

Towards a new worker internationalism?

Guest editor: Celia Mather

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Solidarity in a changing world

by CELIA MATHER*

The profound political and economic changes worldwide are having their effect on international trade union alignments. Unions in South Africa, as across the globe, are reassessing what they mean by international solidarity, and with whom they want to collaborate.

In the following pages we bring together articles looking at different aspects of international union solidarity with South Africa.

Both COSATU and NACTU are evaluating their relationship to the rival world confederations, the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Both SA federations have a pol-

icy of non-alignment but, under pressure to seek out material and political assistance, are increasingly accepting an ICFTU role.

In an interview, an ICFTU deputy general sec-



Celia Mather, ILR staffer
Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

retary speaks of his organisation's desire to increase support for the SA trade unions and the fight against apartheid. He also talks about ICFTU 'philosophy' that a combination of the market economy with strong workers' movements for a fair income distribution is what develops countries. In the ICFTU "we don't believe in trade unions that are organically connected with a political party." However, Jay Naidoo points out that many ICFTU affiliates are much more "incestuous" with political parties than the SA unions.

In a provocative debate piece, an anonymous correspondent criticises both internationals for being secretive and undemocratic. But rather than "entering to democratise from within", she

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makes the radical suggestion of a new international union alliance to campaign for a "a single unified, democratic and accountable world federation". Who might gather together such an alliance is left unclear, but there are many workers organisations - particularly in the South, but not only there - which could consider joining such an alliance.

Certainly both COSATU and NACTU general secretaries perceive possibilities of a new unity to replace the old Cold War divisions and recognise, as Jay Naidoo says, that there is more that unites workers across the globe than divides them.

Meanwhile, individual SA unions have also been assessing the impact of their relationships to the industry/sector based International Trade Secretariats (ITSS) associated with the ICFTU. Several (though not all) COSATU unions told the *Bulletin* they have successfully kept external agendas at bay and have benefitted from affiliation.

On the plus side, amongst other things, there is contact with unions fighting the same corporations, information on health and safety, and

support for education programmes. Negative trends which have to be combated are external political agendas, and unwarranted siding in internal disputes.

It appears, however, that the ITSS are concentrating on COSATU affiliates and marginalising NACTU unions. A defiant Cunningham Ngcukana says NACTU unions are going for self-reliance as the answer.

Meanwhile, by contrast, COSATU has been 'normalising', as Jay Naidoo puts it, its relationship with western union centres it previously held in suspicion, particularly the US AFL-CIO. The overseas activities of the AFL-CIO have long been criticised by COSATU and many others for their support of US government foreign policy aims. Many eyes, particularly in other unions of the South, will be upon COSATU to see how it handles the AFL-CIO.

Many the *Bulletin* has spoken to believe that the relationship between unions of the South and the Northern-based internationals and their affiliates is one of patronage, but have yet to find how to break the North out of its paternalism.

One way will be for unions of the South to be more active in contributing to, as well as taking from, international solidarity. It is not just a question of 'what we can get' but 'what we can give'. Such a perspective is, however, absent from the COSATU policy discussion paper published in the last *Bulletin*.

Union-to-union links seem to have proved particularly fruitful. In an article from the USA, John Hudson of the US garment and textile workers' ACTWU speaks highly of the mutual relationship which has developed with SACTWU here. He points to the lessons ACTWU has been able to learn from SACTWU's mobilising methods and worker control. There are many others in the North fighting bureaucratic unionism, and racism among unionists, who might value learning from their SA comrades.

Both COSATU and NACTU recognise that stronger alliances among unions of the South are important for the future. But in spite of a commitment to 'natural allies' in the fight against imperialism and capitalism, little concrete progress has been made. Available resources

flow North-South, not South-South.

COSATU is now joining NACTU in putting more emphasis on regional activities, and will be debating affiliation to the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity at its Congress in July.

Closer collaboration particularly with other Southern African unions on a common social charter is already under way.

There is much more yet to international labour solidarity not covered in these pages. The majority of workers worldwide are unable to form or join genuine trade unions, or have their issues included on union agendas, for numerous reasons.

Some are nevertheless organised in other ways. Among these are migrant workers, women workers, part-timers and subcontracted labour. They too should be included in discussions of why and how workers organise internationally to protect their interests.

The international union world has changed, and will change further in the next few years. We hope these articles contribute to the debate about how the SA trade union movement can contribute towards a new internationalism. ☆

International solidarity: ILR's Filipina Friends

Remarkable solidarity was shown last year by women garment workers in the Philippines towards the British-based magazine *International Labour Reports (ILR)*. *ILR* is known to many of our readers for its excellent coverage of international trade union issues. The *Bulletin* has for several years distributed *ILR* and reprinted *ILR* articles.

In early 1990 *ILR* was sued for libel by the British garment multinational William Baird PLC, for what it published about the company's activities in Britain and the Philippines. At its IGMC factory in the Philippines, Bairds made clothing for the European market.

The IGMC women workers had been out on the picket-line, harassed by the military, for over year, first for implementation of a government agreed minimum wage increase and then for proper redundancy pay as Bairds closed the factory down. In their final settlement, the IGMC workers got Bairds to unconditionally drop the case against *ILR*. "We told Bairds", union President Lucy Salao later said, "that the Filipina concept of friendship is that you never let a friend down. *ILR* has been a good friend to us."

Former *ILR* Editor Celia Mather told the *Bulletin*, "You can imagine what it meant to us that the IGMC brought this damaging case against us to an end". However, Bairds is showing no sign of respecting the agreement. *ILR* has had to launch an appeal to meet its legal costs.

Facing the libel case and financial crisis, *ILR* had to suspend publication in mid-1990. Celia says, however, that they are working hard to relaunch later this year. Letters of support are very useful for helping to raise funds. Please send letters and donations to: *International Labour Reports*, P.O. Box 45, Stainborough, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S75 3EA, England. ★

"More that unites than divides"

In an interview with Celia Mather and Karl von Holdt, COSATU general secretary JAY NAIDOO explains the federation's international policy.

Labour Bulletin: *COSATU's policy has been one of active non-alignment between the international union federations, but nevertheless you have been developing a relationship with the ICFTU. How do you see COSATU's international policy developing?*

Naidoo: International policy has never been high on COSATU's agenda. We did not feel that it was a priority compared with building a strong internal labour movement. Also, we wanted to avoid the situation where conflicts in the international trade union movement, which were really not relevant to our struggle against apartheid and exploitation here, could divide us.

So, when we dealt with international policy at our various congresses, there was never really a discussion; it was just proposed and moved.

I think generally all sides of COSATU felt it should not become a bone of contention. So we developed a policy of 'active non-alignment', which in essence meant we didn't do much internationally.

But we recognised that South Africa is an integral part of the western economy. Needing solidarity for industrial action against multinationals from the western countries, and having much easier access to the West, our first contacts obviously developed with western unions, in particular, the Scandinavians, Dutch,



and Canadians, and to a lesser extent the Australians and the British. All these are ICFTU affiliates.

Now, we had certain problems with the ICFTU, particularly in its relationship with us historically and certain of its functionaries. Though a section of COSATU equated the ICFTU with some sort of imperialist function, that was never the formal position of COSATU, and it was crudified by people who really didn't understand the situation.

I do think some hostility inside COSATU was due to hysterical anti-communist rhetoric from some quarters in the ICFTU. Many communists had made a sterling contribution to building the democratic trade union movement in South Africa. The criticism of COSATU was coming from anti-communists and not just non-communists.

non-communists.

So we decided not to participate in the ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee or to receive assistance via it. We would instead have bilateral relations with those national centres we believed shared something in common with us, which were, as I have said, largely ICFTU affiliates. Also, many of our affiliates belong to the ITSSs, which are linked to the ICFTU.

We never intended to split the ICFTU as some have alleged internationally. And we had no problem with those ICFTU affiliates or national centres we had bilateral relations with reporting to the ICFTU what they were doing with us.

Our decision to not affiliate was seen as a political attempt to undermine the ICFTU. Some of it got pretty difficult, particularly in the way the West German DGB and the American AFL-CIO saw us. But we did have a number of meetings with the ICFTU to exchange views. Like any trade union movement faced with repression, we sought support from any agency that could offer us support, and included among them was the ICFTU.

Today, we have strong links with some of the biggest unions in the AFL-CIO, eg the garment workers' ACTWU, the automobile workers' UAW, the miners' UMWA, and the public employees' AF-SCME. As with the German DGB, we encourage direct worker-to-worker and union-to-union contact. Even though

we had differences with the national centre, this didn't mean we had nothing to do with American workers. In fact, we respect the role that American workers, and in more recent times the AFL-CIO, have played in isolating apartheid.

It was as the political cohesion of COSATU emerged, that the issue emerged of what concretely should be our relationships internationally. One of the biggest problems in South Africa has been the way in which we have become so self-centred about our struggle that we really don't understand very much about struggles in the rest of the world. There is an expectation that, given that apartheid is seen as a crime against humanity, everyone should identify with us and that this is the centre of struggle in the world. There is very little understanding of international problems, even in Southern Africa.

