Interview with Ms M Mtandi,30 November 1986.
24. Ilanga lase Natal, 24 May 1952.
25. Ibid, 18 September 1953.
26. Interview with Mr M Mcanyana, 12 July 1985, and Ilanga lase Natal, 18 November 1950.
27. Interview with Mr S Nxumalo, 3 April 1982.
28. The battle for a forty-five and forty-hour working week was to wage throughout the 1950s. See Ilanga lase Natal, 19 July 1950.

must do. If you come back and there is no money on Friday then there is trouble."[29] Thus, as one a woman recalls, women "would always be looking around to find Mr Right". Women would "judge" men on their ability to "earn money" and castigate those who either failed to earn sufficient wages, or "spent all their times in the beerhalls drinking u-Bokweni."[30] As Charles Khumalo remembers,

> When the man comes home on Fridays he gives most of the money to the wife, who will then cook and wash and look after the house. Then she gives you money for busfare and some beer. But if you stay at Gezindlandla too long then you are for it. That is when you are attacked for spending the money before she has given you what you can have.[31]

Significantly, explicit in women's criticism of their male partners' inability to provide sufficient money were the images of a developing working-class consciousness. These became associated with the need for a "decent" life and images of masculinity and sexuality. Ma Phewa recalls that "you would not be happy if your man was a Jo'burg swank, but he must not be lazy. He must work hard and not be a tsotsi."[32] Just as important were those criticisms which implied sexual weakness. As a popular song had it, when a woman married, she should avoid city types who, drunkenly, "go to bed in their boots" nor should she marry "a man from a bantustan."[33] Those who drank freely at the municipal beerhalls were mocked. As Thomas Shabalala recalls, such men would be drowsy, fat and thus "could not get close to a woman ...They could not be dutiful men and do what they had to. Then [women] went looking around for other men!"[34] Conflicts over the amount of money which could be allocated to household food expenditure were endemic due to the absolute disparity between wages earned and the costs of basic food. Gladys Dlamini remembers that "there would be terrible fights all over the place when the men come home on Friday drunk with no money - or it had been stolen or gambled. Without that money we could do nothing."[35]

By 1958 when over half the formally employed African men in the Emergency Camp earned between £5 and £10 a month, the government estimated that the minimum food costs for an African family of five were in the region of £14.[36] During the 1950s, the difficulties faced by residents attempting to secure sufficient food were exacerbated by the decline in co-operative ventures, the persistence of black marketeering, the isolation of the shantytowns, and the growth of an African licensed trading class.

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29. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 26 July 1985.
30. Interview with Mrs T Phewa, 7 July 1985.
31. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 26 July 1985. See also KCAV; interview with Mr R Ngcobo, 13 September 1979. Gezindlandla was the shack residents' name for the Cato Manor beerhall.
32. Interview with Mrs T Phewa, 7 July 1985.
33. Thorpe Papers; script of the musical "Mkhumbane!", (Gallotone, 1960).
34. Interview with Mr T Shabalala, 14 July 1985.
35. Interview with Mrs G Dlamini, 3 April 1982.
36. Horwood, "Urban African Employment", p 79.

By the early 1950s most of the co-operative societies, which many regarded as a real form of socialism had either been transformed into individual trading ventures or disappeared.[37] Although residents were experiencing problems in meeting the cost of daily requirements, the co-operatives, which had allowed residents to reduce the costs of food and other necessities by purchasing in bulk, were never to be a real feature of Mkhumbane life during the 1950s. Stanford Mtolo explains: "The feeling was not right. No, they were dead. That was the general feeling. Too far to the shops, who was going to do it. No there were lots of problems."[38]

With the difficulty of commuting between the shantytowns and the mainly Indian-owned shopping area around Warwick Avenue, where black marketeering or overcharging were prevalent, residents tended to purchase commodities from commercial ventures inside and surrounding the Emergency Camp.[39] Vegetables and fruit could be purchased from the many "door to door salesmen" or from roadside vendors operating around the numerous bus stops and meeting-places in the area.[40] The one effective co-operative society, the Zulu Hlanganani, ran a series stalls at the bus
stop near the intersection of Booth and Denis Shepstone Roads. Mabel Dlamini, one of the women's groups conducting business in these stalls, paints the picture:

> We would go into town in the middle of the day and buy from the Indian market. Just what we could afford from yesterdays money. Fruit, carrots, tomatoes and things and then sell at Zwane's place. We would be there early in the morning to sell to the people going to work and then later in the day when the buses came back.[41]

These stalls were rented by the Zulu Hlanganani to women vendors who were members of the co-operative. In spite of numerous attempts by the municipality, sometimes acting after complaints from licensed African traders, to close the stalls down, they carried on with their operations.

For the most part, domestic essentials were purchased from the various licensed trading concerns in the Emergency Camp. By September 1955, legal African traders were operating eleven general dealers businesses and two butcheries in the Camp. In addition there were still twelve Indian-owned stores operating in the same area. By the late 1950s most of these stores had been expropriated and leased to African traders.[42] The profit margin of these traders was high. This was particularly so in the African-owned shops. For example,

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37. University of York; interview with Mr M B Yengwa by T Lodge, 23 November 1976.

38. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

39. Ilanga lase Natal, 10 May 1952.

40. MNAD; Cope Trading Report.

41. Interview with Mrs M Dlamini, 14 June 1987. Many of these women still belong to what they themselves refer to as the 'Zulu Hlanganani' and have small fruit and vegetable stalls outside Kwa Mashu Station.

42. See for example Native Administration Committee agenda, 19 June 1953 and MNAD; H2/CM; List of [Indian] traders, n.d. and A Leslie, Leon and Wilson-Town Clerk, 4 September 1953 and Daily News, 23 September 1953.

traders insisted on charging the maximum amount permissible on controlled items such as paraffin, even through their Indian counterparts charged less. All traders offered weekly or monthly credit.[43]

From the experiences derived from the daily routines of purchasing and preparing food came an increasing reflecting over three issues crucial to everyday life. Further growing criticism of traders in general. Also through it seems the very conflict within households over the struggle to purchase food, working men began to develop an increasing desire to gain higher wages. The roots of this militancy came through the way in which women would accuse lowly paid workers of lacking "manliness". As Charles Ndlovu, then employed in a textile firm in the Maydon Wharf area, remembers:

> When you come home and you give money to your wife, all you want to do is go to bed. Too much of this [liquor]. But no, all of a sudden you are not inside the blankets, but inside a big fight.'Who are you! Look at what you bring to me? You are not a real man.' That is when I started to speak to SACTU. We had Congress all around us but I had not listened before this. I joined Congress in ... around 1956.[44]

The growth of working class consciousness in Mkhumbane

Both accepting the reality of industrialization and the role of women within the domestic household, various women's groupings would develop in ways which saw women becoming more influential in issues not simply related to household matters. Various womens' groupings had for long existed within the Mkhumbane shantytowns. Many of these associations had started through the impetus provided by the formation of an ANCWL branch in the shantytowns during the later 1940s. The growth of these groups was substantially assisted by the municipal development of the Emergency Camp. Through the allocation of church sites, the activities of welfare institutions, some of which, like the Toc 'H' society, had withdrawn from the area during the 1949 riots, and the municipality's own, newly established, welfare section woman's associations, gained increasing influence.[45]

Some of these women's groups were overtly political, as was the ANCWL branch. Other associations were more closely associated with White welfare organizations. These associations became interested in refuting the notion that African parents "lacked moral fibre", provided no toys for their children and were anti-religious.[46] Women would stress that African "families" could only develop once "we were all equal in the city" and that the municipality was directly responsible for the conditions in Mkhumbane through both municipal neglect and the beer brewing monopoly.

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43. MNAD; Cope Trading Report.

44. Interview with Mr C Ndlovu, 29 November 1986. Although a member of the African Textile Workers' Union this informant confuses SACTU and the ANC. It is nevertheless clear that the informant is discussing SACTU. See also Worker Unity, March 1958.

