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Stevedoring and the GWU

Mike Morris

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SAAWU: Dispute at Metal Box

On November 15 1984, Metal box management at the Rosslyn plant dismissed its 500 strong black workforce. According to dismissed workers, Metal Box is not the worst company around; by South African standards wages and conditions were described as "moderately good". Rather, the causes of the dispute are to be found in the failure of management to honour its agreements, and in the fact that, according to workers, the company's training and promotions policy was racially discriminatory.

The South African Allied Workers Union began organising at the plant in late 1984. SAAWU organisers began by recruiting workers outside the factory, who then went on to organise inside. As workers began to join, structures were created inside the plant, with shop stewards elected for each crew (shift). The stewards, together with elected office bearers, formed a Workers Committee. In April 1985, with over 75% of the workers signed up, the Workers Committee successfully approached management for a recognition agreement. Thereafter, monthly meetings were held, a number of grievances were addressed (eg. regarding overalls), and workers noted an improved attitude on the part of lower management.

The company even negotiated prior to retrenching 22 workers in September 1985. It was agreed with the Workers Committee that these retrenched workers would be considered first for any vacancies which arose. However, in October, without explanation, 3 new (white) faces appeared on the shopfloor. When management was questioned they replied that the retrenched workers were not suitable for the skilled position of production mechanic for which the whites had been recruited. But, the workers could not see how the 3 whites could be so skilled, since the company intended to send them on a training course! Management having failed to provide an acceptable explanation, the workers downed tools on October 23.

Discrimination in training

It was not simply that management had broken the retrenchment agreement. In the view of the workers this was just the most recent case where black workers had been overlooked in favour of whites. Significantly, there had been a number of blacks working

as production mechanics for a considerable period of time until 1984, when they were demoted. Workers said that before that time opportunities existed for blacks and whites in the company's training centre, which had provided a basic course in engineering. Everyone had a chance to go on the course, and then receive further training on the job. Workers say that training opportunities for blacks were reduced when the present Plant Manager, Alexander McLeish replaced the previous manager, McGregor, in 1984. Now most on the job training goes to whites. The same trend is evident, they believe, in respect of apprenticeship training. In 1981 there were 8 black apprentices, and 4 white. In 1985, there were 10 white apprentices, and only 2 black.

Management has since protested that black workers who applied for the position of production mechanic were set an aptitude test which only 4 out of 30 managed to pass. Workers point out that even these 4 were not accepted. Also, the results of the test are universally rejected by the workers. The fact that management refused to allow them to scrutinise the marked papers has fuelled suspicions that irregularities surrounded these tests.

It may be that Metal Box, in the midst of recession, is being forced to cut back expenditure on training. But black workers will not accept economies which are implemented on a racial basis.

Mass dismissals

On October 23 workers began a 2-week sit-in, clocking in every day and then sitting in the canteen. Negotiations over the position of the 3 new workers were fruitless. McLeish was not going to let anybody tell him what to do, especially blacks. On November 8, the workers were locked out. On the 15th, they were dismissed when they ignored a management ultimatum to return to work.

From the first, the union put forward only two demands: that the 3 workers leave the premises; and that workers should be paid for the time they were on strike. The union was willing to compromise to the extent that the 3 new workers might be suspended or sent on leave pending the outcome of negotiations. Management refused to address this central issue, although they came up with their own proposals, such as an undertaking to employ 3 blacks in addition to the 3 whites. They also attempted to bribe workers with a promise of bonuses if they returned to work. Only a handful accepted the bait and approximately 420 are still on strike.

Having dismissed the workforce management started recruiting amongst retrenched workers and people who had previously worked for Metal Box. Approximately 60 came forward and together with the white staff they have kept the plant running. The workers say that efficiency has been affected and shifts have been reduced, due to a combination of strain and long hours.

Boycott

SAAWU has taken the workers case to the Industrial Court (The case is due to be heard on January 31). In the meantime, and immediately after their dismissal in November, workers launched a boycott of canned drinks in the Pretoria area. The campaign was vigorously taken up by the local communities, and canned drinks disappeared from the shelves. (Metal Box produces all cans containing beers; wines and cold drinks). Management's response was to obtain an interdict restraining SAAWU, and certain of its members and officials from organising or encouraging the boycott. The boycott continues in Pretoria and there are signs that it will spread.

As far as the dismissed workers are concerned, they continue to meet to discuss strategy and they remain confident. Some have withdrawn their money from the pension fund in order to buy food; many have no money and are experiencing extreme hardship. They believe that, to win, the campaign against Metal Box must intensify.

Indeed, it would seem that the company is particularly vulnerable to boycotts and local and international pressure. SAAWU is investigating all the possibilities. It is relatively easy to boycott drinks in cans, as such drinks come in bottles as well. Moreover, Metal Box South Africa Ltd is part of a much larger corporate network. It is ultimately controlled by S A Mutual via the supposedly "liberal" Barlow group which controls C G Smith which owns most of Nampak which in turn has a 51% holding in Metal Box. (In fact Nampak and Metal Box are closely inter-related). In addition, Metal Box Overseas Ltd retains a sizeable holding. Independent trade union organisation spans many of the companies associated with Metal Box. Most significant for trade union solidarity is the fact that many of these unions have, since the strike began, come together to form COSATU. (SALB correspondent, January 1986)

Offers of help or messages of support should be sent: care of SAAWU, 3rd Floor, Tudor Mansions, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg.

SFAWU: Brewery Workers Victory

The eighteen month wage dispute between Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union and the Natalia Development Board in respect of its business undertakings ended with the Industrial Court making an arbitration award which accorded substantial increases to the workers. The dispute started in January 1984 when the Board granted a 12% increase which had been negotiated through the Industrial Council on which SFAWU is not represented. SFAWU members at the breweries effected rejected the increases and demanded that the Board negotiate with the union. The Board refused and claimed that conditions were regulated by the Department of Co-operation and Development. In May 1985, workers at the brewery and its outlets stopped work and demanded to see the Minister of Co-operation and Development to explain why he was not prepared to meet their demands.

The Board, under pressure, granted substantial increases which were vetoed by the Minister. SFAWU then declared a dispute against the board on behalf of approximately 1,000 workers in the Board's breweries and liquor outlets in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and coastal area from Port Shepstone to Empangeni.

The dispute was dealt with in the Industrial Court where SFAWU failed to reach any agreement. The workers at the breweries then, in a series of mass meetings, resolved that they would strike if their demands were not met. The Natalia Board, under united pressure from the workers, was prepared to grant the increases but was hamstrung by the Department of Co-operation and Development. For this reason the Industrial Court delayed in making an award.

The final award granted increased wages of workers on the lower scales by up to 55%, raising minimum wages from R215 per month to R333 per month. These increases were backdated to 1st March 1985. In addition the Board granted a further 5.5% increase on the existing salaries, which was backdated to 1st January 1985.

According to the shop stewards, "the increase represents a major victory for workers. SFAWU had consistently fought for a living wage for all workers and the outcome of this struggle was an important step forward in that struggle. The bosses in South Africa must recognise that workers are no longer prepared to work for starvation wages." (SFAWU communique, November 1985)

FCWU: Dairy Belle Dispute

This briefing is based on discussion with Israel Mogoathle, the secretary of the Kempton Park branch of Food and Canning Workers Union, J. Funky Komape, vice-chair of the Dairy Belle shop stewards committee and chair of the Kempton Park shop stewards committee for the food industry (a joint body with Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union), and Wilson Manokwane, a security guard who was victimised by Dairy Belle management.

The Dairy Belle plant in Olifantsfontein (Clayville) is owned by the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Co. Ltd. It prepares milk, juices and yoghurts with its production operations organised according to long-life and short-life products. The plant is new and was opened in 1984 after operations were transferred from the Pretoria and Johannesburg branches. Some of the workers from these other factories were transferred to the new plant, and local people from Tembisa were also recruited. Management used this relocation as an opportunity to reorganise production and change conditions of employment.

The Pretoria workers were already organised by FCWU and took the lead in establishing a union at the new plant (some Johannesburg workers had been members of CUSA's Food and Beverage Workers Union). The Dairy Belle workers fall under the Kempton Park Branch of the union, which also includes Olifantsfontein and Isando. FCWU has 10 factories in the area and SFAWU another 10. With the impending amalgamation of the two unions, Kempton Park is set to become one of the largest branches of the new combined food union.

In early 1985, Dairy Belle management finally agreed to negotiate a recognition agreement, but laid down that this be completed before any wage negotiation could take place. The workers saw this as an attempt to delay paying any increase, and in February staged a successful half-day strike to force management to set a date for wage negotiations. A recognition agreement was signed in March and a wage agreement was reached on July 4. Previously there was no clear wage structure and most workers received between R50 and R55 per week. The agreement provided for 4 grades paid at an hourly rate of R1.68, R1.78, R1.88 and R1.98. Also, further benefits were

negotiated, eg. an allowance for working in refrigerated areas. By this time some 500 of the company's 600 employees were union members. This included many of the security personnel, despite management's declaration that these people should not join unions.

In July, Wilson Manokwane, a security guard and union member, detained the security manager (Edwards) as he was going through the gate with four 500ml cartons of yogurt. Management, however, refused to take any action against the security manager. Workers struck in protest against management bias and double standards. The matter was resolved by mediation, the security manager and Mr Manokwane were both suspended pending the outcome of an investigation which found there was inconclusive proof of theft. Shortly after, the security manager left Dairy Belle of his own accord.

A similar incident occured two months later when Mr Manokwane had reason to suspect the personnel manager, Marais, of irregularity. Marais' explanations contradicted the statements given by others involved and so a hearing was set for the following Friday, September 20. However, before this could take place management issued a pamphlet claiming that the union agreed that Marais was not guilty and announced that Wilson Manokwane was to be disciplined for forging overtime on his clock card. Mr Manokwane was informed that he must report to the new security manager, a Mr Wilson, and that he may be accompanied by two representatives. However, when they arrived they were told it was "too late". Mr Wilson was warned not to "play" with the workers in this way. The next day Mr Manokwane was dismissed. The union took the issue up with management, who refused even to let them see the alleged forged clock card. The union office bearers declared that their members could not be dismissed without a hearing and instructed him to continue to come to work as normal.

Mr Manokwane did not arrive for work the next day (Thursday September 19) because he had been arrested the previous evening. The police who came to his home on Wednesday night did not know why they were picking him up, just that they were acting on information received from Dairy Belle management. Mr Manokwane was accused of causing strikes and unrest and being responsible for the consumer boycott.

When the shop stewards heard about the arrest they confronted the general manager, Waldeck, and demanded that Manokwane be delivered to the factory by 12.00 midday. When workers heard what had happ-

ened they stopped work, saying they would remain on strike until their fellow worker was reinstated. The next day the shop stewards committee informed management of this decision. At midday Waldeck arrived to deliver a 10 minute ultimatum to get back to work or be dismissed. Workers were not to be frightened so easily. They threw their passes at Waldeck and marched to the office to demand their money. Police and ASSEC security guards were already present. Workers were told to leave and come back on Monday. The workers sat down and refused to move. After ignoring the ultimatum, and with Hippos, police vans and sjambok wielding police now moving in, the committee members led workers out in a disciplined march.

On the Monday, the union told workers not to collect their wages, which would amount to accepting dismissal. They were also instructed to report to the union office daily for the latest information and to maintain discipline. Local area strike committees were established to maintain contact with workers who lived further away.

The union telexed their demand for reinstatement to Dairy Belle management. There followed a series of meetings with management during the period of the 3-week long strike. Meanwhile, FCWU was organising support from the federation unions and plans were well underway for boycott action. Workers at the Pretoria warehouse staged a one-day solidarity strike and Retail and Allied Workers Union was putting pressure on local Dairy Belle management in Cape Town. Members of CCAWUSA (Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union) threatened to refuse to handle Dairy Belle products. Also, although the white employees and their families tried to keep the factory going, production and distribution was suffering. At this point management gave way. They agreed to reinstate all workers except Mr Manokwane who would be suspended on full pay until his case could be heard.

ASSEC security

Management made one significant gain during the strike. They managed to install a private security firm, ASSEC, in place of their own guards, who they planned to retrench. It seems that management formed this plan when Dairy Belle security guards began to join the union. It transpired that the new security manager, Mr Wilson, actually worked for ASSEC. His role in the events at Dairy Belle requires further attention. In the first place, he adopted this secretive approach because previously, when ASSEC guards had been installed at the Pretoria plant, workers refused to tolerate their

presence. Mr Wilson, once installed, tried to trick security guards into signing resignation papers. They refused. Wilson's intentions were made plain in an outburst in the canteen after canteen staff reprimanded him for jumping the queue: he would dismiss all the union people starting with Manokwane, he blustered. The new security manager was certainly deeply involved in the dismissal of Mr Manokwane. It was he who accepted and signed Manokwane's clock card - only later was the alleged forgery discovered.

But it was the strike itself which gave management the opportunity to install ASSEC guards. The reasons are clear: to divide workers by using an outside security agency which took responsibility for their wages and conditions and imposed their own discipline. Presumably these guards will be less "cheeky" to white management and get on with the job of policing black workers.

Since the workers were reinstated relations with management have been tense and workers complain of unnecessary harassment. One departmental manager threw a container of maas into the face of a worker. A white employee in the workshop brandished a revolver at a union member. There are also complaints that "coloured" women in particular are being harassed. Also, since the strike there have been threats of retrenchments, which have, so far, been successfully resisted by the union. The case against Wilson Manokwane has fallen away, as he has now accepted employment elsewhere.

Despite problems, the union has entrenched its position; membership has actually increased since the strike. It survived this "trial of strength" and has used the period since reinstatement to reorganise before carrying the struggle further. One tactic used by the management during the strike was to employ "coloured" strike breakers. But since its return the union has started to recruit these workers, much to the frustration of management. The union has set out to unify all workers irrespective of race. As the workers strength grows in the face of a backward management, the first casualties have been amongst the white supervisors, who are being squeezed in between. They see how they have been used by management - to keep the factory going during the strike - but that they have no organisation to speak for them. On the other hand their power on the shopfloor has been undermined by the presence of the union. Out of frustration some white supervisors have already left for an easier life elsewhere. Presumably, as union organisation spreads and grows, the time will come when there is nowhere left to run. (SALB correspondent, December 1985)

CUSA and AZACTU Support Worker Unity

Representatives of CUSA (Council of Unions of South Africa) and AZACTU (Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions) met on November 2 to examine common ground for a future working relationship. At that meeting a sub-committee was established to explore the future of the working class in South Africa. The meeting found common ground on the following issues:

* black leadership;
* acceptance of white involvement at grassroots level;
* non-affiliation to political organisations;
* agreement on financial accountability to members within unions;
* independent action of unions within a federation;
* methods of international financial assistance;
* continued community involvement.

CUSA and AZACTU discussed the formation of COSATU and resolved that: "noting the formation of COSATU, CUSA and AZACTU wish to place on record the following:

1. We believe in the principle of worker unity based on the material conditions workers are exposed to.
2. We believe in the principle of worker control based on anti-racism/non-racialism to build a non-exploitative, democratic society based on the leadership of the working class.
3. Our belief in a new federation which would unite the majority of organised black workers in our country, expressing the true aspirations of black workers and not accomodating the aspirations of a minority leadership.
4. CUSA and AZACTU remain committed to discussing the basis of working class unity with truly worker-controlled organisations.
5. We further believe that it would be contrary to working class unity to create new organisations where democratic worker controlled unions have already been established.
6. We believe that any federation of the working class has to identify with and participate in the national liberation struggle.
7. We believe further that a federation of the working class has to inform and educate its membership for life-long education. Therefore the education of workers should be based on a broader political philosophy of self-reliance and self-determination.
8. The solidarity of workers should start at home and the process

of unity thereafter should spread to Southern Africa, Africa and the international community.

9. CUSA and AZACTU have agreed to the following and therefore invite all organisations of students, parents, community, civic, political and workers, including COSATU, to join us in:
   9.1) establishing trade union regional solidarity committees;
   9.2) calling for a national strike if the state of emergency is not lifted by 31 December 1985;
   9.3) develop a worker manifesto,
   9.4) begin an unemployed workers' project,
   9.5) form solidarity alliances in the community,
   9.6) control service organisations through participation on the management committees,
   9.7) establish national May Day Committees.

(Report taken from Izwilethu 3.9-10, Nov-Dec 1985)

CUSA Resolution on the Education Crisis

Recalling the 1981 CUSA resolution on education, which inter alia called for universal desegregated education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in an undivided non-racial/anti-racist South Africa, the CUSA NEC, as CUSA and parents, therefore:

1. endorses the resolutions of the meeting in Johannesburg on 28-29 December 1985 on People's Education for People's Power;
2. condemns the selective sectarian implementation of the resolutions, and wishes to warn those church and community organisations present at the consultation to enforce the resolution not to open the schools until 28 January 1986;
3. dedicate ourselves to involvement at the local, regional and national level of the creation of a National Crisis Committee but require that these structures be established and operate on democratic principles;
4. call on all CUSA structures and the branches of all affiliated unions to participate in these structures at every level;
5. Call upon the various committees to publicise meetings as widely as possible so that this crisis can truly reflect the People's power for a People's Education.

GWU: Cleaning Up at Corobrik

The majority of workers at Corobrik (Western Cape) belong to the General Workers Union, and the union is recognised by the company. The union initiated a health survey at Corobrik's four Western Cape plants in June last year. The survey was conducted by the Industrial Health Research Group (Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town). The survey was initiated at the request of the members who complained about the prevalence of health problems amongst workers, and about the appalling conditions at the factories and especially in their living quarters (owned by the company).

The first step involved an inspection of each factory and hostel in which Corobrik workers worked and lived. The second step involved medical screening of workers for likely occupationally related conditions. The third step is to involve measurement of the quality and quantity of dust in the breathing zones of workers in the different job categories of the brickmaking process, and is the final stage in the survey.

Step 1

Results of inspections at some of the factory premises included:

* filthy toilet facilities with dangerously cracked porcelain bowls, flush mechanisms that did not work, no toilet seats, no doors on toilets, no toilet paper, no towels, soap or washing facilities;
* no lockers, clothes stacked on the floor and in one case women workers using toilets as locker rooms;
* very poor ablution facilities where the showers generally did not work, shower heads were broken off the pipes, or had no taps, most taps in basins were out of order, and there was generally only cold water or insufficient hot water;
* restroom and eating room facilities were bare with rough concrete tables and benches, and generally extremely dusty;
* very dusty workplaces with no protection, absence of extractor mechanisms for dusty grinding and mixing machines;
* very hot workplaces where the temperatures of the kiln fires were measured regularly for reasons of production, while envir-

onmental temperatures where workers load and offload bricks were not;
* some unguarded machines and ladders;
* some unventilated confined workspaces;
* heavy pollution with coal fumes from the clamps (piles of baking bricks in the factory yards);
* each factory had a clinic with an industrial health nurse in attendance. Each clinic had a newsclip prominently displayed telling the story of a doctor who had been found guilty of unethical conduct for giving workers sick leave when they were not in fact sick. Given the appalling hygienic facilities at most of the plants, despite the presence of medical personnel, this was indeed ironic;
* all plants had either 3 or 4 star NOSA ratings which were interesting indications of what NOSA understands by health and safety.

Conditions at all but one of the company hostels and housing facilities were generally even worse than those in the factories. In some cases the hostels were owned by the company while in others they were owned by the administration board. Most of the housing was in a very poor condition and unfit for human habitation. This also applied to most of the "coloured" housing on the premises of one of the factories that has closed down since the survey. Housing here was actually worse than that for African workers in the other factories.

Privileged accomodation at the hostels and the company housing was provided for a small number of special workers like security guards and supervisors. These specially converted facilities, although not luxurious, boasted electricity, showers with hot and cold water, kitchens, lino on the floor, and ceilings. In these dwellings half the number of people, and in many cases less, occupy the same living space as in the overcrowded dwellings. Conditions in this accomodation contrasted interestingly with those of the majority of workers which are described below:
* at 3 of the 4 plants, the living quarters had no ablution facilities like kitchen sinks, bathrooms, handbasins, washbasins, taps or showers. The only water source was an open outside tap serving several bungalows. For the majority of occupants of the "coloured" housing at one plant the water was not fit for drinking and the ablution block serving their houses had no running water or functional toilets;
* at 3 of the 4 plants, there were no lockers for safe storage of possessions;

* at 2 of 3 hostels, bungalows were constructed of asbestos-cement cladding for walls and asbestos-cement sheeting for roofs;
* no hostels, except for the special accomodation mentioned, had ceilings or floor coverings for the rough concrete, or insulation of any type against cold and heat;
* most of the hostels were extremely damp, with fungus growing universally on the inside surface of the asbestos-cement;
* there was severe overcrowding at all the hostels and housing. At one hostel there were 32 workers to a bungalow. Generally workers occupied double bunks which were very close together;
* in all but one of the facilities, toilets were in a disgusting state. In one case there were bucket-type toilets, and in another there were floor-level flush toilets covered over with broken, leaking asbestos-cement cladding shelters. In the "coloured" housing none of the toilets worked.
* no kitchen facilities, except a bare hall with wooden benches and an eating hall with a TV at one plant;
* overflowing refuse bins with rotten material producing offensive smells at two of the hostels;
* night and day-shift workers generally shared the same bungalows at hostels.

Step 2

In July, the second step of the survey followed in which workers had their lungs tested and were x-rayed. The results of this are still provisional as they are still being analysed and evaluated. The survey showed that 72 out of 575 or 12.5% of the workers surveyed had abnormal x-rays which were suggestive of TB. As these findings may indicate either old inactive or current active illness, these workers have been sent for further tests. However, this high percentage of people with abnormal x-rays which could turn out to be active TB fits in very well with the extremely poor and unhygienic living and working conditions already observed.

In addition to this at least 18 people or 3.2% of all workers showed x-ray changes that could turn out to be silicosis. Most of these workers had worked in dusty jobs in brickmaking for many years. Silicosis is the lung disease that miners, quarry and foundry workers get from being exposed to rock dust (silica) for many years. These results are also still preliminary and the possible cases are being examined by experts for confirmation that they do indeed have silicosis.
The poor hygienic conditions in areas of the factories and the

workers' housing have been taken up with the company by the union. Some of the features mentioned have been remedied by the company since the inspection. The company has also undertaken to build new hostels in some cases and to renovate hostels and houses in others.

Step 3

Given the preliminary results of the first and second steps where the existence of dusty conditions and chest diseases have been observed, the union hoped to do dust measurements. The results of these measurements together with what has been learned from the inspections will enable them to ascertain where the sources of the health problems lie. This will also enable the union to recommend specific and effective preventive measures for the future.

After the results of step 2 were made available, the company ruled that it would only allow its own doctor to take dust measurements at the plants, with a union-appointed doctor present in an observer capacity only. This decision was rejected by the workers who believed that the company had shown very little concern for their health until pressurised by the union in this regard.

Although a company doctor has been in Corobrick's employ for four years, workers had never had any contact with him until the union initiated the health survey. The presence of a company doctor did not seem to have any effect upon the existence of the unhygienic conditions prevailing in company housing and in production, and nothing had ever been done to investigate these problems from the side of the company health personnel.

Given that it was the workers' health and well-being that was at issue and that it was only by their own efforts that health and safety issues had been addressed at all, they believed that they had every right to demand that doctors of their own choice be allowed to complete what had been begun - an investigation into the health and safety of their conditions at work.

A dispute was avoided when a compromise was reached. The third step will now be planned and executed jointly by a committee consisting of the company doctor, 2 members of management, a union doctor, a union official and a shop steward for each plant.

(SALB correspondent, January 1986)

Impala: Gencor Strikes Again

On January 6, Impala Platinum Mines, part of the Gencor mining group, dismissed over 20,000 miners who were involved in a strike and were refusing to return to work. (65% of these workers were recruited locally in Bophuthatswana and the others were migrants from other parts of South Africa, as well as from elsewhere in southen Africa. The dismissal is the biggest of its kind in recent labour history and raises important questions about the nature of, and possibilities for, trade union activity in the bantustans.

In the last few months of 1985, workers from Impala Platinum Mines approached the National Union of Mineworkers to organise them. The union then applied to the company for access but was refused. The reasons given were that Impala was in Bophuthatswana and that the NUM did not comply with the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act (Bophuthatswana), which stipulate that any trade union which wishes to operate in the area must have its head office and its governing or controlling body in Bophuthatswana.* Signficantly, this has not stopped the same management from having dealings with the South African-based white racist Mine Workers Union.

Although the company refused access rights, this did not prevent the workers from organising. On December 23, the workers presented management with a list of grievances. On December 26, another list of grievances was presented covering wages, working conditions and demanding that the NUM be given recruiting facilities. This was accompanied by a short work stoppage indicating to management the seriousness of workers' demands. Management, however, did not attend to these grievances and, on January 1, all the Impala mines went on strike - involving some 30,000 workers. The strike was well organised and disciplined. The demands presented to management during negotiations combined those presented previously.

During the period of the strike and the dismissals which follwed, Impala management acted very heavy-handedly and co-operated closely with the Bophuthatswana police in dealing with union activists. Twenty-seven workers were shot with rubber bullets resulting in twenty-six being hospitalised. In addition forty-eight workers were arrested by the mine security and handed over to the Bophut-

* For further details see SALB 9.5, March 1984.

hatswana police to appear in the Pukeng Regional Court.

The strong police and mine security presence in the area made communication between the workers and the union extremely difficult. Moreover, management refused to meet with NUM officials who came out to the mines. In as far as it had any dealings with the workers, management preferred to deal with the local sweetheart union - Bophuthatswana National Union of Mine Employees (Bonume) - which the workers have decisively rejected. Although it has been able to get access to the mines, it has not recruited many workers.

Action Taken

The NUM has no locus standi in Bophuthatswana making the legal option very difficult. NUM is looking into the possibility that a committee could be set up to take up the matter on behalf of the dismissed workers.

NUM has informed other Gencor members about the situation and is examining the possibilities for solidarity action. On the international front the automobile and steel workers unions in the United States of America have been fully informed since platinum is used extensively in the motor industry there.

Pirowshaw Camay of CUSA has pledged the support of his federation to the cause of the dismissed miners. COSATU is compiling a list of Gencor-linked companies as a prelude to solidarity action by workers in these firms and by other progressive organisations, which are being kept informed. Sidney Mufamadi of COSATU charged Gencor with collaborating with this bantustan regime inorder to create a trade union-free zone where extreme forms of exploitation could continue.

