
South African Labour Bulletin

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The South African Labour Bulletin

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Editorial note

Debbie Budlender has resigned as a member of the Editorial Board of the South African Labour Bulletin due to pressure of work. She served for two and a half years as a Cape Town member of the Board but was known before that to Bulletin readers for her articles on the Factories Act (vol 8.7) and Workmen's Compensation (vol 9.4 & 5)

Debbie's long commitment to the trade union movement (she was banned for five years in November 1976 while in the employ of the Western Province General Worker's Union), her wide-ranging intellectual and administrative skills, and her close contact with the trade union movement as a staff member of the Food and Allied Worker's Union, made her a valuable member of the Editorial Board. She will be missed by her fellow editors.

Andre Roux and Aswin Desai have resigned from the Eastern Cape committee of the SALB. The Editorial Board would like to express its thanks for work done for the Bulletin in the past. Andre has been prevented from making more of a contribution over the last year as a result of his detention under the state of emergency.

Pippa Green, the research officer during 1986, has also left the Bulletin to go to the USA. Among the many articles and briefings written by Pippa, her writings on developments in the Eastern Cape and Northern Natal stand out. Her article on UWUSA in the last edition of the Bulletin represents the first attempt to evaluate, on the ground, the various claims and counter claims made by UWUSA and its opponents. Pippa was also responsible for coordinating and producing the special focus edition of the SALB on influx control. The editorial board expresses its appreciation for all her work.

Good news is that Phil Bonner will not be leaving the Editorial Board. In December last year Phil was briefly detained pending his deportation. Following representations to the Minister, the deportation order was shelved. Also threatened with deportation was Chris Bonner, secretary of the Transvaal branch of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, an action which resulted in widespread protest strikes in the chemical industry.

Two new staff members have joined the Bulletin in 1987: Maimuna Suliman and Coletane Markham. Maimuna takes over as administrator. Coletane joins the Bulletin as research officer.

To you comrades P Sibiya, S Ngubane, F Mnikathi, A Nkibande

by Mi Hlatshwayo

We say
 very well
always

We shall remember
your smiling and simple faces

there
 stark against
the midst
of our grim and resigned faces

We say very well
always

we shall remember
your smiling and simple faces

there
 stark against
our sorry faces
of regret and hopelessness

Your smiling and simple faces
that drove other men
to
 rape our unity
to
 raid our camps
and kill our pride

you - you

Your smiling and simple faces
meant sleepless nights
to bosses, rulers and their puppets

Your smiling and simple faces
gave hope to Sarmcol workers' struggle
to our liberation struggle

Your death now
comrades
proclaims our earthly triumph.

Sarmcol killings

The people of Mpophomeni, the striking Sarmcol workers and MAWU remember Phineas Sibiya, Florence Mnikathi, Simon Ngubane and Alpheus Nkabinde. "We will never forget you, we will never give up the cause you died for" are the words of the poster to commemorate their lives, what they stood for and what they did as leaders and activists in Mpophomeni.

Phineas Sibiya was chairperson of the Sarmcol shopstewards, a leader of the cooperative movement and a MAWU regional worker leader. Simon Ngubane was a Sarmcol shopsteward, a leader within the cooperative's cultural wing and leading performer in the Sarmcol play. Florence Mnikathi was a Sarmcol health committee activist and a daughter of one of the Sarmcol strikers. Alpheus Nkabinde was a youth activist in Mpophomeni.

On December 5 Phineas, Florence, and Simon were abducted from the township of Mpophomeni and brutally murdered. On that same night Alpheus was killed in the township. The entire community was shaken and together with the union struck with grief and anger. Union leaders alleged that those responsible for the killings were vigilantes led by Inkatha sympathisers and occupying the local community hall in Mpophomeni during that night. The Bureau of Information in a statement issued soon after the killings confirmed the involvement of Inkatha sympathisers in the killings. The police, perched on buses, and threatening to shoot tear smoke at the angered community, escorted the suspects out of Mpophomeni the following morning.