45. See L K Ladlau, "The Cato Manor Riots", (M A , UND), p 43.

46. See, for example, Ilanga lase Natal, 29 March 1958.

Municipal beer brewing came in for particular criticism. Many women's groups asserted that the municipality was deriving money from a monopoly which impoverished and destroyed households; moreover this was a municipality which "wanted us to believe it was helping us." Indeed many woman's groupings placed a central stress on the virtues of teetotalism. As Constance Matiwane recollects,

> All your husbands would come home drunk. Then the children see them and everything gets very cross. ... I can remember that it was not nice. ... He got cross and fight and sleep. That was not the way God planned for us to be.[47]

Moves to compel African women to register for work and carry passes came in for particular scorn. As Ruth Shabane recalls, "they told us we were not proper mothers and then they wanted to separate us from our husbands with passes for women.[48]

Nevertheless, whether being self consciously political in outlook, church clubs, sewing clubs or other , often small, groups , the main focus of such associations was directed at attending to specific shantytown issues. Even the local ANCWL branch distributed milk to undernourished children.[49] The Cato Manor Zenzele Club was closely associated with the Young Christian Women's Association which had erected a "girls' hostel" in the Emergency Camp.[50] Every Sunday the Zenzele Club would host a "Silver Tea Party" "after church" at the YWCA hostel. At such meetings , which proved to be popular, women would meet and discuss local issues and provide entertainment - treasure hunts, dancing and concerts for local children.[51]

Other women's associations would assist welfare organizations in feeding the many children suffering from kwashiorkor. Others would make school uniforms, organize Sunday Schools, as did the 'Band of Hope', or operate creches.[52] The 'Band of Hope' worked closely with the South African Institute of Race Relations and the American Board Mission, whose church and school in the shantytowns was used as a main venue. Women residents would supervise games and singing sessions for children, take children on various excursions and picnics, and distribute to children with food supplied by the SAIRR.[53]

Other women formed a creche "where children from mothers who could not stay at home" would be provided with food, basic schooling and entertained during the day. Marshia Mtandi, who both attended creche and the 'Band of Hope' Sunday meetings remembers:

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47. Interview with Mrs C Matiwane, 23 April 1983.

48. Interview with Ms R Shabane, 18 November 1986. For similar comments see Ilanga lase Natal, 22 October 1949.

49. Ibid, 27 March 1954.

50. KCAV; interview with Mr S Selby, 12 August 1980.

51. Interview with Ms R Shabane, 18 November 1986. For similar comments see Ilanga lase Natal, 17 August 1957.

52. KCAV; interviews with Mrs E Africa, 16 May 1979 and Mrs A Mnguni, 21 July 1980.

53. Interview with Ms M Mtandi, 30 November 1986 and KCAV; interview with Mrs A Mnguni, 21 July 1980.

> At Benoni section... there was a creche, nursery school and clinic... established by the Red Cross [with] European nurses and our mothers. We used to wear red pinafores, we were even grouped, some of us were called Butterflies [girls?] and Tigers [boys?] They used to give us brown bread, thick slices and jam or kimmer butter [peanut butter] we did not pronounce it properly and white margarine and milk. There were even toys to play with. All that at 2 shillings 6 pence a month.[54]

But there was also a broader focus for women's activities: the problems of teenage delinquency, inadequate schooling, and the status of Africans in the city. During the 1950s the problem of teenage "gangs of tsotsis" became increasingly evident in the shacklands.[55] Children took to sniffing benzine fumes, pickpocketing in bus queues, petty theft and drunkenness.[56] More, more and more young girls seemed to be turning to prostitution. In 1950 a group of fourteen-year-old girls from Mkhumbane took a taxi ride to Chesterville and "offered to pay with their bodies." [57]

For women the problems did not arise simply form the tenuous nature of nuclear family life in the shantytowns. A main focus of discussion amongst women's associations was the totally inadequate schooling facilities for Africans, in the city and in the Emergency Camp area in particular. Inadequate schooling, as Constance Matiwane remembers, led directly to "our children not being educated enough to get jobs. We wanted more schools, more jobs and that those jobs must first be given to our children, not to people coming from the farms."[58]

This was a central issue for women in the shantytowns. They opposed passes for women, as they would threaten the basis of family life in the cities. Through their role within the domestic household and the very activities of women's groups within the shacklands women were in fact crucially influential in sustaining notions of a stable, respectable nuclear family life in the developing working class culture of the shacklands.[59] It was in this context that during the 1950s, with increasing economic hardship and unemployment, women saw in the newly restructured pass laws a possible means whereby further domestic stability could be attained. Despite the iniquities of the pass laws and labour bureau system, the vast majority of African men in Mkhumbane had gained the legal right to remain permanently in the city. For many women this change in the pass laws seemed to offer increased prospects of permanent working-class family life in the city.[60]

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54. Interview with Ms M Mtandi, 30 November 1986.

55. Interviews with Mr J Mzimela, 5 May 1986 and personal communication, Mr C N Shum. Joshua Mzimela was one of "Shum's boys": the shantytown youth whom Colin Shum helped to organize into sporting teams.

56. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 3 May 1952 and 27 February 1954.

57. Ibid, 3 June 1950.

58. Interview with Mrs C Matiwane, 21 June 1985.

59. See, for example, interview with Mrs T Phewa, 7 July 1985

60. Interview with Ms R Shabane, 18 November 1986.

Among the shantytown proletariat the compelling force of populism, anti-elitism and anti-Indianism had for long been accepted. Yet, as the 1949 Riots indicated, such a political consciousness was unorganizable and could rarely be sustained. Yet this was the politics of the rapid violent overthrow and the creation of that social vacuum which could allow shack dwellers to regain and further sustain their own life.[61]

During the 1950s many residents attempted to develop a community life not solely rooted in the beerhalls and shebeens or structured around riots, robberies and violence. In many cases these new forms of community life were facilitated through residents using the resources provided by welfare organizations and the municipality.

For African men soccer had for long been a central feature of city leisure activity. In the early 1950s various soccer teams had formed in the shantytowns, and matches were played regularly at the Round Table sports ground close to the beerhall. In 1957 residents formed the Cato Manor Football League. This was independent of the Durban and District African Football Association, an inefficient and often corrupt body racked by internal dissension among its leadership. Among the soccer teams in Mkhumbane were the Shumville Celtics, City Pirates, Cato Manor Assegais, Black Bees and Cato Manor Young Aces.[62] Matches were extremely popular: at weekends the football grounds were "full of adults."[63] During 1957 the Cato Manor School Sports Association attempted to "improve the activities of the Cato Manor community". Among other functions, it arranged for a "picnic" to Nagle Dam where "rock and roll" music was provided. The limits of normality were nevertheless clearly apparent. In advertising this venture, the organizers stressed that persons should bring their own food as, with segregated public facilities, "the picnic place is isolated."[64]

Residents would also arrange excursions to beaches in Durban and, more often, to the "Bantu beaches at Mgababa, boxing tournaments where African professional boxers would train local boxers and music events in the various shack halls.[65] In spite of lacking any venue with both a stage and piano, these evenings were always fully attended. In the main entertainment was provided by 'jasbaadjie' groups whose isicatamiya and ngoma ebusuku music best represented a form of Christian based African working class music.[66] Nationally popular African entertainers rarely entered the shack settlements. The only important exception was when the acclaimed 'African Inkspots' performed to a packed audience in the Emergency Camp in 1957.[67]

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61. Ilanga lase Natal, 28 May 1949.

62. Ibid, 27 April 1957 and interviews with Mr N Matiwane, 28 June 1986, Mr M Mcanyana, 19 May 1985 and Mr J Mzimela,5 May 1986. See also T Couzens, "An introduction to the history of football in South Africa", in Bozzoli (ed), Town and Countryside in the Transvaal (Johannesburg,1983) and Kuper, African Bourgeoisie, Chapter 22.

63. Ilanga lase Natal, 22 March 1958.

64. Ibid, 10 September 1957.

65. KCAV; interview with Mr S Selby, 12 August 1980.

66. V Erlmann, "Singing brings joy to the distressed: the social history of Zulu migrant workers' choral competitions" , History Workshop conference, University of the Witwatersrand, February 1987.

67. Ilanga lase Natal, 8 June 1957.

It is significant that such changes in the nature of residents' leisure activities gathered increasing momentum during the very social crises of the later 1950s. Amidst the social upheavals of the late 1950s the Cato Manor Women's Society, founded by Mrs A J Luthuli, held a Christmas Party. Commenting on the event, Ilanga lase Natal noted that " many used to think that everything in Mkhumbane was bad. Now ... all is clearly not bad."[68] The images of respectability clearly evident in peoples' recollections of these events are not the same as the notions which pervade the concerts and ballroom dancing functions held in the city centre and so popular amongst many of Durban's African petty bourgeoisie.[69] Although upholding notions of respectability and decency, here in the shantytowns was a working-class culture.

Yet there was a squalidness and roughness about shack life. Attempts to sustain a dignified life were constrained by the refusal of the municipality to improve facilities in the area, by the financial costs of renting accommodation in Kwa Mashu and by the conditions under which industry and commerce made use of African labour.