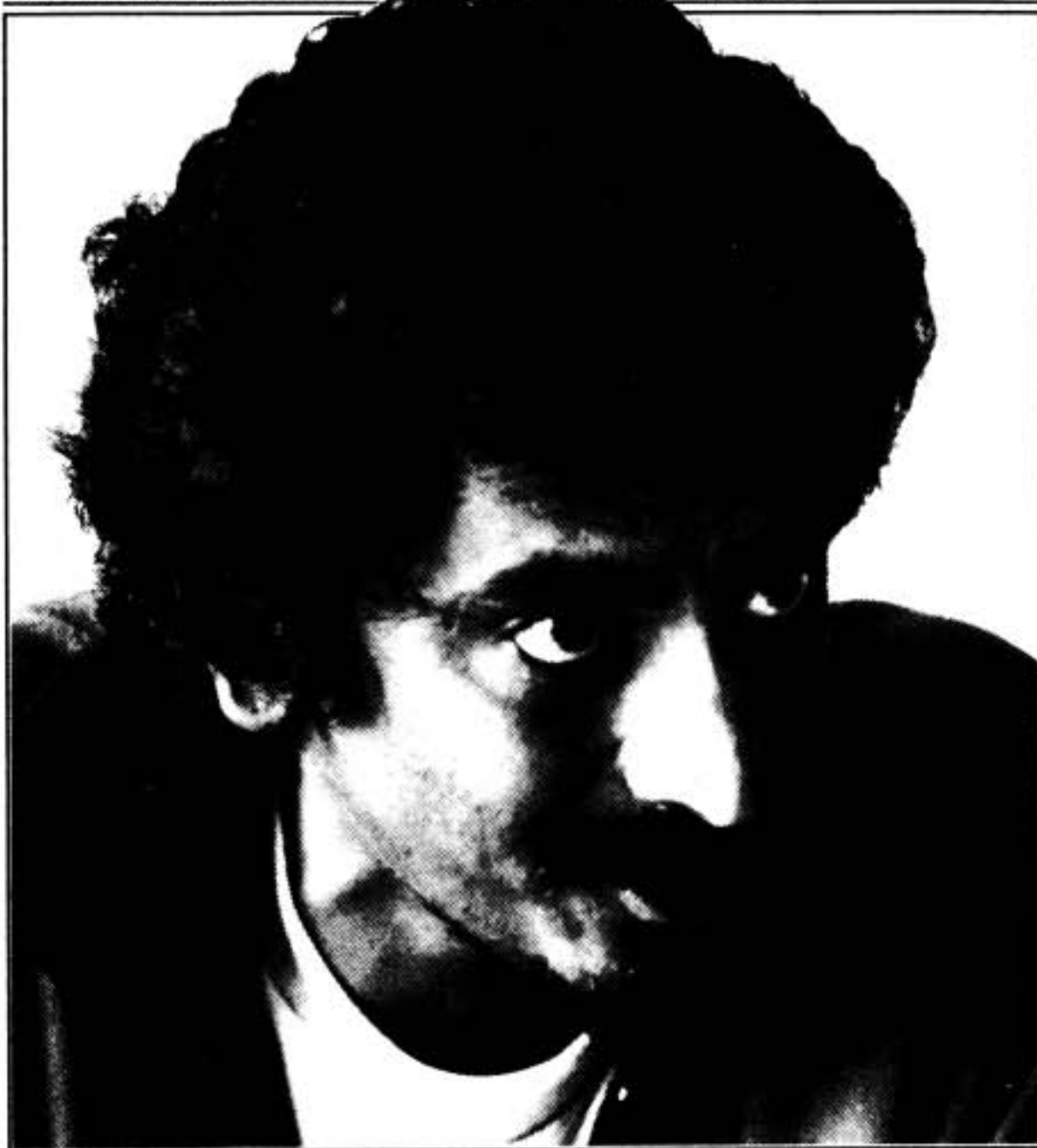
In 1987, the first real debate took place, over the question of affiliation to OATUU. None of us really knew what OATUU stood for, but it was a symbolic thing of wanting to identify with Africa. The consensus at the end was that we should develop a working relationship and get to know what OATUU did, the value it could be both to us building internally and also to establishing relations across the region. Again our policy of non-alignment was reiterated but there was a view that we should begin developing contacts with militant trade union centres in the Third World.

As we saw it, the most militant struggles were being fought out in the developing world, and yet the centre of unionism was either the WFTU or the ICFTU. Those are definitely not the places where the most militant struggles are being fought out. So we looked to the South, to the Philippines, the Pacific Rim, South Korea, Malaysia, and to India and Brazil, and in the Southern African context, to Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The fact is that we never really established links with unions in the Pacific Rim or South America. What intervened was a wave of even more intensified repression against our democratic formations, which meant that by 1988-89 our trade union movement had to become absorbed with the political struggle against the apartheid regime.

I think up to now international solidarity has just been a slogan, or has meant money and material assistance. There are very few examples in South Africa of us taking solidarity with international struggles. The NUM made a donation to the miners' strike in Britain and workers in 3M went on strike for their American counterparts, just as there has been solidarity with us, including industrial action, and obviously also pressure in relation to sanctions, disinvestment, and the release of detained or charged trade unionists such as Moses Mayekiso.

So, late last year we seriously, or rather semi-seriously, started to discuss what our in-



Jay Naidoo

Photo: Anna Zieminski/Afrapix

ternational relationships should be. I think it was put on the agenda for very concrete reasons, particularly the world restructuring of the economy, and the loosening of the political climate internationally with the formal ending of the Cold War and the collapse of East European regimes.

We also saw that there were possibilities of a more unified response by workers internationally to political developments eroding their interests, whether they are in the Soviet Union or USA. At the end of the day, workers are going to begin sharing common problems, particularly where there is an unbridled move to free market systems, where the lives and jobs of

workers, the benefits they have gained, are being jeopardised.

So we started to re-discuss our role. Obviously, we had to begin normalising relations. There was a trip to the Soviet Union by the first formal political delegation of COSATU in October last year. In late 1988 we visited the DGB in Germany, and at a political level normalised relations with them. We had our first meeting with the ICFTU Executive Council in December 1990 in Tokyo. Most recently we visited the AFL-CIO Executive Council in the USA.

By 'normalisation' I mean that we are attempting to say, 'let us set aside our historical perceptions of each other and identify if there are areas of

common interest' because it is our belief, as South African trade unionists, that there is more that unites us than divides us. We should not pretend that there are no differences - there will always be differences - but we should cooperate around the issues common to us. Whether you are an American worker, or a worker in the Soviet Union, Europe, Asia or Africa, the world restructuring of the economy is going to undermine your rights in the interests of increased profits for the capitalists.

So, it is in that context that we are normalising our relations, not just with the ICFTU but with all federations. There are new initiatives afoot to bring us into contact in the next few months with unions in the Pacific Rim and in South America too.

In Africa, we have taken a more active role. We attended the OATUU Congress last year and have become centrally involved in its Southern Africa Trade Union Coordinating Committee. We are helping to develop a social charter for workers' rights across Southern Africa. Our common interests with Southern African workers will be shared, particularly as borders open up, with industry relocating, or manufacturing industry in the Frontline States being wiped out by South Africa. The question of affiliation to OATUU will come up at our next Congress.

That is the only question of affiliation that will come up. There may be the question of

the role we are playing in relation to the ICFTU, either concretising it more with regard to material assistance, or playing a role in whatever possibilities exist to unify the international trade union movement.

Labour Bulletin: *You talk about 'normalising' relationships. The International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO has been severely criticised for the activities of its Institutes in Latin America, Asia and Africa in collaborating in the repression of genuine trade unions. How do you see your contribution to the struggle of those other trade unionists of the South, with whom you have said you also want to build stronger relationships?*

Naidoo: I think we would prefer not to polarise the debate because for once there are real possibilities of unifying workers. Clearly the basis has to be very principled, for example, respect for the integrity and self-determination of workers in each country; that we should deal with genuine trade unions not conveyor belts of political parties, either of the left or the right, or structures set up by employers; that we should deal with trade unions based on principles which we espouse, like workers' control over the organisation, non-racialism, and shopfloor solidarity and democracy.

We have been very strong on the issue that we do not see any need for either ourselves

or any other national centres to set up institutions in other countries. We have always been very critical of the AFL-CIO's AALC because of that. Cooperation should be on a bilateral basis between national centres, or through an agreed international centre, on clearly defined programmes.

Obviously, our natural interest would be with workers in similar struggles to our own, against colonialism, all forms of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation.

Trade unionists in Central America or Asia or Africa are our natural allies and we will attempt through our relationship with trade unions of more developed countries to influence policy as to how solidarity is carried out. That too must be on a principled basis. You can have solidarity carried out by some very well intentioned people that creates a dependency, as well as solidarity by people who don't have good intentions. We need more debate in the international trade union movement to establish the best vehicle to build solidarity.

What one is trying to define, and I think we have achieved it with the Scandinavians and Dutch is a level of solidarity based on a respect for each other's programmes. It is not that we agree with them over everything, but we have developed a relationship which provides virtually a model for solidarity in the rest of the world. It is not just a transfer of material resources, but a respect for the integrity

of the struggles that we fight, and an involvement in our struggles. Now, given the loosening of the political process here, we are beginning to discuss areas more orientated towards reconstruction. So the level of cooperation is moving to development issues. That is the type of basis on which we would like to develop solidarity.

Labour Bulletin: *There are forces which have tried to impose particular perspectives and ways of organising on unions in many countries. Has COSATU experienced that sort of pressure?*

Naidoo: In the international environment there are very different agendas at play. One needs to arrive at a situation where those agendas do not become hostile to each other and there is some unity of process that begins to develop a common agenda, though it is a difficult task.

As for COSATU, I don't think we have suffered in any way from the kind of intervention which other countries have. Solidarity with us has usually been on the basis of what we have put forward as our needs and that ultimately is because we have a strong base. Where you have a weak base you can have yourself dictated to, whether it is in a factory negotiation or on a national or international scale.

In terms of intervention, we would fight it wherever we saw it. That is why in our relationship to Namibia we were very cautious about how we

should proceed. Some workers there in the initial stages said they wanted to join COSATU unions, but this would be promoting some sort of colonial mentality.

We have identified the Namibians, Zimbabweans and Mozambicans as important areas to develop stronger links. But it has to be on a very clear basis of developing jointly, not determining, the content of those organisations.

We have never experienced intervention, even by those people who disagreed with us, because they had respect for us as trade unionists. That has been a critical difference. And obviously, given apartheid, solidarity with us was much more a need and sometimes a necessity in the self-esteem of people outside this country.

Labour Bulletin: *Is there a contribution South African unions can make to the North as well?*

Naidoo: Absolutely. There are many weaknesses in the trade unions of the developed countries. In relation to strengthening shopfloor democracy, involvement of people on the ground in struggles, there are critical contributions we can make.

Also on the independence of the trade union movement. What one sees in the developed world is much more interaction and integration of the labour movement with political parties. The question is always posed to us about 'two hats'. But if you examine the

relationship of trade unions to political parties in the North it is much more incestuous than it is here. Many trade unions in the West affiliate to political parties or sit on each other's constitutional structures, etc.

While in the social democratic model there is a stronger role for organisations in civil society, particularly the trade union movement, to take part in decision-making, certainly we want to see it taken much further. Drawing on the lessons of both developed and underdeveloped countries we hope to graft on our own model, and that could be of use to others.

