



Tackling the conglomerates: Barlow Rand workers at a recent demonstration in Johannesburg

The victories continue... struggle is certain

The Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu) have moved another step closer to achieving their aims in their campaign against the Labour Relations Act (LRA). As reported in *WIP* 69, the cabinet on 20 September accepted a proposal that a draft bill based on the Cosatu-Nactu-Saccola accord on the LRA - as amended by the National Manpower Commission (NMC) and a working group established by president FW de Klerk - be submitted for consideration by the parliamentary standing committee on manpower.

The committee heard representations on the Labour Relations Amendment Bill in late October, paving the way for it to become law next year.

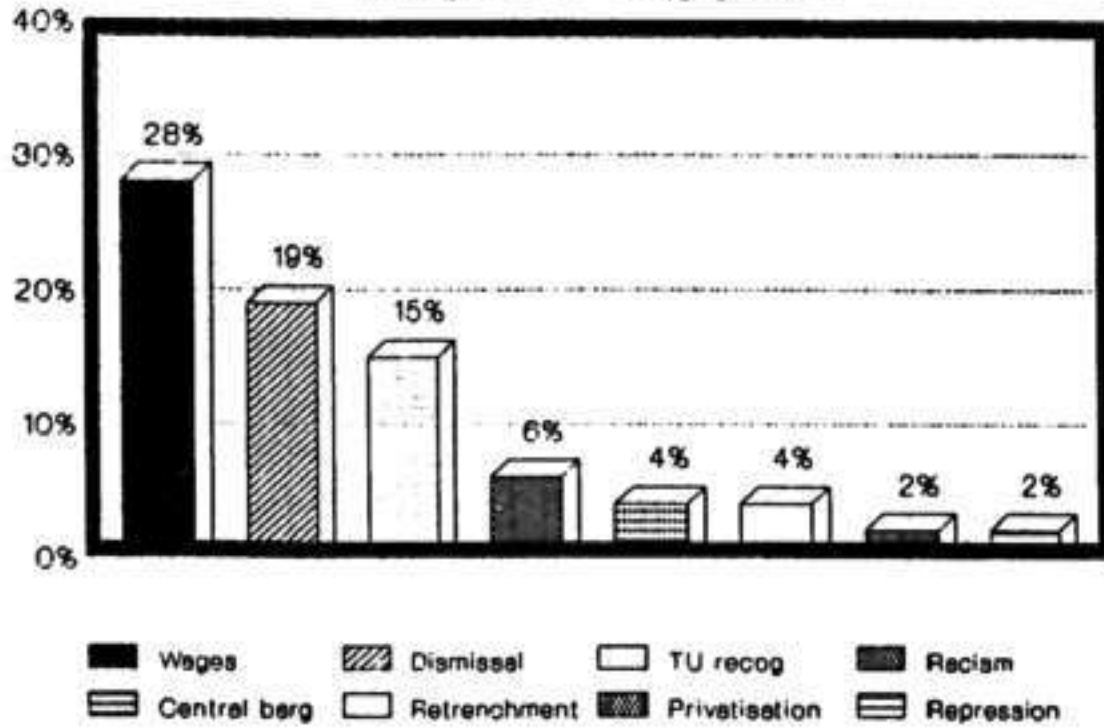
The labour federations are quite naturally pleased with this development. After all, they have been campaigning for this change for over two years. There is, however, still some concern about the steps that lie ahead.

According to Cosatu's Geoff Schreiner, the bill is not entirely to the federation's liking; there is also a degree of uncertainty about what will happen in standing committee and, later, in parliament.

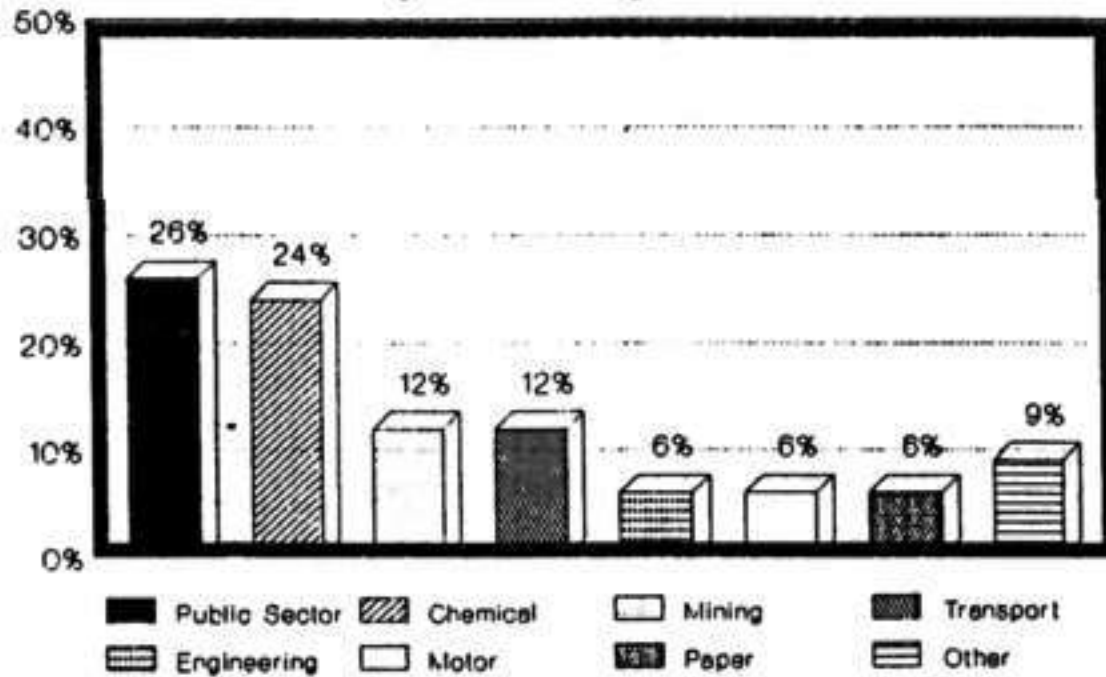
'The state's law advisers introduced certain changes which we believe change the substance of what was agreed in the working group,' says Schreiner.