Health conditions in the shacklands were appalling prior to the establishment of municipal authority over the Emergency Camp. Over two hundred African children were admitted to the under-staffed King Edward VIII Hospital every month. Of these it was estimated that ninety five percent came from the Mkhumbane area and that fifty percent would die.[70] The main killers were malaria, malnutrition and gastro-enteritis. In 1950 alone, 1,083 African children in the city died of malnutrition.[71] Reliable estimates maintained that one in every third African child born in Durban would die before the age of one. Conditions for adults were hardly better. African adults aged between twenty and forty-five suffered from those same illnesses evident in White adults aged between fifty and seventy.[72] With the development of the Emergency Camp, health conditions in the shacklands grew even worse with a growth in the number of reported cases of tuberculosis, malaria fever and constant epidemics of typhoid.[73]

Africans in the city had for long resisted hospitalization. Even male patients, suffering from tuberculosis and thus hospitalized for long periods escape because of "worry about their wife and children".[74] For most Africans, medical care came from the outpatients clinic of King Edward VIII Hospital. In 1956, 73,738 people made use of the outpatients facilities at the hospital. In the late 1950s the government doubled the cost of outpatient services in King Edward VIII Hospital from two shillings to four shillings a visit,

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68. Ibid, 25 January 1958.

69. See Kuper, African Bourgeoisie, Chapter 11.

70. Ilanga lase Natal, 28 July 1951.

71. Ibid, 31 October 1952.

72. Ibid, 1 July 1950.

73. Municipality of Durban; Medical Officer of Health, annual report, 1957-1958.

74. Ilanga lase Natal, 16 April 1949. Mr C D S Mbutho's wife was forced to earn money as a fence during Mr Mbutho's long period of convalesence as a T B patient.

maintaining that Africans were using the place to "gossip" or be treated for "needless illnesses." There was a dramatic drop in the number of outpatients.[75]

Not only did the established institutions of civil society dealing with African health view African life as cheap. The state's attitude towards those convicted of serious crimes was ambivalent. Three Africans convicted of stealing money were given eight strokes and additional sentences of between ten and eleven years imprisonment.[76] Africans convicted of murdering other Africans could often gain lighter sentences. Reductions in sentence were often through courts accepting that poor living conditions were of considerable import as mitigating factors.[77] Although the legal defence of those convicted of having acted within the mobs which killed policemen in Mkhumbane in 1960 stressed that shack conditions should be accepted as central mitigating circumstances, many of the convicted were hanged.[78]

Not only was crime against White property regarded seriously, White citizens would also press for "cheeky" Africans to be "publically sjambokked."[79] However, a White South African policeman convicted of killing an African man in the Somtseu Road barracks received a sentence of £50 or two months imprisonment.[80] Of the many White South African policemen convicted of raping African women, most received sentences of one to two years imprisonment with or without the option of fines.[81]

Offences committed in African areas and involving Africans received different punishment. African entrepreneurs convicted of embezzlement or fraudulent schemes in African residential areas, would be given lenient sentences.[82] African men convicted of raping African women could often be sentenced to only three months imprisonment.[83]

Attempts to establish a level of normality in the shantytowns were impeded by inadequate health facilities and by civil society's callous attitude towards offences committed by Africans against other Africans. Controlling the nature of African proletarian life in the city involved massive coercion and overt violence. Ranging from pass and liquor raids, labour laws, mass arrests, humiliating medical examinations, to the forced resettlement of Africans, key aspects of proletarian life in the city were overtly criminalized.[84]

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75. Ilanga lase Natal, 27 February 1958.

76. Ibid, 11 March 1950.

77. Ibid, 9 April 1955.

78. Magistrate Court Records, Natal, Rex versus E Zondi and Others, 1962 and personal communication, C N Shum.

79. Ilanga lase Natal, 11 March 1950 and interview with Mr S Selby, 12 August 1980.

80. Ilanga lase Natal, 13 May 1950.

81. Ibid, 30 September 1950.

82. See, for example, Ibid, 6 May 1950.

83. Ilanga lase Natal, 25 November 1950.

84. For further details see South African Institute of Race Relations, Annual Surveys, 1954-1955 and 1959-1960.

Throughout the 1950s, the shantytowns would be beset daily by murder, rape, stabbings and brutal assaults.[85] Forged in many ways in the vicissitudes of proletarian life, such actions would perpetuate and legitimate notions of violent conflict. It was one thing to have a soccer team called the City Pirates or the Cato Manor Assegais and quite another to live in an area where robbery and ritual disembowelling became fashionable.[86]

Some of the violence was simply the reaction of Durban's growing reserve army of labour to increasing unemployment. Other crimes were committed by the shantytown's street gangs and tsotsi element.[87] Other incidents were clearly due to the reality of growing class distinctions in the African city population. Rowdy drunken mobs would invade ballroom dances and disrupt other such occasions.[88] Daily life in the shantytowns became heavily infused with an acceptance of violence. Violence was often endemic to those Zionist churches and sects that were closely associated with a shantytown working class culture.[89] In an area where an eight-year-old boy could "chop" his three-year-old sister to death in an argument over "a cup of tea" and a woman could "encourage" a daughter to "stab" another daughter, attempts to sustain a new working-class culture would be somewhat constrained.[90]

There were further structural impediments to the growth of a working-class consciousness which stressed respectability, the dignity of labour, sobriety and community unity in the shantytowns. A central feature of shack life in the area had been the growth of petty commodity entrepreneurship. Over the weekend Mkhumbane would gain the custom of thousands of male hostel residents. Much of this trading was focussed on the sale of alcohol, sex and other services to African men unable to enjoy such forms of leisure in the strictly controlled city barracks and hostels. With the very many shebeens and the less evident drinking dens, the municipal beerhall and within stokvels and the domestic household, alcohol was central to much working class culture. It was in this situation that a vibrant, assertive and often chauvinist male proletarian culture developed.

It was also through the brewing and sale of alcohol that many women gained a livelihood that both gave to women increased status and provided a much needed additional income. Women endeavouring to gain sufficient money to sustain household life would be continually confronted with the issue of alcohol. On the one hand male drinking rituals affronted notions of sobriety and, as Dorothy Nyembe recalls, "made men drunk on beer and not politics."[91] However integral to opposition to the municipal beer monopoly was a desire to

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85. Ilanga lase Natal, passim. See particularly the 'Happenings' columns.

86. Ibid, 7 June 1958.

87. Interview with Mr J Mzimela, 12 May 1986.

88. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 17 November 1953.

89. Ibid, 7 June 1958. See also J Kiernan "A Cesspool of Sorcery: How Zionists visualize and respond to the city:, Urban Anthropology, vol 13, nos 2-3 (1986) and "The role of the adversary in Zulu Zionist churches", Religion in Southern Africa, vol 8, no 1 (1987).

90. Ilanga lase Natal, 27 April and 31 March 1957.

91. Interview with Ms D Nyembe, 10 July 1986.

acquire an increasing patronage for the brewing activities of shack women. The shebeen and the beerhall were never the sole nexus of a proletarian culture, but all working class notions of decency, sobriety and a respect for the ideology of work were to be distilled through the pervasive influence of the shebeen.[92]

Through the influence of women's associations, through the use of resources provided by welfare organizations, and through a growing acceptance of the recognition of some strategic advantages in aspects of the new pass laws the nature of community life within the shacklands altered. Created through struggle against both state and capital, being ill-provided with basic residential services, ridden with violence and being in many ways dependant upon the provision of services so inimical to the sustaining of that desired working class consciousness, the shacklands were hardly conducive for the growth of any effective working class political organization.

Despite such constraints, conflict within the shantytowns led residents to become increasingly conscious of the power of proletarian unity. Some of the strategies originated within the shantytowns. However with the main shackland struggles up to the late 1950s, the incentive and specific strategy originated from within the broader campaigns waged by the Congress Alliance. Nevertheless the character of the shackland struggles was both determined and limited by the almost intractable problems of shack life. Within an often introspective shack community, the complexity of the issues which residents confronted seemed in many cases to mitigate against the development of organized struggle within the shacklands and provided both the ANC and SACTU with a relatively weak organized support base in the area.

Confronting the increasing wealth and security of the African traders was difficult. Shack dwellers had little choice but to purchase from the various African and Indian owned stores in the area. With the force of populist unity still strong, during the September 1953 riots in Mkhumbane no African-owned shops were touched. Such a respect for the property of African traders would soon diminish. Thefts from African shops became increasingly prevalent.[93] By the late 1950s it was accepted that such traders could be robbed in the same fashion as Indian stores had for long suffered from theft and looting. It is significant that theft from African traders developed despite a shantytown leadership and entrepreneurial element constantly extolling the virtues of a populism which presented the traders' successes as evidence of the power of African unity. Moreover in the shantytowns there had always existed a vaguely defined notion of what constituted legitimate theft.[94] African shop-keepers were however seen as fair game.

This was clearly recognized by the traders. Most African traders experienced a theft problem and feared that their shops could easily be subjected to the large scale looting which accompanied rioting. African traders thus refused to stock rolls of calico, German print or cheap rayon and linen materials or children's clothing, footwear and other popular items. As one African trader explained, "I don't carry materials because it

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92. For greater detail see Edwards, "Shebeen Queens".

93. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 26 September 1953, 14 April 1956, 3 May 1958 and 31 May 1958.