Labour Bulletin: *You have used the phrase 'a more unified trade union movement'. Could you tell us more about how you see the balance changing between the WFTU and ICFTU federations, now that the Cold War is over. What are the possibilities for unifying the movement, while yet making it more progressive and responsive to workers on the shopfloor?*

Naidoo: It has not been discussed extensively in COSATU, but one can make some generalisations. Obviously, given our principles, we have a vested interest in seeing the international trade union movement unified, particularly given the changes I have talked about internationally.

These changes in turn require a much deeper solidarity from the workers in the western world, particular-

ly in relation to democratic struggles being fought for workers' rights and against the increasingly aggressive transnationals, given that the collapse of the socialist centre in the East has tilted the balance of forces in favour of imperialism.

The trade union internationals, particularly the WFTU and ICFTU, have in the past both been influenced by ideology, and had their priorities determined by ideology, which hasn't been in the interests of the workers of the world, and both have made mistakes. I think it is important that we do not get into a 'winner takes all' situation but confront the reality of what workers on the ground want, wherever and whoever they are.

If we can establish a set of principles around which we can unite workers internationally, which should not be difficult, then we can start developing the programme as to how we implement those principles in a process towards unification of the international trade union movement. It is not going to be an administrative process, that is one thing we have learnt here. It is only through a process of struggle and engagement that we are able to unify the labour movement internationally.

Labour Bulletin: *What are the structures for making COSATU's international policy? How does your new International Officer and the international work you do interlock with COSATU's*

educational programme?

Naldoo: I think one lesson we are going to learn is not to develop an International Department with a bureaucracy which separates itself from the political direction of the federation. The task of our new International Officer is more to do the research, to brief people, and to feed reports back to the structures. International policy-making re-

mains directly in the functions of the elected national leadership.

Also, a significant part of our international study tour programme will be located in the context of economic reconstruction of South Africa, and so our visits will be more to exchange information, expertise and experience on key issues of transferring power to the people.

There will be much more

consistency in monitoring visits, so that they contribute in some way to the debates which are taking place, looking at international invitations and determining why we have been invited, what will interest us in those countries and whether we should accept it or not. We will be developing a core of people who understand international affairs more than just the few we have at the moment. ☆

COSATU'S new international officer

COSATU recently created the post of International Officer. Mcebisi Msizi, with several years' experience in SACTU's international offices abroad, began the job on 15 March this year.

Msizi told the Labour Bulletin that his role is not to always be abroad, but to regularise COSATU's international work from the office. He believes that COSATU's principle of workers' control and structures of decision-making will prevent international work becoming isolated in head office. "The International Department belongs to the workers, and I have to see to it that I serve their interests", he says.

Msizi first got involved in trade union activities organising for MACWUSA/GWUSA at his workplace in Port Elizabeth in 1980. He began organising full-time for the union. At the same time he joined ANC underground structures. He was also a founder member and first general secretary of the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress.

It was on a visit to Lesotho in 1981 that Patrick first came across the exiled union federation SACTU. The next year he left South Africa and was employed in SACTU's International Department. In 1985 he joined the SACTU office in London, and five months later was given the task of opening up a SACTU Information Office in Denmark.

"My job was to disseminate information to the Nordic countries, but it was one of the most difficult tasks, because SACTU was affiliated to the WFTU and all the major Scandinavian unions are affiliated to the ICFTU. At that time the conflict between the ICFTU and WFTU was very strong. I was told by labour representatives in those countries that I would not succeed."



But Msizi set off on a round of visiting factories, local and regional structures and the SACTU Nordic office opened in 1987. There he stayed until he returned to South Africa in 1990.

"I told the Scandinavians, 'You cannot place on us all the ideological struggles that you have fought as far back as 1949, because that was a European conflict, not a South African one. Let's face the question of apartheid'."

"I worked very closely with COSATU when I was in Denmark. My policy was that COSATU's relations should take their own course and I should not interfere but provide the logistics. I think it worked out fine. So you can say that I am here to continue what I have been doing." ♦

Rooting out dependency

NACTU General Secretary CUNNINGHAM NGCUKANA, talks to CELIA MATHER and KARL VON HOLDT

Labour Bulletin: *Could you tell us about your international affiliations, and with whom you have closest relationships though you may not be formally affiliated?*

Ngcukana: NACTU is not affiliated to any international organisation except OATUU. We are an independent federation with fraternal relations to all international confederations, the WCL, the ICFTU and the WFTU.

We have had closer relations with the ICFTU because it has been one of the major international confederations operating in South Africa, either directly or through its affiliates like the Scandinavians, Dutch, British, Canadians and Americans.

Over the past two years or so we have been able to establish links with the WCL, and we sent a delegation to the recent WFTU conference in Moscow.

The ICFTU has played a major role in solidarity with SA trade unions, in terms of material and moral support and of course together with the WFTU it has supported various positions in the United Nations and other international bodies.

Labour Bulletin: *CUSA, one of the unions that formed NACTU, was affiliated to the ICFTU. Can you tell us why you now have a policy of non-affiliation?*

Ngcukana: Though we recognise that the ICFTU has

played an important role, it was our feeling that in the interest of international trade union solidarity we should not affiliate to any one for the time being because all of them have supported the struggle against apartheid. By not affiliating we believed it was a small contribution towards international trade union solidarity.

Labour Bulletin: *Do you see that position changing, with the changing realignment of the ICFTU and WFTU?*

Ngcukana: The OATUU policy is that African trade unions do not affiliate to the international confederations. NACTU had that policy even before we went into the OATUU. A shift is something that can only be discussed by our conference because non-affiliation has been a policy decision.



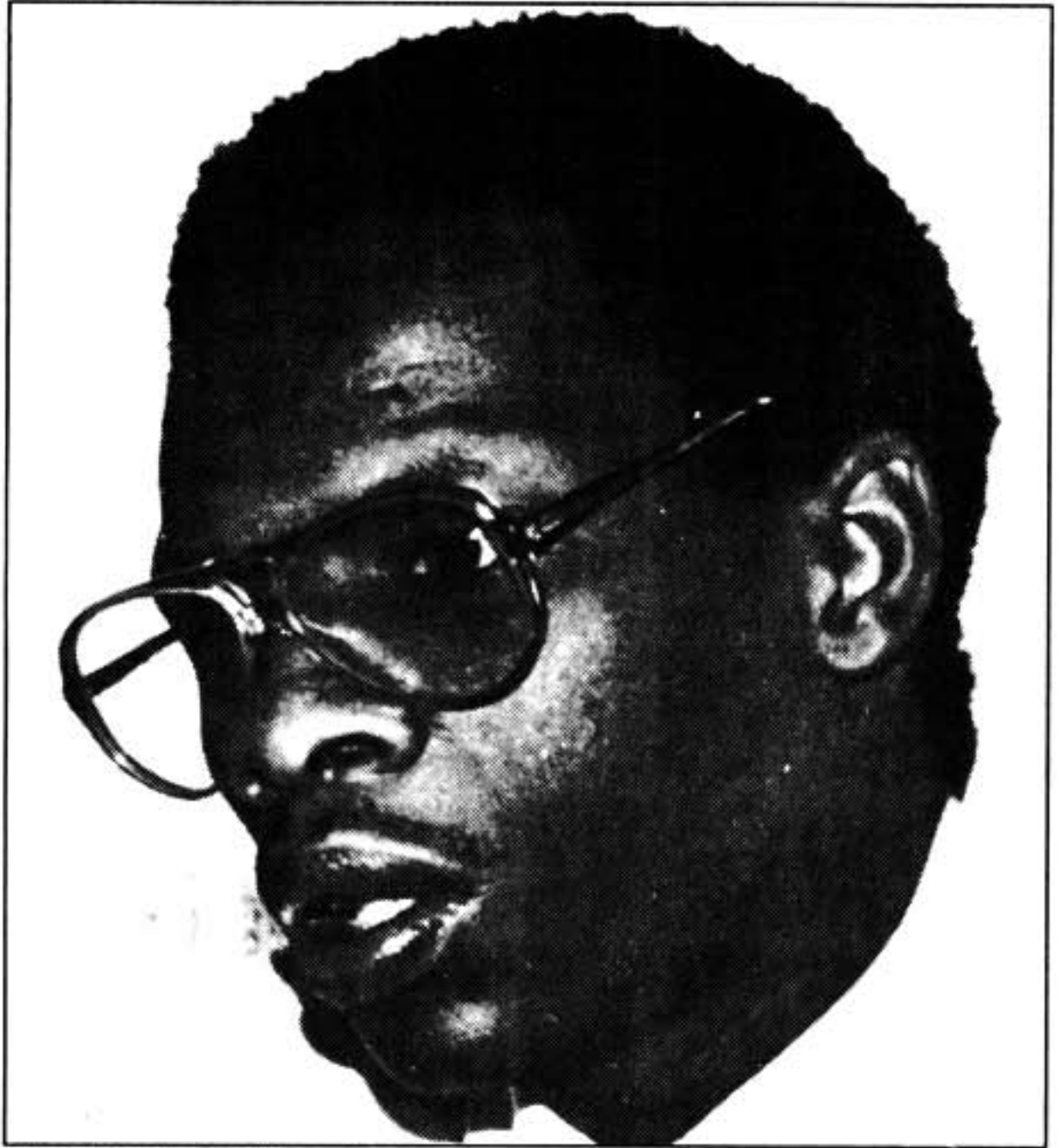
You have got to understand that NACTU has got a very strong socialist and Marxist-Leninist approach, and the organisation is very strict about how we conduct ourselves internationally.

We would like to see the ICFTU, WFTU and WCL come together on a common trade union platform to increase trade union solidarity among the international working class.

There has been bitter antagonism but we believe this is going to change. Eastern Europe is moving towards a market economy; the trade unions in those countries will have to restructure themselves to meet the challenges they face from incoming multinationals. The division between the ICFTU and WFTU will no longer be necessary.

Changes in the international economic and political order, and the movement of western capital to the east, necessitates such an accommodation.

Labour Bulletin: *WFTU has claimed, as have many of the militant Third World federations, that it is anti-capitalist and part of the struggle for socialism. The ICFTU has tended to see itself as improving conditions within a capitalist framework. Many federations would say that the struggle for socialism continues and therefore have a particular perspective on the ICFTU. What is your view?*



Cunningham Ngcukana

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

Ngcukana: The ICFTU looks at the short-term improvement of working conditions within a capitalist system, and we don't hold that view. We believe that, yes, we operate within a capitalist system and we will fight for a living wage and better working conditions. But the long-term objective is obviously to establish a system where the working people are in control of their lives.