The issue at stake in Impala is not only wages and working conditions, but the very right of workers to join a union of their choice. Consequently, it is an issue which affects the entire trade union movement. At its inaugural congress COSATU adopted a resolution denouncing the bantustans. Exactly how unions are to operate in these areas and how to deal with union bashing managements which take advantage of these conditions requires urgent discussion and concerted action.

(SALB correspondent)

BCAWU: Building Union Organisation

In December 1985 members of the Building Construction and Allied Workers Union established a shop stewards council for the building industries in the East Rand, covering the area from Germiston to Olifantsfontein. One hundred shop stewards, representing a dozen factories and sites attended the first meeting of the council on January 19. The following programme was adopted for 1986:

(i) to concentrate resources against stubborn employers;
(ii) to provide education for workers in the region;
(iii) to organise jointly with youth and community organisations;
(iv) to organise on a door-to-door basis.

Workers warn that the shop stewards council will be a body that not only barks, it will also have a bite.

In a sector which has traditionally been difficult to organise, this achievement is an important breakthrough. It comes after a series of bitter, and sometimes protracted battles with stubborn managements. The most important of these was the four-year long struggle for trade union rights (1981-1985) at the Olifantsfontein plant of Johnston Tiles. (This will be the subject of a seperate article in the future). But there are many other instances where union members have faced mass dismissals and daily harassment in the struggle to establish the union.

Sterkfontein Brick Works

When the union first started to organise the 135 workers of Sterkfontein Brick Works (Olifantsfontein) in 1984, the plant manager, workers say, used to "manage" with a gun on his hip. When workers struck to protest against bad conditions - work is dusty, heavy and hot - they were all dismissed. The union took the case to the Industrial Court, and after 7 months secured an out of court settlement. The workers were re-instated and received back payment.

During 1985 bad relations with management persisted, as the union members continued to resist poor working conditions and fought for a recognition agreement. At the end of the year all five shop

stewards were suspended and subsequently dismissed for allegedly organising a work stoppage. The issue here had been non-payment for a public holiday. In November the entire workforce struck in protest against the dismissals, and stayed out for 1 month. On December 4, the union agreed to an out of court settlement by which all workers except the 5 shop stewards were reinstated, the shop stewards received compensation, and the firm undertook to immediately negotiate a recognition agreement with the union.

Concor Roads

In September 1985 the union began to organise at Concor Roads. By November over 80% of the 260 workers had signed up. Management, when they got wind of the union's presence, started interrogating workers. The workers would not be intimidated. They demanded higher wages and took strike action. The company then undertook to enter a recognition agreement, but immediately broke the spirit of the undertaking, unilaterally making decisions which affected union members, as when when 68 workers (union members) were retrenched on December 13. The first they knew of it was when they opened their pay packets to find a retrenchment notice.

When the union challenged this the company responded that since there was no recognition agreement there was no obligation to consult. They soon changed their tune, however, when the union applied to take the issue to the Industrial Court under Section 43 of the Labour Relations Act. The company undertook to reemploy all dismissed workers, and in future to consult the union.

Glamour Rock North

The union began organising at Glamour Rock North (Germiston) in August 1985. By September the majority of the 44 workers were signed up. However, management refused to deal with the union, and never responded to letters from the union. Eventually a meeting was arranged. The BCAWU presented its registration certificate and constitution and requested stop order facilities. In December the union submitted stop orders for verification and implementation. Also, the union drew up a draught recognition agreement.
On December 20, the company responded by retrenching the entire workforce. When the union tried to discuss the issue, the director refused to meet them. The union has now applied to take the case to the Industrial Court under Section 43 of the Labour Relations Act.

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In all these cases workers have taken industrial action where necessary. They have also used legal channels where these exist, to further their struggles. But in the end it is the self-organisation of the workers themselves and the exercise of their collective power that has begun to push back the frontiers of management control, and to win better conditions. The formation of a shop stewards council for workers in the building industries on the East Rand is another sign that this is happening. And on February 9, the BCAWU is to launch a national shop stewards council. (Reports from Narius Moloto, BCAWU)

EMI: You've Got to Show Some Respect

A new policy has been introduced into EMI South Africa concerning the way people must address each other at work. From now on it is company policy that people will be addressed by their surnames. It is only by mutual agreement that a person can be addressed by the first name or nicknames. People who contravene this policy will be subject to disciplinary action which can involve dismissals. This means that the days when management and whites could call black workers by offensive nicknames are now over in EMI. Changes such as this are an important part in the struggle for workers to be treated with respect.

This new policy came about thanks to the shop stewards taking management to task over the way CCAWUSA (Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union) members were being addressed. The policy also covers all offensive, abusive or derogatory language. EMI shop stewards will keep a sharp lookout for this form of racism.

The right to strike

The EMI negotiating team have also won a major new right for the first time in CCAWUSA. As part of the dispute procedure the team have won the right to go on strike for ten working days with a guarantee that they will not be dismissed. Once the grievance procedure is exhausted and a dispute is declared the workers must hold a ballot. If over 50% of the workers decide to strike then they can do so for ten working days without fear of dismissal. This is the first time CCAWUSA has achieved this right. The negotiating team are now involved in a hard struggle to get the best possible recognition agreement. (CCAWUSA News 1.9, December 1985)

Factory Occupations and Sit-ins

Not only has the South African emergent labour movement grown in size and depth of organisation over the last decade, but new and sophisticated methods of struggle have been developed by the workers in these unions. Hampered by labour laws which make legal strikes an arduous and lengthy experience, and faced with the threat of dismissal and police action even if they do engage in legal strikes, workers are shaping new strategies to further their struggles. Towards this end, the sit-in is one tactic workers have recently begun to use with some success. We will look at three case studies which occurred in South Africa during 1985. Although the sit-in tactic has only recently been used in South Africa, it has a long history and has been employed extensively by workers' movements in other parts of the world.

Generally, factory occupations and sit-ins provide an effective means of pressure which workers can use against an employer in pursuit ofimproved working conditions, or to protect jobs. Workers take the initiative, and their physical presence in the workplace gives them control over whether or not production will continue. In so doing the factory sit-in challenges private property and capitalist control of the means of production, and suggests the possibility of an alternative economic system in which production takes place under the control, and in the interests of, the working class. Thus, during periods of general political and economic crisis, sit-ins and occupations have formed part of the broad political offensive against the particular regime, whilst at the same timeattacking the very foundations of the existing social order. Examples of such occassions include: Russia in 1905 and 1917, Germany and Italy after world war I, Spain in the 1930s, Algeria during decolonisation, and Portugal in the 1970s. Equally, sit-ins have been used to achieve much more moderate aims, as in the attempts in Britain in the 1970s and '80s to prevent closures.

Italy 1920

In Italy, in 1920, workers occupied factories throughout the industrial areas of the North. The occupations followed the breakdown of national wage negotiations in the engineering industry. In August workers decided on a national go-slow. But on September 1 employers proclaimed a lock-out, sparking off the occupations.

The workers continued production, but under workers' control. There was no intervention from the police and army who surrounded the affected factories. The factories were evacuated and workers returned to work for the owners in October, after a settlement was negotiated with the employers by their unions which limited the workers demands to employers' recognition of trade union control in the factories. (1)

France 1968

France in 1968 was hit by national factory occupations, which coincided with widespread student revolts. The occupations were in support of demands for an increase in wages, a progressive reduction of the working week to 40 hours with no reduction in wages, a lowering of the retirement age and the extension of trade union freedom and rights in factories. (2) The occupations lasted from 3 to 5 weeks and were most concerted in the metal sector, although white collar workers and civil servants also participated.

An interesting feature of the occupations was that firms recognised the right of workers to occupy their workplaces. During the occupations strike committees were set up in all factories to coordinate and organise activity. They were under union control in most cases. There was also inter-strike committee co-ordination. Strike pickets, set up to prevent strangers from gaining entry to factories, to protect factories from attempted sabotage and to prevent a takeover of the factories, were responsible to the strike committees and were organised on a voluntary and rota basis.

In most cases production ceased during the occupations except in cases where machines had to be maintained or where the lives of the community would be adversely affected. In some factories attempts were made to experiment with workers' control in the running of them. At one shipyard, workers organised payment of wages and distribution of food to striking workers and also requisitioned food supplies held in the port.

At some occupied plants workers held management captive for about two weeks. The aim of this was, at first to, gain a quick settlement, but after the first two days when it became clear that the strike would be protracted, management's captivity became symbolic.

The final settlement reached between the employers, the government and the unions gave the workers higher wages, but did not address

their wider demands. Back in control again, employers in some areas began victimising militant strikers.

Britain: Upper Clyde Shipbuilders

In Britain in the early 1970s, workers' control of society was not really on the agenda in the occupations which started at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' (UCS) yards in June 1971, and spread rapidly to other plants.

Workers at the four yards decided to occupy when the British Government witheld financial assistance to the directors of the company, so allowing it to close down. The workers' occupation included continued production because, they reasoned, the threatened closure of the four yards could not be averted by a withdrawal of labour. The Chairman of the shop stewards joint co-ordinating committee for the UCS company, Jimmy Reid, explained their action:

> We are taking over the yards because we refuse to accept that faceless men can take these decisions. We are not strikers. We are responsible people...we are not the wildcats, we want work. The real wildcats are in [the government]... The biggest mistake we could make is to lie down, capitulate and grovel to them. (3)

The work at the yards, during the occupation, was carefully monitored so that production did not exceed levels at the time of the start of the strike. After more than a year of occupation of the yards the government announced in February 1972 that it would grant money towards the reconstitution of 3 of the yards and would provide aid to any buyer of the fourth one. On October 10 1972 the fourth yard was sold and the occupation was called off.

The workers' action succeeded in stopping closure of the yards and saving jobs in the short-term. Also, during the sit-in workers had encroached on managerial powers when they took over the right to hire and fire. When the occupation came to an end such experiments were also discontinued.

Sit-ins in South Africa

In this period of recession, when there is reduced surplus with which to lubricate the wheels of industrial relations, struggles over wages andconditions have become longer and more bitter. Workers have shown that they are not prepared to passively accept the

terms dictated by employers. But the bosses can simply dismiss workers, and call up the massive reserve army of unemployed labour. If that does not work, police action and a battery of security laws are available to hamper the organisation of any strike and to prevent picketing.

Bosch

About 300 workers at the Bosch factory in Brits, Transvaal, staged a two-day sit-in in September 1985. The workers were members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU).

A wage dispute began at the beginning of September with workers calling for a R1 increase across the board to raise the minimum wage to R3,50 an hour and management refusing to grant an increase of more than 12c and 18c an hour from January 1986. When attempts to resolve the issue failed, workers went on strike on September 3. Management then changed their offer to an 11c an hour increase from July 1 and a further increase of 7c an hour at the beginning of 1986. After discussing this new development, workers, however, voted in favour of continuing the strike. On September 5, management dismissed the striking workers and ordered them off the factory premises. A surprise lay in store for management, however, when workers decided not to leave the factory but to remain inside until their demand was met. Moses Mayekiso, a MAWU official, explained why workers took this decision:

> They wanted reinstatement. By that time they had also indicated that they were willing to accept an increase of 70c. They wanted to protect their jobs and block management from getting new recruits. "No worker will touch our machines", is what they said.
>
> It was a tactic which had been planned for winning an acceptable increase. It developed as the way to combat the threat of dismissals and police action against workers picketing outside the factory to prevent scabs from taking their jobs.

On the first day of the sit-in management refused to talk to workers. "They thought workers were just joking about sitting-in until their demands for reinstatement and an acceptable increase were met. But after 6.30 pm on September 5 they realised the workers were serious," said Mayekiso. By that time union organisers and family members of the workers had begun to bring food and blankets to the factory. Soon after the food and blankets arrived, manage-

ment said they were prepared to talk.

Negotiation continued all night and at 4 am on September 6 agreement was reached. An increase of 50c an hour was agreed (12c an hour backdated to July 1 and another increase on October 1). The minimum wage would then stand at R3.00 an hour, only 50c short of the workers' original demand. In addition management agreed that workers could have the rest of the day off. As Mayekiso saw it:

> The experience was important for workers and several important lessons were learnt. Firstly, workers realised that they had real power. They learnt that the real power to control production lay with them, not the bosses. Secondly, they saw that the only way to protect their jobs was through fighting.
>
> Strikes legal or illegal are always a problem because of dismissals. There is also the problem of strikers being dismissed and when they don't leave the point of production becoming trespassers. At this point the police are usually called in to forcefully remove them.
>
> Once they've left the factory it is more difficult for workers to win a strike. The tactic of the sit-in overcomes both these problems: new recruits are kept out by strikers guarding the factory gates. Management, especially if they are still in the factory, are reluctant to call in the police. In the case of Bosch there was no attempt by management to call the police.
>
> A sit-in makes it difficult to cross the picket line - to scab - and it makes it difficult for the police to smash the workers inside. In addition, the rest of the community gets involved. Workers inside the factory depend on them for material support. The consciousness of non-workers is raised and links are forged between them and the workers.

Durban bakeries strike

Two thousand one hundred bread workers belonging to 4 different unions - Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union (SFAWU), Food and Beverage Workers Union, Black Allied Workers Union, and Natal Baking Industries Employees Union - went on strike for two weeks in Natal in July 1985 to demand a living wage. The workers were up against some of the largest companies - Anglo Vaal, Premier Group, and Tiger Oats (Barlow Rand).

Despite this, workers belonging to SFAWU occupied three bakeries during the first week of the strike. Their reasons for doing so were made clear: they wanted to stay close together and so maintain solidarity, to prevent scab labour replacing them, to prevent management continuing to produce, and to show management that they were serious.

The bakery bosses were equally determined to show workers that they would not budge on their minimum wage offer of R93.90 a week. Workers in SFAWU were demanding R105.50. When workers occupied the bakeries, managements closed the canteens, hoping to starve workers into submission. But workers' families brought food to the bakeries' gates and more than 200 Clover Dairies workers brought crates of milk, yoghurt and mageu. In turn the bakery workers allowed the undelivered bread, which was still on the premises, to be distributed to charity organisations and to workers who had earlier been dismissed from the multinational BTR Sarmcol in Howick, Pietermaritzburg.

Although workers had saved money in preparation for the strike, they were only prepared to use it when it became absolutely necessary. "It was so cold and I became terribly sick," recalled one worker. "But we did no want an organiser to give blankets or buy food until we could not go any further. We used flour bags from the mill to cover ourselves, until the bosses took them. Then we huddled together and used cardboard boxes."

But despite widespread support for the workers' struggle and their willingness to suffer to achieve their goal, they were evicted by court order from the three bakeries at the end of the first week of the strike. At the end of the second week, all the striking workers were back at work with hardly any change in managements' offers.

The chief factor which led to this outcome was the variation in levels of organisation and preparedness for the strike between the four participant unions. Only SFAWU members occupied their bakeries. The workers from the other unions had signed agreements with their managements saying they would leave the bakeries in the afternoons and return in the mornings.

Printpak

Ninety workers at Printpak Gravure in Industria, Johannesburg, all

members of the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union, began a two and a half week sit-in strike on October 9 1985. Their action followed the dismissal of a fellow worker who had refused to obey management's order that he do his own work as well as that of another worker who had been taken ill. Joseph Nene, the chairman of the shopstewards committee at the plant, explained:

> The trouble started on Tuesday night [October 8] when we found that we were short of one person in our department. He had become ill. We told the foreman about this and he said he would get somebody from the basement to do the work. Cyril Rulashe was sent up. But he also had to feed the machine in the basement and couldn't cope with both jobs. At one point the basement machine had to stop for 3 hours.
>
> The Wednesday the same situation existed - we were still short of one person. When Cyril told the foreman about his difficulty in coping with both jobs he wouldn't listen. I also explained the situation to management but they weren't interested. Instead they wanted to give Cyril a written warning. We left the office without signing anything.
>
> Soon after we'd left I was called to the manager's office and told to tell Cyril to do the two jobs. Cyril was given a final warning.
>
> The other workers decided to discuss the issue but while we were busy, one of the managers came up to us and told us we had 5 mins to get back to work and that Cyril was dismissed. But we decided not to go back to work but also not to leave the factory. We told management we would stay in the factory until the problem had been solved.

The workers left the factory on Friday night after having occupied it for two days. However, when they returned on Monday they found themselves locked out. Management insisted that they agree to Cyril Rulashe remaining outside the factory until the matter had been resolved and that the other workers sign an undertaking not to go on strike. Workers refused to agree to either of these and instead devised a way of getting back into the plant.

"We got one of our members to drive up to the gate with a car and to hoot," Joseph Nene recalls. "When the security people opened the gate he drove in so that they could not close it again. Other workers then rushed in and opened the gate properly so that we

could all enter the premises."

Management called the police but the latter took no action. They further tried to prohibit workers from leaving and entering the premises freely and told them they would not be provided with food. After workers demanded food, however, management allowed them to buy some from the nearby shop. Workers further warned management that if the police were called in and took action against them, they would fight back and the safety of persons, that is, management and others not involved in the strike, and of machinery, could no be guaranteed.

The next day, the workers won further ground when management signed an agreement saying they would not prevent workers entering or leaving the premises. When it became clear that workers were prepared to sit-in for as long as was necessary for management to reinstate them all, management re-opened serious negotiation and acceded to their demand. Besides the pressure of the workers' sit-in, Printpak management was also faced with threats of solidarity action by workers in factories which handle Printpak products. "Other workers would have come out in support if the sit-in had failed," said Sipho Kubeka, PWAWU Transvaal Branch Secretary: But this was not necessary because management gave in. Workers saw the strike as very important. Although the issue might seem small, it was important to protect that one worker's job. It is something which could face any worker and the only way to stop dismissals is to have united action by other workers.

The tactic of sitting-in was consciously decided on. Workers had learnt from the bakeries strike in Durban and the Brits one. They felt it would give them more control over the situation than an ordinary strike, although it needs more thorough organisation. There was also the advantage of workers being together for a long time. They were able to discuss issues, explain things to one another and build greater unity through closer interaction.

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Sit-ins or factory occupations, although on the increase in South Africa are still a new and relatively unexploited tactic. Given the often harsh repression which even legal strikers face once they have been evicted from factory premises, and given the vast numbers of unemployed, sit-ins could prove to be an effective

method of defending workers and their jobs during a dispute. Their success will depend on the level of organisation of workers involved, their preparedness for the occupation, as well as the position adopted by management.

As can be seen from the above examples the sit-in tactic can be used to redress a wide range of grievances. It places control of the strike directly into the hands of the workers and indicates, practically, when they see the machines standing idle, the pivotal role that the workers play in production. Depending on the extent and form of the sit-in, it gives a vision of how a new, worker-controlled society might function.

But although workers may control their factories for a period, in society at large the bosses remain in command, able to use the law, the courts and the security forces to deal with strikers.

(Estelle Randall, January 1985)

Footnotes:

1. A Gramsci, Selections from political writings 1910-1920, London, 1977.
2. A Hoyles, Imagination in power, Nottingham, 1973.
3. K Coates, Work-ins, sit-ins and industrial democracy, Nottingham, 1981.

Postscript: We have learnt that 250 workers at Chesebrough Ponds, all members of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, have staged a successful sit-in to further their demands. The sit-in began on January 22 when negotiations with management broke down. CWIU's demands were for a minimum R3,25 per hour, May Day as a paid holiday, a 40-hour week, one month's annual bonus, and 5 days a year compassionate leave. The company offered a package amounting to an 18,4% increase (hourly minimum up from R2,70 to R3,05; increased annual bonus and compassionate leave).

The workers occupied the factory for two days and three nights, during which time relatives and friends kept them supplied with food and clothing . With production at a standstill, management gave way: the union demands in respect of wages, annual bonuses and May Day were all met, whilst hours were reduced to 44 a week.

The Question of Unity – A Reply

Alec Erwin's paper, "The Question of Unity in the Struggle" (SALB 11.1, September 1985), raises many important issues that are facing mass based organisations in South Africa. Erwin's attempt to initiate "broad and coherent debate rather than piecemeal organisational sniping" (p51) is very welcome at this time. However, the paper is finally somewhat puzzling. It shifts around uneasily within what Erwin calls a "dilemma". On the one hand, we are told that: "The struggle for liberation from a regime such as that in South Africa requires maximum unity of purpose among the oppressed people." (p69) On the other hand, Erwin argues, the "imperatives imposed" by such popular unity "do not encourage or facilitate political practices that address transformation." (p68) Yet transformation is seen to be critical for the successful resolution of the South African struggle. We are tossed, then, between the need for maximum unity, and the seemingly opposed need to address the crucial question of transformation. "The dilemma is an acute one for working class organisation." (p68)

Without wishing to deny the complexity of the issues, I believe that the dilemma in question is more of Erwin's own making. The root cause of the dilemma is, ironically, a failure on his part to consistently approach matters from a class perspective. Erwin's argument is distorted and finally hijacked by some rather ropey, undialectical categories.

In the first place, there is the central and mechanical distinction that he makes between "liberation politics" and "transformation politics". I shall come to this distinction later. Then, within the category of "liberation politics", Erwin enumerates three possible forms - "national defence", "nation building", and "populism". This is an odd assortment of categories pulled, partly, from academic social "sciences". Erwin then proceeds to deduce certain "imperatives" that mark these different forms of "liberation politics".

"National Defence"

Although it has only indirect bearing on the South African struggle, I would like to begin this critique by considering what Erwin has to say about the first form of "liberation politics", namely

"national defence". In so doing I hope to begin to illustrate the mechanical, undialectical character of much of Erwin's argument.

"National defence" is a form of "liberation politics", we are told, in which mobilisation is achieved against an exogenous (ie. foreign) regime occupying an existing nation. This form of liberation politics "has inherent in it elements that are reactionary in that both past and existing class interests are fixed and protected by the symbolism of the nation being defended... National pride and identity is a mobilising force but it also sails very close to the winds of racial stereotype and outright racism...". (p53) In this manner Erwin characterises "national defence"; it is a very one-sided portrayal. He fails to notice that the majority of socialist revolutions have, in fact, involved a strong component of "national defence" - China (the national liberation struggle against Japanese militarist occupation), Vietnam (the struggles against French colonialism, Japanese occupation, US imperialism), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Japanese occupation, US led invasion), and the post-war socialist revolutions in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe (which all emerged in part, from national resistance struggles against German and Italian occupation).

In other societies where socialist transformation is under way - Cuba, for instance - "national defence" is a significant component in mobilising for ongoing socialist transformation. Among the fundamental organs of mass-based democracy in Cuba are the local, community CDRs (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution). In all of these instances of "national defence", the symbolism of the nation, with its traditions and heritage, tends to be evoked. Such evocations of a significant past are not inherently reactionary, racist or conservative as Erwin suggests. In a situation where, let us say, the feudal land-owning classes, sections of the bourgeoisie, and some of the intelligentsia side with a reactionary, foreign invasion force, it is possible for the proletariat, its vanguard party and its mass based organisations (eg. trade unions) to assume leadership of the struggle for national defence. In this case it is possible to mobilise (in an internationalist, not chauvinist manner) around national pride and identity, and, at the same time, in the course of the struggle, to place social transformation on the agenda.

In any society the past is not the sole property of the ruling classes. The past is not only the past of reaction, of the time-

bound, of oppressive hierarchies, of "great men", chiefs, kings, princes, of courtly traditions and of a refined and mystifying high culture. That is one version, a reactionary version, of the national heritage. But the past is also a past of struggles, of people's heroes, martyrs, of legendary bandits, peasant revolts, carnivals that mock the established order, folklore, work songs, music and dance. In all cases of socialist transformation, whether these have been dominated by "national defence" or not, the working class has been able to appropriate and present its own version of the past. Part of the leading role of the working class consists precisely in this, the ability to project itself as the class force best able to spearhead a broad alliance that safeguards the finest traditions of the nation/people.

Although our struggle has its own special features, there are general lessons to be learnt from the rich experience of international struggles. To understand the objective significance of a struggle for "national defence", or any other for that matter, we need to approach the particular struggle in terms of the concrete class forces involved, their alignment with other classes, their their strengths and weaknesses. We cannot deduce in an undialectical and ahistorical manner that "national defence" will, by definition, tend to be reactionary.

This tendency to allow eclectic, sociological categories to displace a class understanding is a feature throughout Erwin's paper. It is, however, with his second and third forms of "liberation politics" ("nation building" and "populism") that we encounter theoretical problems with a more direct bearing upon the South African struggle. According to Erwin, our struggle has been dominated by an "amalgam of populism and nation building" (p60). In particular, it is "populism" that concerns Erwin. Let us look at this matter a little more closely.

"Populism"

In Erwin's view, "populism" occurs in a situation where there is a radically undemocratic, domestic regime, creating "the conditions for an alliance of classes whose economic interests differ but who find common cause against the regime" (p54). The apartheid regime clearly lays the basis for a multi-class, popular alliance opposed to it. But to label such an alliance "populist" is already to load the issue in a misleading and unhelpful manner.

It is analogous to labelling someone who believes in the leading role of the working class a "workerist", or to labelling someone "reformist" who believes that winning reforms (let us say in labour legislation) can clear the space for further advances. Populism, like workerism, and like reformism, is an ideological deviation, based upon a mechanical, one-sided emphasis on one factor in our struggle. Workerism, while correctly calling for the leading role of the working class, fails to see that this leadership must be exercised on all fronts of the struggle, and not just in narrow "pure" working class, shop-floor issues. Likewise populism, while correctly emphasising the need for maximum popular unity against a reactionary regime, mistakes the common factors that unite different classes and strata, for a simple identity of interest. Every front of struggle carries its own inherent ideological dangers. It is the duty of progressives within the trade union movement to broaden, develop and educate the spontaneous workerism, economism and reformism that tend to occur in the trade unions. Similarly, populism tends to emerge more or less spontaneously within the context of popular, national democratic struggles. Trade unions are not per se workerist or reformist, multi-class liberation struggles against undemocratic regimes are not per se populist.