94. Ibid, 3 May 1958 and interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 28 April 1985.

would be an invitation to robbery - one roll of material costing £10 is light in weight, easily handled and valuable. Compare this with a bag of malt weighing 200 lbs and costing £3."[95] For such goods the market was securely held by the Indian traders of Mkhumbane.[96]

Despite African traders often calling for a boycott of Indian stores in the Emergency Camp, support was never more than minimal. The increasing wealth of African traders was resented, as was the way in which many traders would "drive around us in flashy cars."[97] Supporting African traders meant, in many cases, paying prices higher than those charged by Indian traders.[98] Indeed many residents believed that, as one writer to the Ilanga lase Natal asserted, the Zulu Hlanganani "wants to be the sole milker of desolate people".[99]

Similarly, the issue of transport facilities in the shacklands provoked the anger of residents. The transport issue allowed residents to view shack entrepreneurs in a more critical light. Due however to the constraints imposed by daily life the proletariat was never able to successfully unite over the question of transport. The issue was also to reveal how contradictions between shack conditions and broader political campaigns worked against the ANC.

Taking advantage of the cessation of Indian-owned bus services into the shantytowns of Mkhumbane after the 1949 riots, African entrepreneurs were able to "get one of our most cherished dreams" : the formation of African-owned bus companies.[100] In July 1949 six African bus companies applied for licenses to operate on the Booth and Wiggins Road routes to and from the city. In that same month the first African-owned bus to operate was greeted by shouts of "Zulu!." Popular shantytown approval was such that Indian residents "ran away" fearing renewed rioting. The owners of the bus were leading officials of the ANC in Natal.[101]

Amidst the flurry of applications from many other newly formed African transport ventures, shack residents began to boycott Indian-owned bus services.[102] Fred Ngema, already a wealthy entrepreneur in the Johannesburg area where he owned a fleet of buses, extended his operations to both Clermont and then Mkhumbane. Ngema's bus company was called the Bantu Bus Company. A wealthy Durban mail order herbalist, Israel Alexander, also started the Ebony Bus Company. There was also the Stand For Yourself Bus Company.[103]

Despite the publicity and populist rhetoric which accompanied the appearance of more African-owned bus companies plying the Mkhumbane routes, the failure of these companies was soon evident. As early

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95. Quoted in MNAD; Cope Trading Report. Emphasis added.
96. Ibid.
97. Interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 28 April 1985.
98. MNAD; Cope Trading Report.
99. Ilanga lase Natal, 9 October 1954.
100. Interview with Mr B Mnqadi, 29 October 1986.
101. Ilanga lase Natal, 2 July 1949 and 16 July 1949.
102. Ibid and interview with Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1985.
103. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 22 April 1950 and 17 February 1951 and interview with Mr R Arenstein, 22 August 1988.

as 1951 the Secretary of the local Road Transportation Board, who had been agreeable to the licensing of African bus companies after the 1949 riots publically commented that these services were a failure.[104] Lacking expertise and capital, and constantly fighting among each other and sabotaging each others' buses, ordinary residents who had invested in such ventures became "cross." Those controlling the operations of one failed bus company were all members of the CMWDB.[105]

Africans began to rely more and more on the Indian-owned bus services in the area. Not even the amalgamation of various bus companies would secure the future for the African-owned services.[106] In 1951, of the seventeen African-owned buses operating in the Mkhumbane area only two would usually be operating on any one given day.[107] In 1953 there were only thirty-eight Indian-owned buses and nine African-owned buses operating in the area.[108] Residents referred to the poor transport services in Mkhumbane as "e-Satan."[109] Under enormous pressure from the residents, and despite the objections of Indian and African-owned bus companies, the municipality increased municipal bus operations in the shantytowns. Although the intervention of the municipality did improve the bus service, in order to get to work in time workers would always have to make allowances for the lengthy queues and delays caused by the inadequate bus service.[110]

Shantytowns in residents were becoming increasingly aware of both their own marginalization in the city and the growing class distinctions within the shantytown community. Such was the harshness of everyday shack life that within the routines of daily life, constraints were such that the level of working class unity and organizational struggle within the community was weak. Despite attempts to sustain a working class consciousness, shack life provided both limitations and for the very many contradictions within such a consciousness. However through changes in the nature of shack life, a changing political climate and the growth of new forms of working class struggles, the nature of working class politics in the shacklands was to alter in important ways.

Imperfect Economies, Proletarianization and New Struggles

During the early 1950s many shantytown residents had supported a call from the African bus owners for a total boycott of Indian-owned transport. Despite many people being willing to "walk to work because there were no buses",[111] the boycott of Indian bus services quickly collapsed. Residents were both angered at the way in

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104. Ilanga lase Natal, 3 March 1951.

105. Ibid, 25 July 1953 and 20 April 1954. For the failure of such companies see interviews with Mr R Arenstein,22 August 1988 and Mr H C Sibisi,22 October 1986.

106. Ilanga lase Natal, 24 November 1951.

107. Ibid, 28 July 1951.

108. Ibid, 10 October 1953.

109. Ibid, 15 February 1951.

110. Thorpe Papers;script of the musical "Mkhumbane!", (Gallotone, 1960).

111. Interview with Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1985.

which African bus owners gained permission for fare increases and the continued inadequate operations of such buses. African-owned buses kept to no particular routes timetable. Although bitter, the proletariat was unable to organize effectively around the issue. Furthermore, in 1957 when the ANC called for a boycott of municipal buses throughout the city, the campaign was rejected by shackland residents.[112] The issue also aroused deep resentment among the shack residents who believed that the ANC was strongly influenced by a Natal Indian Congress interested only in furthering the interests of Indian bus owners.[113]

Nevertheless for the shantytowns proletariat the principle of economic boycott was growing stronger. African eagerness to engage in such activity was clearly reflected in the ranks of the ANC in the early 1950s. In 1953 Luthuli stated publically that the products of firms paying African workers poor wages should be boycotted.[114] This was accepted by the annual conference of the ANC in Queenstown in 1954.[115]

To many shack residents, such a policy had much in common with shantytown struggles during the late 1940s. As with the late 1940s, shack residents' strategies in the 1950s aimed to compel all employers to ensure that Africans were both sufficiently educated and allowed access to increasingly semi-skilled work. Accepting the power of industrialization shack residents desired to gain increasing status and remuneration from within that very process.[116]

During the 1950s, the ANC was never to accept fully the principle of "Africanization" which was so forcefully endorsed by both the remaining CYL groupings in Durban, the ANCWL branches in Mkhumbane, and other shack residents. Within these aspirations for a greater share of the wealth created by industrialization was an ethnic consciousness which reflected not only a desire for an economic base for African nationalism but also an assertive racism.[117] As Charles Khumalo recalls

> We wanted to get all Indians and bosses to put us in the places where we could get money. Not at the bottom. 'John, bamba, now fuck off' This we had done for a long time. You know ... when you go to a shop there were Indians shouting at you 'come and buy this! Free socks!'. But no money! When you went to work for mlungu, there kaffirs are kaffirs. If you are matric then you can start sweeping the floors.[118]

Experiences in the factories and trading areas of the city did often produce a racism alongside a developing working class assertiveness. Among the "hot" Mkhumbane proletariat, such expressions encompassed an anti-Indian feeling. Not only were the Indian petty bourgeoisie in control of many trading ventures in the shantytown area, but the shacklands were often still owned by Indian.

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112. Ibid.

113. Ilanga lase Natal, 2 March 1957.

114. Ibid, 2 September 1953.

115. Advance, 10 December 1953.

116. See interviews with Ms D Nyembe, 10 July 1986, Mr C Khumalo, 3 June 1987 and Mr A Nene, 29 January 1984.

117. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 27 June 1953 and 11 August 1956.

118. CKM; reel 3B; 2:DR 19:30/13; ANC (Natal), executive committee meeting, 6 June 1954.

Within the ANC leadership in the city there was considerable concern over the manner in which campaigns focussing on economic issues could produce a heightened anti-Indianism and class conflict within the African population. The minutes of the executive committee meeting of the ANC (Natal) in June 1954 reflect this concern:

> The Boycott: This resolution was discussed at length, and the dangers that some people might exploit this against the Indians, and that some traders might try to use it to boost their own businesses were expressed. It was resolved that this resolution has to be carried out but our allies the Indian congress should be fully consulted, and any action should be taken after full discussions with them.

In 1954, just months after the promulgation of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953 which outlawed all strikes by African workers, African workers at the United Tobacco factory in Durban went on strike and were dismissed and prosecuted. Agreeing to a request from the Tobacco Workers' Union, the ANC led a call for a boycott of all United Tobacco Company products. The response from the shack dwellers was immediate and successful. The boycott was implemented: customers "shouted at shop keepers who had those cigarettes on their shelves." [119]

In 1959, a potato boycott was initiated by the Congress Alliance in protest against the working conditions of African farm labourers. During this campaign "Congress volunteers" would search people alighting from buses at the bus ranks in Mkhumbane, and "throw any potatoes away." Other groups of ANC activists and gangs of youths, would "conduct houses to house searches to look for potatoes." As Stanford Mtolo recalls, "during this campaign no-one in Mkhumbane and Chesterville ate potatoes."[120] Although the boycott was both successful and had the potential to act as a issue around which the ANC could acquire increasing support in the shantytowns, the boycott was soon called off. Residents believed that "they [the ANC] were too afraid of getting the shop keepers into trouble."[121] Such comments are probably a little unfair. They nevertheless do reveal a willingness to criticize the ANC's stand on economic issues regarded as important proletariat.