The WFTU has had its own problems. The Eastern European trade unions were transmission belts for political parties and they were in control of the WFTU. That didn't make it very much of a rival in challenging capital, improving working condi-

tions and supporting the rights of working people.

International relations are not informed only by long-term objectives, but also short-term objectives and what is possible at any given time. We have to have mutual solidarity with trade unions in countries where multinationals operating in SA come from. To have international relations only informed by long-term objectives would be a very serious blunder.

Some national centres have asked us to affiliate to the ICFTU and we have had to explain our independent position. We certainly do not necessarily share their objectives. We are looking at the short-term objective of the

struggle, and in the longer term our ideas and vision might not coincide.

Labour Bulletin: *Do you participate in the ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on Southern Africa?*

Ngcukana: Yes, we participate because our funding is multilateral from the ICFTU through the donor organisations which are affiliated to the ICFTU. We sit in the regular SACC meetings.

Labour Bulletin: *What has been most useful from your relationship to the internationals?*

Ngcukana: We have been able to get solidarity for struggles by workers against multinationals through the ICFTU and its associated international trade secretariats.

The ICFTU became much more important to us because largely its affiliates come from western countries which have trading and investment links with South Africa; most of the multinationals come from such countries. In the struggle in Unilever for example, we were able to get the support of the IUF and its British affiliates, and with Coca Cola, before it divested, from the ICFTU-affiliated American unions.

The ICFTU circulates information to its affiliates to get solidarity. Also, there has been material support from the national centres affiliated to the ICFTU - from the

Scandinavians, Canadians, British, American-affiliated unions, Spanish, and Italians - and from the ICFTU itself.

This support has been for education programmes and legal assistance in cases of repression. It has been a very useful and important solidarity. Through it we have built this movement to what it is today. We have generally had a lot of support against apartheid.

Labour Bulletin: *There has been criticism, particularly from Third World trade unions, that the trade union centres of the north interfere in a way that is not warranted. Have you experienced this from the ICFTU or any of its major affiliates?*

Ngcukana: Of course some of the national centres have got their own perceptions. For example, the Scandinavians and the Canadians, believe that you should be affiliated to a particular political organisation. They don't see why we shouldn't be in the ANC.

Of course, they have got their own choices of political parties in South Africa; we are quite conscious of that. But our view is that we are an independent organisation and we should be able to make independent decisions. We have been able to put our policies across to them, and they do not have any influence.

Labour Bulletin: *Could*

you tell us about NACTU unions' relationships to the ITSs?

Ngcukana: NACTU unions are affiliated to ITSs like the public sector PSI, foodworkers' IUF, chemical and energy workers' ICEF, metalworkers' IMF, building and woodworkers' IFBWW and the plantation and farmworkers' IFPAAUW. But only a few NACTU affiliates have such affiliations.

When it comes to ITSs there have been very serious problems. Our building workers' union has not had problems with the IFBWW, and we have had generally good relations with the IMF. However, with the mineworkers' MIF, the PSI, IUF, and the ITF, there have been serious problems. They have tried to play certain tricks on our affiliates and we have made it quite clear that we will not tolerate some of their attitudes.

We might have to disaffiliate from IFPAAUW. It has set up an educational programme for farmworkers, even though NACTU and our affiliate, the only union organising farmworkers in South Africa, have our own education programmes. It has also been discriminating against our affiliate in funding of projects.

The PSI has also been discriminating in funding and projects. It is the same with ICEF, which has been playing tricks with SACWU, which is the biggest chemical union in Africa, to such an

union in Africa, to such an extent that SACWU has been considering disaffiliating. We have also had a problem with the ITF, even though we have the biggest union in the passenger transport industry. We have had problems with the IUF but the affiliate is trying to discuss it and resolve the problem.

There is a problem of democracy and accountability within these internationals, and a problem of certain of their affiliates calling the shots. They are very selective and divisive, and not very helpful in terms of trade union unity in South Africa. We are planning a conference for our affiliates in May or June to discuss these matters.

Labour Bulletin: *Is this discrimination in favour of COSATU affiliates?*

Ngcukana: In most cases, yes. Some of the national centres presume divisions, and encourage them, between COSATU and NACTU. People from the Commonwealth TUC and the Canadian unions have had an awful attitude. I have had to tell the Canadians that if their representative doesn't come here it doesn't matter.

Some would like to see NACTU fall. It is a thread that runs internationally, orchestrated by funding by certain donors and organisations. To us it has become a non-issue, however, because an organisation that has got members is not easy to wish

away.

It is important that our affiliates get to be self-sufficient, and then they will be in a position to say to hell with anyone. The National Union of Wine and Spirits is not affiliated to the IUF, but it is one of the most self-sufficient and democratic trade unions in SA.

This is the tragedy of past international funding, of paternalism by international organisations. It has created a culture of dependency, and we really have to root it out.

Instead of having a negative impact it has been positive, however, in that our unions are able to find means to survive. With the 'anti-apartheid industry' going bankrupt that is an advantage. For those who have become dependent on international funding there will be a negative impact.

South African unions have got to learn much more about self-sufficiency. Within NACTU a rationalisation programme is already under way and we are hopeful that even without international assistance in two years' time we will be able to survive. For instance, we have had to scale down our administration and our overhead expenditure.

Labour Bulletin: *Have you also been in dialogue with the AFL-CIO?*

Ngcukana: We have had discussions with the AFL-CIO. It is a national centre to national centre relationship,

but what we would like to see more is our affiliates building relationships with the industrial unions in America, because we have a lot of American investments in South Africa. We need more grassroots relationships, in the steel industry, the food sector, in mining. We believe that union-to-union relationships are much stronger.

Labour Bulletin: *Have you had any assistance from the AFL-CIO's African institute, the AALC?*

Ngcukana: The AALC has never directly assisted NACTU except through the ICFTU, but it has assisted some of our affiliates, and possibly through training programmes of unions affiliated to the AFL-CIO.

Labour Bulletin: *Suppose the ICFTU is engaged in some kind of undermining action against a militant Third World union. Federations like the South African ones, with more access to the ICFTU, might be faced with a choice of challenging the ICFTU on behalf of those unions or concerning themselves only with their own short-term issues.*

Ngcukana: We are prepared to give unqualified support to such struggles and also condemn any activity undertaken by any organisation, irrespective of our relationship with it, which is

to the detriment of the working class. The problem is that we do not have much information. It is important for trade unions to develop their own resources so that they can take an independent position on such matters.

Labour Bulletin: *Trade unionists of the North only seem to consider what they can give and not what they could receive from you. People from the South seem to consider only what they can receive and not what they can contribute. What do you think?*

Ngcukana: It is true that people view it as us receiving and them giving. The problem has been the type of trade unions we have and the links with political parties in power and governments. We have never had an independent trade union movement in Africa. South Africa has tried but, who knows, we might move in the African direction.

Increased investments from the North in the South necessitate cooperation because of the high labour costs of the North and the low labour costs of the South. With changes in the economic order there will be a change in terms of receiving and giving. It will be a mutual cooperation.

European products will find their market in the South, and of course we can participate in the boycott of such products if they mistreat workers or if unions in Eu-

rope have problems. There is not much done in the area of taking industrial action in support of workers in the North, but there are possibilities, in particular with British firms.

Labour Bulletin: *Turning to regional cooperation, how do you see your role in OATUU developing?*

Ngcukana: We have been participating within OATUU's SATUCC framework for five or six years, attending their workshops and taking part in the Southern Africa Labour Council meetings.

The Southern African region is economically integrated. We have a lot of migrant labour from neighbouring countries and we should develop a social charter to protect their rights. Most South African employers in industries including construction, mining, and forestry, are taking people from outside because they do not have to make social security payments.

Also, once the political question is resolved in South Africa, there are possibilities that South African companies will move into neighbouring states and exploit workers there. Cooperation amongst Southern African trade unions is very important to tackle employers in the whole region.

We also believe that within the framework of the OATUU we may be able to make a contribution to secur-

ing trade union rights in a number of countries. It is important that a future democratic South African government takes up the issue of human rights in all the African countries.

Labour Bulletin: *As well as regional cooperation, have you been able to develop South-South links with other trade unions around the world?*

Ngcukana: We have a number of links, like with the Australian national centre. We have been able to go to India, Malaysia and other parts of Asia through the Commonwealth programme. But the Latin American links have not been very strong.

We see cooperation with Eastern Europe and Latin America as important because of the movement of working people and capital. To fund this, we have to develop our own internal resources.

Labour Bulletin: *How is international policy determined within NACTU? Do you have an international officer or department?*

Ngcukana: We have one member of the Secretariat who is responsible for international affairs. We have a sub-committee, an International Committee, that executes policy and recommends changes to policy-making structures, to National Council and Congress. ☆

the ICFTU in SA: coming on strong

Deputy General-Secretary of the 100 million member International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Mr DENZIL FRASER, was interviewed by DEVAN PILLAY* at NACTU's Third National Biennial Congress on 27 September 1990. Mr Fraser is also a member of the Italian Socialist Party.**

Labour Bulletin: *What is the programme of the ICFTU in South Africa and do you make a distinction between NACTU and COSATU when giving support?*

Denzil Fraser: Our programme is to continue support and solidarity with the black trade union movement in the most effective way.

We do not react differently to the two federations. It is not only in South Africa that the trade union movement is divided. But this is a problem concerning the workers here, and not the international trade union movement. Both of them are fighting to liberate this country from the fascist minority regime, and we will help them as much as we can. Everywhere workers are divided because of political tendencies, but it is not



my duty to elaborate on these differences.

Labour Bulletin: *Within the trade union movement, in particular certain affiliates of COSATU, there has always been a reserved attitude towards the ICFTU. Has there been an improvement in relationships in recent years?*

Denzil Fraser: It is true that in the past we met with some problems. But our commitment is to remain in touch, and we will continue to remain so - helping through our member organisations with which COSATU affiliates have established

contact. Member organisations of the ICFTU have been our 'ambassadors'. We have been able to discuss with them, and take decisions on how South African trade unions could be best helped, taking into account their own wishes and needs.

We hope, of course, that all misunderstandings, if there are any, can be clarified. We meet from time to time, to discuss the problems concerning South Africa. It is very good to know from South Africans what their assessment is of the political and trade union situation, and what are the major obstacles. We listen to them on what the international trade union movement can do to overcome those difficulties.