It is true, however, that radical populism has played a large and generally progressive role within our struggle. The working class in South Africa, perhaps no less than other sectors of the oppressed, is heavily imbued with a populist ideology, with strong nationalist, and often also religious overtones. It is the task of all progressives in South Africa to develop and transform, where possible, this populism into a more scientific, class based understanding of our struggle. This development and this transformation are not opposed to the task of cementing popular unity - on the contrary. It is a dangerous, undialectical error to imagine that the cause of unity runs counter to an understanding and articulation of differences within that unity. Nothing threatens unity more than the illusion that the unity is based upon a complete identity of interest. For instance, when, in the name of an undifferentiated "people", students have burnt down the beer halls of migrant workers, the cause of popular unity has not been served. Such unity requires an understanding of both the unifying interests as well as the crucial class and strata differences within the people's camp. (The flip-side of this kind of populism involves a similar failure to distinguish and strategise around class differences within the enemy camp.)

To conclude this brief survey of populism and its relation to popular alliances, it should be noted that, contrary to what Erwin implies (p54), common interests are not all political, and the divergent interests are not all economic in a popular, multi-class alliance. In South Africa, for instance, while oppressed black traders and black workers have common political interests (the removal of group areas, pass laws, etc.), they also have certain common economic interests (the struggle against monopoly domination, for instance).

"Liberation politics" and "transformation politics"

Erwin's tendency to erect mechanical, undialectical oppositions in theory where none need exist in practice, is no-where more apparent than in his distinction between "liberation politics" and "transformation politics". Indeed, it is this distinction which dominates the whole paper. By "liberation politics" he means a form of politics involving wide, cross-class unity and the pursuit of broad international solidarity. He sees this form of politics as being directed essentially at the question of legitimacy. "Liberation politics" seeks to undermine the legitimacy of an unpopular regime, in so doing, we are told, it suppresses class differences within the people's camp, and tends to suppress, therefore, all consideration of transformation.

In dealing with the South African struggle, Erwin correctly queries the validity of the "usual two stage argument" (p68-9). (I am not sure whose "usual" argument it is - are there any claimants for paternity? - but nevermind.) Unfortunately, in place of two stages, Erwin erects a simple two track approach instead. These two separate tracks are, precisely, "liberation politics" and "transformation politics". The only relationship between these two forms of struggle appears to be antagonistic, getting in each other's way. What is bewildering about Erwin's paper is that he hands out bouquets to "liberation politics", while at the same time he portrays it as obstructionist to the "transformation politics" he finally endorses. I have already, at the outset, noted the resulting "dilemma". I would like to deal with this "dilemma" in a little more detail. Let us first consider the international aspect.

The international factor

According to Erwin, "liberation politics", is "crucially shaped by international reactions". (p57) On the international front, as on

the domestic, it makes good sense to win friends while isolating to the maximum the prevailing regime. The international anti-apartheid struggle has, as Erwin notes, (p60) achieved remarkable results over the last two decades. Support for the South African liberation struggle comes from a diversity of sources - governments, political parties, international bodies, trade union federations, religious and humanitarian groups. The political inclinations of these sources range from communist to liberal and beyond.

Erwin is not wrong to suggest that the pursuit of the widest possible anti-apartheid support might place constraints on the elaboration of the tasks of transformation in certain forums. He is wrong, however, to not see other aspects to this struggle. Above all, he fails to notice the substantial contribution that the anti apartheid struggle is making, at an ideological level, to question of transformation on a world-scale. The international, anti-apartheid campaign has served to isolate not only our own regime, but also (to some extent at least) the major imperialist regimes. The ruling imperialist groups in the US possess massive political and ideological resources. Their ability to sell the capitalist, "American way of life", while sowing disinformation about the achievements of other social systems, is one of the major ideological blockages to developing a "transformational" outlook on a world-scale. However, their continued support for the apartheid regime and for South African capitalism has dented their prestige, and underlined internationally the anti-democratic, predatory character of imperialism. Our own struggle here in South Africa has, therefore, strengthened, in its own small way, the cause of international transformation. This is a point often made, with great regret, by liberal apologists for capitalism. Within South Africa, continued imperialist support accorded to the apartheid regime, and highlighted by international solidarity, presents possibilities for mass education With strong transformation implications.

Economic development and reform

The unfortunate effects of Erwin's mechanical opposition between "liberation politics" and "transformation politics" in South Africa is also apparent in his consideration of the impact of recent economic development and of the regime's reform initiatives. On page 61 we are told that "Economic growth and political reform are weakening the cement of populism" (ie. of the popular, or national democratic alliance as I would prefer to call it). But on page 66 we are told something a bit different. This self-same economic

growth has, in fact, resulted in a deep-seated structural crisis and massive unemployment and poverty. Not only will the government be unable to buy off significant strata of the industrial and rural proletariat, but: " In fact prospects don't look too good for the petty-bourgeoisie and small-scale capital. This could give new life to populism and if nation-building became an active process then this would reinforce a popular alliance.

This second statement seems to me more accurate, but it is still rather hesitant. We are living in a time of heightened, country-wide popular uprisings, consumer boycotts, stay-at-homes, school boycotts, rent boycotts, very large political funerals with communities symbolically taking control of their townships for the day, and of widespread physical confrontation with the security forces. It seems, then, a little inaccurate to speak so tentatively of the possibility that "new life" might be given to the "weakened cement" of popular alliances. (I am not, incidentally, suggesting that there are not also uneven processes and difficulties within this massive, rolling wave of popular struggle.)

It is true that contradictory economic developments are throwing up new strata within the black communities. These new strata are, in principle, available for possible co-option by the regime's reform initiatives. However, to date, neither these economic developments, nor the regime's political initiatives have scored any substantial victories. Once more, Erwin's tendency to approach issues undialecticaaly reveals itself. In this case, the broad working masses and their allies are treated, it seems to me, as passive objects upon which economic growth, and upon which government political reforms impress themselves. To say that the government's political reforms are weakening the cement of popular alliance is to mistake government (and capitalist) intentions, for actual achievements. The attempted reforms of 1984 created political space that a broad range of working class and popular organisations were able to actively exploit. The level of popular mobilisation, and (to an extent) organisation has risen dramatically in the last 12 months. If anything, the regime's back-firing reforms have strengthened the cement of popular alliance. This is not to say that complacency can now be the order of the day, that the regime might not make gains in the future. Nor (for those who see populism as the biggest headache) should we imagine that some elements and strata currently drawn into popular struggle are entirely reliable, unwavering and unlikely to desert.

From protest to challenge

It is worthwhile reflecting more on the broad anti-reform campaign of 1984, and its impact on the events of 1985. The anti-reform campaign certainly assumed many of the features that Erwin associates with "liberation politics". It sought to mobilise the maximum unity against the regime. This unity was mobilised locally and internationally. The first goal of the campaign was to deprive (basically through election boycotts) the new tricameral parliament and Black Local Authorities of all legitimacy. The campaign ended, unquestionably, in a resounding victory for all popular forces.

However, the resulting mobilisation and organisation on the one side, and the massive political crisis of the regime on the other, have now opened up into countrywide struggles that go beyond questions of legitimacy and protest to address issues of transformation. Consumer boycotts of white shops, for instance, have led to popular unity between the working masses and black shopkeepers. These boycotts have not necessarily led to a simple, class-blind populism. In many cases black, largely working class, communities organised in civic bodies and consumer action committees have learnt to draw black shopkeepers into the campaign (they stand to gain, of course), while at the same time monitoring, and where necessary pressuring these shopkeepers, to ensure that prices on essential goods are lowered, and that other prices are not speculatively raised. Where it has achieved results, the development of the consumer boycott has required, therefore, a correct understanding of class differences within popular unity. At the same time the question of democratic control and the transformation of social consumption has begun to be addressed.

On the education front in the Western Cape, for instance, the school boycotts, or rather the curriculum boycotts have arisen directly out of the soil of last year's anti-election campaign. In marches on locked schools, and in alternative programmes, parents, teachers and students have gone beyond challenging the state's (and Carter Ebrahim's) legitimacy, to advancing questions of popular (and often, working class) control and transformation of education. Other examples may be cited, the point I wish to underline is that "transformation politics" can, and has emerged from the impetus of "liberation politics". They do not belong to two irreconcilable tracks, forever presenting us with a dilemma. I hope the examples I have used will also serve to show that questions of "transformation" are not just emerging in "the independ-

ent shop-floor based unions" as Erwin seems to imply. (p68)

Unity and transformation

I do not deny that balancing the need for economic (and other) programmes related to transformation with the need to develop wide unity and international solidarity can be complicated tasks. There are different levels of work, there are different styles of work which are appropriate at these different levels. How to ensure the greatest success in one particular field, in a principled way, without undercutting the broader "transformation" struggle, is not always an easy matter. But developing appropriate strategies and tactics is not assisted by erecting a wall between "liberation politics" and "transformation politics".

How do we go forward? Certainly, the question of transformation needs to be looked at much more seriously, it needs to be raised, in and through struggle, within all progressive organisations. This is a collective task.

Certainly, also, a great deal more attention needs to be given to deepening mass-based democracy in all sectors (labour, civic, student, youth, women, sports etc.). This means developing the collective character of decision-making, tightening up on discipline, and on the accountability of leadership. Deepening democracy is, in principle, an important means to ensuring greater working class participation, responsibility and leadership within our struggle.

The task of extending and deepening mass-based democratic organisation is also particularly important at a time when the apartheid regime and international and local capital are manoeuvring frantically to take the steam out of the current wave of popular struggle. On the one hand, leadership of progressive organisations is being decimated through detention, trial and straight assassination. On the other hand, various reformist plans hope to detach and corrupt credible leadership from the mass base, with a view to negotiating, behind closed doors, some arrangement to render South Africa safe for local capitalism and international imperialism.

Although I am convinced that neither repression nor the various reformist confections will succeed in their ultimate dreams, the task of deepening mass-based democracy acquires greater urgency.

(Jeremy Cronin, November 1985)

The Freedom Charter: A Critical Appreciation

For thirty years now the Freedom Charter has been a vital expression of the struggle for freedom in South Africa. It was the product of the Congress of the People, held in Kliptown in 1955 and attended by around 3,000 delegates of all races. Since then it has been endorsed by many political organisations, including the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front and the South African Communist Party. The significance of the Freedom Charter, however, transcends these particular political groupings. For many black people in South Africa, it has become a living symbol of their liberation.

Thirty years on, the Charter has not lost its validity. At a time when apartheid is in crisis and the movement from below is pressing hard for change, the Charter offers a vision of a democratic future: a government based on the will of the people as a whole, universal suffrage, equality before the law, civil liberties, freedom of movement, free trade unionism, land reform, state education and welfare, equal pay for equal work, the abolition of all apartheid legislation and transfer of the private monopolies in mining, industry and finance to the ownership of the people. The language of the Charter combines the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment and the social ideals of the modern welfare state. It is not for nothing that the Freedom Charter still captures a popular imagination.

These days there are few political forces outside the Far Right which are not anti-apartheid. In South Africa calls for reform come from the magnates of big business like Gavin Relly of Anglo-American, from the "liberal" opposition in the Progressive Federal Party, and from conservative tribal leaders like Gatsha Buthelezi. Even the government itself has instituted a substantial programme of reforms beneath the sound and fury of its guns. As apartheid loses its utility for capital, some of these forces may become "anti-apartheid", but none of them is pro-democracy. "Anti-apartheid" is a purely negative slogan which is entirely unspecific in terms of positive content. It says nothing about what the movement is for. Just as oppression of black people did not start with apartheid, so too there is no certainty that it will end with the abolition of apartheid. Black people have fought for more than the replacement of white rulers, white bosses and white supervisors

by black rulers, black bosses and black supervisors. The Freedom Charter expresses positively this aspiration for something better, namely the replacement of apartheid by democracy.

The Freedom Charter is not, however, above criticism. It is not an infallible bearer of eternal truths, but a product of human activity, revealing the strengths and weaknesses of its conditions of birth. The idealisation of the Freedom Charter as a dogma negates the very freedom it seeks to express. In this spirit, I wish to explore three connected problems: the first concerning the origins of the Charter, the second its content and the third its means of realisation.

Origins

Both at the time of its formation and among today's heirs to the Congress tradition, the Charter has been presented as a pure expression of the "voice of the people", allowing for the first time "ordinary citizens" to speak for themselves. The people, so the story goes, were called upon to pose their demands. The demands were gathered together by volunteers. The Freedom Charter was drafted on the basis of the people's own demands. It was presented to the Congress of the People, discussed and adopted by acclaim. Thirty years later it continues to express "the will of the people".

A good story but bad history. In reality as the historian, Tom Lodge, has commented: "the formulation of the Charter involved only a limited amount of consultation: certainly popular demands were canvassed but the ultimate form the document assumed was decided by a small committee and there was no subsequent attempts to alter it in the light of wider discussion." The form of representation at the "national convention" was narrow and did not reflect the numerical predominance of workers. At the convention, there were speeches but no debate; acclamation of the Charter, but no rival programme in spite of passionate opposition from Africanist and Liberal currents, the exclusion from the Charter of demands put forward by the Women's Federation, and behind-the-scenes arguments over nationalisation and trade union rights with the workers' wing of the alliance.

By South African standards the process of the Charter's creation was relatively democratic, but the idea of "the people's voice" was largely a formality through which a particular, political current expressed itself. Even if the Charter were the "people's

voice" in 1955, democracy is not a singular event but a process of repetition. Just as the people can create one constitution, so too they can dismantle and replace it. As Marx once commented: "a constitution produced by past consciousness can become an oppressive shackle for a consciousness which has progressed". Historical criticism and political practice go hand in glove. In the construction of future programmes, people may learn from criticism of the old. The Charter is not inviolate. The people may change it and explore more democratic means of expressing their wishes than those possible at the time of the Charter.

Contents

The second set of criticisms concern the Freedom Charter's content and in particular the incompleteness and ambiguities present in its conception of democracy. The idea of "a democratic state based on the will of the people" is a fine sentiment, but can cover a host of sins, depending on how formally or substantially the "people's will" is present and on the mediations through which it is expressed. "Universal suffrage" does not indicate the power of the elected assembly in relation to the unelected parts of the state bureaucratic and military machinery. It does not explain the relation of representatives to the electors: whether accountable to them as their servants or privileged above them as their masters. It does not say whether the assembly will be one-party or multi-party, nor what kind of internal party democracy is desired. These "little" ommissions can make all the difference between a real parliamentary democracy and its formal trappings.

The idea that "the mineral wealth...the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole" falls short of a commitment to nationalisation and says nothing about what form of nationalisation is envisaged. Under the apartheid state - indeed since the 1920s - South Africa has enjoyed many nationalised industries (e.g. in steel, energy, rail and oil) but this has had precious little to do with the democratic management of industry.

The opening of the state administration, the police and the army "to all on an equal basis" and their transformation into "helpers and protectors of the people" leave intact their hierarchical structures, lack of accountability and vast powers over the people. The opportunity for every citizen to join these state apparatuses may create an identity between them and the public only in

the sense (in Marx's words) of "an identity of two hostile armies in which every citizen has the opportunity to join the hostile army". What is to be done to the passive obedience, worship of authority, rigid principles and corporate abuses of power which characterise the police and army if their function as "protectors" and "helpers" of the people is to be more than a formality?

The idea that "all national groups shall have equal rights" offers a vitally important perspective of multi-racialism based on the idea of protection of minorities (not on a federal or power-sharing system but on laws against discrimination and for the protection of languages and religions, etc.). It does not, however, conceive an eventual transcendence of racial divisions altogether in a non-racial South Africa.

The freedom of "all who work...to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers" makes no mention of a right to strike or of a right of unions to political affiliation or activity. The principle that "men and women shall receive equal pay for equal work" does not guarantee women access to equal work nor does it touch upon the many other forms of oppression facing women. The promise that "the land shall be re-divided among those who work it" does not indicate what forms of landownership this re-division will be based upon.

The great step forward for democracy taken by the Freedom Charter should not blind us to the limits of its promised freedom. The likelihood is that where democratic demands are not explicitly articulated, they will succumb under the weight of old prejudice concerning the needs of state. When taken to its limits, the concept of "democracy" implies the democratisation of the state far beyond the limits of the Charter and to the point of the dissolution of all the authoritarian, bureaucratic and unaccountable structures associated with the modern state. The degree of political emancipation envisaged in the Charter falls well short of the democratic potential being released by the South African revolution.

Means

My third set of criticisms of the Freedom Charter concerns its abstraction as a desirable end from the means required for its realisation. The Charter offers no programme of action. The democracy of the future is suspended in mid-air divorced from the struggle in the here and now. As far as the Freedom Charter is

concerned, means and ends are severed. Isolated in their separate documents, they become strangers to one another's company. This is a fault, since it is unlikely that democracy can be achieved as an end except through means which themselves contain a democratic content. This is not to say that the method of struggle must "prefigure" in its entirety the democratic goal to which it aspires. Such a view ignores the pressures on a democratic movement fighting in an environment not of its making and can only lead to a paralysis of will. Democracy, however, needs to be constructed in the process of struggle, if it is to have any hope of realisation at the end of struggle.

If "popular representation" is to mean anything in the future, then it needs to be built up in the present through the establishment within the democratic movement of mechanisms of election, accountability, recall, education and open debate. If "popular participation" is to become a reality, then the movement's current methods of struggle need as far as possible to be based on the democratic self-activity of black people. If "trade union freedom" is to mean anything in the future, then black workers need to fight for their independence now. If "women's equality" is to mean anything in the future, then women's issues cannot be postponed till a "second stage". If "non-racism" is to become a future reality, then the democratic movement needs to construct it within its own current organisations. The problem with the Freedom Charter is that it offers no guidance on these questions. It leaves a blank space where the most important of issues lie.

These three criticisms are linked to the question of socialism. I am not saying that the Freedom Charter is wrong to place democracy rather than socialism at the centre of the struggle against apartheid. If socialism is to come to South Africa, it will come through the battle for democracy and not apart from it. Socialism requires the extension of democracy beyond the limits allowed by liberal constitutionalism; it is not simply a negation of liberal values. What I am saying is that the depth of the democratic revolution depends on how the future is conceived, programmes are devised and struggles are waged in the here and now.

(Bob Fine, November 1985)

COSATU Launch

On the weekend of November 29 to December 1, 870 delegates from all over South Africa met in Durban to found the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Thirty-three unions with a paid-up membership of 449,679 were represented.

The Inaugural Congress opened with a speech by Cyril Ramaphosa, the Conference Convener (see below). On day two the constitution of COSATU was adopted (see below for preamble, aims and objects). Three important amendments were made to the draft constitution:

(i) a 2/3 vote of the Central Executive Committee is required for a decision to be binding;

(ii) representation on the Central Executive Committee was changed in favour of larger unions. Unions with under 15,000 members get 2 delegates, those above have 4;

(iii) an additional full-time post, that of assistant general secretary was created.

The next item of business was the election of office bearers. Those elected are:

* President	- Elijah Barayi	(vice-President of National Union of Mineworkers)
* Ist vice-President	- Chris Dlamini	(President of Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union; and former President of FOSATU)
* 2nd vice-President	- Makhulu Ledwaba	(President of Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of SA)
* Treasurer	- Maxwell Xulu	(vice-President of Metal and Allied Workers Union)
* General Secretary	- Jay Naidoo	(General Secretary of Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union)
* Assistant General Secretary	- Sidney Mafumadi	(General and Allied Workers Union)

Day three of the Congress began with a mass rally of 10,000 workers at the Kings Park Stadium. Messages of support were read out from the following organisations: Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, Western Cape Youth League, United Democratic Front; from all the international trade secretariats, from the ICFTU, from

European unions and from South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The main speech, by President Elijah Barayi, condemned the pass system, the Bantustans, the government, and the banning of COSAS; called for the lifting of the state of emergency and for troops to get out of the townships; and warned that COSATU will take up these issues vigorously.

Delegates returned to the conference hall to discuss the resolutions forwarded by member-unions (see below). But first the COSATU emblem had to be selected from five designs put forward. The majority of delegates selected the design which depicted figures of three workers struggling to turn a large wheel, to move it forward. But certain important changes were requested: that one of the figures be changed to represent a woman worker; and that the slogan of "An injury to one is an injury to all" be added.

OPENING SPEACH TO THE INAUGURAL CONGRESS

"Workers' political strength depends upon building strong and militant organisation in the workplace. We also have to realise that organised workers are not representative of the working class as a whole but are its most effective weapon. Therefore, for workers it is important that organisation on the shop floor be strengthened and in this way we will be able to contribute to the struggle of the working class as a whole and to the struggle of the oppressed people in this country.

"It is also important to draw people into a programme for the restructuring of society in order to make sure that the wealth of our society is democratically controlled and shared by its people. It is important to realise that the political struggle is not only to remove the government. We must also eliminate unemployment, improve education, improve health facilities and the wealth of the society must be shared among all those that work in this country.

"It is important that the politics of the working class eventually becomes the politics of all the oppressed people of this country."

This was the central thrust of Cyril Ramaphosa's (convener of the Congress) opening speech which set the tone for the Inaugural Congress. This was an historic occasion: "The formation of this Congress represents a tremendous victory for the working class. Never before has it been so powerful and so poised to make a mark in

society." Cyril Ramaphosa went on to discuss the role that COSATU will play in the crisis in which South Africa now finds itself and its crucial role within the wider struggle for liberation.

"We are all living in urgent times, therefore it is urgent to make it clear to the South African government, employers and all sections of society where the working class, united under the banner of COSATU, will stand.

"The reforms that have been proposed by the government and employers are not offering any solution. The Rand is continuing to drop, there is high inflation and the cost of living is rising every day. While all this is happening the people in the country are continuing to resist. Confrontation with the police has become a daily thing. Some of the townships have become completely ungovernable. The government has clearly demonstrated that it is not in control of this country and PW Botha has failed to point the direction. It is time that the working class tell him to lay down his powers and let the legitimate leaders of the country take over the seat he now occupies.

"We have seen in the past four years that organisations of the oppressed have grown stronger. And at the same time we have seen trade unions growing stronger as well. We have seen trade unions not only broaden their areas of struggle on the shop floor, we have also seen them contribute to community struggles.

"However, the pace of these struggles has been determined by people in the community. As trade unions we have always thought that our main area of activity was on the shop floor - the struggle against the bosses.

"But we have always recognised that industrial issues are political. Workers have long realised when they are paid lower wages that it is a political issue. But what is difficult is how to make the link between economic and political issues.

"We all agree that the struggle of workers on the shop floor cannot be separated from the wider struggle for liberation. The important question we have to ask ourselves is how is COSATU going to contribute to the struggle for our liberation. As unions we have sought to develop a consciousness among workers, not only of racial oppression but also of their exploitation as a working class.

"As unions we have influenced the wider political struggle. Our struggles on the shop floor have widened the space for struggles in the community. Through interaction with community organisations, we have developed the principle of worker controlled democratic organisation. But our main political task as workers is to develop organisation among workers as well as a strong worker leadership. We have, as unions, to act decisively to ensure that we, as workers, lead the struggle.

"Our most urgent task is to develop a unity among workers. We would wish COSATU to give firm political direction for workers. If workers are to lead the struggle for liberation we have to win the confidence of other sectors of society. But if we are to get into alliances with other progressive organisations, it must be on terms that are favourable to us as workers.

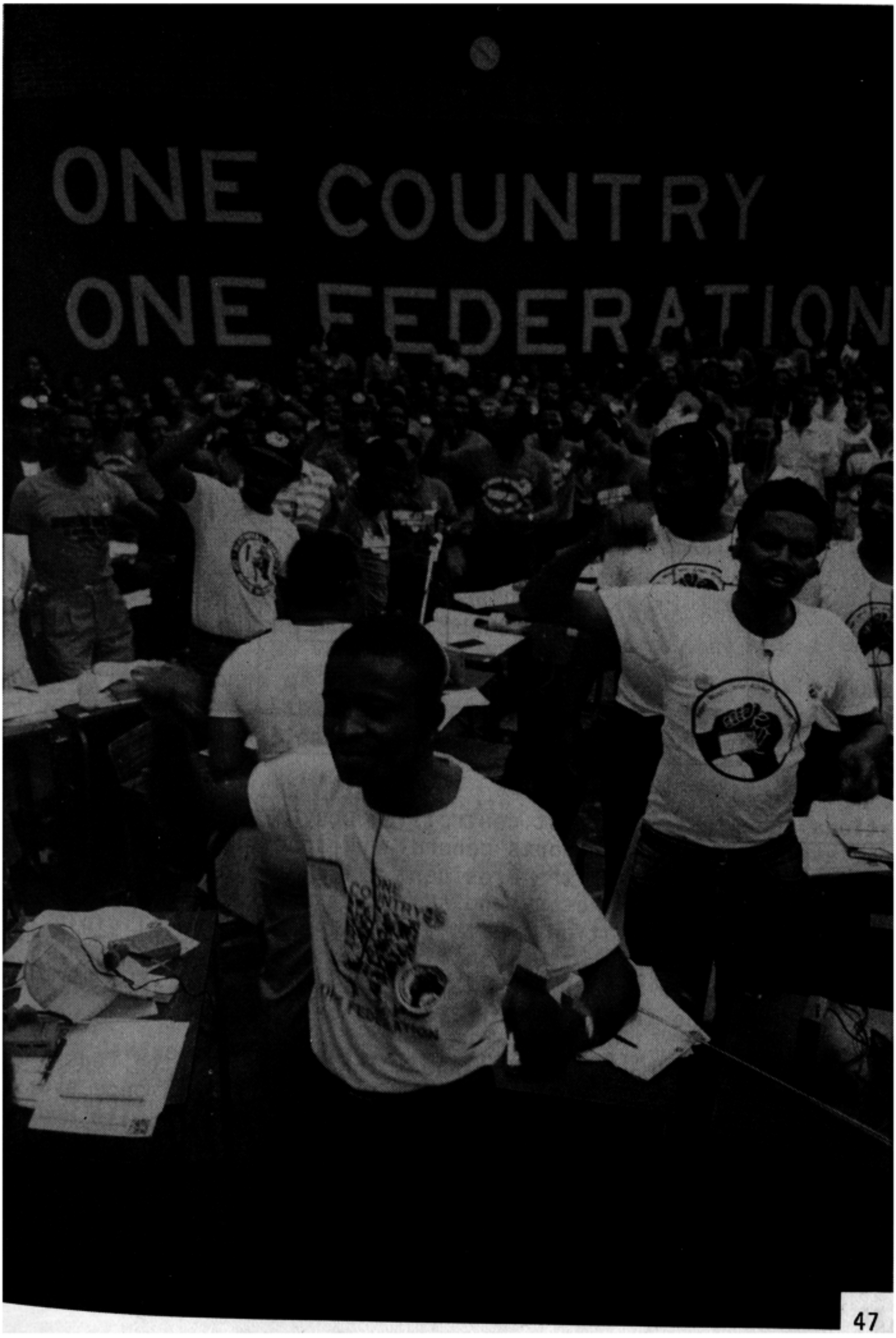
"To make sure we establish alliances which are progressive, we must be strong and united. And it is COSATU that is going to unit us under one banner. To do this we have to give concrete expression to the five basic principles on which COSATU was formed. All these principles must be put into practice in order to build a stronger unity and enable us to better participate in the struggl for liberation.

