

Many of the menaces I have discussed in this essay have external as well as internal features, depending on the perspective they are viewed from, and it would have been tautological to have tried to draw sharp distinctions. Insidious menaces transcend the categories "external and internal." In modern societies, it often seems to make

little difference whether the increasing satisfaction of needs is accomplished by an authoritarian, or a liberal democratic system. Smooth efficiency and a constant flow of goods are all that matters. This happy consciousness is the Arch-Menace that subsumes most other menaces. □

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# THE INSTITUTION FOR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

by Foszia Fisher

An Institute for Industrial Education (I.I.E.) research team investigating the Durban strikes and their relation to the system of labour relations in South Africa, came to the following conclusions:

- 1) There are in fact objective conflicts of interest between worker and employer, and these conflicts cannot be overcome merely by improving communication between the two.
- 2) Institutions for mediating between the two sides must therefore recognise the fact that there is a power dimension involved.
- 3) If in fact the institutions that exist are such as to render the workers powerless or to deny the actual power that they do have, then there will be certain consequences which, although not usually recognised by management as resulting from the conflict situation, are in fact the only weapons which remain to the workers. These consequences are, cumulatively, very serious indeed. They include "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency", high labour turn-over, increased sickness and accident rates, industrial sabotage.

- 4) This means that, although in one way it is in the employer's interest to maximise his power to coerce the workers, in another way the failure to grant some power to the workers over wages and conditions is actually against the real interest of both worker and employer.
- 5) Finally, in the absence of some meaningful sharing of power, communication itself will almost certainly not occur.

Thus we can conclude that the development of Trade Unions for Africans is not only an urgent necessity for African workers; it is also necessary for further industrial development and for social peace in South Africa. But, given the short-sightedness of most employers, of the government, and of most white workers, such Unions will have to be developed by workers themselves against considerable opposition. Their margin of manoeuvre, given the rather repressive nature of industrial relations in South Africa, is not very large. Would-be African Trade Unionists are faced with obstructionist tactics by management, with a general lack of information, and also with great difficulties in actually organising workers. There is great enthusiasm amongst African Trade Unions, but turning

this enthusiasm into efficient and viable organisation is a difficult task. It is not helped by the generally low level of education of African Workers, and by the fact that what education they have had has prepared them to understand orders, but has not given them the information necessary for them to understand the economics of industry and the legislation affecting them as workers.

Thus the development of African Trade Unions requires, inter alia, a system of education designed to meet the needs of workers. Workers need to know the existing system of industrial legislation, how it is enforced, and how they can use it. They need to be able to understand and refute the sophistries frequently presented by management to justify paying low wages. They need to understand what causes inflation, the exact nature of the relation between wages, productivity, and training, and the relation between wages, profits and expansion. To meet this need for an "industrial education" the Institution for Industrial Education has been brought into being.

The I.I.E. is not designed only for African workers. There is no full-time educational institution specialising in workers education in South Africa, and we hope that our courses will be useful to all workers. But we expect the biggest demand to come initially from African workers, and their need is certainly greatest.

The I.I.E. is the joint product of Natal Trade Unionists and academics, and it also enjoys the support of the Kwazulu government. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi has agreed to become chancellor of the Institute. The Trade Union support comes from both registered Unions and from the new young African Unions in Natal. Although the I.I.E. will concentrate on Natal in 1974, the intention is to expand to a national basis after the first experimental year.

For the academics concerned, an important motivating factor has been an awareness of the extent to which existing universities are management and middle-class oriented. This shows itself partly in the recruitment of students, which, as a result of the fact that university education requires full time non-earning for a number of years, is predominantly middle class, and destined for management.

This applies to a slightly lesser extent to black students, but in any case most students at university in South Africa are white. The management bias also shows itself in the subjects that are being taught and in the way that they are taught. There are many courses designed to help businessmen increase their profits, but none that we know of is designed to teach workers how to organise a successful strike. Similarly, research problems are usually set within a management framework. We suspect that any student intending to do research aimed at improving bargaining techniques for workers would have difficulty in getting a research grant!

This means that there will be interesting problems involved in adjusting traditional teaching material to fit the different problems and perspectives of workers. Of course, there are a number of workers' education institutions in existence outside South Africa, and we hope to benefit

from their experience. The I.I.E. has already established links with the most prestigious of all these institutions, Ruskin College, Oxford. Ruskin College has agreed to act as the external examining body for our courses, which means that syllabi will be set in consultation with them, and they will ensure that our standards are up to international levels.

Ruskin College is run on a residential basis. Trade Unions negotiate periods of release from work for their members so that they can attend short courses on a full time basis. Such a system is not possible in South Africa, partly because Unions have not as yet been able to arrange release, and also because in any case group areas legislation would make it very difficult to run a college open full time to all workers. Most of the Institute's teaching will be done by correspondence, and this has its own difficulties. In a face-to-face teaching situation it is possible continuously to adapt the methods and the material to the students, although, of course, this is frequently not done in practice. This cannot be done with correspondence education. Also, the workers have a relatively low standard of formal education, and are perhaps not all that used to using written material.