South Africa has always been a priority for the ICFTU. But we need to give

* At the time of this interview, Devan Pillay was a writer at the Labour Bulletin. He is now the editor of Work in Progress (WIP)

** Both COSATU and NACTU have policies of non-affiliation to the ICFTU, but have been receiving considerable funding from ICFTU affiliates

it special attention these days, because there is some misunderstanding in international public opinion. The fact that Mr Mandela has been released, and that some conversations are taking place between the regime and the liberation movement,

have given the impression that the process has begun to eliminate apartheid, which is not true. We stress the importance of these conversations, but we must convince international public opinion that we must continue to assist our friends.

The member organisations of the ICFTU around the world must implement ICFTU policy. If we give up sanctions and other pressures on the SA government, we will make it harder for the black population to finally recover their dignity.

South Africa and the AFL-CIO



AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland and Nelson Mandela in the US

Photo: Labor Notes

Relationships between COSATU and the US union centre AFL-CIO have been steadily deepening over the past year. A visit by Nelson Mandela and COSATU Vice-President Chris Dlamini in June, was followed by the NUM's Cyril Ramaphosa in October and most recently Jay Naidoo in February this year.

In return, a delegation including AFL-CIO International Affairs Director (and leading light of the anti-communist Social Democrats USA) Tom Kahn, plus representatives of the AFL-CIO's Institute in Africa AALC,

federated and non-federated American unions, visited COSATU while also attending the NACTU Congress as observers in October 1990.

The international activities of the AFL-CIO, and particularly its three institutes in the Third World - the AALC (Africa), AIFLD (Latin America) and AAFLI (Asia) - have received much criticism for supporting US official foreign policy aims, particularly in countries with militant unions and national liberation movements. Many unionists worldwide will be watching to see how COSATU handles the relationship.

Since 1986, COSATU's policy has been one of non-cooperation with the AFL-CIO and its bodies. Consequently, AFL-CIO activity in SA has been with individual COSATU affiliates, including funding study tours to the USA. At the February meeting in Washington, COSATU pressed the AFL-CIO to regularise this by channelling activities only on a centre-to-centre basis.

SA unionists have in the past accused the AFL-CIO of back-peddling on support for economic pressure against apartheid. In an interview with the Labour Bulletin at the NACTU Congress, AFL-CIO representatives blamed "conflicting signals coming from the SA trade union movement until COSATU was formed" for earlier reticence, but claimed the AFL-CIO has always supported sanctions and is now at the forefront in keeping pressure on the Bush administration.

They also said that the AFL-CIO "has no problem" with COSATU's alliance with the SA Communist Party, but will itself have nothing to do with the SACP. They also denied having any relationship with UWUSA. ♦

We will campaign against the lifting of sanctions. Our member organisation in the United States, the AFL-CIO, will campaign against it until there is a real indication that the SA government has given up apartheid, and has accepted the principle of one man one vote.

It has always been the policy of the ICFTU and AFL-CIO to support sanctions and not only in the USA. But, as a democratic organisation, we have met with difficulties amongst member organisations in the ICFTU to implement this decision. Some measures against SA could cost jobs in the industrialised countries, most of which have trade relations with SA. During a period of high unemployment in these countries it was not easy. It was not a question of politics. It was a question of convincing unemployed people in developed countries that we owe solidarity to the black workers in South Africa, because their conditions are much worse than ours, even when we are unemployed.

But the policy of the ICFTU concerning sanctions has been constant since 1950, when the ICFTU began. We built our Co-ordinating Committee specifically on the South Africa problem to deal with assistance to black trade unions. This was more than 15 years ago, as soon as the black trade union movement came into being. At the same time, we tried to implement

our sanctions policy.

Labour Bulletin: *Why then has there been such distrust about the ICFTU's intentions in South Africa?*

Denzil Fraser: This is a good question for those who have had doubts about the ICFTU. I don't know why.

When the world was divided into the democratic world on the one side, and the undemocratic world on the other, there was propaganda against us. But we



never spent any time answering that propaganda. We have been busy developing positive action.

Labour Bulletin: *In terms of what has been happening in Eastern Europe over the past year, what do you think will happen to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and your relationship with it?*

Denzil Fraser We don't have any relations with the WFTU, and I don't see that happening. The majority of trade unions in East and Central Europe have withdrawn from the WFTU. Some, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, have already joined the ICFTU. Others, such as Hungary and Bulgaria, have applied for affiliation. But all of them have already with-

drawn from the WFTU.

Now the WFTU is saying that, since the division was a result of the Cold War, we can now come together. However, it was not because of the Cold War that there was a division, but because the WFTU was dependent on a political party. Now that the workers are recovering their independence, their unions are withdrawing from the WFTU, but it still remains a tool of the Russian trade union movement.

In the Soviet Union itself there are also initiatives now to build free and independent trade unions. For instance, the miners have built their own trade union organisation independent of the one which is still connected to the communist party. For us, it is not only a question in Russia, but everywhere. We don't believe in trade unions that are organically connected with a political party, especially where there is a one party system. It does not serve the interests of the workers.

This has nothing to do with the Cold War. It is a question of philosophy. The populations in those countries have realised that without freedom and democracy you cannot have social and economic progress. They will meet a lot of difficulties, however, because changing their systems will not automatically solve all their problems.

It is not true, as is claimed, that the market economy and free enterprise have developed our countries. It is those things, *plus*

strong workers movements - political and trade union - fighting against employers to make sure that there is fair distribution of the income produced.

Labour Bulletin: *Many leaders in COSATU and NACTU may describe themselves as Marxist socialists (not necessarily of the Soviet type). What influence will this have on the ICFTU's relations with these federations?*

Denzil Fraser: What does it mean to be a Marxist these days? If they believe in it, that is their right. What is important for us is a free and democratic, pluralist society, where everybody has the right to express their views, including Marxist socialists, even though nobody can explain today what it is. I am a socialist, but I am first of all a trade union leader. I believe that my discipline is the discipline of the trade union movement. Although we must be committed at the political level, the trade union organisation must remain autonomous and independent. This is an important principle in a democratic society.

In Italy, members of the CGIL union federation in Italy were mainly members of the Communist Party. That party is now about to give up its communist name. It believes today in a democratic and pluralist society. There are some differences at a political level, but these should not prevent us from being united. We all now be-

lieve that the trade union movement must be independent and autonomous, dependent only on its members, and not on any political party. The debate which is taking place these days in the CGIL is that it should be independent, and apply for membership to the ICFTU. They withdrew from the WFTU years ago.

In France, with the lowest rate of organised workers in Europe, the CGT is a member of the WFTU. The majority of its members are



not French citizens. They are immigrants from North Africa. It is the only organisation in Western Europe that is a member of the WFTU.

There is unlikely to be a similar debate in the CGT as in the CGIL, because the French Communist Party has not changed.

The presence of Christian trade unions in Europe, with no more than two million members, serves to divide the trade union movement. I am a socialist, but I belong to a free and independent trade union movement, not a socialist-aligned trade union. This is because other workers, who are not socialists, would not be able to be with me in a socialist union. A trade union must be for unity, so creating conditions that institutionally hamper unity, does not make sense.

Labour Bulletin *What does this mean in terms of COSATU's declared alliance with the Communist Party in South Africa?*

Denzil Fraser: There are communists in COSATU, but nobody can say that COSATU is a communist organisation. I am democratic, and I believe in the right for those who want to be communists to be communists. They will have a great problem defining what communism is today, but that is their problem, not mine.

I don't think forming an alliance with the Communist Party necessarily contradicts what I've just said about trade union autonomy. The common struggle is against apartheid. It is too early to say what will be the debate on the kind of society that these communist people want to build. We hope that they will be in favour of a democratic country, but this is the second step. For now, let them be together to fight against apartheid.

Labour Bulletin: *Does the ICFTU have any relationship with UWUSA?*

Denzil Fraser: I am the Deputy General Secretary of the ICFTU and I don't know what UWUSA is. That is a good answer, don't you think? [Interjection from Aikumbo, of the ICFTU Africa Desk: "It is non-existent. We have no relationship with it"] I don't know whether it is a football team or what [laughter]. ☆

With the loss of most of its Eastern European affiliates, and the political reorientation of the newly reconstituted General Confederation of Soviet Trade Unions (from October 1990), the Prague based World Federation of Trade Unions is undergoing radical reevaluation and restructuring.

Soviet unions, in the past the most influential in WFTU, have a new ideological orientation. They have accepted their new role of trade unionism in a market economy, and the influence of this on the confederation was revealed in the draft document produced for WFTU's 12th Congress, held in Moscow (November 1990).

The old ideological confrontation with imperialism is gone (not once is the word used in the document). Instead, it argues for the "depoliticisation" of the trade union movement. There should be an "evolution from the existence of two great ideological blocks, promoting animosity and confrontation, to new internationalism with a human face and progressive social content", it says. This shift in the policy of the Soviet unions simply reflects the shifting policies of the Soviet state. This suggests that the unions are still tied to the bureaucracy, rather than expressing an independent line.

WFTU is inviting the ICFTU and WCL into reconciliation, cooperation and "greater unity". That there was not a better coordination between the internationals

What's new at WFTU?

previously is put down largely to "obstacles set by the TNCs". ICFTU General Secretary John Vanderveken has indicated his organisation's hostility to this, however. "Our greatest asset in the eyes of the workers in Eastern Europe", he said, "is we never collaborated in any way with those who sided with their oppressors... When it comes to the WFTU ... I see no reason for us to cooperate with an organisation that glorifies an economically bankrupt system, and that has consistently failed to condemn violations of human and trade union rights."

In the draft Congress document, however, WFTU is now promoting 'free' trade unions, independent of political parties. Finally buried is the call for proletarian dictatorships. The draft speaks of merely "equal participation" by workers in management decision-making, with "the right to information and consultation". Its current analysis of the role of trade unions would be perfectly acceptable to any West European social democrat.

It is not known to what extent the document was accepted. However, a Soviet attempt to have all mention of 'class struggle' removed from the

WFTU Constitution met with heated opposition at the Congress and was defeated.