"When we do plunge into political activity, we must make sure tha the unions under COSATU have a strong shop floor base not only to take on the employers but the state as well. Our role in the political struggle will depend on our organisational strength.

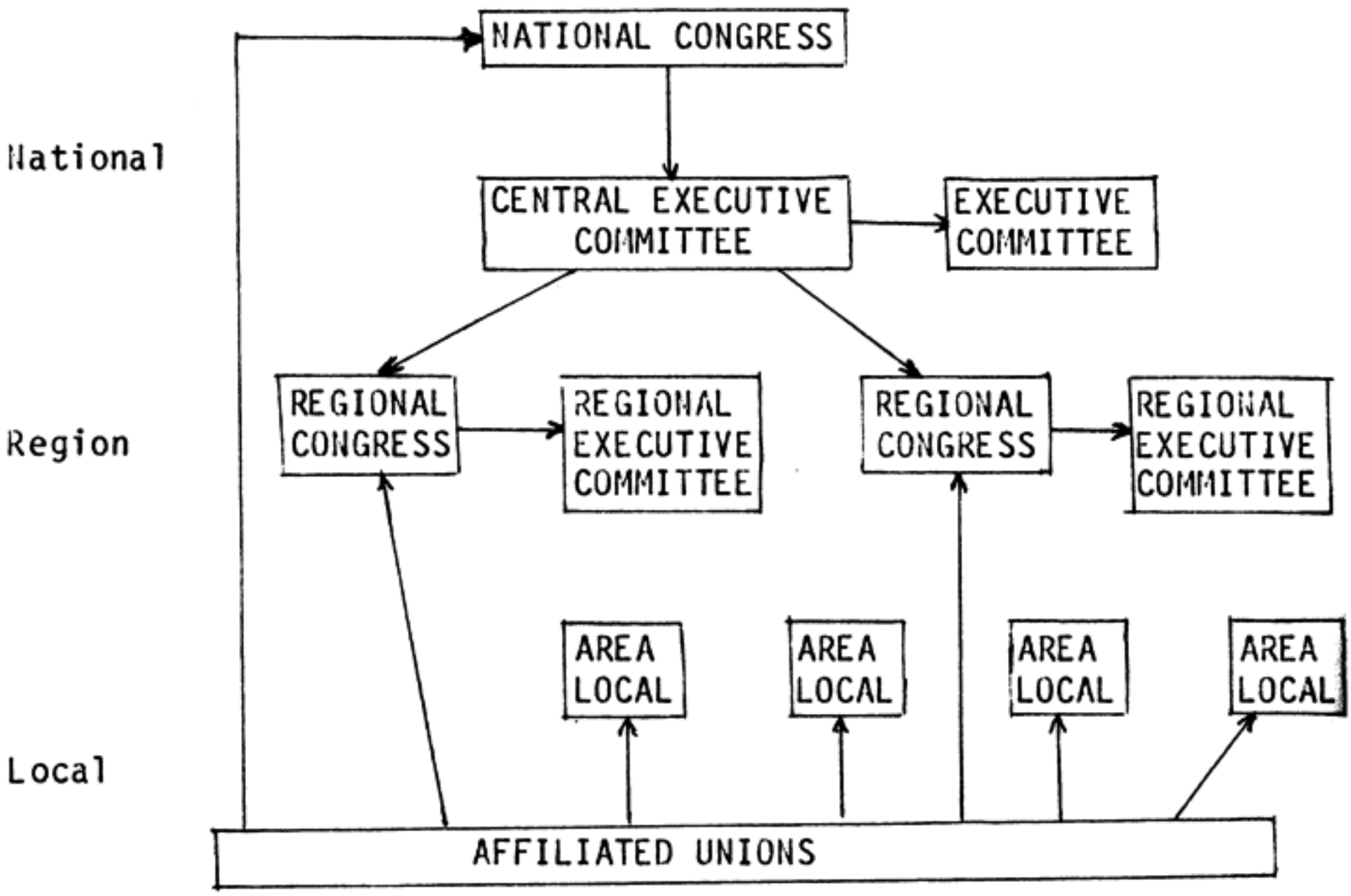
"We must meet with progressive political organisations. We have to work in co-operation with them on realistic campaigns. We must not shy away and pretend they do not exist.

"We have to pay particular attention to worker education and our role in the political struggle. We must encourage a healthy exchange between our Congress and other progressive organisations.

"In the next few days we will be considering resolutions which will point the direction that COSATU will take. We will be putting our heads together not only to make sure that we reach Pretoria but also to make a better life for us workers in this country. What we have to make clear is that a giant has risen and will confront all that stand in its way. COSATU is going to determine the direction of the working class in this country."


ONE COUNTRY
ONE FEDERATION

Structure of COSATU



National Congress * highest controlling body * meets at least once every two years * adopts general and specific policy by means of resolutions * elects the President, Vice-President, Second Vice President, General-Secretary and Assistant General-Secretary * No official of the federation or its affiliates shall be eligible for the position of President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President or Treasurer * each affiliate has 1 delegate per 500 members - workers must be in the majority of the delegation.

Central Executive Committee * manages the affairs of the federation between meetings of the National Congress * meets once every 3 months * 2 representatives for each affiliated union with under 15,000 members (1 must be a worker); 4 for unions of over 15,000 * Chairperson of each Region has speaking but no voting rights * President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Treasurer, General-Secretary and Assistant General-Secretary hold same positions, but no voting rights.

Executive Committee * limited power - assists the General-Secretary * meets once between meetings of the Central Executive Committee * cannot make policy or amend a policy decision of the federation * President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary plus 4 additional members of the Central Executive Committee (no more than 3 members from 1 region, and no more than 2 members from 1 affiliated union.)

Regional Congresses * carries out decisions of the NC and the CEC * subordinate body to the CEC - decisions of the Regional Congress may be confirmed amended or reversed by the CEC * each affiliate with a Branch in the Region elects 5 representatives for the first 1,000 members and then 1 representative for every 250 members * elects a Regional Chairperson, Regional Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Regional Secretary.

Regional Executive Committees * administers the Region between meetings of the Regional Congress * meets once a month * 2 delegates from each affiliate with under 8,000 members, 4 delegates with over 8,000 * plus Regional Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. [10 Regions planned for]

Locals * All members of the Shop Steward Committees of affiliated unions meet in Shop Stewards Councils or Locals (one per area) to co-ordinate local action and encourage co-operation between affiliated unions.

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF COSATU

We the Trade Union representatives here present firmly commit ourselves to a united democratic South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation. We believe that this can only be achieved under the leadership of a united working class. Our history has taught us that to achieve this goal we will have to carry out the following tasks:

1. To organise the unorganised workers and build effective trade unions based on the democratic organisation of workers in the factories, mines, shops, farms and other workplaces.
2. Organise national industrial trade unions, financed and controlled by their worker members through democratically elected committees.
3. Unify these industrial unions into a national worker controlled federation.

4. Combat the divisions amongst the workers of South Africa and unite them into a strong and confident working class.
5. Encourage democratic worker organisation and leadership in all spheres of our society together with other progressive sectors of the community.
6. Reinforce and encourage progressive international worker contact and solidarity so as to assist one another in our struggles.

We call on all those who identify with this commitment to join us and the workers whom we represent as comrades in the struggle ahead. We call on all trade unions to strive to unite their members in their ranks without discrimination and prejudice, and therefore resolve that this federation shall determinedly seek to further and protect the interests of all workers and that its guiding motto shall be the universal slogan of working class solidarity:

"An injury to one is an injury to all"

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF COSATU

The most important of these are:

* To secure social and economic justice for all workers.
* To strive for the building of a united working class movement regardless of "race", colour, creed or sex.
* To encourage all workers to join trade unions and to develop a spirit of solidarity among all workers.
* To understand how the economy of the country affects workers and to formulate clear policies as to how the economy would be restructured in the interests of the working class.
* To work for a restructuring of the economy which will allow the creation of wealth to be democratically controlled and fairly shared.
* To strive for just standards of living, social security and fair conditions of work for all.
* To facilitate and co-ordinate education and training of all workers so as to further the interests of the working class.

RESOLUTIONS

STATE OF EMERGENCY

This Inaugural Conference, believing:

1. that the declaration of a State of Emergency has been used to wage a war of repression against all sections of the oppressed

communities and to try to crush democratic organisations;
2. that the cause of all violence in South Africa is the existence of the apartheid system, and that there can be no peace while it exists;

calls:
1. for the immediate lifting of the State of Emergency;
2. for the withdrawal of the SADF and all apartheid security forces from the townships;
3. for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, the unbanning of banned individuals and organisations, as a prelude to the creation of a democratic South Africa where all shall live in peace and prosperity.

DISINVESTMENT

This Congress:
1. believes that all forms of international pressure on the South African government - including disinvestment or the threat of disinvestment - is an essential and effective form of pressure on the South African regime and we support it;
2. further believes that if this government remains intransigent in its racist, anti-democratic and anti-worker practices, then this pressure will have to increase as an act of solidarity with our struggle for liberation from exploitation and oppression.
3. commits itself to ensure that the social wealth of South Africa remains the property of the people of South Africa for the benefit of all, and further commits itself to the principle of international working class solidarity action as the most powerful form of solidarity action with our struggle.

BANTUSTANS

Congress noting:
1. that the bantustan system was imposed on the African people, against their will, with a view to thwarting the just struggle for One Person One Vote in a unitary South Africa;
2. that various bantustan adminstrations have practised extreme forms of oppression against the oppressed people - including trade unions;

noting in particular:
the banning of SAAWU in the Ciskei, the banning of all unions in

the Bophuthatswana bantustan and the killing of trade unionists and other democrats by tribally based organisations;

hereby resolves that:
1. the bantustan system be totally rejected and that the Federation struggle - together with other democratic forces - for the creation of a democratic and unitary South Africa;
2. we shall not hesitate to exercise our right to organise in plants based within the bantustans and that we are fully prepared to defend ourselves against repression by whatever effective means at our disposal;
3. that we are completely and absolutely opposed to the super-exploitation occuring in these areas and declare our commitment to reject the idea and practice of workers receiving less wages and worse conditions of work;
4. that we express our solidarity with those communities around Durban and elsewhere who are struggling against being incorporated into the bantustans.

WOMEN

This Federation noting:
1. that women workers experience both exploitation as workers and oppression as women and that black women are further discriminated against on the basis of race;
2. that women are employed in a limited range of occupations, doing boring and repetitive work with low and often unequal pay;
3. that due to overtime and night work women workers are subjected to many dangers while commuting;
4. that women workers often suffer sexual harassment in recruitment and employment;
5. that most women workers in South Africa lose their jobs when they become pregnant;
6. that pregnant women often have to work under conditions harmful to themselves and their unborn child;

resolves to fight:
1. against all unequal and discriminatory treatment of women at work, in society and in the federation;
2. for the equal right of women and men to paid work as an important part of the broader aim to achieve full and freely chosen employment;
3. for equal pay for all work of equal value - the value of work must be determined by organised women and men workers themselves

4. for the restructuring of employment so as to allow women and men the opportunity of qualifying for jobs of equal value;
5. for childcare and family facilities to meet workers' needs and make it easier for workers to combine work and family responsibilities;
6. for full maternity rights, including paid maternity and paternity leave and job security;
7. for the protection of women and men from all types of work proved to be harmful to them, including work which interferes with their ability to have children;
8. against sexual harassment in whatever form it occurs;
9. for adequate and safe transport for workers doing overtime and night work.

now commits itself:

1. to actively campaign in support of these resolutions;*
2. to negotiate agreements with companies wherever possible as part of this campaign;
3. to actively promote within its education programme, a greater understanding of the specific discriminations suffered by women workers and ways in which these can be overcome;
4. to establish a worker-controlled sub-committee within its education programme to monitor progress made in implementing this resolution and to make representations to the education committee;
5. to budget for the working of such a sub-committee;
6. to actively promote the necessary confidence and experience amongst women workers so that they can participate fully at all levels of the federation.

REGIONAL AREAS OF THE FEDERATION

That this congress resolve:

1. that the regional areas of the federation be:
   a) Northern Transvaal
   b) Witwatersrand/Vaal
   c) Highveld
   d) Western Transvaal
   e) Northern Natal
   f) Southern Natal
   g) Orange Free State
   h) Northern Cape
   i) Western Cape
   j) Eastern Cape

2. that the Central Executive Committee be instructed, that immediately when feasible, as provided for in clause 9.1. of the constitution of the federation, that regional structures be established in such regional areas.

EDUCATION

This federation noting:
1. that the present education system in South Africa is designed to maintain the working class in ideological bondage;
2. that the present education system is designed to continue and reinforce the values, ideas and practices of the ruling classes
3. that the present education system is aimed at fostering divisions and anti-democratic values within the working class;
4. that education is vital in the liberation struggle of the working class;
5. that education must serve the interests of the vast majority of the people of the country;

therefore resolves:
1. to establish a national, regional and local education programme for the federation to:
   a) ensure that this education programme politicises, mobilises and organises the working class so that they play the leading role in the liberation of our society and its transformation into an economic, social and political system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited;
   b) develop an understanding and capacity to wage our struggle by democratic means that will allow maximum participation and decision making power for workers both now and in the future society we wish to build;
   c) develop the human potential to the fullest and create and transform skills and the abilities so that they are accessible to the oppressed and exploited;
   d) develop the understanding among the working class that their struggle forms part of the world struggle against oppression and exploitation;
2. to establish a Federation newspaper which will:
   a) express the views and policies of the Federation and its affiliates;
   b) record the struggles of the Federation and its affiliates;
   c) counter the dominance of the bosses' media by popularising democratic ideas, values and traditions among the working

class.
3. to organise and commemorate the important cultural events and resistance days in the working class calender, for example, May Day and June 16 and Federation Day;
4. to recommend to the Central Executive Committee of the federation that they appoint an education officer and newspaper editor;
5. To establish a National Coordinating Education Committee made up of:
   a) regional and local committees of workers;
   b) union representatives.

ON THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

This Federation noting:
1. that Capital and the local state are spending millions of rand to celebrate the centenary of Johannesburg;
2. that they are planning the celebrations next year without consulting the workers who have built Johannesburg, the gold mines and the industrial complexes we have today;

therefore resolves:
1. to organise a boycott of all centenary celebrations;
2. to ensure that all unions under the banner of COSATU organise an alternative programme to highlight 100 years of exploitation and oppression in Johannesburg and in particular the mining industry.

FEDERALISM

This Congress noting:
1. that South Africa's bitter history of industrialisation and exploitation has forged one nation;
2. the attempts by the apartheid regime to create and reconstruct separate states and nations which will be combined into some federal system are fraudulent and undemocratic;
3. that the intention of the proposed federal system is to maintain power and control in the hands of the present minority and perpetuate an oppressive and exploitative system;
4. that the demand of all progressive and democratic forces in South Africa is for a unitary state based on One Person One Vote;

resolves:
1. to reject as a total fraud the new proposed federal solution;

2. to re-affirm our belief in a unitary state based on One Person One Vote;
3. to work towards the destruction of all barriers and divisions so that we are united irrespective of language, race or creed.

and further believes that:
only with the total unification of all people into South Africa will we be able to re-build our rich land and make a real contribution to breaking the chains of poverty and economic exploitation that bind Africa.

RIGHT TO STRIKE

This Federation noting:
1. that the strike is a legitimate right and necessary weapon of the working class in their struggle against bad working conditions and low wages;
2. that the strike is internationally accepted as an essential element of collective bargaining;
3. that freedom of association, assembly and picketing for strikes action are also fundamental rights, internationally, in industrial struggle;
4. that the infringement or curbing of these rights is detriment to the social and economic interests of the workers;
5. that the right to strike is severely curtailed in South Africa
6. that a strike involves a democratic form of struggle;
7. that picketing is an integral part of a strike and of morally persuading fellow workers not to break a strike;
8. that essential service workers are not allowed to take industrial action in pursuing their demands;

therefore resolves:
1. to continue a relentless campaign which will allow workers full freedom of association, assembly and picketing for strike action. This requires that all forms of security legislation that denies these rights be removed;
2. to ensure that where workers have followed mutually agreed dispute procedures with employers, there will be full job security during such strikes. This requires that eviction from accomodation and other such measures be outlawed;
3. to campaign and respond vigorously against police and state intervention in strikes or industrial disputes;
4. to fight for the right of trade unions to establish strike funds;

5. to ensure that strikers are free to establish and control strike committees;
6. to fight for the removal of the designation of essential services and that all workers be allowed to share equal rights.

MIGRANT LABOUR

This Federation noting:
1. that pass laws were legislated by the apartheid regime to control and dehumanise the lives of the working class in South Africa;
2. that pass laws and influx control served to strengthen the hand of capital to exploit and oppress the working class in its endeavour to generate super profits;
3. that the economic and social hardships of the migrant labour system includes the break-up of family life and relationships;
4. that the migrant labour system seeks to further divide the oppressed and exploited workers into permanent residents and migrants;
5. that the apartheid regime persists in threatening to repatriate migrant workers to the homelands and neighbouring countries;

resolves to:
1. fight for the scrapping of the migrant labour system including pass laws and influx control;
2. fight for the right of workers to seek work wherever they wish and to reside with their families wherever they wish and that proper housing will be provided for them;
3. call for a national strike should the apartheid regime carry out its threat to repatriate any migrant workers.

NATIONAL MINIMUM LIVING WAGE

Seeing that:
1. the majority of workers in South Africa are earning starvation wages because of the present economic system, constantly rising prices (inflation) is making what little money workers have worth less and less every day;
2. employers in South Africa continue to make massive and completely unrealistic profits when compared with employers in other capitalist countries;
3. many millions of workers do not have any minimum wage protection whatsoever;
4. the issue of a living wage is one of the strongest points for

organising the unorganised;

we hereby resolve:
1. that the Central Executive Committee establish as soon as possible what workers regard as a minimum living wage;
2. to then initiate and conduct - in alliance with other progressive organisations and trade unions in the country - an ongoing national campaign for a legally enforced national minimum living wage for all workers in South Africa, by amongst other things fighting in every industry through worker action and negotiation for that minimum living wage to be paid by all employers;
3. fight for this minimum living wage to be automatically linked to the rate of inflation;
4. struggle for the abolition of GST on all essential items and worker control over all deductions like pensions and UIF, which are being financed by workers but used against workers by the racist and anti-worker government;
5. fight to open all books of every organised company so that workers can see exactly how the wealth they have produced is being wasted and misused by the employers' profit system, and on that basis can demand their full share of the wealth they have produced. Should the wealth not be there, then it will only prove the inefficiency of employer management and strengthen the case for worker control and management of production.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN UNION COOPERATION

This Federation noting:
1. that foreign and South African multinational corporations (MNC's) have for years exploited workers in Southern Africa by reaping huge profits and exporting them to Europe and America;
2. that workers in Southern Africa are employed by the same MNC's and subjected to similar conditions of control, exploitation and oppression;
3. that many of them are union bashers and have undermined the legitimate right of workers to organise trade unions;
4. that these MNC's, as the major agencies of imperialism, have cooperated with reactionary regimes in pursuit of super-profit
5. that MNC's can only be resisted if there is unity and worker to worker contact in various countries of Southern Africa;
6. that the problems faced by the workers of Southern Africa are integrally linked and that their futures are tied together;

therefore resolves:

1. that unions affiliated to COSATU should actively pursue links with progressive unions in Southern Africa so as to strengthen worker unity;
2. that COSATU should form constructive relationships with fraternal federations in Southern Africa;
3. that every effort be made to unite workers of Southern Africa and improve solidarity work.

UNEMPLOYMENT / NEW TECHNOLOGY / RIGHT TO WORK

Believing:
that all able-bodied men and women have a right to work;

and noting:
1. that under capitalist conditions of exploitation, unemployment is a reality facing every worker at all times;
2. that these unemployed workers are used as a reserve pool of labour by the bosses to keep wages low and to provide a source of scab labour in the event of strikes;
3. that the interests of all workers, whether employed or unemployed, are the same - the right to a job at a decent living wage;
4. that the unity of employed and unemployed workers is essential in the struggle against scabbing and to advance the struggle for the right to work at a living wage;
5. that under capitalist conditions of exploitation, unemployment is a reality facing workers at all times and is a waste of the human resources of this country;

and further noting:
1. that in South Africa there are millions of unemployed - a number that is increasing daily through retrenchments;
2. that the introduction of new technology for profiteering purposes is making the whole unemployment situation even worse. This is further aggravated by pressure from employers for higher productivity;
3. that many are abandoning all hope of finding suitable employment in the immediate future;
4. that for thousands of school leavers there is virtually no prospect of getting employment and therefore no possibility of drawing UIF benefits;
5. that unemployed workers are not organised in South Africa;

Congress therefore resolves to:
1. fight as one united force to defend all jobs threatened by re-

trenchments; fight the closing of the factories; and fight for participation in and control over - right from the planning stage - the implementation of any new technology. And fight all attempts by employers to make workers work harder and attempts to rationalise production, because in the present system this always leads to unemployment;

2. campaign for a 40 hour week at full pay and a ban on overtime;
3. fight for free and increased unemployment benefits and that these benefits be paid in South Africa;
4. fight for a subsistence fund, in addition to unemployed benefits, supplemented by rent, transport and medical concessions for all unemployed workers;
5. demand that the state initiate a national programme of public works to provide jobs for the unemployed and to improve services and facilities in working class communities;
6. fight for work-sharing on full pay whenever workers face retrenchments;
7. establish a national unemployed workers union as a full affiliate of the new federation for the realisation of the right of all to work and security;
8. struggle for a fair, democratic and rational political and economic system which can guarantee full employment for all people in Southern Africa at a living wage;
9. to give full support to efforts by retrenched and dismissed workers to establish co-operatives based on the principles of COSATU.

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

Noting:

1. that all affiliates have previously committed themselves to the establishment of one national union in each sector of industry;
2. that we will be unable to protect worker interests and advance their rights unless we build large broadly based industrial unions capable of dealing with the highly centralised structures of capital;

therefore resolves:

1. to confirm its commitment to the establishment of one national affiliate in each industry and to national co-operation between such affiliates as a matter of great urgency;
2. that should such developments not have materialised by the end of March 1986, a Special National Congress be convened in June

or July 1986 to assess such failure;

3. that in order to facilitate the establishment of national industrial unions affiliates are urged to establish a single union in each of the following sectors:
   a) Food and Drink;
   b) Textile, Clothing and Leather;
   c) Paper, Wood and Printing;
   d) Mining, Electrical Energy;
   e) Metal, Motor Assembly and Components
   f) Chemical and Petroleum;
   g) Commercial and Catering;
   h) Transport, SA Transport Services, Cleaning and Security;
   i) Local Government and Public Administration including Education, Health, Posts and Telecommunications;
   j) Domestic Workers;
4. that all structures of the federation be used to encourage mergers of affiliates operating in the same industry;
5. that the Central Executive Committee establish priorities in relation to resources with a view to the establishment of national affiliates in the following sectors:
   a) Construction;
   b) Agriculture;
6. that the Central Executive Committee be directed to facilitate the implementation of this resolution and to this end take such action as may be necessary. Further that the Central Executive Committee may also evaluate the viability of the sectors outlined above, with particular reference to problems which may exist in all sectors.

The Tears of a Creator
Poem Composed for the Launch of COSATU

Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo and Alfred Temba Qabula

1. O' maker of all things
   grief
   assails you from all sides
   each step forward you take
   Brings emnity nearer
   What is the nature of your sin?

2. In the factories
your enemy suffocates you
on this side; the bosses
on that: the boss-boys

3. Attackers and assailants
stalk you
from all chambers
and channels...
Permits and money
become the slogans
through which
they pounce on you
What is the nature of your sin?

4. Your labour power
has turned you
into prize-game
for the hunters of surplus
What is the nature of your sin?

5. In the busses
in the trains and taxis
you are the raw-meat,
the prey
for vultures
Are you not the backbone
of trade?
What is the nature of your sin?

6. Worker
your rulers
have dumped you
away from the cities,
Now all the misfits and orphans
of other nations
can suck you dry

7. Now
you are a nameless breed of animals
a stock of many numbers
and your suppressor's lust
to suck you dry
recognizes neither day

nor night
What is the nature of your sin?

9. Your hand
has developed
a drunkard's tremble
it can no longer draw straight lines
to steer you clear
between the law enforcers and the bandits

10. Worker
are you not the economy's foundation?
are you not the engine
of development and progress?

Worker
remember
what you are:
you are the country's foundation base and block

11. Oh maker of all things
the world over
worker
your capacity to continue loving
surprises me, its enormity
touches the Drakensberg mountains
What is then
the nature of your sin?

12. Your sin:
Can it be your power?
Can it be your blood?
Can it be your sweat?

13. They scatter you about
with their hippos
with their vans
and kwela-kwelas
with their teargas
you are butchered
by the products of your labour
the labour of your hands
these are the cries of the creator of all this
Cosatu

- COSATU -

Woza msebenzi, woza Cosatu, woza freedom.

14. Oh Cosatu
we workers
have travelled a long way here

15. Yes: we have
declared wars
on all fronts
for better wages

16. Yet,
victory eludes us.

17. We
have dared to fight back
even from the bottom of the earth
where we pull wagons-full of gold
through our blood.

18. We have
come from the sparkling kitchens
of our bosses.

19. We have arrived from the exhausting
tumult of factory machines.

20. Victory eludes us still!

21. Cosatu
here we are!
Heed our cry -
we have emerged
from all corners of this land
we have emerged
from all organisations.
We have emerged
from all
the country's nooks and crannies!

22. We say today
that
our hope is in your hands
We are ready.

23. We say:
Let your hands deliver us from exploitation
Let our freedom be borne
Let our democracy be borne
Let our new nation be borne.

24. Cosatu
Stand up now with dignity
March forward
We are raising our clenched fists behind you

25. Behind us
we call into line
our ancestors in struggle
Maduna and Thomas Mbeki
Ray Alexander and Gana Makhateni
JB Marks and hundreds more.