During the 1950s, responding to the increasingly evident class divisions within the shack community and changes within the local economy, new strategies and perceptions developed among the working class in the shacklands. For the shantytowns proletariat during the later 1940s and early 1950s a key strategy had been the attempt to avoid full proletarianization. Along with poor wages, the casual and unskilled nature of wage labour, and the process of job hopping, came a disdain for full and continuous employment and a desire to become involved in petty entrepreneurial ventures. The vast majority of shack leaders who arose during the latter 1940s had consistently attempted, often successfully, to avoid full proletarianization through their control of various

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119. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 26 July 1885. Luckhardt and Walls Organize, pp 274 and 340 and interview with Mr A Nene, 29 January 1984.

120. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

121. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 3 June 1985. See also Ilanga lase Natal, 11 August 1956.

resources within the shacklands. Such persons had absolutely no desire to become involved in wage labour. Why did Japhta Mnuguni start running a shackshop? : "because of bad wages."[122]

Such strategies of escaping from full wage employment and the discipline of industrial production processes were intrinsic to the shacklands proletariat. Immediately after the 1949 Riots there was a "lull in politics" as "even ordinary labourers" desired to open trading ventures.[123] Indeed, although in formal wage labour, many among the shackland proletariat wanted "nothing to do with the boss."[124]

By the late 1950s it became steadily more difficult for the Mkhumbane proletariat to become involved in such ventures. The 'fertilizer' had run out. With declining wages and increasing household expenses, the money that could be redistributed within the local economy was declining.[125] A legal African trading class dominated trading in the shantytowns. Competition within this imperfect economy was increasing. Legal traders clashed amongst themselves and with those illicit traders who were still operating. Similarly competition between shebeen queens was rife and often vicious, with some informing police of competitors' operations.[126] The internal redistributive economy was also subject to increasing competition from the municipal beerhall in the Emergency Camp and the ravages of municipal and police raiding which climaxed during the political crises and shack demolitions of the late 1950s. Fines and the confiscation or destruction of commodities seriously undermined this economy. The hundreds of thousands of gallons of liquor destroyed during raiding and the high sentences meted out to those convicted of illegal brewing placed severe constraints against attempts to sustain such brewing. Fines of around £60 or sixty days imprisonment were common for possessing gavine.[127] For possessing large quantities of dagga, fines of around £300 or alternative prison sentences of three years were common.[128]

Principal power was not passively accepted by the shantytown community. Dagga dealers became strolling minstrels, concealing the new "King Size zols" in their guitars.[129] Shimeyane or other illicit spirits, including 'White mans' liquor', would be drunk from china tea cups. Joshua Mzimela recalls:

> When you had friends and you wanted to drink gavine, then you sit on the stools outside the room and you put the gavine into a teapot. Everyone has their own cups and saucers and you all sit there drinking. When the police come they do not kick things around and break things because they see you are doing things properly.[130]

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122. KCAV; interview with Mr J Mnguni, 22 July 1980.
123. Ilanga lase Natal, 18 June 1949.
124. Ibid, 17 October 1953.
125. Interview with Mr S Shabalala, 21 June 1985.
126. Edwards, "Shebeen Queens", p 86.
127. Ilanga lase Natal, 4 April 1953.
128. Ibid, 9 February 1957.
129. Ibid, 9 January 1957.
130. Interview with Mr J Mzimela, 28 April 1985.

Despite such tactics, there was nevertheless a realization of the crippling effects of detection and conviction.

Writing to Ilanga lase Natal during the early 1950s, when the possibilities for Africans to escape full proletarianization were clearly all but gone, an aspirant trader vented his anger and explained his diminishing chances of avoiding full wage labour. Stressing the difficulties of gaining trading licenses and the dangers befalling those selling illicit liquor, the writer maintained that there was no option but to gamble on horse racing and sell 'imbazo' sorghum beer in municipal beerhalls.[131]

It was indeed true that by the late 1950s, the African proletariat living in the shantytowns had become more interested in the potential wealth which could be gained through gambling on horses. Thousands of "ordinary" Africans flocked to the Greyville race course.[132] In 1955, over twenty thousand Africans attended race meetings in the city. Betting was becoming a new feature of African proletarian life. An editorial in Ilanga lase Natal commented thus:

> The ordinary person who tries to save voluntarily would be thankful and consider it a blessing if some major scheme were designed to force him to save and still leave him capable of meeting his obligations. Not so with the mass of Durban's African punters. In buses, tea rooms, shebeens, beerhalls and street corners they had been grumbling because over the last three weeks rains have compelled turf clubs to cancel races. This they could not bear ... To hear them complain one would think every punter had a sure thing and would have made a fortune ...[133]

Among the proletariat there were other strategies for accumulating money. Banking institutions would advertise and gain increased African patronage with adverts such as that by Barclays Bank which depicted a shack resident saving after having his house burnt down.[134]

By the late 1950s the weakness of attempts to avoid full wage labour through investments in the imperfect internal shack economy were clearly apparent. For the shantytown proletariat faced with increasing material hardships and the imminence of removal to Kwa Mashu, stokvels would often be the site of massive brawling and stabbings. In 1957 municipal police operating in the Mkhumbane area reported that "of late, many fights take place in stokvels."[135] Charles Khumalo explains: "Always the fights and the poking. 'I gave you this last month, now you must pay me this. Look you have not spent anything yet. Who do you think I am, Oppenheimer hey?' It was all about money that no-one had. Everybody was cross."[136] During the same period brawling developed as people started to reclaim unpaid debts.

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131. Ilanga lase Natal, 17 October 1953.

132. Ilanga lase Natal, 2 July 1955. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 7 April 1956 and interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 19 May 1985.

133. Ibid, 27 November 1954.

134. Ibid, 5 January 1957.

135. Ibid, 22 June 1957.

136. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 14 July 1985.

Many residents had for long seen investment in shack housing as being an important way of both investing money and allowing for later prosperity through expanded shack renting. Now in many ways such options had been foreclosed by the growth of established shacklords after the 1949 riots and the late acquisition of the Mkhumbane area by the municipality. Nevertheless, many ordinary residents did own pieces of shacks, having added to shack buildings during the 1950s. Others owned shacks purchased through municipal loans. With the municipality refusing to pay any compensation to shack owners when the shack population was resettled to Kwa Mashu, many attempted to break down their shacks. As Charles Khumalo recalls, they "wanted to take their walls and windows away to Malagazi, Inanda and other places. Big fights. 'This is not your wall ...' ."[137] Although having failed to secure land and housing ownership in the Mkhumbane shacklands, the African proletariat was never to forsake the desire to gain permanent land tenure in the city as a means of acquiring increased material and political power.

By the late 1950s, it was apparent that long cherished means of avoiding full proletarianization were no longer efficacious. Yet the defects of such strategies, which had derived from residential as opposed to factory floor life, led the growing popularity of new strategies of struggle outside the shacklands. The failure to gain secure permanent residential rights in Mkhumbane, the growing sense of class distinctions within the shacklands, and the changing nature of the internal shack economy, came at the same time as a growing sense of working class consciousness within the shacklands and the growing importance of new forms of struggle.

Trade Unionism

Just as the municipality and police clamped down on illicit petty entrepreneurship in Mkhumbane, so the state and capital acted to compel increasing acceptance of the rigours of full formal wage employment. The creation of a new working class was to be accomplished through actions within residential areas, within the labour market and in industrial and commercial concerns. During the 1950s both the state and capital sought ways of both ensuring a sufficient reserve army of labour and ensuring that African workers became involved in longer periods of continuous employment.

In 1949 the newly elected Nationalist government debarred the vast majority of African urban wage labour from any form of unemployment insurance as a means of compelling African workers to remain in continuous employment.[138] As one worker remembered,

> Now there was no more getting drunk and sleeping in the afternoon. You must work or leave. So you have to work. You cannot sit at Ordnance Road getting money for not working any longer. It was hard. If you go to Dalton [beerhall] for lunch, then you can get kicked out and you cannot live.[139]

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137. Interview with Mr O Kunene, 26 July 1985 and Mr C Khumalo, 7 July 1985.

138. Ilanga lase Natal, 18 June 1949.

139. The author would prefer this testimony to remain anonymous due to the similarity of this testimony and later events within this informant's own life. For the popularity of lunch time beer drinking see Edwards "Recollections", p 79.