Organisationally, with the loss of most of Eastern Europe, the Third World has gained greater significance within the WFTU. A decision at the Congress to establish regional structures and offices in Africa (Brazzaville), Asia (New Delhi), Latin America (Havana) and the Middle East (possibly Damascus) is already being implemented. By contrast, the future of the industry/sector based TUIs seems to be uncertain.

There has been a serious drop of income following the loss of Eastern European affiliates. However, expenditure has been cut. Secretariat staffing has been slashed; the organisation has moved into alternative premises in Prague; and previous expenditure on travel for Eastern European officials is no longer necessary. WFTU still has important members like the Soviets and the French CGT. Also, it is not without resources, having assets like buildings which it could realise.

The Czech Government has ordered WFTU to move out of Prague by June 1991. WFTU has appealed. Paris, home of the French CGT, is rumoured to be a possible new location.

WFTU still claims to represent 191 million workers worldwide*, and has consultative status at United Nations bodies like the ILO, UNESCO, UNCTAD, FAO and UNIDO. ♦

* The IUF claims WFTU membership is down to 171 million, with only 3 and a half million fully voluntary



Towards worker-controlled internationalism!

A Labour Bulletin CORRESPONDENT with recent experience of international trade unionism argues that most workers of the world know very little about what is done in their name through the organisations of the international trade union movement. She calls for a new international alliance of non-aligned democratic trade union centres, to campaign for a single, unified and accountable trade union international.

The world has gone through dramatic changes in the past five years. With the collapse of communism and the defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, world capitalism seems virtually unchallenged. But if, to paraphrase Mao Zedong, every obstacle presents an opportunity, we can identify some positive features in the current situation.

First, all recent major upheavals have been decisively influenced by mass mobilisations of workers and their families. Mass action in Eastern Europe, the Soviet

Union, China, Latin America, the West Bank/Gaza, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Burma, S. Korea, South Africa, and a number of African countries, has challenged, paralysed or led to the collapse of military regimes, bureaucratic elites, and capitalist governments, regardless of the repressive measures at their disposal.

Second, although economic failure and hardship underlies much of the discontent expressed worldwide, there is also a profound democratic aspiration. Demonstrations everywhere

repeatedly call for justice, social responsibility and accountability.

Third, the rejection of the 'socialist' model as typified by Eastern European states has not led to the wholesale embrace of capitalism by workers. Aspects of life under capitalism do seem attractive from afar, particularly the range and choice of consumer items, but the negative impact on jobs, housing, health care and other social services is becoming obvious. There is a growing popular rejection of the 'free market' solution.



Fourth, after a period of decline trade unions appear to be growing again in numbers and strength in many parts of the world. Many advanced capitalist countries are witnessing an end to the erosion of union membership. Many of the trade union movements in former communist states are asserting their independence or being challenged by more independent formations. New trade union organisations are being formed in countries which lack a tradition of a strong labour organisation, and often where an 'economic miracle' is supposed to have undermined the need for collective activity.

All of these developments mean international trade union solidarity has can no longer be a 'conscience' item on conference agendas. Traditionally solidarity has been seen as a generous 'gift' from more 'advanced' organisations to the needy. There has been very little sense of what the union movements of the South can contribute to worker struggles in the North. And the unions of the South have spent all their energy building links with unions in North America and Europe, and paid very little attention to developing contact with comrades in other countries of the South.

But the power of the multi-

national corporations and finance capital, and the austerity programmes of governments everywhere, mean we have to seek practical solutions which mobilise our potential strength on a world scale. Our strategy should rest on building and linking the power of organised workers which exists in many countries.

So, how do we build and strengthen democratic trade unionism at home and internationally? In this article I will raise a number of criticisms of the ICFTU and WFTU, which are the major trade union international organisations. I will then put forward an argument for a new international alliance of non-aligned and democratic trade unions. I hope that this article will stimulate and contribute to further debate on these issues.

The need for information and accountability

Both the ICFTU and WFTU are extremely sensitive to public scrutiny. Needless to say, this grew out of the Cold War rivalry between the two organisations, but it has also limited the degree to which trade union activists can find out what is being done in their name.

Most internal documentation is classified 'private and confidential'. Of course, this is justified if trade unionists are in danger in their countries and security measures are necessary to protect them. But the main preoccupation seems to be to limit



the information available to 'the other side' - ie, to the rival international. For both organisations the 'other side' also appears to include their own memberships!

The ICFTU and WFTU would both claim that part of the responsibility for explaining what is being done lies with their own affiliated national centres or federations. National centres/federations would then claim that individual union affiliates should bear responsibility for reporting back to members. This is a route begging for a communications breakdown!

In the main, report-backs are done in the international section of conference reports. But a review of these over the last ten years shows that often only general references are made. In fact, the news publications which are produced by the ICFTU and WFTU tend to be self-congratulatory and are certainly not aimed at an activist audience.

Every activist understands the need for financial accountability. Yet even the amounts of money which are at the disposal of the ICFTU and WFTU are treated as secret information, as are the sources of the money (although lately there appears to be some relaxation by the ICFTU). Equally difficult to get hold of is information about how the money is ac-



tually spent.

There is considerable evidence that both the ICFTU and WFTU use money to 'win friends and influence people'. Equally worrying is money spent by ICFTU and WFTU affiliates in the form of direct aid which serves to increase the dependency of union organisations in developing countries. The enthusiasm for this type of unilateral activity by the US union centre, the AFL-CIO, even embarrassed the ICFTU for a time. The ICFTU was forced to distance itself from the AFL-CIO after embarrassing allegations of union-busting and collaboration with governments against genuine workers' organisations.

A retired general secretary once described how he used to play one side off against another. One year he was given a Chevrolet by the AFL-CIO, and the next year a four-week 'medical recuperation holiday' in a Black Sea resort by the Soviet ACCTU!

This would be comical if it were not so serious. The general secretary in question openly admitted that both gifts distracted him from the task of building his organisation. They also fuelled a smear campaign by his government that he was misusing union funds. This publicly discredited trade

unionism.

Some national centres are more secretive than others. When a UK-based charity, War On Want, published the late and deeply committed Don Thompson's book *Where Were You Brother?*, detailing what became known as 'trade union imperialism', both the author and War On Want were treated by the TUC as traitors. Their biggest 'crime', it appears, was to strive for openness and to dare to make this information available to trade union members.

On the other hand, where national centres have attempted to explain their international work, the response from members has been positive, leading to a stronger international consciousness. This contrasts with the cynical view that matters should be kept 'private and confidential', which reinforces the patronising belief that workers are only interested in their pay and conditions. Perhaps more significant is that workers can learn from discussing and reading about each other's struggles and experiences.

The free flow of information is an indispensable aspect of democratic practice, and could serve as a first step in opening up the international trade union organisations.

Independence and democracy

Independent democratic trade unionism is a demand which is put forward most

forcibly by the trade union centres associated with the ICFTU. This demand is also popular with many of the relatively new formations such as CUT in Brazil and COSATU, and those centres such as the CGIL which exist outside of the main world federations. Thus a broad consensus exists across a spectrum of national centres who would argue that trade unionism is most effective if it is independent of the state.

The WFTU until very recently preferred not to elaborate on its view of trade union independence. It has only just started coming to terms with the concept, following the collapse of its 'independent' Eastern European affiliates.

One of the most stinging criticisms made of many national centres sympathetic or affiliated to the WFTU has been that they serve as mere transmission belts for government policy, that they are in effect government-controlled, and dependent upon the state for finance and other benefits. While this description is accurate for many present (and former) WFTU affiliates, it does not paint the whole picture. As the recent miners' strike in the USSR and sectoral disputes elsewhere have illustrated, important groups of workers can and do act independently of both the state and their own bureaucratic union leaderships. Sometimes they have to fight both.

This is an important point to grasp. It underlines the

inter-relationship between independence and internal democracy. Can a trade union movement which is not controlled by its members be truly independent?

Many ICFTU affiliates would proclaim that their independence proves that they are democratic. But for both ICFTU and WFTU affiliates in developed countries, it is on international work that there is least control by members. It is also on international work that there is the greatest reluctance to challenge their own governments' foreign policies.

In the advanced capitalist countries, most national centres/federations receive substantial funds from their governments for trade union education and international work, even when the governments in question are openly hostile to trade unionism. Reagan, Thatcher and Mulroney of the USA, UK and Canada continued to provide finance to national federations while at the same time enacting a range of anti-union legislation. This continues today.

But does such reliance on government funding undermine trade union independence? The ICFTU affiliates in question would doubtless answer "no". They might admit that without this funding they would be less able to provide services to their own members and give assistance to trade unionists in other countries. But, they would argue, what is important is who controls the finance, and who decides

how it is used.

But who does control the finance and decide how it is used? Certainly not the members!

The AFL-CIO made similar claims when it was reported that it was receiving millions of dollars from President Reagan's National Endowment for Democracy fund to use overseas. The same fund was used to support the Contras and to fatally destabilise the Nicaraguan experiment. While the AFL-CIO vigorously denied that there was any government control of how the money should be spent, the fact is that it was used to finance pro-US unions and undermine genuine trade unionism, often by bloody means.

American trade union activists would not have agreed to this if they had known about it, and if they could have exercised control over the AFL-CIO leadership. The lack of information and lack of accountability make it difficult to accept the AFL-CIO argument that it is "independent" when it receives and uses this kind of money. It is clear that no trade union organisation - whether the Soviet ACTTU or the US AFL-CIO - can claim to be independent when it is not democratically controlled and accountable to its members.

A number of AFL-CIO affiliates are fighting to establish the accountability of the federation, particularly of its international work. One



of the lessons they are learning, and which is shared by activists in the UK, is that the trade union bureaucracy which controls the national centre/federation is often a law unto itself. It often monopolises information and controls the appointment of staff and the allocation of resources.

Unless trade union independence is protected by worker control, there will always be a danger of 'behind the scenes' deals being struck which undermine genuine international solidarity. Often international solidarity depends on the adoption of a particular political line or affiliation. It is often those who shout loudest about "independence" who are at the forefront of attempting to undermine the independence of other organisations!

Solidarity with the South African struggle

The one case of international solidarity which took place on terms determined by those who received the support was perhaps in the struggle against apartheid.

One reason for this is that there was a high degree of membership awareness. This was stimulated not by union bureaucrats, but by activists at local level through individual unions and the anti-apartheid movement. This made it more difficult



The main issue around which South African workers received international solidarity was apartheid

Photo: David Vita/Impact Visuals (Afrapix)

for the bureaucracy to operate secretly. COSATU in particular was able to sustain a mass movement in South Africa and at the same time effectively campaign for support throughout the world without being compromised by membership of either the WFTU or ICFTU.