Police continued to make their presence felt in the community in

- sarmcol murders -

the week between the killings and the burials. Homes were visited, police dogs were brought in and the streets were patrolled. The state imposed severe restrictions on the funerals, preventing the families, the community and the union membership from commemorating and burying their dead in the way they would have chosen. Police roadblocks turned back the buses of workers who were coming to bury their comrades. The number of people in the hall was severely restricted so that even those coming on foot were turned back. There were no songs of struggle, no shouts of 'Amandla'. The grief that hung over the hall turned to sobs as the MAWU President broke down, crying, in the middle of his speech on Phineas. The interpreter, attempting to relate what the president was saying also broke down sobbing. Casspirs and police vans lined the field outside the hall. At the graveside stood two casspirs, with soldiers on top watching obscenely as the burials took place.

Arrests have been made in connection with the killings and the matter will be brought to court. The striking workers and the community will not forget Phineas, Simon, Florence and Alpheus as they continue their court battle and their work in the co-op.

(Shamim Marie, January 1987)

Shootings at MAWU AGM

About 25 workers were injured and 1 killed - Simon Mchunu - in a brutal shotgun attack on MAWU workers as they were leaving their AGM on November 15. About 10,000 workers were at the meeting. As workers began dispersing to find their buses to return home, police fired teargas, fired shotguns and chased workers with sjamboks. The union called for a day of commemoration on December 1 to be marked by all MAWU members and progressive organisations; but the union warned: "This is not just a day of mourning. It is a day to renew our commitment to the struggle. We are demanding that the killings must stop. We demand the right to hold meetings without harassment or fear of being shot. This is a basic human right. We demand that Moses Mayekiso and all our leaders be released."

(MAWU communique, 20.11.87)

Strike at OK Bazaars

In the largest strike in the history of the retail industry, over 10,000 workers, members of the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union, are in the eighth week (at the time of writing) of an action which, according to the union, is characterised by "unprecedented repression and opposition by management and police". CCAWUSA offices all over the country have been raided in the course of the strike, and there have been numerous injuries. The strike against South Africa's largest retail chain, OK Bazaars, (total workforce 23,000) which began on December 18 and spread to 137 of the company's 202 stores has so far resulted in 551 dismissals for allegedly breaching "rules of conduct during a strike" - rules unilaterally issued by management; and 1,000 workers have been detained, including 161 under state of emergency regulations. The union has spent over R100,000 on bail for members.

CCAWUSA charges that the company has always acted in a paternalistic manner and has been slow to negotiate rights and improvements. An indication of poor staff relations in the firm is the fact that between September 1985 and September 1986 approximately 2,000 individual workers were dismissed.

The immediate history to the present wage dispute begins with the agreement signed in September 1985 which provided for an "anniversary increase" of R40 per month to be paid out over 18 months (ie. paid out according to when you joined the company, so that some workers would not receive the full increase until March 1987!). The agreement did, however, make provision for a review of wages if OK profits increased on the previous year. In fact profits at the financial year-ending March 1986 did improve (by R237,000 after tax). However management refused any wage review. The union therefore declared a dispute and applied for a conciliation board. The board met on December 3 to discuss the review as well as an agreement to cover the period from April 1987. By December 15 the parties were still deadlocked, with management offering nothing on review and an increase of R85 per month from April 1987 to be paid on an anniversary basis.

The union's main demands at the commencement of mediation were for:

- (i) R160 per month across the board increase, covering the period April 1986 to March 1988.

- OK strike -

- (ii) R450 per month minimum wage.
- (iii) Staff discount of 20% on purchases instead of the present 10% (senior management receive 25%).

In addition, the union demanded:

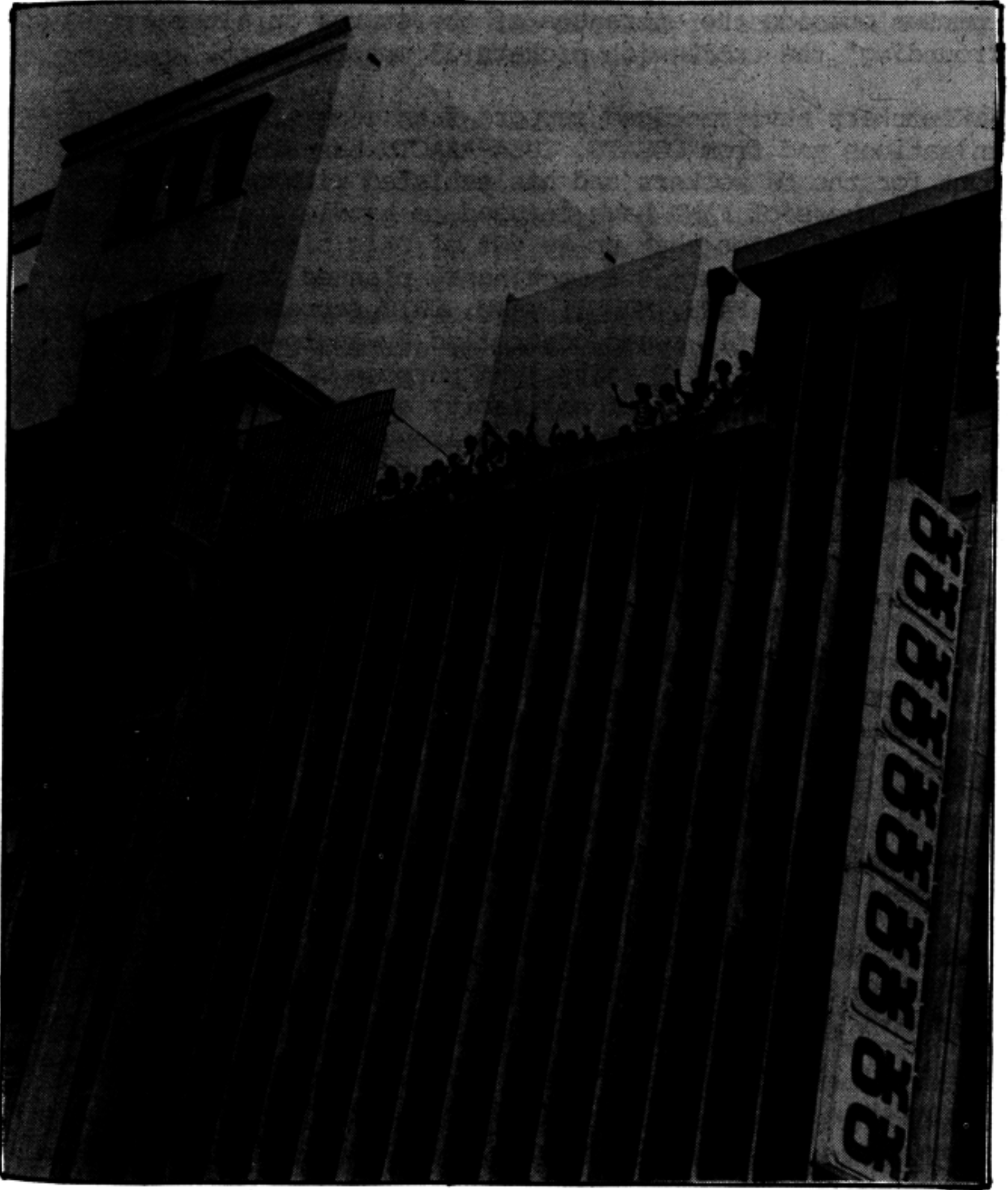
- (iv) That workers in Bantustans should receive the same increases.
- (v) That women on maternity leave should receive a pro rata proportion of the annual bonus when they leave.
- (vi) Women returning from maternity leave should receive the same increase in their wages.
- (vii) The unconditional reinstatement of those dismissed during the strike.
- (viii) The reinstatement of benefits withdrawn during the strike - eg. the 1986 bonus and withdrawal of privileged leave.



photo: pickets outside OK Bazaars in Eloff Street, Johannesburg,
8.1.87 [Afrapix]

- OK strike -

photo: striking OK workers occupy the top of the OK building in
West Street, Durban, 19.12.86 [Afrapix]



In the resulting strike, which is legal, an intransigent management, backed by other employers and by the state, according to CCAWUSA, confronts an increasingly militant workforce. Despite the long

- OK strike -

strike, during which time they have received no money, the OK workers are determined and morale is high, says the union. Despite harassment, picketing continues "South African style" with either one person outside the entrances of the stores or alternatively "surrounding" the store with pickets 25 metres apart.