The ethic of productivity was forcefully impressed upon the African working class.

The process of 'job hopping' became progressively more difficult. In 1952 section 29 of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act was changed to broaden the range of African workers who could be considered 'idle and undesirable'. Africans who failed to accept three offers of employment, those who failed to remain in any new job for less than a month, and those who were frequently dismissed for misconduct were liable to be expelled from the city. Such workers would thus forfeit their cherished right to permanent residence in the city.[140]

During the 1950s Africans and employers became more conscious of the growing reserve army of labour in the city and the eagerness of Africans to gain more permanent employment.[141] As a result the power of employers in the labour market and the production process increased. As SACTU member Harold Nxasana remembers,

> [At a textile firm wages were not that] bad. But I can tell you a funny thing. Now we are working on a production system. For instance the minimum blankets, say you are supposed to make twenty five blankets a day. They were calculated in such a way that those twenty five blankets are making you a day wage.Now whenever there was a wage increase, Mr Schult [the supervisor] increases the number of blankets-making it very difficult for you to reach that minimum. And in some cases he will increase the quality of the yarn so that the yarn makes it not easy for you to actually cover the score.[142]

Within the African working class living in the Mkhumbane shantytowns the growing facts of their virtually complete subjection to the discipline of formal employment rapidly became evident.

Shantytown life was both harsh and brutal. In this setting life the established working class began to portray itself as more respectable and claimed unto itself a moral high ground over lumpen elements. Here are the signs of growing divisions within the proletariat. Workers had new songs about "courage", "strength" and "the way we were working": all of which indicated an acceptance of the ideology of work.[143] Some such songs came through increased involvement in SACTU affiliated unions. Others arose from within the shantytowns.

In the shacklands there were new images of working-class consciousness. Alongside songs about male proletarian unity against "boss boys", the municipality and "clever Africans" there were others that expressed different sentiments.[144] Some of the jasbaadjie songs popular told, in a derogatory fashion, of "the drunks who can only sleep on the road at Kwa Banki." In this song both drunkenness and homelessness are counterposed against the "people who can buy their own liquor and hold their liquor and can get home to their

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140. Hindson, Pass Controls, p 69.

141. See, for example, Industrial Employers Association (Natal Section), Annual Report, 1953-1954.

142. Interview with Mr H Nxasana, 26 May 1986.

143. Interview with Mr M Mthethwe, 14 January 1986 and Mr C Ndlovu, 29 November 1986.

144. Ilanga lase Natal, 27 July 1957 and interview with Mr T Phewa, 12 May 1985. For reports of murders on buses see the 'Happenings' column of the Ilanga lase Natal.

beds."[145] Sensitive to and adept at overturning aspects of a dominant ideology, another song, apparently to the tune of a Sunlight Soap advertisement heard of Radio Bantu, told of how "sweating was there to make us clean."[146]

A working-class shantytown resident became angered by the increasing incidence of theft in the shacklands. Such activities were those of "tsotsis", the "won't works" and the work of others who, somewhat pompously, were referred to as "malcontents."[147] This anger was particularly visible at bus ranks where the police were unable to prevent the long queues of "helpless workers" from the ravages of pickpocketers and those having a tendency for more forceful means of expropriation.[148]

Although rooted in the 1950s such often lyrical reflections need not necessarily reveal a working class militance however. What does reveal the importance of such commentary is the way in which African workers began to both accept the virtual inevitability of their subjection to full capitalist wage employment and their growing desire to struggle against this very process from within the production process.

Among the proletariat there had always been various tactics used to obtain employment. Taking advantage of kinship ties or a factory induna favouring the employment of those from his own rural district, were two such methods in Durban. To avoid the indignity of medical inspections many work-seekers developed strategies to circumvent harsh, corrupt inspecting doctors. As Harold Naxasana remembers,

> You used to go to Kwa Muhle to get a 'special': that is the labour seekers' permit. You have got to see a doctor, a very old man. I am sure they were pensioned doctors and you had to strip off and go there naked. They wanted you to show your private parts and you had to pull the skin back because they said they wanted to prove that you were not infected with VD. ... I am told the needles were very long. Then they would ask you to pass water... If your urine happened to be yellowish they will say you have VD. As a result you have to drink lots of water.[149]

Others believing that "the doctors were there to stop us getting work" went directly to places of employment, secured work, and then registered.[150] Obtaining employment was one issue; gaining strength within the capitalist wage market was very different.

By the early 1950s, the barter markets which had operated in the city had closed down. As those areas of the city in which an African proletariat traded became more and more structured around money, so African workers asserted their desire to be paid solely in money. Employers agreed and by the early 1950s few

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145. Interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 19 May 1985.

146. Interview with Mr M Mthethwe, 14 January 1986.

147. Interview with Mr C Ndlovu, 29 November 1986.

148. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 27 July 1957.

149. Interview with Mr H Nxasana, 26 May 1986.

150. Interview with Mr N Matiwane, 26 July 1986.

paid wages in cash and kind.[151] Such victories, though did not necessarily improve the material position of workers. As Thomas Ndlovu recalls,

> When the companies started paying money only. Thats all. No samp and beans for the rooms [employer barrack] No sugar. Nothing. Just money every week. But when we went to buy with that money there was less than before. In the old days it we wanted a shirt, then we could take some maize and talk to the aunties at Dalton [Road] Now we had to buy the shirt.[152]

Similarly, the manner in which an African proletariat having gained the legal right to perm : urban residence gleefully mocked the African educated elite did reveal a class consciousness. However a, possibly often vindictive, awareness of the socially levelling nature of the new pass laws does not lead directly to increased working class strength. This was so clearly evident within the shacklands. During the period when an African working class was accepting the rigours of full permanent wage labour, the established African traders increased their authority and wealth, becoming employers in their own right.

During the 1950s, confronting both a state determined to further restrict the power of African workers and local employers who, unlike major employers in other urban centres, desired the prohibition of all forms of African worker representation including internal works committees was exceedingly difficult.[153] This new form of struggle was nevertheless precisely what the songs created during the 'One Pound a Day' campaign and the jasbaadjie songs "I won't work for a penny. No way! No way! " and "chickens are for farmers. I want money! I want money!" were all about.[154] The growing level of African working-class militancy in the shantytowns and the increasing level of conflict between African workers and employers was based around on trade union organization. Within the shantytowns an important level of working class consciousness could be sustained. However, residential areas provided little scope for organized working class conflict.

During the later 1940s, the level of unionization among the Mkhumbane shantytown population was low. African unions in the broad alliance of the SATLC were often either small or inoperative. The effectiveness of the numerous independent African unions of the period was slight, with many unions being mere figureheads used by ambitious African entrepreneurs for purposes of self gain. Others were riddled with internal conflicts among leadership.

But there was more. During the late 1940s an African proletariat living in Mkhumbane believed, as did many of their compatriots living elsewhere in the city, in another form of worker power. Notions of worker dignity, sobriety and an acceptance of the industrialization process became suffused within a populist desire to establish an industry and commerce owned and operated by Africans. It was significant that during the 1950s

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151. Broome Commission; evidence of the African Bakeries and Confection Workers Union and the Baumanville Womens' Association.

152. Interview with Mr T Ndlovu, 14 January 1986.

153. Industrial Employers Association (Natal Section), Annual Report, 1952-1953.

154. Interview with Mr A Masango, 30 November 1986 and Mr M Kunene, 3 November 1986.

such ideas were proposed by neither members of the African petty bourgeoisie nor by the African working class. By the 1950s, as with the co-operatives, such notions were defunct. Stanford Mtolo remembers:

> They were the same as the co-operatives. They did just not work. They were very important during the years after the war. Very good ideas. There was this chap Mr Victor Maillie. He was involved. So were the Youth League. But nothing happened like this in the years of Congress [after A J Luthuli assumed power] ... Why? I just think that it was not possible.[155]

During the later 1940s many worker organizations had been either general workers' unions or unions in a nominal sense only. The latter were often operated virtually single handed characters who saw in unionism a chance for entrepreneurial gain. However in 1952 the unpopularity of such forms of unionism amongst workers was indicated with the formation of a new African Municipal workers' Union.