26. Where are you ancestors?
Lalelani and witness:
Here is the mammoth creature
you dreamed of
you wanted to create
the one you hoped for
Here is the workers'
freedom train!

27. It is made up of old wagons
repaired and patched up ox-carts
rolling on the road again
back again
revived!
Once capsized by Champion
the wagon - once derailed by Kadalie!

28. Here it rolls ahead
to settle accounts with the oppressors
to settle accounts with the exploiters.

29. Here it is:
the tornadosnake - Kanyamba with
its floods!
its slippery torso!
Here it is: Cosatu

- COSATU -

The spears of men
shall be deflected!

30. Here it is:
the tornadosnake of change! Kanyamba,
the cataclysm
clamped for decades and decades
by a mountain of rules.
The tornadosnake
poisoned throughout the years
by ethnicity
and tribalisms.

31. Here is this mammoth creature
which they mocked!
That it had no head
and certainly no teeth!
32. Woe unto you oppressor
Woe unto you exploiter

33. We have rebuilt its head
we lathed its teeth on our machines.
the day this head rises
Beware of the day these teeth shall bite.

34. On that day:
mountains of lies shall be torn to shreds
the gates of apartheid shall be burst asunder
the history books of deception shall be thrown out

35. Woza langa
Usuku
Woza Federation
Woza Freedom

36. Cosatu
Stop now
listen to our sound

37. You'll hear us sing
that the rulers
and employers
are sorcerers!

38. Do not smile
Do not dare disagree

39. If that was devoid of truth
Where is the ICU of the 1920's to be found?
Where is the FNETU of the 30's to be found?
Where is the CNETU of the 40's to be found?
and the others?

40. They emerged
they were poisoned
then
they faded!

41. Cosatu
Today be wise!

42. In the desert
only the fruit-trees
with long and sturdy roots
survive!

43. Learn that
and you shall settle accounts with the oppressor
you shall settle accounts with the exploiter
you shall settle accounts with the racists.

44. Here is Cosatu
who knows no colour
Here then is our tornadosnake/Kanyamba

45. Helele
Cosatu

46. Helele
workers of South Africa

47. Helele,
transport workers
Helele,
miners of wealth
Helele,
cleaners of the bosses' kitchens
Helele,

- COSATU -

builders of the concrete jungle
Helele,
workers of South Africa.
Helele,
makers of all things

Woza msebenzi! woza Cosatu! woza freedom!

(The authors are members of Metal and Allied Workers Union, Natal, Workers Cultural Local, Durban.)

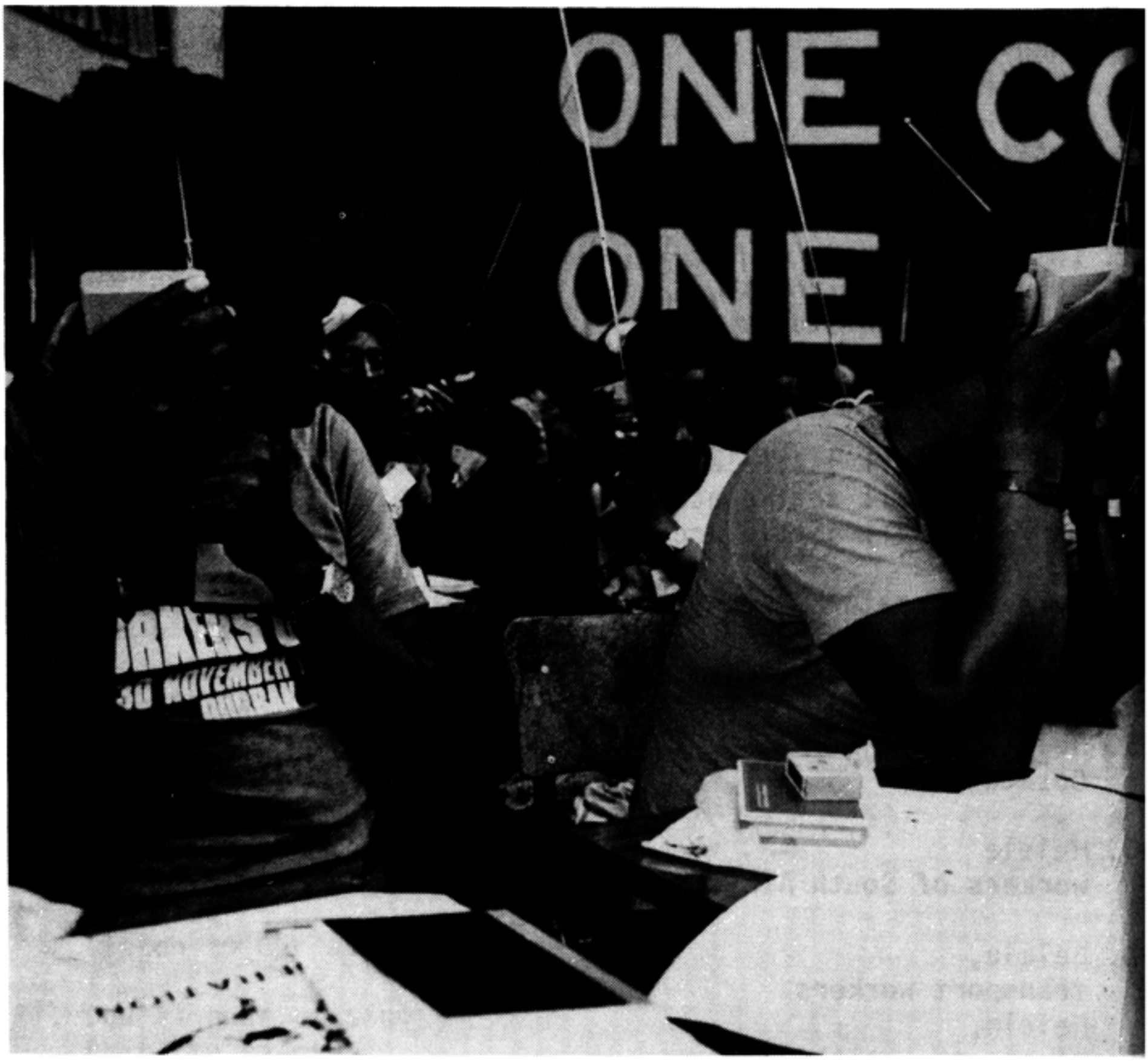


photo: delegates to the COSATU Congress. Hundreds of radios were used in order to allow the proceedings to be simultaneously translated into four different languages.

Directory: South Africa's Independent Unions*

The membership figures for each union are the most up-to-date at the time of going to press. The length of each entry was dependent on the replies received from each union.

CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS (COSATU)

1 Amalgamated Black Workers Union (ABWU)
Head Office: Room 41, Tudor Mansions, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 230815
General Secretary: S Nhlapo
Founded: 1984
Membership: paid up - 1,000
total - 6,000
Organising sectors: non-specified
Affiliation: United Democratic Front
General: Formed after a split from the Black Allied Workers Union.

2 Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (CTMWA)
Head Office: Trade Union House, Beverley Street, Athlone, Cape Town, or PO Box 49, Athlone, Cape Town
Tel: (021) 6378140
President: Andrew Johnson
General Secretary: John Ernstzen
Founded: around 1928
Membership: paid up - 11,097
total - 11,428
Organising sectors: municipality workers
General: Minutes of meetings date from 1950. There were problems of worker democracy and control up until 1964 when the existing leadership of the union was expelled and replaced after a lengthy and bitter struggle. The union aims to help form a national union of municipal workers in the near future, although it currently only represents municipality workers in the Cape Town area.

3 Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU)
Head Office Address: Box 18349, Dalbridge 4014, Durban or Central Court, 125 Gale Street, Durban

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* Data for the directory collected by Estelle Randall.

Tel: (031) 301 7401/3
President: C Makgaleng
General Secretary: R Crompton
Founded: 1974
Membership: paid up - 20,700
total - 20,736
Organising sectors: chemicals, plastic, rubber, glass, industrial minerals, petroleum and coal products, gas, candles, oils and fats
Branches: Transvaal, Southern Natal, Northern Natal, Eastern Province and (still to be formerly constituted) Western Province
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU, International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers Unions
General: It started as an affiliate of the Trade Union Advisory Co-ordinating Committee (TUACC). The period 1974 to 1976 saw banning and detention of the union's leadership and a change in strategy from wider organising to plant-based organisation. In 1979, TUACC became part of FOSATU. Long recognition battles began with Henkel, Colgate and Revertex. The first agreements were signed in 1980-81 and a phase of rapid growth began. In 1982 consumer boycotts were called at Henkel and Colgate. The union also merged with the Glass and Allied Workers' Union in that year. A major campaign for the re-instatement of Sasol workers was waged in 1984-85, dismissed for participating in the November 1984 Transvaal stay-away. The majority of workers were reinstated and the union has since increased its membership at Sasol. But shortly after this victory, the union lost one of its executive members, Andries Raditsela, who died of head injuries on May 6 this year, soon after his release from police custody. His death was commemorated nationally by workers in all major independent trade unions.

4 Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA)
Head Office: 2nd Floor, Khotso House, de Villiers Street, Johannesburg 2000
Tel: (011) 236127
President: M Ledwaba
General Secretary: E Mashinini
Founded: 1975
Membership: paid up - 50,345
total - 50,345
Organising sectors: catering and retail
Branches: Natal (Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Newcastle), Transvaal (Johannesburg, Klerksdorp, Pietersburg, Pretoria), Orange Vaal (Vereeniging, Bleomfontein), Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth, East

London), Western Cape (Cape Town)
Affiliation: International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET), International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF)
General: The union was formed in 1975 as a parallel union to two TUCSA unions - the National Union of Distributive Workers (NUDAW) and the National Union of Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers (NUCCAW) - but won its independence at an early stage. The period 1981 to 1984 saw a rapid expansion in CCAWUSA's membership: from 5,000 to 33,000. It engaged in major recognition strikes in 1981 and 1982. In 1985 it succeeded in preventing retrenchments, nationally, at OK Bazaars and won its battle for recognition with Spar after strike and boycott action. CCAWUSA has led the way in winning maternity rights and benefits. A major shift in the union's organisation occurred in 1984 when it amended its constitution to include "coloured" and "Indian" workers. It became non-racial in August 1985.

5 Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU)
Head Office: 355 Albert Road, Woodstock, Cape Town, or PO Box 234, Salt River 7925
Tel: (021) 471034
President: Irwin Pereira
General Secretary: Jan Theron
Founded: 1941
Membership: paid up - 26,455
total - 26,455
Organising sectors: food
Branches: Ashton, Ceres, Cape Town, Gansbaai, George, Grabouw, Malmesbury, Saldanha Bay, Somerset West, Wellington, Worcester, Paarl, Mossel Bay, Lamberts Bay, Molteno, Johannesburg, Kempton Park, Pretoria, Queenstown, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth
General: The African Food and Canning Workers Union and the Food and Canning Workers Union amalgamated in 1985 in line with a 1984 conference decision and the union's policy. The situation of having two unions - one for "coloured" workers and one for "African" workers - was a result of the government's policy of not recognising rights for African workers. The FCWU has a long and proud history of struggle. From 1955 to the early 1960s, it was a stalwart of SACTU. In 1979 the successful struggle waged by the A/FCWU against Fattis and Monis heralded an era of major advance for the union and the working class. Currently moves are well underway to amalgamate with Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union.

6 General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU)
Head Office: Box 261156, Johannesburg, or Tudor Mansions, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 230815
President: Samson Ndou
General Secretary: Monde Mditshwa
Founded: 1980
Membership: paid up - 19,076
total - 34,000
Organising sectors: transport, building, engineering, services, local government
Affiliation: UDF, Joint Union Education Project
General: Formed after a split from Black Allied Workers Union.

7 General Workers Union (GWU)
Head Office: 11 Benbow Building, Beverley Street, Athlone, Cape Town
Tel: (021) 6382592
President: M F Gona
General Secretary: M L Qotale
Founded: 1973
Membership: paid up - 10,000
total - 10,000
Organising sectors: transport, building and allied, engineering.
Branches: Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London
Affiliation: International Transport Federation (ITF)
General: The union started as an advice office. It first began organising workers in Cape Town docks, as the Western Province General Workers Union, and later expanded to organise dockworkers nationally. It has been a leading participant in the major debates within the emerging labour movement. On the registration question, GWU refused to register, arguing that this would compromise the principle of workers' control. After considerable debate, and taking account of the many changes in the objective conditions, GWU finally registered in 1985. It is presently engaged in merger talks with the Transport and General Workers Union.

8 General Workers Union of South Africa (GWUSA)
Head Office: Court Chambers, 623 Main Street, North End, Port Elizabeth, or PO Box 2924, Port Elizabeth 6000
Tel: (041) 544245
President: Dumile Makanda (Thobile Mhlahla - acting president)
General Secretary: Dennis Neer
Founded: 1981

Membership: paid up - 2,205
total - 5,000
Organising sectors: chemical, leather, retail, building, textiles, maintenance
Branches: Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, East London
Affiliation: UDF
General: The President and an organiser were banned in 1982 and this year the general secretary, Dennis Neer was detained.

9 Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU)
Head office: 2nd Floor, Harrester House, 65 Harrison Street, Johannesburg
Tel:(011) 8341651
President: Jeffrey Vilane
General Secretary: Thembi Nabe
Founded: 1973
Membership: paid up - 36,789
total - 42,500
Organising sectors: electrical engineering, electronic equipment, cables, motor, rubber, non-ferrous metals, iron and steel, heavy engineering
Branches: Transvaal, Southern Natal, Northern Natal, Eastern Province
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU, International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), SA Co-ordinating Council of the IMF
General: MAWU's period of most rapid growth was 1981-82, during which time a series of strike waves rocked the East Rand. The union's forward march was temporarily halted when a number of strikes were defeated, the most important being Scaw Metals where workers were fighting to establish the right to bargaain at plant level. Since then MAWU has consolidated. In late 1985 a campaign of proposed strike action was launched against the major metal companies in the Transvaal where management refuses to negotiate at plant as well as industrial council level. This indicates that the union is now ready to take up that fight once again. MAWU is currently engaged in merger talks with National Auto and Allied Workers Union and Motor Industry Combined Workers Union.

10 Motor Assembly and Components Workers Union of South Africa (MACWUSA)
Head Office: 2nd Floor, Court Chambers, 623 Main Street, Port Elizabeth, or PO Box 2924, Port Elizabeth 6000
Tel: (041) 544245
General Secretary: Dennis Neer

Founded: 1980
Membership: paid up - 3,100
Organising sectors: motor industry
Branches: Port Elizabeth
Affiliation: UDF
General: Formed out of the Ford Workers Committee. About 700 workers at Ford's Cortina plant in Struandale walked out on October 31 1979 in protest at the dismissal of a trainee draughtsman at the plant, Thozamile Botha, then president of the Port Elizabeth Black Community Organisation (PEBCO). Today the union has strong links with PEBCO and believes in close links between factory and community issues. It works closely with GWUSA.

11 Municipal Workers Union of South Africa (MWUSA)
Head Office: PO Box 6207, Marshalltown
Tel: (011) 3373624
President: Gatsby Mazwi
General Secretary: J Gamede
Founded: 1982
Membership: paid up - 9,249
total - 10,000
Organising sectors: municipal and general
Affiliation: Public Services International, UDF, JUEP
General: In 1980 workers at the first meeting of the Union of Johannesburg Municipal Workers staged a mass walkout. The Black Municipality Workers Union was formed. In the same year, members of the Black Municipality Workers Union went on strike for higher wages - the first strike by municipal workers in South Africa in recent history. In 1982, however, a split occurred, resulting in the formation of the Municipal and General Workers Union of South Africa (MGWUSA) and the South African Black Municipality and Allied Workers Union (SABMAWU). The name was changed to MWUSA (1985).

12 National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU)
Head Office: 9 & 10 Lotus Building, Cottrell Street, Port Elizabeth, or PO Box 4097, Port Elizabeth 6000
Tel: (041) 46010/9
President: J Harris
General Secretary: Fred Sauls
Founded: 1967
Membership: paid up - 20,338
total - 20,338
Organising sectors: bulb manufacturing, motor assembly, tyre, rubber, battery, carpet manufacturing

Branches: Eastern Cape, Transvaal, Natal, Western Cape
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU, IMF, SA Council of the IMF, International Federation of Chemical, Engineering and General Workers
General: NAAWU began in 1967 as the TUCSA-affiliated National Union of Motor Assembly Workers of South Africa. At that stage it consisted of mainly "coloured" workers from plants in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. When the number of African workers in the motor industry increased in the early 1970s, the union, then called the National Union of Automobile and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA), began to organise these workers in the United Automobile, Rubber and Allied Workers Union (UARAW). In 1976 NUMARWOSA left TUCSA and in 1979 assisted in the formation of FOSATU. NAAWU was finally formed in 1980 out of the Western Province Motor Assembly Workers Union (WPMAWU), UARAW and NUMARWOSA. In 1980 the union led an important strike at Volkswagen, Uitenhage, which established the principle of a "living wage". The union is currently involved in merger talks with MAWU and MICWU.

National Federation Of Workers (NFW)
Head Office: 15 Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrews Street, Durban 4001, or PO Box 47011, Greyville
Tel: (031) 3063993
General Secretary: Themba Nsumalo
Founded: 1980
Membership: paid up - 11,551
signed up - 20,521
Affiliation: UDF
General: Formed after a breakaway from the Black Allied Workers Union. In mid-1985 the NFW listed 11 affiliates
Affiliates: (followed by paid up membership, and signed up membership in brackets.)
13 Brick, Clay and Allied Workers Union - 748 (1,262)

14 Cleaning Services and Allied Workers Union - 850 (1,050)

15 Commercial Distributive Workers Union - 1,600 (2,050)

16 Health and Allied Workers Union - 1,111 (2,000)

17 National Post Office and Allied Workers Union - 2,163 (3,900)

18 National General Workers Union and Retail and Allied Workers Union (NGWU/RAWU)
Head Office: 374 Vermeulen Street, Pretoria

Tel: (012) 218662
General Secretary: Jan Masemola/Donsie Khumalo
Founded: 1984
Membership: 6,057
Organising sectors: food distribution, dairies, bakeries, services, skin and hide
Affiliation: UDF, Joint Union Education Project.

19 National Iron, Steel, Metal Workers Union (NISMAWU)
Head Office: Box 2599, Newcastle 2940
General Secretary: M Oliphant
Founded: 1980
Membership: paid up - 976
total - 2,279
Organising sectors: metal, distributive, glass
Affiliation: UDF
General: Formerly part of the National Federation of Workers.

20 National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)
Head Office: 5th Floor Lekton House, 5 Wanderers Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 294561
President: James Motlatsi
General Secretary: Cyril Ramaphosa
Founded: 1982
Membership: paid up - 100,000
signed up - 220,000
Organising sectors: mining
Branches: Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal, Cape
Affiliation: Miners International Federation, formerly CUSA
General: Formed after the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) passed a resolution in 1982 to organise mineworkers. The union's first members came from the Johannesburg depot of the Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA). A few weeks later, when six workers at the depot were retrenched, they became the first organisers for the NUM. On October 19 1982, two months after it was formed, the union was granted access to mines of the Chamber of Mines. Ten gold mines were targeted for organising and, in late 1984, three shaft stewards from each of these 10 mines drafted a constitution for the union. This was followed by the union's first national congress. The union led its first national strike in September 1984. Since then it has continued to grow and has engaged in a number of struggles to improve the living and working conditions of black miners. During 1985, there were boycotts of taxis, beer-

halls, mine concession stores and sports facilities. Following a legal strike in September 1985, where thousands of workers were dismissed and many injured and arrested, the union won reinstatement for workers dismissed from the Gencor mine, Marievale, in an important test case.

21 National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW)
Head Office: Central Court, 125 Gale Street, Durban
Tel: (031) 3014923/4
President: Nelson Mthombeni
General Secretary: John Copelyn
Founded: 1973
Membership: paid up - 23,241
total - 23,241
Organising sectors: textile, knitting, clothing, leather
Branches: Natal Coastal (Durban, Tongaat), Natal Midlands, Pinetown, Ladysmith, Transvaal, Eastern Province, Western Province
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation
General: The union was a founding member of the TUACC which was later absorbed into FOSATU. About three months after it was formed, the union's leadership was put under house arrest. The union developed rapidly after the 1973 Frame textile strikes and signed its first recognition agreement in 1974 - with Smith and Nephew. It was the first house agreement to be signed by an unregistered union. 1976 saw more bannings of the union's leadership. In 1981 and 1982, the NUTW fought for recognition at many new factories. After 1982, the main campaign was to capture the mills of the Frame Group. After 53 legal cases over two years, recognition was won at the New Germany complex. NUTW sees this as a major victory in the struggle to break into all companies of the Frame Group. The union has strong links with unions in Europe and is active in the International Textile, Garment and Leather Federation. Two of its members sit on the executive of that body.

22 Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAWU)
Head Office: 1st floor, Harrester House, 65 Harrison Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 8384725
President: Jerry Mbonambi
General Secretary: Jeremy Baskin
Founded: 1974
Membership: paid up - 11,856
total - 11,856

Organising sectors: paper and pulp, paper printing and packaging, wood, sawmills, furniture
Branches: Transvaal, Northern Natal, Southern Natal, Western Cape
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU, links with the International Chemical and Energy Federation
General: By 1984, after a series of successful organising campaigns, PWAWU had organised the majority of the country's paper mills. In Natal, the union was successful in breaking down traditional ethnic divisions fostered by the bosses. In mid 1984 the union joined the Pulp and Paper Industrial Council. It withdrew in August 1985 because the council had failed to meet its reasonable demands. The formal structure of the industrial council had hardly changed since the days of "whites only" representation. The Council has since collapsed.

23 Retail and Allied Workers Union (RAWU)
Head Office: formerly Corporation Chambers, Corporation Street Cape Town, but destroyed in a fire which swept through the building in October this year
Tel: none, for above reason
General Secretary: Allan Roberts
Founded: 1983
Membership: 3,830
Organising sectors: dairy employees in the Cape Peninsula
General: RAWU established a base at Dairy Belle after a strike in 1984 which stopped milk deliveries.

24 South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU)
Head Office: Box 261156, Johannesburg, or Tudor Mansion, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 290423/4
President: Thozamile Gqueta
General Secretary: Bonile Tuluma
Founded: 1978
Membership: paid up - 25,032
total - 27,000
Organising sectors: metal, building, food, motor, electrical, rubber, plastic, chemical, printing, distribution, municipal, power stations, railways, health, transport, furniture, education, services, paper, wood
Affiliation: UDF, JUEP
General: Soon after its formation, SAAWU called a national boycott of Wilson Rowntree products when members of the union at the Eastern Cape plant were dismissed. The formation of support commit-

tees, made up of community and student organisations, to co-ordinate the boycott in support of the striking workers was a relatively new phenomenon in trade union activity at the time. Members of SAAWU played a leading role in the long-running bus boycott in East London (1983-84). Leaders of the union have been regularly harassed by the South African and Ciskeian authorities. The union is banned in the Ciskei, and its leaders are currently facing charges of "treason". During 1984, divisions surfaced within the union. However, the groupings still operate as SAAWU.

25 South African Domestic Workers Association (SADWA)
Head Office: 20 St Andrews Street, Durban
Tel: (031) 318322
President: Cephus Mkomo
General Secretary: Margaret Nhlapo
Founded: 1981
Membership: paid up - 4,500
total - 15,000
Organising sectors: domestic workers and cleaners
Branches: Transvaal, Cape Town, Durban, Orange Free State
Affiliation: JUEP
General: The union assisted in drawing up a minimum wage contract in 1982 as well as a service contract for domestic workers. Last year it started an unemployment fund for domestic workers.

26 South African Mineworkers Union (SAMWU)
Head Office: Box 7549, Johannesburg, or Tudor Mansions, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 290423/4
Chairman: Samson Ndou
General Secretary: Sisa Njikelana
Founded: 1983
Membership: paid up - 3,029
total - 3,163
Organising sectors: mining
Affiliation: UDF, JUEP
General: SAMWU was formed on January 3 1983 by the following unions: GAWU, SAAWU, MGWUSA, OVGWU (Orange Vaal General Workers Union), NISMAWU and MACWUSA.

27 South African Railways and Harbours Union (SARHU)
Head Office: Box 7549, Johannesburg, or Tudor Mansions, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 230815

General Secretary: Catherine Mavi
Founded: 1984
Membership: paid up - 8,220
total - 8,740
Affiliation: UDF, JUEP.

28 South African Scooter Transport and Allied Workers Union (SASTAWU)
Head Office: Box 7549, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 230667
General Secretary: Thabo Mohale
Founded: 1981/2
Membership: paid up - 4,700
total - 14,000
Affiliation: UDF, JUEP

29 South African Textile and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU)
Head Office: Box 7002, East London 5200
Tel: (0431) 26899
General Secretary: Boyce Melitafa
Founded: 1984
Membership: paid up - 1,900
total - 1,900
Organising sectors: garment, textile
Affiliation: UDF.

30 South African Tin Workers Union (SATWU)
Head Office: 301 Noor Chambers, 208 Grey Street, Durban 4001
Tel: (031) 329933
President: V Kistansamy
General Secretary: H Patel
Founded: 1937
Membership: paid up - 581
Organising sectors: sheetmetal and non-ferrous collapsible tube industries (in Durban, Port Elizabeth and Western Cape)
General: Formerly an affiliate of SACTU.

31 Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union (SFAWU)
Head Office: Central Court, 125 Gale Street, Durban, or PO Box 18109, Dalbridge 4014
Tel: (031) 3017931 / 3017350
President: Chris Dlamini
General Secretary: Jay Naidoo
Founded: 1974

Membership: paid up - 19,596
total - 19,596
Organising sectors: sugar, milling, biscuits, bakeries, dairies, brewing, sweets and chocolate
Branches: Transvaal, Northern Natal, Southern Natal, Eastern Province
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU
General: SFAWU was formed after the strikes of 1977 in the Springs area. In 1980 it expanded to Southern Natal and in the next year, to Northern Natal. In 1983, it entered the Eastern Province. It is currently engaged in merger talks with the Food and Canning Workers Union. During 1985 the union was involved in two important strikes in the biscuit industry and against bread bakeries in the Durban area. The biscuit strike assisted SFAWU in establishing itself as a national union. One feature of the bread strike was the demand that free bread be distributed to the Sarmcol strikers. Both strikes saw TUCSA unions on the retreat.