In fact, the support most appreciated by COSATU appears to have come from centres/federations acting independently of either the ICFTU or WFTU, particularly the Dutch and Scandinavians (though they are ICFTU affiliates), and non-aligned organisations such as OATUU and the Italian CGIL, new emergent unions like the Brazilian CUT, and the smaller Commonwealth TUC.

It was the American consumer activist Ralph Nader who said, "There is no such thing as a free lunch". Could

it be that what COSATU appreciated were the offers of solidarity without strings, solidarity based on respect for the independence of COSATU?

The struggle for genuine solidarity

The relationship between trade union movements of the North and South dates back to when colonial governments were in retreat.* Local and often militant 'native' trade unionists were given instruction on 'The Principles of Modern Trade Unionism' by worthy trade union officials sponsored by the retreating colonial power. This kind of 'solidarity' was intended to teach the 'native' unionists a 'responsible' attitude towards the interests of capital after independence.

As the Cold War intensified, trade unions in developing countries were

not left alone for long! Sooner or later, and usually depending upon the pace of the Cold War at regional level, they were made offers that they found hard to refuse.

This is not to say that trade unions in developing countries were blind to the dangers, or that financial support was not desperately needed to help strengthen organisation. But once hooked, an insidious culture soon developed which changed the meaning of solidarity into something quite different. Assistance was provided not on the basis of common class interests (although a convergence of North/South bureaucratic interests often developed!), but on an unwritten pledge of loyalty to the funding organisation.

It was precisely these concerns which encouraged the 'active non-alignment' of COSATU. This position has been sustained despite considerable pressures for more flexibility and pragmatism.

OATUU's struggle for non-alignment

OATUU also had to contend with similar pressures. Many of its affiliates had slipped so deeply into the pockets of international organisations that they feared any disruption of external funding would be fatal. It took a determined campaign spearheaded by the current secretary general to untangle the web of depend-

* The term 'North' refers to the advanced capitalist countries of Europe, North America and Japan; the term 'South' refers to all other countries, including the developing countries and the underdeveloped ones.

ency which suffocated pan-African trade unionism.

Drawing upon his experiences as a past president of the non-aligned Nigeria Labour Congress (still among the largest trade union organisations in the world), he realised that African trade union organisations had to change the way they related to the internationals and donor agencies. Better to risk splitting the African trade union movement than to allow its unchallenged domination by overseas interests to continue, especially in the face of mounting repression, enforced structural adjustment programmes and escalating poverty.

OATUU adopted a policy of discouraging African centres/federations from affiliating to any international union organisation apart from itself. A weighted voting procedure was established within OATUU which favours those centres/federations which follow the policy of non-alignment. At the same time, donor agencies and internationals were persuaded to enter into Co-operation Agreements which provide some safeguards against the misuse of funds and establish guidelines on the type of assistance required.

For the first time in many years, OATUU has achieved a degree of unity which can only strengthen its ability to tackle the many serious problems facing African workers. Of course the cycle of dependency/loyalty has not

been broken entirely, especially as many ICFTU affiliates act unilaterally without reference to the OATUU/ICFTU Co-operation Agreement.

However, this initiative to forge a non-aligned international solidarity based on the common interests of workers is an important breakthrough. It is being closely observed in the Caribbean, Asia and Central and Latin America.

The impact of reduced funds

The revenue generated by membership subscriptions available to northern trade union centres/federations has decreased over the last decade. The British TUC, for example, has shrunk from 12 million to 8.3 million members in that period. Government aid to many northern trade union centres/federations for overseas solidarity programmes has been decreasing in real terms too. Finally, there is a steady drift of what resources do exist away from the South towards Eastern Europe, where the ICFTU in particular hopes to exploit the now almost universal disenchantment with the WFTU.

Instead of encouraging moves towards greater South-South unity, this reduction in funding could actually increase North-South dependency. Trade union centres/federations of the South could be driven to break ranks with their sister organisations to compete for



the decreasing money available from the North.

Indeed, many donor agencies, as well as the ICFTU, have recently declared (despite their previous activities to the contrary) that an essential objective in their assistance to trade unions in developing countries is to encourage "self-reliance". It is remarkably convenient that "self-reliance" should now be to justify a switch in resources away from the South just when it is most needed!

Without doubt, trade union movements in developing countries will continue to require considerable support and finance in their struggle against the conditions which threaten the livelihoods of millions of workers. There is, however, no justification for basing this redistribution of resources on a patron-client relationship.

In the long run, international trade union solidarity actions and programmes can only be effective if they are based on principles which deepen democratic practice and accountability within individual national centres and international organisations of the North and South. If such solidarity helps us to rediscover the common interests of workers round the world, we may yet establish the internationalism which inspired the early pioneers of



the workers' movement.

A new International?

The virtual collapse of the communist bloc and its effect on the WFTU has raised the question of rebuilding a single unified world trade union international. The WFTU, with Soviet support, appears determined to continue, albeit in a trimmed down way, desperately seeking a new role for itself.

The ICFTU, on the other hand (and the ITSs), are busy reallocating resources to strengthen relationships with trade union formations in Eastern Europe. Regular delegations are sent to advise on trade union structures. Solidarnosc in Poland and the new Czech union federation, CKOS, are already affiliates.

What should be the response of non-aligned trade union organisations in this situation?

First, it is clear that international solidarity is going to be crucial to defend the livelihoods of millions of workers against the activities of multinational companies and the austerity and structural adjustment programmes of governments, and to extend trade union and democratic rights.

Second, the absence of accountability and internal democracy within the existing internationals is a major obstacle to ensuring that the

long-term independence of trade unionism is preserved.

Third, despite claims to the contrary, there is little evidence to indicate that the mentality of the Cold War or the Euro-centric view of the world is being challenged within the structures of either the ICFTU or WFTU.

Fourth, the most dramatic advances in trade unionism have invariably been won by trade union movements which can rely on the strength of their own members, and which are prepared to mobilise to pursue their demands.

The issue of whether or not to affiliate to the ICFTU is not the most appropriate question. In fact, it seems highly unlikely that COSATU will change its 'active non-alignment' policy soon. However, the question of ICFTU affiliation may be posed over the next few years. Recently COSATU agreed to participate in the ICFTU Southern African Co-ordinating Committee, and this has fuelled speculation worldwide.

Is affiliation a viable option for organisations like COSATU? The Dutch FNV, and the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian centres/federations, which make up the 'progressive group' within the ICFTU, would argue that the best way to change the ICFTU is to join it. But the 'progressives' themselves only have limited bargaining power within the ICFTU, and this bargaining power is based on specific conditions.

The 'progressive' group has considerable resources at their disposal, inherited from a long period of social-democratic consensus in their countries. These resources are very valuable to the ICFTU, and this gives them the room to manoeuvre.

On the other hand, within the countries of the 'progressive' group, there are large anti-apartheid organisations which enjoy the support of many thousands of trade union activists. If it became known that the 'progressives' were curtailing support for COSATU to pressurise it into affiliating to the ICFTU, shock-waves would be felt from worker-activists in every locality.

The 'progressives' have been able to act flexibly within the ICFTU by balancing these two factors - access to substantial resources to fund ICFTU projects, and real *pressure from below* to maintain good relations with the SA trade union movement.

The progressives have won the space inside the ICFTU to act outside of it in giving support to the SA unions. But the price is that they have to report their actions to the ICFTU Southern Africa Co-ordinating Committee. This means that their work is in a sense co-ordinated through ICFTU structures.

This suits both the old guard within the ICFTU, and especially the bureaucratic apparatus, and the bureaucrats of the 'progressive' group. Both experience press-

ure from their membership to provide solidarity to SA unions. The combination of bilateral solidarity by the 'progressives' with co-ordination through the ICFTU structures helps to contain this pressure, since both can claim credit for the solidarity. In this sense both the conservatives in the ICFTU, and at least a section of the 'progressive' organisations, have a common interest.

At the same time, the conservatives in the ICFTU remain confident that they can contain the 'progressives', while receiving substantial funding from them.

Clearly, COSATU does not have the same bargaining powers as the 'progressives' - but it has other strengths.

COSATU enjoys enormous prestige with worker-activists everywhere, and this is one of its greatest strengths. The ability to link with these layers of activists, both inside and outside the ICFTU, would be seriously undermined by affiliation, unless COSATU explicitly stated that it intended to challenge decades of Cold War practice. But sooner or later it would be acting alone, and vulnerable to accusations of biting the hand that feeds it!

A far better strategy is to maintain links with those activists within ICFTU affiliates, and strengthen the relationship with those forces prepared to fight for genuine international solidarity worldwide.

On a continental level,

COSATU is committed to strengthening OATUU, which itself has only recently emerged from the quagmire of affiliation problems. A concerted input from COSATU could help the organisation to emerge as a powerful tool for South-South solidarity, and challenge the domination of the Northern centres/federations over trade union activity.

So the question is, not whether to affiliate to ICFTU, but rather - What are the objective needs of the workers' movement worldwide in the current situation? How can we contribute to the growth of a genuine international solidarity which is based on our trade union principles of equality, accountability, independence and unity in action?

By posing the question in this manner, we can escape falling into the sectarian trap of placing the organisational 'needs' of the internationals before the needs of the workers of the world.

The new emergent and largely non-aligned trade union movements such as COSATU, CUT, OATUU, KMU, and others are potentially in a powerful bargaining position. Their strength includes the support of extensive networks of worker activists in the established unions of Europe and North America. If their strengths are shared and consolidated, the non-aligned trade union movements, together with union activists



within the unions affiliated to the ICFTU and WFTU, could play a decisive role in campaigning for the following:

- the establishment of an international democratic trade union alliance which brings together all those centres/federations and regional organisations who agree on the need for a single, unified, democratic and accountable world federation, and who are prepared to openly campaign for it;
- the free flow and exchange of information about international solidarity assistance and the utilisation of resources;
- the planning, resourcing and implementing of specific campaigns reflecting the needs of the working class internationally.