Throughout the 1940s Sydney Myeza had advertised himself as the secretary of the African Municipal Workers' Union. Under Myeza who was rather a maverick figure being involved in trade unionism, co-operatives and other entrepreneurial ventures, this union was in essence a business venture. Africans would seek Myeza's advice, for which Myeza would claim a part of any money resulting from his successful negotiation with management on the worker's behalf. The new African Municipal Workers' Union was an industrial union in the real sense. Although Myeza was to complain about the establishment of this new union, Myeza's claim to trade union leadership rapidly waned.[156]

Throughout the 1950s various organizations and persons were to develop general workers' unions. Champion was forever attempting to resurrect the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, and was even prepared to use municipal animosity towards SACTU to achieve his aims. But workers criticized Champion, and his attempts at gaining increasing power through trade union leadership failed.[157]

The utility of general workers' unions was also accepted by SACTU but in rather different terms to those understood by persons like Champion. In order to organize workers and then, after 1958, as a response to the massive rush of workers eager to join SACTU, the union federation started general workers' unions. In these unions workers would normally be issued with membership cards clearly indicating in which industry they were employed; and, "whenever there were enough workers from one industry in the general union, we would start an industrial union for them."[158] Indeed as Billy Nair recalls "for SACTU industrial unions were accepted as a strategic principle ... as being the best way in which workers could start organizational strength in the factories."[159]

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155. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

156. Although extremely powerful, the South African Railways and Harbours Union was mostly concentrated in the Somtseu Road barracks and the various male hostels in the Point area. 300. Ilanga lase Natal, 19 May 1958. For another different attempt to start such a union see Ilanga lase Natal, 26 September 1953.

157. Ilanga lase Natal, 19 May 1958. For another different attempt to start such a union see Ilanga lase Natal, 26 September 1953.

158. Interview with Mr R Arenstein, 18 July 1985. See also Feit, Workers, p 54.

159. Interview with Mr B Nair, 27 June 1985.

During the early 1950s there appeared to be an increasing interest amongst African workers in the benefits of industrial trade unionism. In Mkhumbane the strongest unions were the independent African Bakery and Confection Workers' Union and the African Textile Workers' Union and Tobacco Workers Union both of whom were affiliates of unions belonging to the SATLC. All these unions held regular meetings in the city and, reportedly, the African Bakers and Confectioners Workers' Union had established "branches" in Mkhumbane during the early 1950s.[160] All such unions were directly focussed around conditions at the workplace. The main issues taken up concerned employers' failure to pay according to statutory wage determination levels, the length of the working week factory conditions, and the general working environment.[161]

Many union organizers were either members of the ANC people like Stephen Dlamini and Moses Mabhida of the African Textile Workers' Union, Pious Mei of African Tobacco Workers' Union and Stanford Mtolo of the African Bakery and Confection Workers' Union. But generally unions had little involvement in the ANC campaigns of the early 1950s.[162] The only exception was Jacob 'The Leopard' Nyaose, an effective organizer with the African Bakery and Confection Workers' Union; he was anti-White and made "no bones about it to workers".[163] The majority appear to have focussed specifically on immediate shop floor issues. Many leading African trade unionists wanted to re-establish the May Day celebrations so that "workers must unite and be as one", but little was achieved on this score.[164] This was partly due to union leaders fearing police action against attempts to hold May Day meetings.[165]

There was a more fundamental reason why many African unionists desired to separate political involvement and union organizing. Within the Durban and District local branch of the SATLC there was a conflict over the question of the role of White unions in White political nationalism.[166] For such strategic reasons both Stephen Dlamini and Moses Mabhida voted against the principle of a political role for trade unions.[167] Nevertheless among many trade unionists in either independent unions or those affiliated to union as which belonged to SATLC there was an increasing sense of the need to assist the growth of an African

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160. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

161. See for example Ilanga lase Natal, 22 April 1950, 6 May 1950, 3 January 1952, 7 June 1952,18 April 1953, 13 June 1953 and 20 June 1953.

162. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983. From the middle 1950s the A N C (Natal) had a "trade unions" sub- committee within the provincial executive committee. See for example CKM; reel 3B; 2:DA 19/1: 30/8; ANC (Natal), executive committee meeting, 26-27 November 1955.

163. Ibid.

164. Ilanga lase Natal, 8 May 1954.

165. Ibid, 13 May 1950. This was understandable as after the January 1949 Riots, the municipality successfully prohibited most African meetings in the city.

166. SAT&LC; AH 646, Da4.4; Durban Local executive committee meeting, 8 May 1952, Durban and District Local, annual meeting, 24 July 1952 and Durban and District annual general meeting, 1955.

167. Interview with Mr B Nair, 27 June 1985.

working-class militancy through focussing on both factory floor and political issues. Related to this was an increasing impatience with both the seemingly endless conflict in SATLC and the inability of this union federation to provide any clear assistance in the formation of new African unions.[168]

However, even after the establishment of SACTU, the elected local committee in Durban was unable to provide much assistance in ensuring growing union membership in SACTU-affiliated unions.[169] Despite having clear connections to broader political organizations within the Congress Alliance, SACTU was primarily a trade union organization.[170] However the organization was continually short of funds. The federation was always unable to afford the luxury of those numbers of organizers which even the efficient daily operating of existing unions required.[171] Prior to the 1959 beerhall riots in Mkhumbane and the gathering political militancy of the very late 1950s, SACTU campaigns to increase union membership were largely failures which often rebounded against the organization. Up until the later 1950s, Africans joined unions for reasons and in ways that were never fully consolidated or capitalized on by SACTU itself.

The most common reason for joining SACTU-affiliated unions arose from personal experiences in the shantytowns. It rapidly became apparent that the various contradictory forces so ingrained in shackland life provided little scope for the assertion of African working-class power. However, suffering increased problems in providing sufficient money for household budgetary needs, stung by both parents in the rural areas and shack women consequently criticizing workers for their lack of manliness and seeing the failure of various other long used strategies or resistance unionization "came" to workers.[172]

In specific factories unionization depended less upon large-scale campaigning and was more focussed around less evident features of working life. With workers within a specific plant often having originated from the same rural area, through kinship networks within factories and through the authority of specific indunas, workers could be more easily organized than through large-scale campaigning. Although referring to organizing activities conducted during the 1940s, M B Yengwa's account is in no real way different to the means of organizing conducted during the later 1950s. On his first day as a union organizer, Yengwa is taken by Mr Mthembu, an established union official to a specific workplace:

> His task was to introduce me to the workers as their new organizer and it was he who taught me the ropes. Carrying our little leather bags of the type used by school boys we set out to the Marine Hotel. Baba Mthembu gave a low whistle and called softly and rhythmically 'We Zaba-nja-na'

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168. SATLC; AH646, Dd 4.17; Report by Joint General Secretary, 9 March 1952 and Secretary, Durban and District Local-General Secretary, 14 February 1954, Ilanga lase Natal, 8 May 1954, 5 June 1954, 3 July 1954 and 24 July 1954 and J Lewis, Industrialization, chapter 8.

169. Feit, Workers, p 54.

170. Lodge, African Politics, p 191.

171. Feit, Workers, pp 52 and 77-79.

172. See, for example, interview with Mr C Khumalo, 7 July 1985 and Mr A Masango, 30 November 1986.

Recognizing Mthembu, the gate attendant opens the gate and shows the two to the "boss boy" Mkhize. Mthembu speaks only to Mkhize, first offering greetings and then explaining the reason for the visit:

> Mkhize, this is Yengwa. My young man. The new organizer. he is not Sishi who is out to deceive people and break away from the union and form another one led by himself. Can you call all your men to come and renew their tickets and join the union

When the men have congregated in the quarters for lunch, Mthembu introduces Yengwa and concludes :

> I felt I should let you know his face so that you may know who he is. ... Now I leave Yengwa to work with you. Trust him. He is from the same district as mine, the son of Mtonzima ... Now anyone who wants to renew their tickets come forward. Anyone who is new and is willing to join the union, let him join.

Workers then started questioning Yengwa, with one of the newly recruited workers in the hotel saying:

> We are all for this Nyonyan [union]. People were true when they said 'The inheritance of fools is always usurped from them by the cunning. How will this Nyonyan benefit me? Will it help me and my children when I am sick and unemployed. I ask you Mthembu and you young man ... by the way I have forgotten your name.

After also having asked whether the "King", the Zulu Paramount Chief, and the hotel bosses had agreed to the union, Mthembu replies in ways which both stress worker struggle, the gains of the union and the need for courage:

> Now look here, the hotel industry does not die. There will always be bosses ... and workers who are exploited. Before the union [workers] were working long hours without week breaks or year breaks. ...Have you ever heard of an enemy giving permission for his adversaries to join forces together against him. ... [And, the rural place of origin of the questioner] is very far removed from the Zulu Royalty. [But] as a matter of fact I went to see ...Mshiyene ka Dinizulu. When I told him I was an organizer he was very happy and commended me for helping the workers.[173]

Within such rituals, the sanction of local authority, rural affinities and kinship bonds and through the stressing of unionism within a broader context lay the core basis of most of the unionization of African workers from within the work environment during the 1950s.[174]

Large-scale organizing drives were also conducted. By the late 1950s SACTU officials were sharing public platforms with speakers from other organizations within the Congress Alliance. Many of these meetings were

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173. Interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Ms B Naidoo, n.d. See also interview with Mr H Nxasana, 27 May 1986.