Nevertheless, our mode of operation does have some advantages. Education is usually geared towards "certification", towards the attainment of a certificate which will give access to better jobs, and will increase personal prestige. Under these circumstances the actual content of the education has no immediate and obvious relevance. Learning it is part of an abstract test of the right to certification, rather than part of a personal growth process in which students are coming to understand better themselves and their social situation. Our material, on the other hand, will, in its content, be directly relevant to the everyday problems of our worker-students. Also those who enroll with us will be highly motivated individuals already active in the Trade Union movement. Much of our teaching will be designed to help workers find out how their particular industries operate. Our "tests" will require them to investigate what is happening around them, and so to show in action that they have understood the principles.

This does not mean that we foresee no problems. In preparing teaching material, it is easy to make false assumptions about what the workers know, or, on the other hand, to produce insultingly elementary material. In an attempt to avoid this we are working with a number of workers in the production of the teaching material. They are presented with the first drafts, which are then revised in the light of their criticisms and of any problems which they have had in understanding them. Our basic course, the Diploma in Trade Unionism, lasts for one year, and during that year we shall also organise a number of seminars for the participants, at which we will be able to get feedback from them about the course, and will be able to use face-to-face teaching techniques to reinforce the written material.

Most Trade Unions run their own training courses for Shop Stewards, and we do not envisage that our courses will supplant these. They should be complementary, pro-

viding written material which the trainees can use before and after their short, specialised courses to help them get a more adequate overall grasp of the situation.

An important factor with regard to written material is that publishing in South Africa, as elsewhere, is geared to the needs of a highly educated middle-class, and English-speaking, public. There is hardly any "academic" literature available in simple English, or in any of the African languages. We believe that there may well be a positive demand for the written material itself. All our material for the Diploma course will be written initially in both Zulu and English. As we extend our activities outside Natal, we will introduce other South African languages as well.

Provisionally, we have divided our syllabus into three sections: The Worker in the Factory; The Worker in the Union; and the Worker in Society. The first section will deal with elementary economics of the firm: production, costs, profits, and factors affecting wages. It will also include an introduction to industrial legislation. This section of the course will be organised around a Legal Handbook, containing a guide to the use of all the legislation relevant to the work situation, such as Factory Acts, Unemployment Insurance Act, and wage regulating machinery. The lessons will be designed to teach how to use the Handbook, so that at the end of the course, the workers will be able to discover in the Handbook what they need to know to handle any particular problem which arises in their everyday activity.

The section on The Worker in the Union is particularly important. The early growth of Unions in most countries illustrates the same set of problems, particularly accidental or intentional financial mismanagement, personality conflicts, and very rapid bureaucratisation. We will attempt to illustrate these problems by a study of Trade Union history, in South Africa and elsewhere; to analyse the structural factors creating these problems; and to explain the techniques of financial management and democratic organisation which can be used to overcome them. This will include an account of book-keeping methods, how to collect and record money, meeting procedure, and how to maintain adequate communication between leaders and members. We hope that our courses will make this information available to members as well as to leaders, since knowledge specialisation is an important factor in encouraging bureaucratisation.

Trade Unions negotiate with employers within a social context, and employers often argue that it is general factors, such as taxation or inflation, or a rapid drop in demand, which prevent them from paying the high wages that they would love to pay. On the other hand, workers often attempt to reinforce their demands for higher wages

with reference to poverty datum lines and other general problems faced by workers. Thus it is important for workers to have an overall understanding of both the macro-economic factors affecting wages, and the nature of the social forces, which, in South Africa, are leading to the inevitable urbanisation of the bulk of the African population, and are making nonsense of that favourite management standby: "Africans are only working for a supplementary income. Their standard of living is maintained by their farming in the reserves". The third part of the course, The Worker in Society, will deal with these problems in relation to a detailed study of collective bargaining techniques in the context of South African wage regulating machinery.

In addition to this basic course on Trade Unionism, the Institute will engage in a number of other activities. From the beginning of 1974, it will publish a monthly "South African Labour Bulletin", which will contain an analysis of the labour scene in South Africa, reports of research undertaken by the I.I.E., and of other academic research in South Africa, book reviews and discussions of significant developments in labour relations outside South Africa, and articles on economic and social issues of general interest to workers and unionists.

The I.I.E. already has two research projects underway. The first (in conjunction with the S.A.I.R.R.), now nearly completed, deals with the Durban strikes, and the second with the methods of communication between Union officials and workers in Natal. At present, there is an urgent need for two kinds of research. Unions bargaining at Industrial Council meetings, or putting forward demands to the Wage Board, need basic comparative information on their industry, its wage levels and profitability. Secondly, there is a need for research into the structure of industry in South Africa, the problems faced by workers in the course of urbanisation, and the particular problems of Union organisation which result from South Africa's unique history. The extent to which we are able to undertake this research will, of course, depend on our financial position. In the long run we believe that it is important that an organisation like the I.I.E. should be largely financed by the Unions it serves. At the moment, the African Unions in particular, are financially very weak, and of course, many of the registered white-controlled Unions are very conservative, so that it will be some time before this position is reached. Meanwhile, we shall concentrate our resources on developing and improving the basic Diploma in Trade Unionism.

Any one interested in doing the Diploma, or in subscribing to the Labour Bulletin, or in assisting with funds, should contact: The Chairperson, The Institute for Industrial Education, P.O. Box 2103, or at Flat 4, Central Court, 125, Gale Street, Durban.□