32 Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU)
Head Office: 1st Floor, Harrester House, 65 Harrison Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 8364463
President: Jeremiah Zulu
General Secretary: Jane Barrett
Founded: 1973
Membership: paid up - 11,000
total - 14,500
Organising sectors: passenger transport, goods transport, stevedores, motor ferry, municipalities, SATS, cement products, hospitals, cleaning and security
Branches: Transvaal, Southern Natal, Northern Natal, Eastern Province
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU, International Transport Federation
General: After the 1973 Durban strikes, industrial unions were formed in the chemical, metal and textile industries. TGWU was set up as a general union and had its main base in Durban's docks. In 1979, when FOSATU was formed, TGWU's constitution was altered to cover more specific industries. It expanded to other provinces after this and since 1982 has focussed mainly on passenger and goods transport and local authorities. It is presently holding merger talks with the General Workers' Union.

33 United Mining Metal and Allied Workers of South Africa (UMMAWSA)
Head Office: PO Box 5698, Benoni South 1602

Tel: (011) 546788
President: Andrew Zulu
General Secretary: David Sebabi
Founded: 1984
Membership: paid up - 8,335
total - 8,355
Organising sectors: mining, metal, motor
Branches: Transvaal
General: UMMAWSA was formed in mid-1984 when officials and members from the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) became dissatisfied with what they saw as the dominance of "white" intellectuals in MAWU and the union's reluctance to involve itself in politics outside the factory floor. Andrew Zulu, who was then vice-president of FOSATU, was one of the people who led the breakaway.

COUNCIL OF UNIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA (CUSA)

Head Office: 7th Floor Lekton House, 5 Wanderers Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 298031
President: James Mndaweni
General Secretary: Piroshaw Camay
Affiliation: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
General: The Council of Unions of South Africa was formed in 1980, joining together unions which had previously met as a loose co-ordinating committee - the Consultative Committee. At its 1982 conference the federation adopted a resolution to establish a union in the mining industry. The result was the giant National Union of Mineworkers. The federation is committed to "anti-racism" and "black leadership", although whites are allowed to join CUSA unions and work their way up through the ranks. The issue of anti-racism versus "non-racialism" divided the trade union unity talks in mid 1985 and led to a parting of the way between CUSA and the COSATU unions. In the process, NUM disaffiliated. CUSA, nevertheless, remains a force in the independent trade union movement, with a number of large industrial unions amongst its affiliates. It participates in both the UDF and the National Forum. Currently CUSA is working in cooperation with AZACTU.

Affiliates:
1 Brushes and Cleaners Workers Union (BCWU)
Head Office: Lekton House
Tel: (011) 298031
Membership: 1,600

2 Building Construction and Allied Workers Union (BCAWU)
Head Office: 6th Floor, Lekton House
Tel: (011) 236311
General Secretary: Aaron Nthinya
Founded: 1975
Membership: 40,774
Organising sectors: building and construction, building materials, cement products, roadmaking, ceramics, clay, stonecrushing
Affiliation: International Federation of Building and Woodworkers
General: Traditionally a difficult sector in which to organise, BCAWU has been involved in some very important and protracted struggles in order to establish trade union rights: Johnson Tiles and Pilkington Tiles, for example. The union has established a presence on the East Rand, and particularly Olifantsfontein, where a shop stewards council has recently been established.

3 Food and Beverage Workers Union (FBWU)
Head Office: 4th Floor Lekton House
Tel: (011) 299527/8
President: Longway Kwelemtini
General Secretary: Leonard Sikhakhane
Founded: 1980
Membership: 17,000
Organising sectors: food, dairies, baking, cold storage, canning and bottling, milling
Branches: Vaal, Klerksdorp, East Rand, Far West Rand, West Rand, Pietermaritzburg, Eastern Cape
Affiliation: IUF
General: This year FBWU won an important victory when it sucessfully negotiated an agreement to reduce the number of planned layoffs from 203 to 63 at three Coca Cola plants. The company accepted FBWU's plan to save jobs which included: a rolling-leave system, no new employment, no overtime, no casuals, early retirement and a freeze on capital expenditure.

4 National Union of Wine and Spirits Workers (NUWSW)
Head Office: 4th Floor, Lekton House
Tel: (011) 235561
President: N Nkosi
General Secretary: Fay Mandy
Founded: 1978
Membership: 6,000
Organising sectors: wine and spirits manufacturing
General: descended from previous unions: South African Distillers

and Allied Trade Union; and the Wine, Spirit and Allied Workers Union of South Africa. In the early days the union was assisted by the Garment Workers Union of South Africa and the National Union of Clothing Workers.

5 South African Chemical Workers Union (SACWU)
Head Office: 8th Floor Lekton House
Tel: (011) 298920/9; 298907
President: Moses Nkosi
General Secretary: Michael Tsotetsi
Founded: 1972
Membership: 45,000
Organisings sectors: chemical, pharmaceutical, explosives, fertilizer, rubber, glass, plastic
Branches: Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal, Cape
General: In early 1984, SACWU led the first national legal strike against the chemicals giant AECI. The workers returned to work after being threatened with dismissal and this raised the whole question of protection for legal strikers. In 1985 again, the union took on the might of AECI as part of a long-term strategy to win equal and improved conditions for all AECI employees.

6 South African Laundry, Dry Cleaning and Dyeing Workers Union (SALDCDWU)
Head Office: 4th Floor, Lekton House
Tel: (011) 239058
General Secretary: A Molefe
Founded: 1972
Membership: 5,700
Organising sectors: laundry, dry cleaning, and dyeing

7 Steel Engineering and Allied Workers Union (SEAWUSA)
Head Office: 5th Floor, Merlen House, 49 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 8344771/2/3
President: Lucas Molefe
General Secretary: Jane Hlongwane
Founded: 1979
Membership: 32,382
Organising sectors: steel, engineering, metal containers, plastics
Branches: Pietermaritzburg, Vereeniging, Alberton, Pretoria, West Rand, East Rand, Johannesburg
Affiliation: IMF
General: In 1981 the union started a strike and unemployment

fund. When it first negotiated in the industrial council in 1982, it managed to reduce watchmen's working hours from 72 hours a week to 48 hours.

8 Textile Workers Union (Transvaal) (TWU)
Head Office: Garment Centre, 75 End Street, Doornfontein
Tel: (011) 3376591
General Secretary: E Seloro
Founded: 1973
Membership: 2,850
Affiliations: International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation.

9 Transport and Allied Workers Union (TAWU)
Head Office: 6th Floor Lekton House
Tel: (011) 294784
President: Alex Mahlatsi
General Secretary: Esau Rankholo
Founded: 1973
Membership: 20,000
Organising sectors: passenger transport, goods transport, vehicle ferrying
Branches: Transvaal, Durban, Port Elizabeth
Affiliation: International Transport Federation
General: Despite its belief in black worker leadership, CUSA unions are open to all. In 1984, TAWU signed up two "white" bus drivers in Port Elizabeth. The drivers had been unfairly dismissed and TAWU defended them and secured their re-employment. The union was also instrumental in securing improved conditions for PUTCO drivers.

10 United African Motor Workers Union (UAMWU)
Head Office: 513-14 Willie Theron Building, Bosman Street, Pretoria
Tel: (012) 3230838
General Secretary: D Nowatha
Founded: 1980
Membership: 7,963

11 Vukani Black Guards and Allied Workers Union
Head Office: 7th Floor, Lekton House
Tel: (011) 298031
President: Jackson Marema
General Secretary: Mike Maimane

Founded: 1981, formal launch July 1985
Membership: 1,161
Organising sectors: security
Branches: Pretoria, Vereeniging, Potchefstroom, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth
General: The union was formed because people in the security sector were not being serviced. The union says that where they have made their presence felt, significant changes in wages and conditions of work have taken place.

AZANIAN CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (AZACTU)

Discussions to form the alliance started in February 1984 and a formal announcement of its existance was made in August. At present AZACTU consists of several unions, the largest of which is the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union (BAMCWU). In 1984 BAMCWU was engaged in a large strike at the Penge asbestos mine in the Northern Transvaal. About 1,700 workers went on a three week strike demanding recognition of the union and a minimum wage of R10 a shift. Despite determined struggle, the workers were all dismissed, evicted from their hostels and sent back to the neighbouring bantustans. Soon after the strike the union began a campaign to get asbestos mining banned because of the health hazards asbestos miners face. Another important union in the alliance, the Insurance, Assurance Workers Union of South Africa (IAWUSA) had its members at Liberty Life engaged in a strike for recognition of the union in 1983. The strike also involved picketing the company's headquarters and boycotts. AZACTU claims 60,000 to 70,000 members. Although the unions are all formally independent of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), some of them emerged from labour clinics set up by AZAPO in the late 1970s. AZACTU is an affiliate of the National Forum and has adopted the Azanian Manifesto. More recently, AZACTU has worked closely with CUSA.

Affiliates:
1 IAWUSA - 30,000

2 BAMCWU - 32,000

3 HOTELICA (formerly CUSA) - 10,000

4 African Allied Workers Union (AAWU) - 2,200

5 Black General Workers Union (BLAGWU) - 5,030

6 Black Electronic and Electrical Workers Union (BEEWU) - no figure available

7 National Union of Workers of South Africa (NUWSA) - no figure available

8 Black Domestic Workers Union - no figure available

9 EAWUSA - no figure available

Co-ordinators who may be contacted for information on AZACTU:
Pandelani Nefolovohdwe (general secretary of BAMCWU) - (011) 8346682 / 8346733
Joe Rakuoadi (general secretary of IAWUSA) - (011) 8384098

OTHER UNIONS

1 Black Allied Workers Union
General: BAWU was formed in 1972 on a platform of black consciousness. Much of the original leadership was banned in 1977. Based in Natal it has been weakened by numerous splits.
[No new information on this union]

2 Federated Council of Retail and Allied Workers (FEDCRAW)
Head Office: Room 93, Security Building, 95 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 8343875
President: Masilo Mpiti
General Secretary: Susan Moahlodi
Founded: 1984
Membership: 4,000
Organising sectors: retail
Branches: Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal
General: Formed after a breakaway from CCAWUSA. In September 1985, members of the union at an Edgars-owned store in Blackheath in the Transvaal struck in protest at the racist harassment meted out by one store controller in particular. Solidarity action spread and some 800 workers were sacked. On September 26, after pickets, boycotts and support action from other unions, Edgars management reinstated all dismissed workers and put the store controller on 6 weeks probation.

3 Jewellers and Goldsmiths
Head Office: 2nd Floor, City Centre, Corporation Street, Cape Town
Tel: (021) 468086
President: Joe Davids
General Secretary: Ted Frazer
Founded: 1939
Membership: paid up - 470
total - 470
Organising sectors: manufacturing
Branches: Cape Town
Affiliation: formerly FOSATU
General: The union was originally called the Jewellers and Goldsmiths Society and began in the Transvaal. It was started mainly for workers using precious metals in their work but could include workers making any kind of ornaments, for example, pottery.

4 Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA)
Head Office: formerly Corporation Chambers, Corporation Street, Cape Town, but closed after fire destroyed the building in October this year
Tel: none, for above reason
President: none
General Secretary: none
A national interim committee is acting for the union until the two groups re-unite (see below)
Founded: 1980
Membership: paid up - 1,500
total - 1,500
Organising sectors: newspapers, printing and packaging
Branches: Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Southern Transvaal Witbank, Far Northern Transvaal, Port Elizabeth, Border
Affiliation: links with the International Federation of Journalists
General: MWASA split over the questions of UDF affiliation and white participation in 1984. A reconciliation conference was held in August this year, however, in an effort to heal the division.

5 National Union of Printers and Allied Workers (NUPAWO)
Head Office: Room 315 Lekton House, 5 Wanderers Street, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 235426/8
General Secretary: Thembekile Sahluko
Founded: 1984

Membership: paid up - 841
total - 841
Organising sectors: printing
Affiliation: UDF.

6 Orange Vaal General Workers Union (OVGWU)
Head Office: 26 Leslie Street, Vereeniging 1933, or PO Box 81, Sharpeville 1933
Tel: (016) 220234
General Secretary: Phillip Masia
Founded: 1981
Membership: [unable to obtain current figures]
Organising sectors: civil engineering, municipal workers, hospitals, farms
Branches: Vereeniging
General: The union started as an off-shoot of the Industrial Aid Centre which operated in the Vereeniging area from 1978. It started with a miscellaneous membership but in 1982, at its formal inauguration, it demarcated four main areas of organisation (see above). It was originally party to the unity talks, but left the talks in 1983 when unions were asked to move towards industrial organisation as opposed to general union organisation.

7 Plastics and Allied Workers Union (PAWU)
Head Office: 705 Atlantic House, Corporation Street, Cape Town
Tel: (021) 453885
Chairman: Joseph Thee
General Secretary: John Appolis
Founded: 1984
Membership: paid up - 370
total - 700
Organising sectors: plastics
Branches: Western Cape
General: The union was formed out of several workers' clubs set up in various areas in the Western Cape during 1983 and 1984.

8 South African Black Municipality and Allied Workers Union
Formerly affiliated to CUSA, this union recently disaffiliated
It has suffered from internal divisions and recently split.

Stevedoring and the General Workers Union

Mike Morris

Mike Morris

Part I: THE STEVEDORING INDUSTRY AND THE GWU'S IMPACT

The General Workers Union's (GWU) control over the stevedoring industry is unique in South Africa. In no other industry is any union let alone an emergent union, so totally dominant as to have 90% of the workers as members. Furthermore, stevedoring is a highly strategically significant industry. It is this fact that has given this relatively small union much greater organisational significance in the South African labour movement than its membership size.

The character and policy of the GWU is another reason why this relatively small union is also well known in trade union circles. It has always been vocal and open about its policy. In previous years for example, the GWU was the main public exponent of a number of positions in the trade union movement: general unionism, non-registration, anti-industrial councils.

The process whereby the GWU came to exercise such dominance, and its effect on the stevedoring industry, is obviously very important for any historical understanding of the labour movement in this country. It is, however, also very important for understanding the changing character of the GWU, for the publically articulated policy of the union did not remain static throughout this process; it shifted and changed to a remarkable degree. The very process of becoming a national union via its stevedoring section had fundamental effects on the whole character and policy of the union. This article aims to explain the dynamics of that process.

Part I deals with the specific conditions of stevedoring and the GWU's impact on the industry. It lays the groundwork for understanding the importance that its success in organising a whole industry had on its policy. Part II [in a future edition] is concerned with the reciprocal impact that the process of organising the stevedores nationally had on the union's policy in regard to industrial unionism, alliances with other unions, registration and industrial councils. Clearly there were other important influences (internal and external, political and economic) that also shaped

and influenced its policies and direction. Those, however, will be left for when a comprehensive history of the union is written.

Shipping lines and the stevedoring companies

Originally stevedoring companies were extensions of the main shipping lines, existing primarily to ensure that their liners were serviced as fast as possible from the moment they entered port, almost regardless of the price. For example, one of the largest lines, Union Castle, owned and operated a stevedoring company called African Associated.

The mail boats of the Union Castle line carried the Royal Mail between the United Kingdom and South Africa. In addition they also carried large quantities of breakbulk cargo; ie. cargo that was in boxes, bags, drums or other loose cargo like motor cars etc. Stevedoring labour was poured onto the Union Castle liners with little regard for the unit cost of labour. These liners had a separate gangway for the stevedoring labour to move up and down on because there were so many stevedores on board ship. The stevedoring companies operated on a simple "cost plus" basis with regard to labour charges: the cost of the number of men working on the ship, plus any other costs, plus profit. As far as the shipping companies were concerned their primary interest was to see that the liners were well serviced, rather than the relative cost of one stevedoring operation vis a vis another.

As far as the stevedoring companies were concerned, the decades when the great ocean liners plied their trade routes were the "golden days of stevedoring". Work was assured. The mail boats came into port with a fixed and frequent regularity. The stevedoring company knew it had at least 52 ships a year to service, on which would be found up to 8 gangs of stevedores working day in and day out.

There were a few independent stevedoring companies, not tied to the shipping lines, that tried to break into the market. On the whole they were unsuccessful and had to be content with mostly handling the bulk cargo - eg. maize, wheat, coal - that was not transported in bags but in bulk.

At the end of the 1960's some of the shipowners demanded a change from the cost plus rate structure (what was called the standard contract) to an "all in" rate structure. The stevedoring company

would then quote a fixed rate per ton of cargo moved irrespective of the type of cargo and the number of stevedores utilised to move it. Each stevedoring company set its own all in rate, as opposed to the standard contract which was set jointly by all the stevedoring companies in joint agreement. This, therefore, facilitated competitive undercutting and enabled the independent stevedoring companies to compete on the basis of productivity - utilising less men on the ship to move the same amount of cargo or ensuring that the stevedores moved the cargo faster, thereby increasing their profit. On this basis the independents began to nibble away at the main stevedoring companies' hold on the market.

The independents were not a significant factor in the stevedoring industry before the 1970's. However, by 1985, through a process of mergers and takeovers, they had dramatically swept the boards and emerged as the dominant force in the industry.

The decline of the shipping companies

In the mid-seventies two processes occurred which fundamentally affected the stevedoring industry: (i) the decline of the great shipping companies with their passenger liners, and their exit from the stevedoring industry; (ii) the containerisation of a large amount of breakbulk tonnage. Their coincidence in the mid-seventies was to radically alter the character of stevedoring.

By the mid-seventies the great shipping companies of the previous decades were no more. The Union Castle line no longer carried the mail, and the great passenger liners no longer ploughed the waters linking the colonies with Europe. Even parcel mail was able to be carried by air. Flying time to Europe had been cut to 12-14 hours making it hardly worthwhile for passengers to take the equivalent number of days to travel to the same destination. Furthermore, decolonisation radically reduced the importance of the colonial expatriate. The direct colonial linkage became less important and the clause in the expatriate's contract granting 14 days sea travel time disappeared. In addition the replacement costs of the line mail boats had radically escalated. Higher safety standards and requirements as ships get older made it more economical to sell the great ships like the "Pendennis Castle" off as scrap, rather than expensively refurbish them. Manning costs were also becoming exorbitant for these types of passenger service. International shipping underwent a major shakeup. The great shipping companies either disappeared, merged or radically reduced their operations.

But if the great passenger liners were to be eliminated or radically reduced in the scope and frequency of their operations, then what was the point in maintaining expensive stevedoring operations in every major port? The shipping companies thus had a major incentive to discard their stevedoring operations.

Coincidental with this, and with even greater impact, was the advent of containerisation which radically altered the character of stevedoring. Larger and larger quantities of breakbulk cargo were transported by container rather than as breakbulk for stevedores to load and offload. This, plus mechanisation of the loading and unloading of cargo, radically reduced the need for the conventional stevedore. These new cargo handling techniques made it technologically impossible to refurbish the great ocean liners as primary transporters of sea borne cargo.

Understandably the shipping companies were the first to realise the long term effects of containerisation and changes in the labour process in stevedoring. Coupled with the decline of the great liners and the change in the shipping traffic, containerisation provided a powerful incentive for them to get out of stevedoring. They sold off their stevedoring interests to the independents, like South African Stevedoring Services Company (SASSCO), whose sole rationale was stevedoring and who had been attempting to break the stranglehold of the shipping companies over the industry. The result was a very rapid and major concentration/centralisation of capital in the stevedoring industry.

Centralisation of capital in stevedoring

The centralisation of capital in the South African stevedoring industry in the 1970's, as we have pointed out, has its cause in international developments. The very same process had occurred in the previous decade in Europe and the USA. The trends in the UK are particularly indicative of the process that was taking place internationally and that was to radically affect South Africa in the next decade. In 1962, there were 751 stevedoring companies operating in six major British ports. By 1981 the number of stevedore companies in these very same ports had been reduced to one in each port.

This process of monopolisation has also resulted in massive redundancy of the stevedoring work force internationally. Numbers have shrunk phenomenally as the effect of the mergers and containeris-

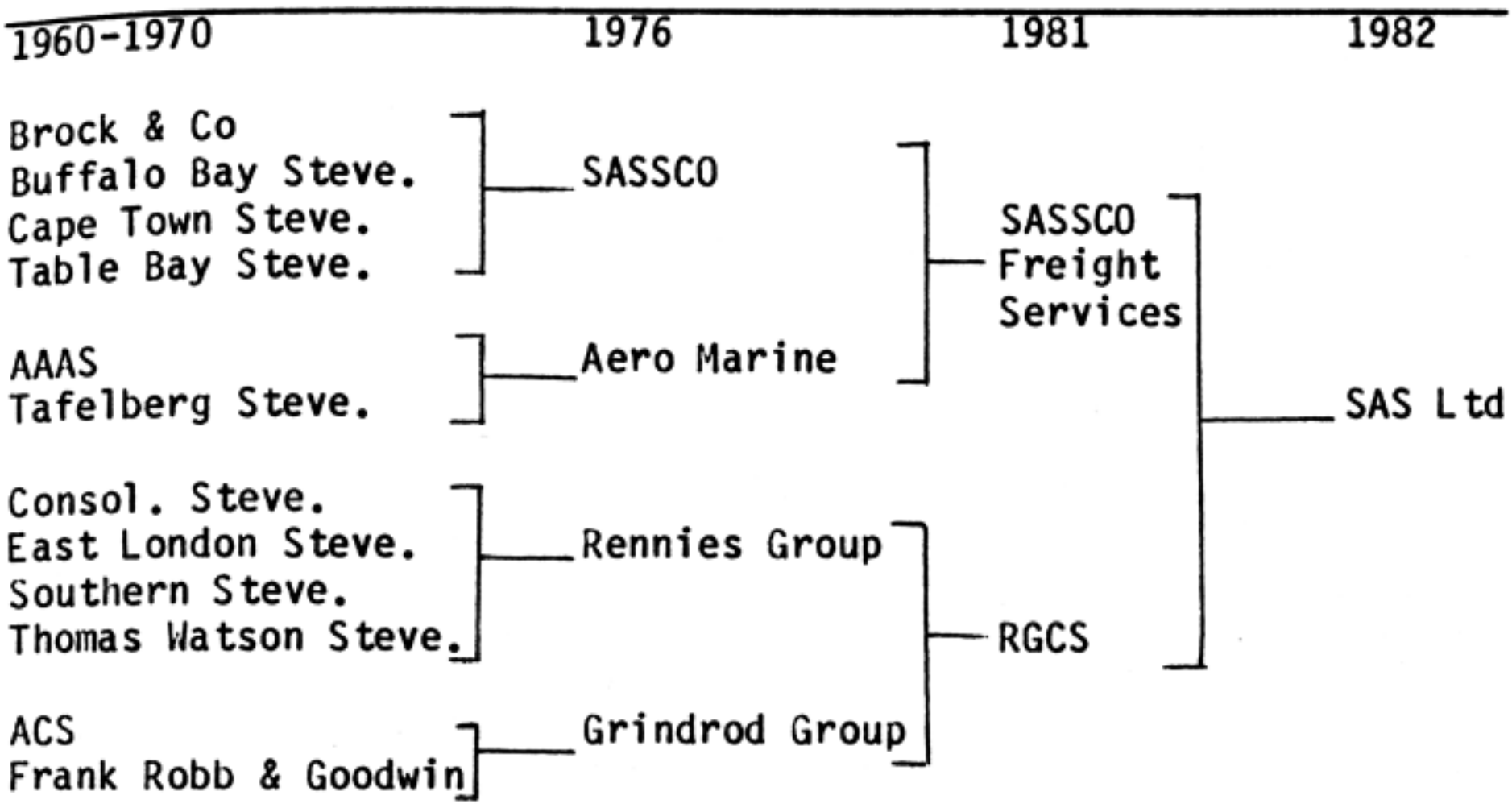
ation has had its full impact. In 1970 there were 70,000 dockers in Great Britain, whereas by 1985 the numbers had shrunk to 20,000. Redundancy in the London docks dropped the workforce from 26,000 in 1965 to 5,600 in 1985. In Hamburg over the same period the number of dockers dropped from 17,265 to 7,666. There were 30,000 dockers in Australia in 1957. By 1975 their numbers had been more than halved to 13,650, and by 1985 they were more than halved again to 6,500.

Taking the same period for South Africa, a similar process occurred. The large number of stevedoring companies in each port in the 1960's was finally reduced to one company by late 1982. (Table 1) Before 1970 there were around thirteen stevedoring companies in existence. In 1980 there were only 3; SASSCO by far the biggest with 60% of stevedoring business, Rennies Stevedoring and Grindrod Cotts Stevedoring with the other 30-40% between them. In 1981, in order to try and counter SASSCO's dominance, Rennies and Grindrod Cotts merged. This desperate bid failed and in August 1982 the inevitable occured: there was only one stevedoring company in South Africa. This was South African Stevedores - on paper a merger with SASSCO controlling 50% - in practice in the operations of the new company, it was a SASSCO takeover. The process of monopolisation was seemingly completed in all South African ports.

In the mid 1970's there were around 8,000 stevedores in all the ports; by 1985 there were only around 2,500. In Port Elizabeth, in the mid-1970's, there were around 800 stevedore labourers below serang level (called induna in Natal), yet by 1978 this had been halved to 400, and by 1985 had dropped to only 155. East London had around 270 stevedores below serang in 1978, whereas in 1985 there were only 70. In Cape Town, in 1978, there were approximately 950-1,000 stevedores below serang level; in 1985 there were only 352.

Durban illustrates this process in a telescoped form over the past two and a half years since the merger between SASSCO and Rennies Grindrod Cotts in August 1982. At the time of the merger there were 2,241 stevedores (excluding drivers and other ancillary staff, but including indunas) in the new company. In January 1983 over 500 stevedores were retrenched as a direct result of the merger. In March 1983 Trident Marine which did lashing and container securing and was owned by Freight Services collapsed and the operation was taken over by SAS, with the 214 workers being incorporated into its workforce. Even with this retrenchment and the add-

Table 1: South African Stevedoring Companies, 1960-82



Key:

AAAS	African Associated Agency Stevedores
SASSCO	South African Stevedores Servicing Company
RGCS	Rennies Grindrod Cotts Stevedores
ACS	African Coasters Stevedores.

itional lashing and securing work stevedores were still having to go on a compulsory stint of 6 to 9 weeks unpaid leave a year in lieu of short time. Finally, in March 1985 a further 557 stevedores were retrenched. The number of stevedores in the company had dropped to 1,248, and this included the additional ex-Trident Marine workers. In only two and a quarter years around 45% of the stevedoring labour force in Durban has been retrenched.