174. See, for example, Worker Unity, March 1958 and interview with Mr H Matiwane, 26 July 1986.

well attended and very many speakers would exhort workers to join SACTU-affiliated unions. Yet, up until late 1958 and possibly even after the beerhall riots of June 1959, attempts to increase membership produced few concrete results.[175]

A glimmer of success appeared possible with the beginning of the 'One Pound a Day' campaign early in 1957. In Mkhumbane the campaign aroused great enthusiasm. Thomas Ndlovu remembers,

> All over the buses and at the rank in Mkhumbane there were these people with the little posters about workers wanting one pound a day from the companies. Everyone was saying it. Now you greet someone. Not just 'How are you', but the [clenched] fist ... and 'One Pound a Day!' And 'comrades', But we said this jokingly. 'We were Russians ... communists!' It was a good time.[176]

Brutus Mthethwe, a railway worker in the Bell Street compound, but with a wife and child in the shacklands, remembers:

> My union card ... SACTU was always on the table on top of my dompass. My wife would be very proud. She would show it to everyone, 'Look, this is what my husband is doing.' It was very important this union thing. This was when people would go around the streets in Mkhumbane shouting 'Vukani! Vukani!' and holding their union card up.[177]

Although the campaign was successful in bringing increasing numbers of workers into SACTU-affiliated trade unions, such unions were still small and as yet not established in several key areas within the local industrial economy.[178] By their own acknowledgement workers were still reliant upon guidance and "education" from the small number of experienced local officials.[179] The organization itself provided little real training for new organizers, and authority in the union structures came to rest in the hands of a few key officials who were unable to maintain routine contact with all unionized factories, leaving day-to-day issues to untrained shop stewards.[180] Not only was there little contact between the local SACTU committee and the executive based in Johannesburg, but also a lack of real contact between local officials and workers.[181] This was unfortunate because many key SACTU officials were both outstanding organizers and electrifying speakers: converting, through their translations "even the most liberal speech from us in Congress of Democrats into pure revolution."[182]

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175. Feit, Workers, p 54.

176. Interview with Mr T Ndlovu, 14 January 1986.

177. Interview with Mr B Mthethwe, 14 January 1986.

178. R I Lambert, "Trade Union developments during the 1950s", paper presented to the conference 'South Africa during the 1950s', University of Oxford, October 1987.

179. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983 and Mr A Masango, 30 November 1986.

180. See for example interview with Mr H Nxasana, 27 May 1986.

181. Feit, Workers, p 53.

182. Interview with Mr D Claude, 18 September 1986.

The form of this 'revolution' was a matter of debate both within local SACTU committees and the Congress Alliance itself.[183] In SACTU there was division over the strategic benefits of 'Stay at Home' campaigns, with some believing that the strategy not only came "from Johannesburg" but was fundamentally not a working class tactic.[184] Rather unionists should concentrate upon building solid working class organization in the workplace: "getting involved in residential areas was another matter, but we first had to get power in the factories, and then sit-ins, strikes were really out of the question - both illegal and we were not that strong anyway. The stay-away idea does not further the aims of the working class."[185] Within the SACTU leadership in Natal there was also a continuing but seemingly amicable, set of differences over the question of socialism, which had become highlighted through the Freedom Charter.

This became one of the issues discussed between SACTU and the ANC. Within the ANC in Natal there were divergent notions of politics and the role of organized labour in the Congress Alliance. Some, such as George Mbele and Asmon Nene, became "very cross about the clenched fist."[186] Harold Nxasana recalls:

> I remember at one stage being told or advised by George Mbele ... telling us that you mustn't always use the slogan raising our fist saying that [then] you soon forget the national slogan. This [the clenched fist] is the SACTU slogan which mustn't be seen as more important than the [thumb up] national slogan of congress.[187]

The attitude of A J Luthuli towards African trade unionism was certainly less confrontational but often ambiguous and ultimately supportive of the authority of the ANC over the specific working class strategies demanded by many leading SACTU officials in Durban. Although having substantial support among union rank-and-file union members, and the almost undivided loyalty of SACTU officials, Luthuli's main concern was the growth of a broadly based African nationalism.[188] Although he had for long favoured African trade unions, Luthuli viewed trade unionism as merely one means whereby Africans could become politicized. For Luthuli, accepting the obvious need for African trade unionism, did not imply personal adherence to any class-based theoretical formulation; nor should trade unions assume any dominant position within the Congress Alliance.[189]

Before 1959 the major campaigns in which SACTU had co-operated in the Congress Alliance in order to gain more members, were a failure. The 'Stay Away' campaign planned for 26 June 1957, and called

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183. This issue is not mentioned in works by Lambert, Lodge or Luckhardt and Wall.

184. Interview with Mr R Arenstein, 1 August 1985. Albeit from a differing perspective, a similar attitude is expressed in Hirson, "South Africa: ten years of the Stay-at-Home", International Socialist, 1961.

185. Interview with Mr H Nxasana, 27 May 1986.

186. This was confirmed by Ashmon Nene. See interview with Mr A Nene, 29 January 1984.

187. Interview with Mr H Nxasana, 27 May 1986. See also interview with Mr D Claude, 18 September 1986.

188. Lodge, Black Po[illegible]s, p 68-69.

189. Luckhardt and Wall, Organize, pp 159-161, and Feit, Workers, pp 107-109.

around the issue of wages, one such failure. There was no stay-away. Even in Mkhumbane the attempt to organize such a stay-away was dismissed. The campaign was only supported by various ANCWL branches who desired to lead a mass march into the city. Having neither support from the majority of women nor from men, the women "decided to march through the streets of Cato Manor."[190] It was the same with the 1958 political 'Stay Away'. Support was weak during the first day of the proposed three-day campaign that was actually called off by the ANC after the first day. Luthuli admitted that the campaign had been a "flop". There is doubt whether any official call for a stay-away was ever issued in Durban.[191] Confusion appeared to reign supreme.

The successes of African unions during the 1950s are difficult to estimate. SACTU was to gain strength only during the period from 1959 through to the early 1960s. Despite weak organizational support and the vagaries of day-to-day struggles to gain union membership, within particular industrial sectors substantial gains were achieved. In many cases workers won reduced working hours, improved conditions of work, higher wages and even union recognition.[192] The foundations of working class power in the factories had probably been laid. Nevertheless, although wage bargaining would still remain centred around the factory floor, by the late 1950s there was a broader argument in favour of increased wages for African wages that was only partially due to campaigns such as the 'One Pound a Day' strategy and increased African assertiveness in factories. Wage increases cannot merely be viewed as SACTU victories.[193]

From the late 1940s onwards both the state and capital had sought to eradicate Durban shantytowns in ways which would correlate closely to the way in which local employers desired to restructure the African labour market. With the building of Kwa Mashu it became apparent to the majority of employers that the costs of accommodation in the new township required substantial wage increases. Wage increases, demands for higher productivity, and the growing number of semi-skilled jobs made available to African labour having acquired permanent residence in the city came at the same time as wage demands and increasing unionization amongst African workers. Workplace struggles would continue, but for the majority of shack residents the final struggle over the future of Mkhumbane was about to begin.

Conclusion

The particular constraints of daily life within the shacklands produced both a population whose political

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190. Ilanga lase Natal, 6 July 1957. The planned march through the city was also a complete failure. The march did not take place through lack of any support. Daily News, 27 June 1957.

191. New Age, 24 April 1958.

192. See E Webster, "Stay-aways and the black working class since the Second World War", University of the Witwatersrand, Institute for African Studies seminar paper, April 1979, R Lambert, "Black resistance in South Africa: an assessment of the political strike campaigns", University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies seminar paper, January 1979 and Luckhardt and Wall, Organize, p 440.

193. For such a perspective see Lambert, "Trade Unions".

.trength was often overestimated and various contradictory elements within a proletarian consciousness. In various ways however, through the struggles over daily life, by the time of the June 1959 beerhall riots in Mkhumbane, there was a growing feeling amongst African workers living in the area of working class strength. Sustained in many ways through the various women's organizations and associations in the area, a new working class consciousness was to develop in the area and gradually extend an often previously myopic horizon to areas of struggle which lay beyond the shacklands themselves.

In many ways this new class awareness was prompted by the manner in which the changing nature of shack life made certain long accepted struggles against aspects of city life untenable. In other ways, but still within the shacklands, the increasing class divisions within the shack community became more evident. More visible trading class had emerged from the proletarian populism of the later 1940s. Shack leaders of the 1940s had remained in authority and had gained increasing wealth. Such class developments had led to the virtual collapse of the shackland's internal economy. The alliances between the ANC and shack leaders was clearly evident, as was the difficulty in sustaining a working-class unity through waging battles within the shantytowns over access to material wealth and political power. Accepting the nature of the industrializing economy, workers gained a deeper appreciation of the need for industrial trade unionism. The growth of such unionism and the general political climate of the late 1950s was however to be dramatically altered by the shantytown revolts of 1959 and 1960.