The OK workers have received support from community and political organisations and from COSATU. CUSA-AZACTU has also stated its support for the OK workers and has assisted with printing of posters. Members of FAWU have refused to handle goods destined for OK. CCAWUSA estimates that up to 60% of OK's black custom has fallen away. On February 8 a meeting is planned for shopstewards from CCAWUSA, NUM, FAWU, MAWU, PWAU, CWIU representing workplaces directly or indirectly owned/controlled by Anglo-American, which has a major stake in OK Bazaars. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss appropriate forms of solidarity action. Escalating the action is necessary, union leaders believe, in view of the widespread support for OK management from capitalists in general, and because of the strategic significance of the strike. Other retailers, and indeed employers in general, will be guided by the outcome of the OK battle, at a time when COSATU unions are gearing up to launch their living wage campaign.

International solidarity has also been offered, and on February 5, the president of CCAWUSA, Makhulu Ledwaba, and Gabriel Sidlayi, chairperson of the OK shop stewards local in Johannesburg, left to tour Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, France, England, and the USA to raise financial and other support. The trip is co-ordinated by FIET, the International Trade Secretariat for the Technical, Clerical and Commercial Trades, and has the full backing of COSATU.

For the workers themselves in the midst of the conflict, according to the union, they "have received a political education second to none." The workers have stood firm for two months and are unlikely to be "starved into submission", says the union. Below we publish an interview with CCAWUSA official Jay Naidoo, who is co-ordinating the OK strike.

INTERVIEW

SALB: There has been some controversy over the exact level of minimum and average wages paid by OK. What is the situation?

Jay Naidoo: Generally OK pays a few rands more than the legal minimum. In some areas general assistants receive R230 or less. OK itself claims to pay an average wage of R489. Workers simply don't accept this as true. We believe the average is somewhere around R300 although some believe it is as low as R265.

SALB: What was the impact of the strike coming as it did just before Christmas.

Jay Naidoo: The timing was good from the point of view of a period of high sales, but at that time of the year there are also many casuals available - school students etc - and progressive organisations are on leave. We certainly dented sales but OK shops continue to operate. This is in part the result of heavy police action. On the second day of the strike one worker was detained under the state of emergency in Durban; in three stores there were mass arrests - 100 in Empangeni, 40 in Margate and 85 in Pinetown. From the start there was evidence of collusion between management and police with the latter being prepared to use force. On the same day there were mass sackings at Empangeni, Margate, Hypermarket Prospecton and Montclair. Things escalated thereafter with raids on CCAWUSA offices around the country.

SALB: How is the strike being organised?

Jay Naidoo: The OK negotiating team, consisting of representatives from each branch, took control of the strike. This body maintains contact with the branches and then reports to myself as strike co-ordinator. As things expanded, with the need for more propaganda each branch organised its own meetings, reportbacks to members and set up support committees. In Durban there developed a shop steward structure which fed information and media to the rest of the country. Each branch tried to motivate support from other unions. Since mediation began two weeks ago a national coordinating committee has been established in Johannesburg, transferring national coordination from Durban.

In local areas where we have offices these have coordinated local activity with shop stewards also playing a major role. In Johannesburg for instance, the shop stewards committee for OK meets regularly and takes important initiatives. Where there are no offices our members rely to a greater extent on the local communities in particular the youth, but still with shop stewards playing a leading role.

- OK strike -

Support committees have been established drawing on community support with workers themselves distributing pamphlets, calling meetings and approaching youth and student organisations. Outside of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, these support committees have been very loose, largely based on CCAWUSA and the OK workers themselves and only drawing on other groups on an ad hoc basis. In the main centres debate has ranged around the composition of the support groups, about bringing in AZAPO, UDF, etc. In fact these support groups now incorporate all progressive groups.

SALB: Why has the strike been so long and bitter?

Jay Naidoo: Strikes - such as the CNA strike which lasted 6 weeks - are becoming long drawn out battles. These now take on the dimensions of a trial of strength and this requires resources. It is difficult to pursue an indefinite strike with the restrictions on the right to collect a strike fund. Such a right is crucial to any notion of a legal strike.

OK is certainly hurting now that many blacks are withdrawing their custom. But we have not moved aggressively to close down shops in the way that happened in the Pick n' Pay strike largely because of the changed political situation. Under the state of emergency we have to proceed more cautiously.

The strike has continued so long because of the intransigence of the management which seems to have the resources to throw into this long strike.

SALB: What has happened to the workers themselves during this period?