Containerisation and mechanical aids

A ship is essentially a self propelled mobile warehouse which unlike its counterpart ashore, is subject to continuous movement, stress, strain and extreme climatic conditions. Hence compactness and securing of the stowed cargo, correct ventilation, possible

contamination and liability to spontaneous combustion are extremely important factors which must be considered when the cargo is loaded. The load has to be stowed in such a way that the vessel will stay trim under all conditions, that goods are in the right order for off-loading at ports of call, and that every square centimetre of space has been used effectively. The art of stowing a ship is therefore very important and that is essentially what the stevedore is - an artist in stowing a ship. The name is, in fact, of Spanish origin, from "Estivador", which in turn is traced back to the Latin verb "stipare", meaning "to press, to pack tightly".

Before the advent of containerisation, a stevedore was essentially required to be big and strong. This was in addition to having the acquired skill of stowing cargo. Without that skill his strength was useless. Loading and unloading liners was an extremely labour intensive operation. Most cargo was breakbulk - the bread and butter of stevedoring - utilising large number of stevedores to pick up bags, boxes etc. Cargo was essentially loose, ie. it was not pre-packed into large standard units, nor was it loaded onto pallets for forklift trucks to move around.

In the mid-1970's a number of processes came together to have fundamental effects on the stevedoring industry in South Africa, particularly on the utilisation of labour. Essentially the issue revolves around the fact that the vast amounts of capital that are tied up in a ship can only be realised if it is productively utilised. When a ship sits around in port the capital invested in it yields no profit. In addition the ship owner has to pay a fee to park his ship at a berth. The longer it stays there the more it costs him. Speeding up turn around time is therefore the critical driving force for the owner of capital in the shipping industry. The trend has therefore been to introduce streamlined cargo handling systems in order to shorten the amount of time spent in port.

This pressure from the ship owners to decrease turn around time is reinforced by all those interests involved in the export/import industry, including government. In the latter case this derives from the need to make exports more competitive, and from the point of view of the balance of payments, to cut the cost of imports. All these pressures have forced the mechanisation of the stevedoring industry on a world scale. Hence the emergence of containerisation and other mechanical handling aids like palletisation, big lifts, unitisation, and roll-on/roll-off (RORO).

The most fundamental of these has been containerisation. Suddenly, instead of most breakbulk being handled by stevedores, it was being packed into containers either at the supply source or at a container depot hundreds of kilometres away from the port. The traditional liner type of cargo just about disappeared out of the stevedores hands in South African ports. At the end of 1979 approximately 62.5% of the pure general cargo traditionally carried in liner type operations had been containerised.

The effect that this has had on the stevedoring industry has been enormous. The impact on capital was partly cushioned by the government's decision to allow the three stevedoring companies operating to have major control over the container packing traffic through the creation of a monopoly company - South African Container Depots. For the stevedores, however, no such cushioning was available as employment in the industry plunged and thousands of men became redundant.

In addition to containerisation there were other mechanical innovations introduced on a large scale in the last decade, further reducing the demand for stevedore labour and fundamentally affecting the role of the remaining workers:

(i) unit loads, ie. several small packages strapped together to form a standardised large unit, requiring mechanical rather than manual stowing methods;
(ii) palletisation, ie. unitisation on a wooden pallet;
(iii) forklift trucks;
(iv) roll on/roll off (RORO) ships requiring only special forklift trucks and tractors for loading and unloading cargo;
(v) mechanisation of bulk cargo (eg. loose grain, sugar etc.) via mechanical suction mechanisms.

All this has had a major impact on the utilisation of stevedore labour. On RORO ships the ordinary stevedore is hardly utilised. The trend towards unitisation means that the ordinary stevedore cannot pick up units of this size anymore. Less labour is required, and its function is radically altered. The stevedore now hooks up the steel, secures the clamps, and guides the lift as it starts to go up or come down. The emphasis for the stevedore labourer has dramatically shifted away from picking up to skill in stowing. The need is less and less for men to be "big and strong", but rather that they be "small and smart". Forklifts and drivers and winchmen are increasingly important in the industry as the handling of cargo comes to rely heavily, if not nearly exclusively at times, on

mechanical aids. Only two decades ago stevedoring was a highly labour intensive industry with a comparatively small capital investment requirement. Now it is rapidly becoming a highly mechanised, capital intensive industry.

The historical character of the workforce

Historically stevedores in South Africa, as in most countries, were casuals employed by the day. There was a small minority of more skilled workers that were paid by the week or the month. Obviously office staff and line management fell into this category, but it also included storemen, lorry and forklift drivers, and mechanics. In most ports, with the exception of Durban, this also included some of the more skilled, supervisory positions (ie. serangs/indunas).

The rest of the productive workers (ie. stevehands, gangwaymen, winchmen, and, in Durban, indunas) were casuals of one sort or another. Although they were not guaranteed a job, or pay every day of the normal working week, they were still regular workers in the stevedoring industry. Notwithstanding their historical lack of daily job security and normal weekly pay, the same floating population of workers would congregate every morning at the booking centres seeking employment on the ships for that day. Indeed as far as the workers were concerned, they regarded themselves as working for a specific stevedoring company, or the stevedoring industry generally. There are numerous old men in the ports of South Africa who have been in the stevedoring industry for most of their lives. One very old man, who lived in Durban in 1982, had first come into the industry in world war I. The fact that he had been a casual employee up until 1959 was, for him, just a quirk of the industry. It in no way detracted from the permanency of his occupation as a stevedore.

In Cape Town, in 1977, approximately 50% of the stevedores were between the ages of 40 and 50 and the majority had been in the industry for the greater part of their working lives. In East London, in 1977, over 90% of stevedores had been employed for over 10 years, and many had been in the industry for over 20 years. This is further exemplified by the length of service of workers retrenched. In Durban, in the retrenchment of 1982, most of the workers retrenched on the basis of LIFO had been recruited in 1975. In the 1985 retrenchment all the workers retrenched were recruited in 1974 or late 1973; ie. the shortest service in the industry at

that point was 11 years.

In prior decades there was a specific arrangement with the stevedoring companies that if the father died or retired his son would have first preferance and be entitled to employment. Thus, at the last round of retrenchments in Durban, one of the youngest workers,with the shortest service, protested vigorously against his retrenchment on the grounds that his length of service should include the years worked by his dead father. Moreover, the son had been taken out of school to come and take his father's place.

The casual nature of employment, coupled with the low pay and the hazardous nature of the work meant that the vocation of stevedore was looked down upon by the more sophisticated urban sections of the African working class. Stevedores in Durban were called "Nyathi" which meant "shit bucket removers". The stevedores, of course, in turn, had their own hierarchy. Those dock workers who didn't handle cargo, but merely cleaned ships were, in turn, looked down on and called "Madageni", meaning "those who can't keep themselves clean".

Except for the coloured workers in Cape Town and the Indian drivers in Durban, most stevedores were migrants, recruited from some of the more far flung rural areas. Local African workers only worked as stevedores as a last resort. The reasons are fairly obvious - work was casual, pay was low and it was an extraordinarily dangerous occupation.

In Port Elizabeth, at the request of the local Bantu Affairs Department, the stevedoring companies kept a rough 60:40 ratio in favour of contract labour in order to provide employment for local African workers. In 1977, the ratio was 50% locals and 50% contract workers from Peddie (200 km from PE). This ratio was totally misleading as more than 70% of the supposedly local workers with relevant urban rights also came from the Peddie district and made little use of their residential rights. Instead, like the other contract workers from Peddie, they lived in single quarters and maintained families in Peddie.

In East London, stevedores were traditionally migrants. However, as the Ciskei rural areas collapsed many were resettled, in the late 1960s and early 1970s in a resettlement camp which later became Mdantsane. Since that time, the stevedores have become local residents of East London. In Cape Town, all coloured workers were

obviously local, whilst 95% of African workers had legal rights to live in Cape Town. Yet the majority of them also maintained their families in the Transkei.

In Durban, the stevedore labour force of contract workers was drawn mostly from the heartland of Kwazulu (eg. Nongoma, Mahlabatini, Mtunzini), but also with a significant minority coming from Eastern Pondoland. In 1977 about 20% of the workers had Section 10(i)(a) or (b) rights, but the vast majority of them did not exercise these rights in the adjacent townships. The majority stayed, and still do stay, with no charge for rent and a free meal a day (although before 1979 a worker only received the meal if he worked that day), in ancient Dickensian compounds in Point. These were owned by the stevedoring companies on land leased from the Durban Corporation.

The compounds comprise blocks with rooms containing anything from 10 to 30 beds in each room. With the successive retrenchments that have occurred in the past few years, the number of workers actually staying in a room now leaves a fair amount of living space per worker. This was not at all the case in the past. Two glaring examples stand out. In the late 1970's, after the South Arican Railways introduced two shifts for its dockworkers, the compounds became hopelessly overcrowded. The reason was that the stevedoring companies feared that if they were unable to cope with the change in shifts, and the expected increase in demand for stevedores per day, the SAR would use it as an excuse to take over the stevedoring side of the dockwork. Hence they very hurriedly recruited additional stevedores to swell the numbers. The result was that workers were having to "hotbed": as the one worker climbed out of his bed to go on shift another coming off shift would climb in.

After the breakup, in 1979, of the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company which had controlled the compound, there were insufficient beds in the section that became the Rennies compound and fell directly under its control. A number of workers, consequently were forced to live on the open verandahs, until the arrival of the General Workers Union and the merger of the two companies under the effective control of the previous SASSCO management, eradicated the attempt by Rennies management to recreate Dickens on a human as well as an architectural level.

Prior to 1959 the vast majority of stevedores, although not registered with any particular stevedoring company, lived in these com-

pounds in company leased blocks, turning out for that company when work was available. In May 1959, after a major strike, all stevedore labour was registered with a specially created company - the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company (DSLSC) - owned by the stevedoring companies that utilised the stevedoring labour managed and administered for their benefit by the DSLSC.

Similar associations with certain differences that are not pertinent here were also set up in Port Elizabeth, East London and Cape Town in later years to administer, control and allocate stevedoring labour from a labour pool. However, I shall concentrate on the DSLSC since it was the first labour supply company to be set up, it operated in the biggest port, and it is the company I am most familiar with.

The DSLSC: controlling the workforce

The DSLSC existed solely for the purpose of recruiting, employing, housing and controlling labour which it then subcontracted out on a daily basis to the various stevedoring companies. Stevedores were now legally and effectively employed by the DSLSC with its own administration. The exception was Grindrod which maintained its own system with stevedores working for the company, directly under its own control and booking in from another section of the Durban harbour.

The use of migrant labour from deep in the tribal heartland and the control mechanisms attached to that were developed to a fine art in Durban. Indeed, management preferred to use contract workers who were rurally based and had deep tribal ties. Rooms and blocks of rooms were arranged by tribal area in the Point compound. The companies developed special arrangements with various chiefs to recruit labour for stevedoring from their areas. There were, in fact, designated jobs within the compound administration for the recruitment and control of labour (labour controllers/allocators).

This placed great power in the hands of the compound administration to manipulate tribal divisions. For example, a certain notorious Mr Buthelezi was appointed as labour controller in the Point compound by the DSLSC in 1959, and he very quickly achieved the dubious reputation of being the most hated member of the compound management. After his appointment no Mpondos were directly recruited, although some came by themselves via a relative already working in the harbour.

When more labour was required the compound management would arrange with the magistrate and chiefs of the selected areas to announce that they were coming to recruit. Between the chiefs and the labour controllers men would be selected who were deemed to be fit. This clearly created a very close relationship between the compound administration and the tribal authority and was open to a wide array of abuses, including personal aggrandisement. Moreover, these tribal links became part and parcel of management's control over their workforce. It was common practice for a worker who was disciplined at work to be reported to his chief so that the latter could take whatever further action he also deemed fit.

The operations of the unpaid leave system also served to constantly reinforce the strong relationship between the rural tribal/peasant base and wage labour in the stevedoring industry. Contrary to most other industries, under capitalism, where management attempts to keep their workforce at the point of production for as continuous a period as possible, the DSLSC encouraged the constant renewal of stevedoring workers' ties with their rural base through the leave system. In addition to the statutory 14 days paid leave, the DSLSC operated a compulsory unpaid leave system of 6 weeks on a roster system in order to match the available labour with the expected requirements for the harbour in any given working week.

Tribalism consequently permeated the workforce, operating to divide workers along narrow regional, clan and tribal lines, thereby running counter to other processes stemming from the socialisation of work and compound living. For example, the Zulus looked down upon the Mpondos, and amongst the Zulus some clans were given greater status than others (eg. the royal family). The compound administration intentionally played upon this and utilised it for their own benefit in controlling the workforce. For example, in 1969 the Mpondos were, it seems, advised by the compound management that if they struck with the rest of the workers they would be the first to be fired. They took the hint and kept working.

The power of the compound administration was considerable. Thus promotions were not decided by the stevedoring companies, but by the compound administration of the Durban Labour Supply Company. Corruption was rife. It was common practice to pay a set bribe in order to ensure promotion. When, for example, the same Mr Buthelezi died, there were a number of complaints from workers that had paid their bribe to Buthelezi, before he died, in the expectation that the next promotion that arose would come their way.

Now they wanted either to be promoted on the strength of the bribe paid, or, to have their chickens, goats etc paid back.

The DSLSC management portrayed themselves, at once, as both the obedient and co-operative servant of the stevedoring companies, and, the dedicated and concerned employers of a large body of simple and vulnerable rural workers. In effect the labour supply management attempted to set itself up as the mediator between the workers and the stevedoring management, and in the process served only its own interests. Certainly the interests of the stevedoring workers were not satisfied by this mechanism, even if the most absurd lengths were gone to in order to play out the role. For example, the only industrial relations framework that existed before the General Workers Union was recognised, in 1982, in Durban was a liaison committee system. Half the workers' representatives were appointed by management, the other half were supposedly elected by the workers, but with the compound manager who had done the appointing running the election. He then chaired the liaison committee's caucus meetings and, when the liaison committee met with management, he was also the chairman of that meeting.

By the mid-1970's some of the new independent stevedoring companies began to realise that the labour supply company was no longer suited to the requirements of the industry. The changes in the stevedoring industry initiated by containerisation and the withdrawal of the shipping lines from stevedoring operations would require new systems of labour control and utilization. The labour supply company was, however, unable to adjust to the changing requirements. It was an empire with all its processes geared to the maintenance of orthodoxy, rather than to the modernisation that was clearly going to have to come.

The DSLSC was stevedoring capital's form of institutionalised control over the workers. But it also set itself up as the ultimate arbiter and interpreter of what the workers wanted and desired, as well as, from the stevedoring companies side, what change was possible. It was able to do this precisely because it portrayed itself as the interposed white mouthpiece of tribal custom, tradition and aspiration. Nothing could be altered in conditions of employment etc. unless the management of the labour supply company agreed with it, because anything that threatened their interests was met with the reply "No you can't do that! The workers will never accept such changes in their customs, etc."

By 1979 there were only three stevedoring companies in Durban and, only two of them (SASSCO and Rennies) were using the DSLSC. SASSCO in particular, as the largest stevedoring company, with 60% plus of the market, needed to re-establish control over its own labour force in order to modernise and restructure labour utilisation on its own terms. Hence the DSLSC was disbanded in 1979 when SASSCO pulled out of it and the stevedores were divided up proportionately between SASSCO and Rennies, under each company's direct control.

Each company, but SASSCO in particular, attempted to establish a corporate identity amongst its own labour force, fostering a further element of competition and division amongst the stevedores who were previously all together in the DSLSC. The compound was divided up and stevedores from one company's compound were kicked out of the other's compound. This created a legacy of bitterness and division amongst the stevedores. Coupled with the fact that Grindrod stevedores never booked or were allocated via the DSLSC but were located instead at Maydon Wharf, this exacerbated the problems of uniting the stevedores into one union when the General Workers Union established a branch in Durban. This problem was not experienced by the union in other ports - where all the stevedores were still mediated through a common labour supply association at the time they were organised by the union.

The peculiarities of the wage and employment systems

The industry is highly peculiar in regard to wages and employment practices. Traditionally, stevehands were employed on a daily casual basis. The standard situation in most other manufacturing industries just does not apply. The key to an understanding of the conditions in the industry lies with the fact that stevedoring companies are servicing ships and have no control over when, and how many, ships enter port for loading and unloading. Consequently there are always peaks and valleys in the demand for stevedoring services. Shipping has its own logic and is subject to other vagaries. Hence an even flow of ships plying the worlds trade routes, and therefore an even utilisation of stevedoring labour, cannot be easily engineered. Ships enter the harbour and demand to be loaded and unloaded. If they wait in port, then considerable wharfing fees have to be paid to the harbour authorities. Hence there may be a huge demand for stevedoring labour three days in the week as the ships are piling into the docks, and very little demand for the remainder of the week when the majority have left.

In the past stevedoring companies throughout the world dealt with the problem by operating with a casualised but stable labour force. As long as sufficient numbers of skilled stevedores were available every day the stevedoring companies could utilise as many as they required on that day and leave them jobless when the port was slack. The cost of the convenience of having stevedores, whenever the companies required them, was thus borne by the individual workers rather than the stevedoring or shipping companies.

Of course there is another alternative. The number of stevedores and berths to be worked per day could be set and additional ships be made to wait outside the harbour where they incur no wharfing fees. Whatever work was available could be spread out evenly throughout the week and stevedores could work on a continuous and more secure basis. But this would not suite the other parties involved. The interests of the shipping companies demand that capital - in the form of ships - should not lie idle (waiting outside the harbour). Also, for as long as the workers can be made to remain as daily-paid casuals, while still presenting themselves for work every day, the stevedoring companies face no real pressure to introduce any alternative system. Finally, and most importantly, in order to be able to even out the flow of ships the stevedoring companies must be able to control not only the loading and unloading of ships but also the quayside operations.

However, in South Africa a state corporation, the South African Railways and Harbours (now called South African Travel Services), have always controlled and operated the whole harbour, including all wharfside operations. Almost all activity in South African harbours from the harbour gates which let the people in, to the tugs that guide the ships in, is out of the control of private capital and resides in the hands of the state. The only substantial private companies operating in the ports are the stevedoring companies. Without control over the wharfside operations - the wharfside cranes, wharfside loading and unloading, and the wharfside warehouses - or the agreement of the SAR & H - the stevedoring companies would have difficulty fundamentally altering the manner in which ships enter the docks for servicing. Neither the stevedoring companies nor the SAR & H were inclined to alter this mode of operating. Hence the system that prevailed in South Africa rested on a casualised but stable stevedoring labour force.

In Durban the workers revolted against this system in the strike of 1959. As a result, with the introduction of the DSLSC, the wage

system was altered to give stevedores greater job and wage security, but still weighting the convenience factor heavily in management's favour. Workers were paid a basic weekly minimum as a guarantee irrespective of whether they worked or not. This was, however, extremely low as the stevedoring companies only made money if and when the stevedores were working. Therefore to this minimum was added a daily work allowance paid automatically for every day worked in any week. Then there were additional allowances for special cargoes (dirty, toxic, frozen etc.). Prior to the introduction of the two shift system in 1975, stevedores used to work their basic day shift and then so many hours overtime as part of their usual day. With the introduction of the two shift system (eight and a half hours for each shift), they lost out on the standard overtime payment. Hence a further shift allowance was introduced, payable for every shift worked.

Although the Durban stevedores were clearly better off than when they were pure casuals, they only really received satisfactory pay when they were actually working. Yet they had the illusion of being weekly paid (or in their language, having a "five day guarantee"). Thus, in Durban in 1977, the basic minimum guaranteed to a stevedore hand was R19.40 per week, the work allowance was R1.48 per day and the shift allowance was R2.16 per day. The daily guaranteed wage was therefore R3.88, while the two allowances for working added up to R3.64. If a stevedore hand didn't get booked out to work that week he received R19.40 only, even though he had made himself available to the company, as required, every day. If he did work every day then he received nearly double. The stevedores were still very much subject to the vagaries of the industry.

It did not, however, end there. For paying out the basic minimum to workers who did not work the full week was a cost to the stevedoring companies. Hence they instituted a system of compulsary and voluntary unpaid leave to enable them to fine tune their labour requirements to match the labour available in any given week. If additional labour than was available was required, then the reserve army of pure casuals that gathered every day outside the gates in the hope of work, was utilised to fill the gaps.

The wage system in the other three ports differed although the underlying principle for the stevedore companies remained the same - ie. to maintain the stability of the workforce and contain some of the pressure from the workers by paying a guaranteed weekly wage, but to ensure that this was as low as possible so that pay-

ments when workers were surplus to requirements were minimised, thus maintaining profits.

In Port Elizabeth, all stevedores, irrespective of the grade, were paid a minimum rate (in 1977, R20 per week), if they reported every day for work. This was in effect booking or "bala" money as the stevedores called it - a sort of transport allowance to enable them to make themselves available. Then there was a daily wage paid for days worked. A shift allowance was introduced in 1975 when the port authorities introduced the two shift system, but management reserved the right to withhold this in cases of indiscipline, late coming, unsatisfactory work etc. In East London a similar situation prevailed, except that more than half the workers in the labour pool were classified as purely casual and paid on a daily basis, only with no guaranteed weekly minimum.

Cape Town had a completely different system. After 1973 stevedores in the pool were guaranteed 3 days full pay (the work allowance was included in the daily wage) plus the shift allowance, irrespective of whether they worked. If they worked more than three days in any week, then they received the equivalent for the number of days worked. They also received a reporting allowance ("bala money") of R1 if no work was available for that day. This system was more beneficial to the stevedores than those operating in the other ports, and the daily wage was also higher.

Wages in the industry up until the early seventies were based on a long standing wage determination which was periodically, but very infrequently (every 3 to 4 years), adjusted by the Wage Board. In the late 1960's stevedoring management in the Eastern Cape was beginning to notice a change in employment patterns. Instead of stevedores voluntarily working 3-4 days a week and spending the rest of their time minding their rural bases in the Ciskei, the obvious breakdown of rural production there meant that the same workers were now working, or needing to work, 5 days or more in the week. In addition, wages were not reviewed annually, and after a year or two of waiting, the rumblings from the ships hatches were very audible. Anger mounted and spontaneous work stoppages became more frequent.

In Durban the tardiness of the Wage Board and the stevedoring companies in not raising wages led to two separate strikes at Point and Maydon Wharf. These, plus the massive Durban strikes of 1973, forced the management to address workers' grievances, rather than

waiting for the Wage Board to review wages only every 4 years. Consequently, the stevedoring employers' association began to meet annually to review their own wages and to submit the new rates to the Department of Labour for amendment to the wage determination. More substantial wage increases were granted every year to the stevedores from 1973 onwards until 1980 when the stevedores were unionised through the General Workers Union.

For example, in Durban between 1973 and 1978 the minimum guaranteed weekly wage for stevehands rose from R9.50 to R19.40 per week. The percentage increase was fairly substantial, higher than the CPI increase. But because the base was so low in the first place, the size of the percentage increase was less significant to the stevedores than it was to the stevedore companies, who had to justify the subsequent increase in tariffs to the shipping companies. The new wage determinations were therefore used by the stevedoring companies to justify these increases in their rates with the argument: "Sorry, the government put up the wages again; we have to increase the tariffs".

Evidently, then, the late 1970's was a period of transition for the stevedoring industry in almost all respects. The capital structure of the industry had altered radically, the dominance of the old stevedoring companies had given way to the dominance of SASSCO over Rennies and Grindrod, the labour process had begun to alter radically, the method of guaranteeing work had altered, the pay structure and wage rates started to shift to take into account the pressures from below. All these changes were to lay the basis for major ideological struggles to take place within the circles of the stevedoring management. Basically, the emergence of a more dynamic stevedoring company - SASSCO, owned by Freight Services - which was in the business for its own sake and not just as an adjunct to the shipping lines with their old methods, as well as the impact of sharper struggles from the side of the stevedore labour force, produced the context for more progressive long-term perspectives. These perspectives were to dominate both within Freight Services and over the other two companies comprising the stevedoring employers' council at the time when the stevedores in Cape Town were organised by the General Workers Union in 1979.

The impact of the GWU on the stevedoring industry

Unionisation had a profound effect on both the lives of the stevedores and on the way the industry operated. Both were radically

altered. Whereas before unionisation the stevedores might be identifiable as working for a particular company, the management had no necessary commensurate social responsibility for the welfare of their employees. The advent of unionisation in the Cape Town docks, coupled with some of the the new forces operating within management, changed that fundamentally. But it was the pressure which resulted from unionisation that brought about the modernisation of the employment conditions of the stevedores. The stevedore as a semi-casual disappeared and management was forced to accept their social obligations to their employees.

Industrial relations in the stevedoring industry accelerated headlong into a new era. From being an industry where the workers had absolutely no formal say over their working lives; where management prerogative was only challenged through explicit demonstrations of power; industrial relations in the industry were transformed to the extent that almost anything was up for negotiation. Perhaps one of the most important effects that the GWU had on the industry was to fundamentally redefine the relations of power.

As stressed earlier, the stevedores were a somewhat fragmented and isolated group of workers, distanced from the rest of the working class. Unifying them into a union with the internal organisational discipline that this entailed, and beginning the process of linking them up with the rest of the working class, was a watershed in the development and history of the stevedores.

The process of negotiating their rights, conditions of service and working conditions stabilised the unity of the workgangs and their power. For the first time in their experience, the stevedores saw the exercise of this power as a process of continuously altering the balance of force in their workplace, rather than an intermittent demonstration of anger. The stevedores began to understand that if their militancy was organisationally directed and concentrated through the union, then fundamental changes in their living and working conditions could be effected. In short, they learned that power is a relationship, and, in doing so, they fundamentally altered the balance of forces in the stevedoring industry. The despised "nyathi" were no more.

Within the ranks of management many found it almost impossible to adjust to this new environment where issues were negotiated and the views of the workers had to be taken account of. Suddenly, to their horror, line management found that issues over which they

had previously had total discretion were referred to a new branch of management: the industrial relations department. Line management's resistance to the new era was quickly set upon by the shop steward committee and union officials. The latter, because of the importance of this breakthrough for the union, spent an enormous and inordinate amount of their time on stevedore issues. The first few years were somewhat stormy. The resistance from line management, however, only served to accelerate the process where more progressive long-term perspectives within management came to dominate. Consequently, Freight Services, who were more prepared for changes in the industrial relations field, increased their own domination over the other stevedoring companies.