Cosatu met with Manpower Minister Eli Louw to discuss its objections prior to giving evidence before the standing com-

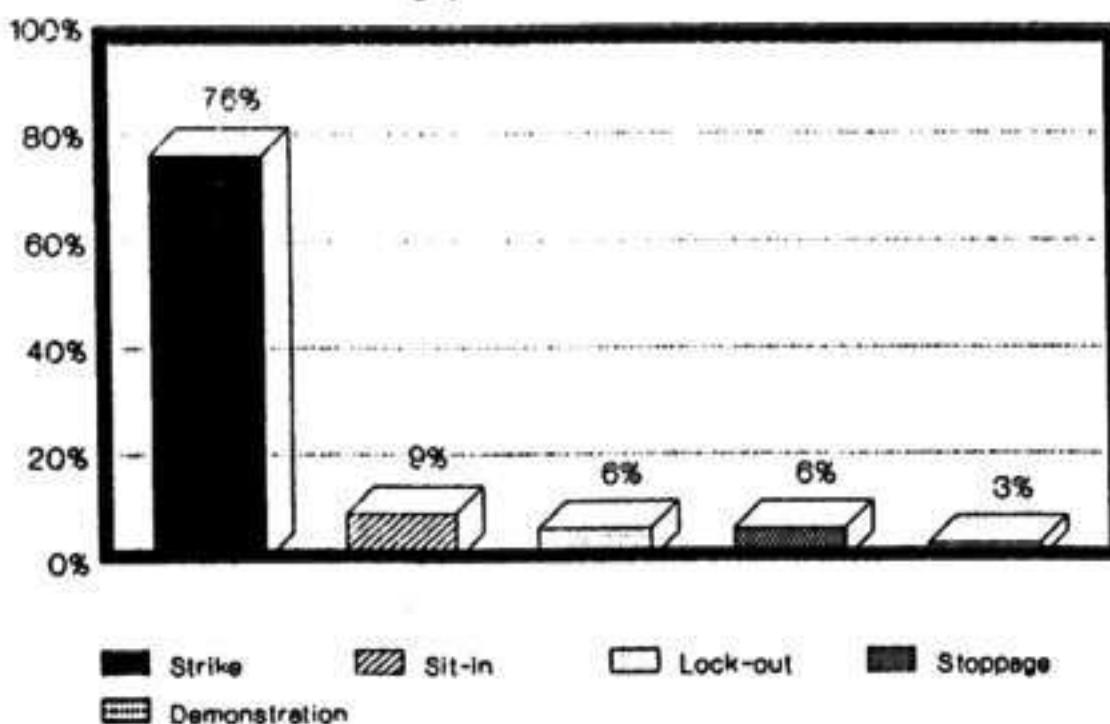
Dispute triggers



Disputes by sector



Type of action



certain procedures. But they can still be fired for being on strike. Employers can also interdict them from striking. And if workers live in company accommodation, they can also be evicted during a strike.

'If they had the right to strike - as workers in other countries do - these things could not happen. This is fundamental if we are start equalising the relationship between capital and labour.'

Trade union rights for all workers in South Africa is another goal that has not yet been attained.

The Cosatu-Nactu-Saccola accord makes provision for civil servants and farm and domestic workers - who are presently excluded from the ambit of the LRA - to be covered by the Act.

The government, however, is still resisting this and the Bill differs from the accord in this respect.

Cosatu is also set upon ensuring that labour legislation is extended to the bantustans.

The industrial court and the Department of Manpower are an additional problem.

'At present the industrial court does not have credibility - it must be revamped. Similarly, the Department of Manpower does not reflect modern realities.'

'We need to have effective mechanisms to give effect to any LRA,' says Schreiner.

Then there is is challenge posed by participation in the National Manpower Commission.

'In principle we have agreed to participate', says Schreiner, 'but we need to work out things like who should be there and what power it should have.'

• WIP monitored 34 disputes involving some 86 680 workers in the period between 21 September and 24 October. Of these 26 were strikes, 2 work stoppages, 3 sit-ins, 2 lock-outs and 1 a demonstration.

Three of the strikes were national strikes, of which the largest is the Nampak strike which centres on a demand for centralised bargaining.

As can be seen in the graphs, wages demands were the trigger for the majority of the disputes, followed by unfair dismissals, and trade union recognition.

The majority of the disputes occurred in the public sector and the chemical industry.

The mining and transport sectors were the next hard-hit. •

mittee. The minister noted the federation's objections and undertook to table them as amendments with the standing committee.

'If the Bill goes through as amended in our talks with the minister, it will be a great victory,' says Schreiner. 'But it depends on how it comes out of the

standing committee and parliament.'

The campaign around the LRA does not end here, however. As Schreiner points out: 'Workers still have to win many other rights.'

'For example, the right to strike is not entrenched in the law. Workers have the freedom to strike - provided they follow