This approach would establish a position of collective strength from which the non-aligned movements could engage in a dialogue with existing world bodies and their affiliates. This would be a logical development from 'active non-alignment' towards *worker-controlled internationalism*. I believe this approach is far more likely to be successful than any project of "entering the internationals to democratise from within". ☆

the *practice* of *solidarity*

ACTWU vice-president JOHN HUDSON describes the strong union-to-union solidarity built between the SA Clothing and Textile Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) in the US.

The organising campaign was not going well. Courtaulds, a British textile multinational, was getting the upper hand through numerous unfair labour practices at its Virginia plant in the US, which ACTWU was trying to organise in 1987.

ACTWU contacted unions representing Courtaulds workers around the world, asking them to send letters to the company protesting its tactics. Unions in England, France and Italy answered our call. But National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) shopstewards at Courtaulds in Durban, South Africa decided they should do more.

Led by chief steward and veteran unionist Andrew Joyisa, Courtaulds workers declared a ban on overtime until the Virginia election and pledged to go on strike if we lost the election and called on them for further support. We didn't win the Courtaulds election, but Courtaulds workers did win a new respect for the potential

'Through cultural, ideological and practical cross-fertilisation we increasingly function as virtually one union - or one movement - with one agenda. We are working to break down barriers of culture, politics or narrow national concerns that might divide us. Supporting a struggle of textile workers across the ocean thus becomes as natural as supporting one across town. While we are still in the early stages of this process, we see our solidarity as a contribution to building unity among clothing and textile workers worldwide.'

- John Hudson

power of solidarity.

Two years later the first ACTWU delegation to South Africa visited workers at the Hextex woollens mill in Wor-

cester in the Western Cape, who were making plans for what they expected to be a very difficult negotiation. ACTWU responded much as we would to a strike of our own members. We undertook an international pressure campaign, threatening product boycotts against suppliers and sanctions against Hextex. And we raised over \$25 000 to support the strikers from our locals and individual members.

A few months after the strike we were the guests of honour at ACTWU-SACTWU (by then NUTW had merged with several other unions to form SACTWU) victory celebration at the Hextex plant. We *toyi-toyed* into the afternoon, well after the end of the lunch hour, singing a song workers had composed during the strike: "Viva ACTWU-SACTWU Alliance!"

**Building one movement,
one agenda**
Solidarity between South Af-

rican and North American clothing and textile workers has evolved over the years to respond to the challenges we face in a mobile, labour-intensive industry. The stakes are high. Textile and clothing employs tens of millions worldwide. Clothing and textile is still often, as in the US, the largest industrial employer in many developed countries, providing crucial jobs for new immigrants and the working poor. At the same time, this sector is often the corner-stone of industrialisation in developing countries. But whenever wages are pushed upwards, because of labour scarcity or united worker activity, manufacturers move on to the next low wage haven.

These factors provide the basis for both competition and cooperation among industrial workers in different parts of the world. The only effective response by workers to the increasing integration of the world economy is to organise internationally. We must struggle to ensure that economic integration improves the lives of workers in the Third World, rather than impoverishing workers in the industrialised world. Labour must co-ordinate its strategies, and fight together for international fair labour standards and trade union rights. We must fight for high wage growth and development strategies, rather than low wage strategies. We must fight for national industrial policies that help our



ACTWU visits SACTWU: from left. Freddy Magugu (SACTWU), Jack Sheinkman (ACTWU), Lionel October, John Copelyn and Edgar Blaauw (all of SACTWU)

Photo: SACTWU

national industries compete on non-labour cost factors such as product quality, design content, and market responsiveness. We must co-ordinate organising and bargaining strategies on both company and industry levels. And we must fight for trade practices that allow for fair and orderly adjustment in developed countries, while sharing production opportunities, markets and jobs with developing countries.

ACTWU has worked with the South African Clothing & Textile Workers Union (SACTWU) and its predecessor unions over the last ten years to build a solidarity that can help to address these challenges. We have learned that solidarity is most effective when it is linked to the general task of union building. Solidarity has thus come to mean our entire "union" of interests and needs in the process of developing social and

political unionism. Supporting a struggle of textile workers across the ocean thus becomes as natural as supporting one across town.

While still in the early stages, we see our solidarity as a contribution to building unity among clothing and textile workers worldwide.

Origins of solidarity

The relationship between ACTWU and SACTWU evolved from the desire of the new generation of unions in South Africa to build international solidarity through 'union to union' ties.

NUTW and ACTWU representatives met in international meetings in 1979, and established regular contact. ACTWU was motivated primarily by a desire to further contribute to the fight against apartheid.

The first real opportunity for solidarity action presented itself in the

monumental NUTW battle to organise the Frame Group, with over 20 000 workers. The Frame struggle was similar in its size, length and impact on the fortunes of NUTW to ACTWU's struggle at JP Stevens in the 1970s. ACTWU worked with other textile unions around the world to pressure Frame into recognition through international industry links.

Then, when health and safety became a key organising issue, ACTWU sent its Health and Safety Director Eric Frumin to South Africa for two weeks to help establish brown lung and steward training programmes.

Frumin returned to ACTWU enthralled by NUTW's militancy and worker democracy. He shared his experience in ACTWU meetings over the following year, giving our members their first taste of South African unionism. We exchanged educational materials and research on companies that operated in both countries.

In early 1985 NUTW President Nelson Mthombeni visited ACTWU as part of a tour of South African trade unionists sponsored by the New York Labour Committee Against Apartheid, which ACTWU had been instrumental in founding. Many ACTWU members then became more involved in anti-apartheid work, and particularly in supporting their union brothers and sisters. ACTWU locals in some cities helped establish anti-

apartheid committees.

During this period ACTWU, at the request of NUTW, ran a 'corporate campaign' against Tidwell, a US company. Tidwell had set up a factory in the Ciskei, where trade unions were banned. NUTW was unable to make inroads organising Tidwell workers. ACTWU put together a coalition of labour, civil rights groups and churches that was able to mount sufficient public pressure to force Tidwell to close down in the Ciskei.

The maturing of solidarity

At an International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) meeting in 1987, not long after the Courtaulds campaign, ACTWU and NUTW leaders had their first detailed discussions about formalising a solidarity programme. However, we shared few common multinational employers which would have lent themselves to co-ordinated strategies. Moreover, the 1986 US sanctions legislation prohibited the import of South African textiles. Our focus was therefore more on global developments in the industry, which promised to heavily impact both of us. NUTW was specifically concerned that South African industry, which had seen wages rise dramatically due to labour activity, was starting to move into low-wage southern African nations. That region promised to eventually attract Western investors as

well. A proposal to the ITGLWF to establish an African regional presence was our first specific collaboration in an international body.

Our interaction and consultation on a range of other union matters was having a positive impact on building both our unions. There was a growing awareness among the members of both unions that brothers and sisters in far-distant lands were becoming part of our union life, and were crucial allies in confronting the global challenges that faced us.

We also believed we could benefit from more systematically sharing our union experiences. ACTWU was the product of a merger of four unions, and NUTW was about to enter similar mergers. NUTW was therefore interested in our experience with more complex union structures and internal management issues.

ACTWU felt that it could learn from the highly democratic and participatory structures that NUTW and other COSATU unions had built. A new generation of ACTWU leaders were coming into their own. They saw their mission as rebuilding working class militancy, and the South African situation had many useful parallels. Moreover, among unions in other countries with whom ACTWU had contact, NUTW was by far the most willing and able to build a multi-dimensional relationship.

Both unions agreed that di-

rect interaction among workers was the most important vehicle for building solidarity. A plan for regular delegations was outlined. In 1988 ACTWUSA President Amon Ntuli and General Secretary John Copelyn toured ACTWU affiliates for three weeks. They toured shops, observed negotiations and organising campaigns, participated in steward training programs, and met at length with our departments.

ACTWU members were fascinated to hear about conditions under apartheid in South Africa and the struggle for change. But basic workplace and union problems were the main focus. The emphasis on class issues stressed the similarities rather than the differences of our situations, and demonstrated that the job of building workers power was much the same, whether the political context was apartheid or Reaganism. Ntuli surprised many ACTWU members when he observed that while conditions for American workers were generally better outside the factory, they were often worse *inside*, in terms both conditions of work and employer resistance to unions.

This tour reinforced the understanding of international solidarity as an extension of shopfloor solidarity. Our members' passion for contributing to the fight against apartheid was certainly strengthened. But it also became clear that we were not simply giving

charity to ACTWUSA. One ACTWU member said: "I expected to hear about a poor, struggling little union. But they're the fourth biggest textile union in the world. They could teach us a thing or two about organising!"

ACTWU was then invited to send a delegation to attend an ACTWUSA congress in 1989 and tour ACTWUSA branches. For most ACTWUSA members, we were their first foreigners. But ACTWUSA members embraced us as "comrades" in their struggle, and pledged to stand with us in ours.

Organic solidarity

In February 1990 ACTWU and SACTWU agreed on a Solidarity Programme to guide our relationship into the future. We organised our solidarity work into five categories: Basic Solidarity, Worker to Worker Solidarity, Local to Local Solidarity, Department to Department Solidarity and International Solidarity.

Two SACTWU leaders then visited our national convention in Miami in June 1990, followed by a national tour of ACTWU locals. Work is underway to match up each of the 31 SACTWU branches with an ACTWU local or joint board. Future 'worker to worker' delegations will be organised around these local ties.

SACTWU organiser John Eagles spent two months working in an ACTWU organising campaign in Virginia. ACTWU president Jack

Sheinkman toured SACTWU branches in early 1991, and organiser Eddie DeJesus will participate in a SACTWU training conference in late April. Further staff exchanges are being discussed involving organisers, researchers and corporate campaign operatives. SACTWU organisers have been invited to work in key ACTWU organising campaigns. Corporate campaign staff are investigating the use in South Africa of the various strategies of non-workplace pressure ('corporate campaigns') we have developed in the US. In recent months ACTWU, in co-ordination with its Amalgamated Bank, has been assisting in securing bridge funding for SACTWU's co-operative sewing venture in Durban, Zenzeleni Clothing.

We are also starting to compare notes on our respective needs for national industrial policies that encourage our industries to be competitive on non-wage factors such as quality, design and market responsiveness.

Solidarity is indeed becoming both the creator and the result of conscious social unionism. We work together on problem solving in the building of our separate unions, we refine our common language, and in doing so we strengthen our ability to confront global industry issues. The next frontier is to expand this model of organic solidarity to clothing and textile workers in other countries. ☆