The quid pro quo for the stevedoring management was a restabilising of the industry as it entered a most difficult period. Spontaneous stoppages still occurred but, fundamentally, industrial relations were no longer so unpredictable and volatile. In a period where most other unions were fighting to prise management's grip over managerial prerogatives even slightly free, the stevedores and their union found themselves in an industrial relations situation which held new and different disorganising dangers. Instead of having to confront management's refusal to negotiate and the exercise of managerial brute force, the stevedores now had to be wary of becoming locked in continuous cycles of negotiation, and a managerial willingness to talk until the proverbial cows came home.

One of the most important impacts that the union has had on the industry is in rolling back management prerogative on a number of very important issues. Although this has taken place at nearly all levels of managerial control, a number of areas stand out. Equal control and negotiation over all aspects of the pension fund is perhaps one of the most significant gains. The stevedores, and therefore the GWU, have a large majority of seats on the board of control of the pension fund. In a mere five years the stevedores have moved from a situation where management accepted no social responsibility for workers who had been in the industry for decades and consequently had no pensions to fall back on; to membership of the pension fund as well as substantial long service gratuities for all retiring stevedores as compensation for the absence of a pension fund in the past; to equal control of the pension fund.

Size of the gangs working in the hold is another area where management prerogative has been diminished. Gang size is important because by varying the gang size management can affect the speed

and intensity of loading and unloading cargo. If the number of workers in a gang is decreased then, all other things being equal, the intensification of labour is increased and the rate of exploitation is also increased. In order to counter this tendency, procedure has been agreed whereby shop stewards can negotiate over gang sizes on the spot, if the workers are unhappy with the number of workers allocated to work a particular ship.

Another area which has been drastically altered with the advent of the GWU has been in the realm of health and safety. Given the extremely dangerous nature of stevedoring, and in most ports prior to unionisation, the absence of even the most basic protective clothing, this has been of fundamental significance to the workers. For example, before the advent of tne union stevedores worked without even safety boots. One of the first workers the union encountered in Durban had his big toe split from top to bottom by a steel bar falling on his broken tackies. Free protective clothing (helmets, steel tipped safety boots, gloves, overalls, rainsuits, rubber aprons, masks and goggles) is now issued on a standard basis to every stevedore and the basic working attire of a stevedore has changed markedly.

Obviously the issue of adequate protection when handling dangerous cargo was a burning one. Working closely with sympathetic industrial health consultants from the Industrial Health Research Group, the union had a major impact on this question. A number of examples are available (eg. handling of asbestos and lead), but perhaps the best to cite is the loading in Cape Town of frozen fish for export in bitterly icy holds. This is called working "maru" and regarded as one of the most hazardous and hated aspects of stevedoring. Many a stevedore suffered terribly from frostbite and fingers were lost from packing forzen fish with bare hands or inadequate gloves. Consequently negotiations over "maru" have always been the bitterest. Although the stevedores still hate working "maru", conditions have improved phenomenally with the introduction of special space suits and major restrictions on the amount of time a stevedore is allowed to spend down the freezing hold. Conditions now compare very favourably internationally.

Clearly the major impact of unionisation has been on wages and conditions of service. From being amongst the worst paid in the country, stevedores are now amongst the highest paid workers. The struggle to improve wages has been waged on three fronts: to increase the daily (or hourly) rate; to fight for a five day guaran-

teed wage; and to equalise the wages between all the ports.

The latter has been achieved in all the major ports and stevehands in Cape Town, East London, Port Elizabeth and Durban all earn the same basic daily wages. In the two small ports of Richards Bay and Saldanha Bay wages are lower but the stevedores there all have a five day guarantee. The system of a daily minimum rate plus shift and work allowances, or equivalents of that system, have been scrapped. The basic wage of stevehands has risen to R21 per day (ie. R2.47 per hour) in 1985. It is difficult to make a time comparison as the guarantee system and daily basic has altered so fundamentally. However, examples from Durban will give some idea of the magnitude of the increases. It must be borne in mind that Durban was the last big port to be organised and hence wages there were the lowest. In 1982, the daily basic for a stevehand who worked was R11.20 in RGCS and R12 in SASSCO, as compared to R21 per day in 1985; ie. daily basic has nearly doubled in three years. In 1982, the hyster drivers were paid different rates and the lowest paid received R62.50 per week, whereas in 1985 all hyster drivers were paid R140 per week.

The GWU has significantly pushed up the number of paid hours per week that a stevedore is guaranteed, whether he works or not. Stevedores in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban are now guaranteed 36 hours pay per week out of their normal 42 and 1/2 hour week (ie. they are guaranteed 4 and 1/4 days pay per week). Conditions of service have altered so fundamentally that in no sense can these stevedores still be regarded as casuals.

These changes, brought about by unionisation, have obviously profoundly affected the working and service conditions of the stevedores. However, there are still a number of important issues that the union has not managed to deal with. The most important are: the utilisation of casuals, the five day guarantee for all ports, and the channelling of redundant stevedores into ancillary stevedoring work in the container depots.

Control over the utilisation of casuals is critically important. One of the major ongoing struggles in the industry is against management's tendency to use casuals rather than spread out the work to allow the registered stevedoring labour force to work a full five days in the week. Basically, the union's aim has been to control the distribution of work so as to ensure that it is evenly distributed throughout the week. The GWU has tried to effect this

in two ways: (i) by controlling the number of casuals that management can use at any point in time via a manning agreement, and thereby ensuring that work is evenly distributed throughout the week; or, (ii) by controlling the flow of ships to the berths in the port, and thereby ensuring an even distribution of work.

The first method would require an industry-wide manning agreement encompassing all the stevedoring companies to be effective. The union has encountered severe opposition from the stevedore managements in trying to secure this. Unless it was a statutory, enforceable agreement (eg. an industrial council agreement) there could be no control over non-unionised small companies refusing to abide by such a manning agreement. The problem is to control not only the total number of casuals being used by any particular company, but also the total number of casuals that could be utilised throughout the industry. In the absence of some statutory control over the whole port it has been well nigh impossible to make any progress on a manning agreement with any particular company.

The second alternative that the GWU has tried is to get the stevedore managements to negotiate with SATS in order to restrict access to the port if all available stevedore labour is being utilised. This path has also proved fruitless. SATS has not been at all sympathetic, and will remain so unless the GWU has some muscle to bring to bear against them.

Given these problems, the union and the stevedores have forcibly argued that, since payment of shortfall is now accepted as being an integral and necessary part of stevedoring costs, management should bear the increased shortfall costs that payment of a five day guarantee would entail out of company profits. If this was accepted then the stevedoring management would have to treat it as any other cost and include it in all costing calculations before setting stevedoring rates.

The other crucially important area where the GWU has not succeeded is in organising and controlling the container depots where cargo is loaded and unloaded. This is essential, for the stevedoring industry has shifted a large part of its operations in that direction. Furthermore, in other countries redundant stevedores have been able to secure preferential employment in the container depots. The failure of the GWU to ensure similar status for retrenched stevedores is due partly to a lack of sufficient organisational muscle and priority, but fundamentally it is because the largest

and most important container depots are in Johannesburg. This is clearly no solution for redundant stevedores in the coastal areas.

Furthermore, and most importantly, up until very recently the GWU did not have a branch in the Transvaal. However, as a result of the setting up of COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), the GWU is well on the way to merging with the Transport and General Workers Union (formerly a FOSATU affiliate). This will result in a major extension and concentration of union influence in the freight transporting industry, particularly insofar as it links up the container depots with the stevedores.

What must be very unclear to many is how the GWU came to be in such a position, given its previous history of antagonism to FOSATU, its propounding of general unionism as opposed to industrial unionism, as well as its refusal to countenance registration? In order to answer that question we have to start again and locate the impact of the stevedoring industry on the GWU, thereby tracing the manner in which the union became a national union. This is to be the subject of the second part of this article.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Review: The Struggle for South Africa

R Davies, D O'Meara, and S Dlamini, The struggle for South Africa. A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (two volumes), London, 1984.

This is a very important reference work for the forces of opposition in South Africa. It is not a reference work in the style of the collected documents by Karis and Carter; it is, as the authors state, a book concerned with the question of power.

The basic reference material, or object of research, is the numerous organisations on the side of the capitalist class and its supporting strata and those on the side of the oppressed and exploited; the organisations involved in struggle either to maintain or change the present system of class domination. The analytical approach to these organisations "assumes from the outset that various changing forms of national oppression and racism are organically linked with, and have provided the fundamental basis for, the development of a capitalist economy in (SA)". (p2)

VOLUME ONE: THE STRUCTURES OF DOMINATION

This volume begins with an historical survey in four essays, each tracing the origins of racial capitalism from 1652 through to the period of Grand Apartheid (1948 to 1972) to end with an assessment of the Apartheid State in the Southern African region in the 1980s. The chapters devoted to "Capitalist ruling class: major forces and economic organisations", deserve a special note. Here is a useful and resourceful compendium of the major monopolies dominating the Southern African economy including the state sector corporations. While significant data - such as the value of total assets; the corporate structures of major institutions like Anglo-American, Sanlam, Anglo-Vaal, Volkskas - is compiled and presented, the primary focus locates these interests in their political and historical context.

"Moderating Nationalist Party extremism":

It is fascinating to learn of Anglo-American's manoeuvre, "practically giving the General Mining and Finance Corporation (Gencor)

to Federale Mynbou, the mining subsidiary of Sanlam", a move which was intended to moderate "some of the extremist policies of the Nationalist Party" and to "arrest the crisis of confidence confronting South African capitalism following the Sharpeville massacre". (pp28, 66) These economic manoeuvres and the well-known political alliances of the various capitalist corporations have been well-researched and documented. This is especially true in their treatment of Afrikaner capitalist enterprises, where the work of O'Meara's Volkskapitalisme is succintly reproduced. In the chapter on the political organisations of the ruling class; the annotated chronology of class alliances and electoral pacts, which were crucial for the capitalist classes in finding a stable basis for government in the period 1910 to 1948, is most welcome. There are similarly useful breakdowns of the repressive state apparatuses and the coercive role of the legal and judicial systems.

The homelands: repression or social control?

The bantustans are analysed as a further elaboration on the repressive state apparatuses. This section is less satisfactory and reveals a tendency to rely on generalisations based on limited statistical data. The repressive role of the bantustans is not contested, but there is a tendency to see this as their only role. This stems from the assumption that the existence of the entire "collaborative black bourgeoisie...rests on the maintenance of apartheid". (p198) The real situation here is undoubtedly more complex: a large part of the "homelands bourgeoisie" is in fact recruited from the rural petit bourgeoisie whose political links with, and domination of the rural locations long precedes the post-Verwoerdian policies of promoting "Bantu self-government".

Similarly the authors overestimate the extent of urbanisation, or rather the depopulation of the reserve areas, by quoting the figure of a decline from "50% in 1921 to 8% in 1951" in the number of "economically active" Africans officially classified as peasants. (p201) It has long been pointed out that this "dramatic decline" is associated with a change in the census classification of rural African women, who were from some point in the 1940s no longer regarded as "economically active", even though it is well-known that they carry the burden of large portions of agricultural production in the reserves.

It would have been more instructive for the readers if the authors had recognised that hundreds of thousands of migrant workers,

even today, let alone in 1948, still retain access, in some form or another, to means of production in rural areas. It is at this level where the rural petit bourgeoisie ensures control and domination over the rural population through their control over conditions of reproduction of the rural households. The class position of the homeland regimes extends beyond dependence on the Apartheid state for survival, and finds its expression in the material reality of a multitude of rural households in these regions. Such a perspective would be a more tangible point of departure for those in the national liberation movement who, faced with Buthelezi's Inkatha and homeland governments, realise these are obstacles which cannot be dismissed as mere "puppets" or as "instruments of the Apartheid State". Their control and domination rests on an active material basis which has to be challenged.

VOLUME TWO: ORGANISATIONS OF THE OPPRESSED

Generalisations and the tendency to abstractionism pervades much of Volume Two. These are a reflection of political position and can be seen in the authors' treatment of the working class and its organisations.

In the introductory essay Davies et al paint a vivid picture of the rising tide of militancy amongst black workers in the period of expansion in secondary industry during the 1940s. They claim that under the leadership of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) "almost 40% of the African industrial workers were unionised" and that the CNETU's membership rose to 158,000 in 119 affiliated unions. They claim further that as a result of "militant action" real earnings of workers rose by almost 50% in the period 1939-48. (p17) The romanticisation of the labour history of the 1940s was initiated by O'Meara's work on the African mineworkers' strike of 1946. He maintained:

> The rapid growth of trade unionism in the period under review (1931-1946) reflected the growing consciousness of the African proletariat - a recognition of the need for independent class action... [T]he ANC failed to recognise the alignment of class forces in South African capitalism...The unions on the other hand, effectively questioned the system of capitalist exploitation based on a racially defined labour force." (1975: p154)

These historical inaccuracies are continued throughout their assessment of the 1950s and 1960s. The figure of 158,000 members in 119 unions, has come under scrutiny in recent research. Stein

has shown that a key CNETU union such as the Non-European Confederation of Iron, Steel and Metalworkers, which claimed a membership of 18,000 in 1948, in fact had 96 paid-up members! A year later the union was non-existent. (South African Economic History Seminar Guide, UCT, 1985: pp1-11) Similarly the African mineworkers' strike was forced on a reluctant leadership through unofficial actions by the membership. While leaders of some of the strongest unions, such as the African Commercial and Distributive Workers' Union leader, Daniel Koza, were expelled for their disagreement with the "no-strike" pledge made to the Smuts government by union leaders aligned with the Communist Party.

The authors emphasise the leading role of the "official" organisations while neglecting to analyse the real contradictions which produced working class resistance and struggle. In these struggles provisional or "grassroots" leadership emerged to take the unenviable leading role, only to find the leaders of the recognised organisations in the labour movement a step or two behind, and as often debating whether or not to catch up.

The ANC: a slow transformation

This work recognises the "slow transformation" of the ANC "from a moderate, petit-bourgeois pressure group into a mass national liberation movement". (p285) For the authors, the "mass politics" of the Defiance Campaign is unproblematic, leading in linear fashion to the Freedom Charter; the formation of SACTU; the stay-aways; the pound-a-day campaign; the treason trial; bannings, repression and the turn to armed struggle. (p26) But there is no analysis of the problematic relationship between SACTU and the ANC which existed despite SACTU's providing a large part of the workpower for the various campaigns, so eloquently described by Davies et al. The ANC was in continued conflict over issues such as: changing the demands of the 1958 stay-away for a national minimum wage and the abolition of the pass laws to "Away with the Nats", in an attempt to try to influence the 1958 (white) general election; and the resort to armed struggle which made it difficult for the SACTU unions to organise. These areas should have been investigated in any assessment of the national liberation movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

The assumption of a problem-free "mass movement" rests on the premise that there is unity of interest amongst all classes of the oppressed in "getting rid of the Apartheid state"; an assump-

tion which, within South Africa today, is under increasing scrutiny but which is not questioned in the text under review.

The acceptance by the authors of the theory of "internal colonialism" as adopted by the South African Communist Party and other groups in the liberation movement, comes to grief over one all-important question: the role and independence of the working class in the national liberation movement. The working class, not the "other class forces", has been the major force and constituency in the campaigns of the ANC. It is only through the placing of working class interests at the head of the political agenda, that a real mass movement is being built in South Africa. This mass movement is directed at the heart of the capitalist class, and carries the Apartheid state away with that class, the reverse of the process envisaged by those propogating the theory of internal colonialism for whom "lasting emancipation" remains but a "possibility". (p289)

Class unity and populism

In their assessment of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) the authors show a keen critical insight: they are critical of statements by the general secretary that FOSATU should restrict itself to point-of-production issues in order to build and consolidate class unity and independence. Quoting the general secretary, they point out that the independent trade union movement is weak in relation to the number of unorganised workers in the workforce. In a recent article O'Meara and Davies explain their position on FOSATU and the independent trade unions:

> The logic of Foster's [FOSATU General Seceratary] argument is to defer alliance between the proletariat and other oppressed classes until the working class consolidates its working class organisation. This implies a retreat into trade unionism." (1984)

The authors do not identify the "other oppressed class forces" nor their interest in "alliances". Neither have they recognised the real divisions within the working class and the difficult task of building class unity as a prerequisite for transforming and democratising of the entire social structure. This leads from the idealisation by the authors of the historical effectiveness and extent of worker militancy in the earlier period.

- review -

Community organisation: "dynamic" or in decline

The major flaw in the discussion of "Community and Civic Associations" is the fact that it pre-dates the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the crystallisation of different political tendencies around and within its organisations. The Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC), is described as the "largest and certainly the most dynamic and militant of the community organisations in the Western Cape". (p383) More recently one would have to explain why less than half the stated affiliates turned up for its last annual general meeting. CAHAC is non-racial, but there is also a separate Western Cape Civic Association, a body with African members only. In fact, CAHAC and most other community organisations in the Western Cape are in decline. The reasons for this stem from a failure to consolidate, train and extend the mass base. This is compounded by the failure of community organisations to engage consistently in mass organisational work around concrete issues and the premature absorption of these organisations into national political structures which threaten the limited organisational gains that have been made.

The Struggle for South Africa is a work of undoubted importance both in its conception and research insights. Volume One synthesises important historical and contemporary social issues. The analysis in Volume Two is inevitably rooted in the current debate in the liberation movement. The presence of such a debate is to be welcomed; to be useful it must involve a careful rendition and assessment of the historical legacy of the liberation movement and its organisations.

(Zakkie Achmat, November 1985)

Statistics and Economic Notes for Trade Unions

The statistics and economic data given below were prepared by the Labour Research Service of SALDRU, University of Cape Town.

INFLATION - latest information is for December 1985:

	Consumer Price Index (1980=100) December 1985	Annual Rate of Inflation (% Increase over one Year) December 1985
Cape Town	206.6	17.7
Port Elizabeth	201.2	17.9
East London	193.8	14.5
Durban	211.0	19.3
Pietermaritzburg	211.8	20.8
Witwatersrand	206.7	18.4
Vaal Triangle	212.5	18.7
Pretoria	213.5	19.6
Klerksdorp	198.0	16.9
Bloemfontein	199.9	17.7
OFS Goldfields	211.7	18.0
Kimberley	202.1	20.3
South Africa	207.4	18.4

In December 1985, the average rate of inflation was 18.4%. In Pietermaritzburg and Kimberley it was over 20%. Price rises have never been so big.

Inflation forecast

Just one year ago, economists promised workers that inflation would fall in 1985. These economists were wrong. Prices rose faster than ever before and any unions that trusted the economists and accepted ten or twelve percent increases in 1985 now find that the buying power of their members' wages is lower than in February 1985.

The same economists are now guessing what inflation will be in 1986. They all have different ideas:

- statistics -

Adam Jacobs (Volkskas)	Inflation may easily hit 20% during the year but the average will be 17% or 18%
Ronnie Bethlehem (JCI)	20% to 35% even
Colin Rogers (UNISA)	18% in 1986, unless workers' wages are raised in an effort to keep pace with inflation, in which case inflation will be 24% in 1986
Rudolf Gouws (Nedbank)	16%
Rob Lee (Old Mutual)	17%
Louis Geldenhuys (Consultant)	16% to 18% but not above 20% on average
Geert De Wet (RAU)	16% to 17% (up from 12%, which was his guess for 1986 last September)

The lowest estimate of price rises for 1986 is now 16%. In this climate it is vital for workers that all wage agreements have a special provision for the effects that future inflation will have on their real value.

1985: A very bad year for minimum wages

1985 was the worst year ever for minimum wages. The Industrial Councils and the Wage Board did not raise minimum wages nearly enough to keep up with inflation. In December 1985, nine out of ten labourers wages were lower in real terms than they were a year before. Half of the labourers wage rates set by the Wage Board had no increase at all in 1985.

Unions which negotiated at plant level were often able to get better increases than those set by the Wage Board and the Industrial Councils. But in many cases even these wage increases were not enough to account for inflation.

[Sources: Finance Week 16/1/86, Business Day 10/1/86, Financial Mail 10/1/86, Star 5/12/85, RAU Econometric Forecast September 1985.]

Women Workers: "Men's Wages Should be Higher"

Below we print an extract from a standard school textbook. Women workers who have been in the forefront of the growth of such unions as CCAWUSA, NUTW, FCWU and SFAWU should note particularly point 2(11). Moreover, if women get tired so easily [2(5)], how is it that they are also able to perform all the housework as well (2(7)]?

Swanepoel and Stassen, Economics for Standard Ten, pp61-2:

"The wages of women differ from the wages of men. As a rule the wages of men are higher than those of women for the same work. Many women complain bitterly about such discrimination.

From research done by Dartnell Industrial Relations Corporation, personnel consultants, the following points emerged:

1. Findings in favour of women

(1) Women work faster and more accurately than men in jobs where dextrous fingers are required.
(2) Women evince a high degree of loyalty toward the company and the "boss".
(3) Women are more conscientious than men in jobs where special attention and accuracy or attention to quality is required.

2. Complaints about women

(1) Women are more emotional than men - more impulsive and inclined to get excited.
(2) Disputes and trivial quarrels occur more frequently among female workers than among male workers.
(3) It is not very likely that women will develop a team spirit.
(4) Women can develop a strong aversion for their work and dislike for the people who supervise them (especially where much supervision is required).
(5) Women have less resistance to fatigue than men.
(6) The turnover of staff is much nigher among women than among men.

(7) Women have greater domestic responsibilities than men - household work, taking care of the children, the problem of illness in the family, going shopping which causes a higher absentee figure, a desire for shorter working hours and an aversion for overtime work.
(8) Women are less ambitious and their aspirations for promotion are not as strong as it is among men.
(9) Women also need more facilities than men, eg. rest rooms etc.
(10) An important objection against women is that they often let their employers down by leaving them just when they have begun to know their work quite well (by getting married, household duties etc.).
(11) Women are not as well organised with regard to trade unions as men and do not take such an active interest in associations or societies for the improvement of working conditions.

In addition, a man is traditionally the breadwinner and head of the family, and consequently he does not like working under a women. It is an age-old custom for women to receive lower wages than men and it is usually very difficult to break with such established customs."

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The conclusion, drawn from the above, is that the compensation of men is higher, and should be higher, than that of women. According to the authors, "The struggle for equal pay for equal work will most probably continue indefinitely."

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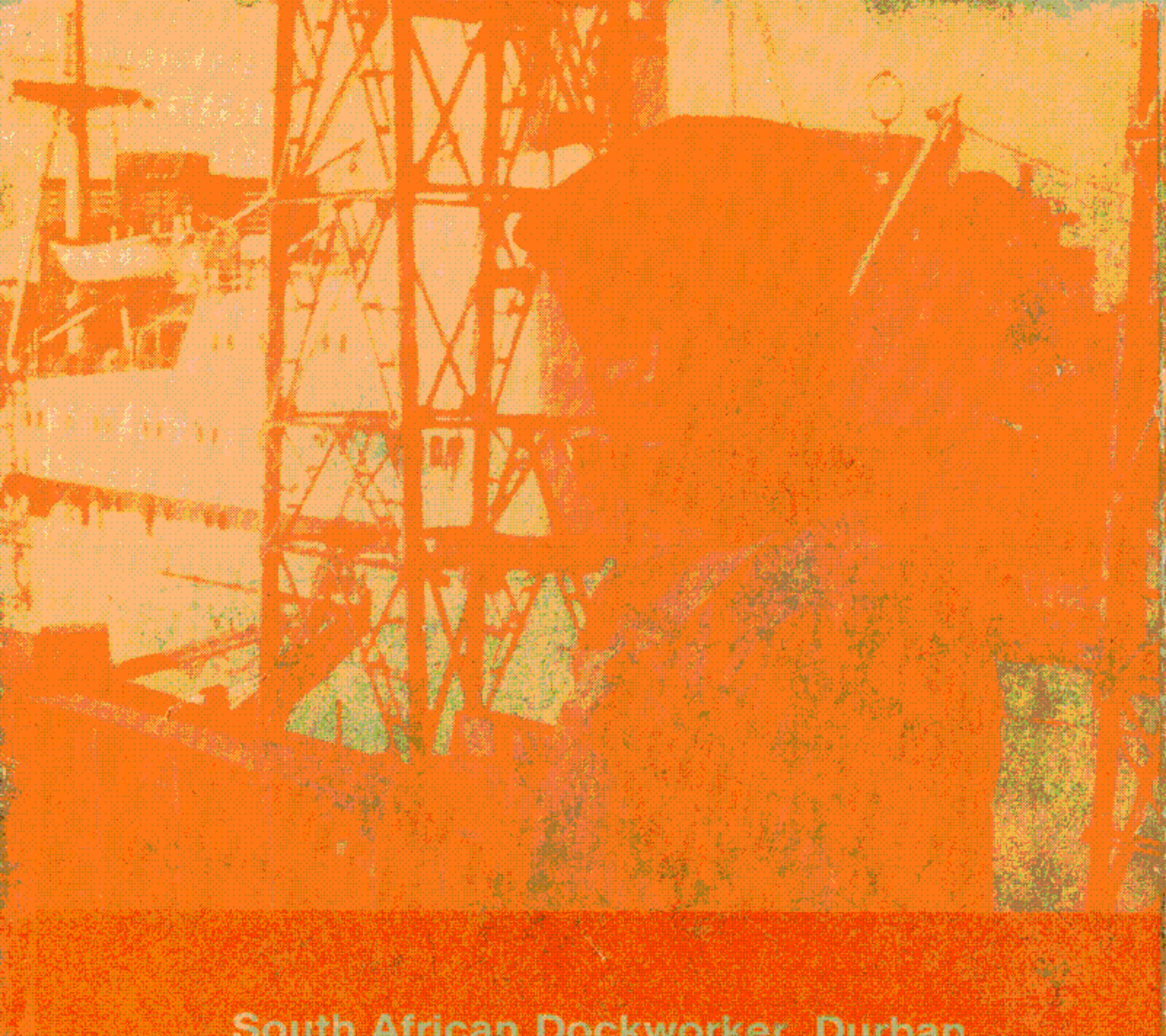

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