Jay Naidoo: They have received no money during the strike but an amazing feature of the strike - and one that is very educational for officials - has been the way that the spirit of the workers has increased over this period of time. Police intervention and hardline management has strengthened the membership who have seen clearly the connections between capital and political oppression. They are now far more politicised.

SALB: What do you think is the significance of the strike and its main lessons?

Jay Naidoo: Firstly, we have observed a consolidation of solidarity

action particularly on the part FAWU members which would have been unthinkable before the formation of COSATU. Secondly, despite very limited resources workers have been able to last for a considerable period: 11,000 workers constantly facing harrassment but remaining united.

One thing we have found is that state repression has impacted on community organisations but that grassroots activism remains strong especially among the youth. But to build and sustain links with less formal and less centralised organisations is very difficult. It has been a useful experience for trade unionists and workers - making contact with other bodies, calling mass meetings, etc. CCAWUSA and COSATU have grown a lot out of this experience.

Increasingly, workers are seeing this dispute as a war of attrition. There is deep animosity on both sides and the possibility of a negotiated settlement at times seems tenuous. The alternative - and this is an idea being mooted by some workers - is that if we cannot get a settlement we will fight to the death and even if we are defeated as a trade union, if we can also destroy our enemy in the process we will have won in political terms. Our achievement will be worth a lot to those that follow afterwards. We will still be here in our thousands maintaining the pressure on OK. This will contribute to a heightened climate in the workplace. Such an outcome would be preferable to an unacceptable deal with the company.

Politically, outside of the workplace our members are now able to exert a wider political leadership in the community. The time is now right for workers, having consolidated their trade union organisation to move in a much bolder way to assert leadership in the community.

(SALB correspondent 6.2.87)

COSATU construction workers union

The launch of the Construction and Allied Workers Union (CAWU) on January 31 of this year marks a further step towards COSATU's objective of "one union one industry". CAWU is the third union after Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) to have merged.

The new union claims approximately 30,000 building and construction workers nationally. Present at the launch were delegates from 5 formally constituted CAWU branches - Northern Natal, Witwatersrand, Southern Natal, Western Province, and Phalaborwa - as well as members from Pretoria/Pietersburg, Bloemfontein, and the Eastern Cape who were present with observer status.

The seven unions which have contributed members towards the merger include the General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU), the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), National General Workers union (NGWU), General Workers Union of South Africa (GWUSA), and the Brick Clay and Allied Workers Union (BRICKAWU).

According to CAWU members joint meetings have been held in the various regions since June 1986. By November a number of branches had been constituted and branch executive committee members elected. Unfortunately the Eastern Cape region could not participate in the joint meetings at first due to the number of unionists who were either in detention or in hiding in that area. By the time of the launch the Eastern Cape branch had still not been established.

An interim national executive committee has now been elected. The committee consists of one co-ordinator for each of the seven unions represented. Office bearers include: (President) David Ngcobo, a shopsteward from Grinaker and former MAWU NEC member; (Vice-President) Phineas Hlongwane, a shopsteward at Alex Murray and formerly a member of BRICKAWU; (Treasurer) Billy Sebola, shopsteward at Pioneer Concrete and former GAWU member; (General Secretary) Desmond Mahasha, formerly a GAWU organiser.

The present office bearers have the task of assisting the formation of branches which have not yet been constituted, and to strengthen and consolidate CAWU structures nationally. They will eventually

give way to a permanent national executive committee due to be elected at a "constitutional congress" which will be held later in the year. According to Desmond Mahasha, interim General Secretary of the new union, the next congress may see certain amendments to the present constitution. It will also have tighter representation, based on proportional voting rights. "We are hoping to establish only six CAWU branches nationally, meaning that the Transvaal region may have to divide into two big branches".(1)

Resolutions

A number of resolutions were adopted. These included:

- * that the union will apply for registration in terms of the Labour Relations Act. The question of registration initially presented some difficulty, especially for some members of SAAWU and GAWU, unions with a tradition of opposition to registration. However it was eventually decided to opt for registration because this has failed to "rope and control worker organisations" and also because of the nature of the industry. The industry is "migratory and as a result it would be difficult to collect subscription fees without stop order facilities".
- * The union will strive for financial self-sufficiency and will establish national control over all finances. There is also to be no formal affiliation to any international body.
- * On working class leadership, CAWU noted that: "The working class is the most oppressed and exploited class and has no interest in maintaining a society based on oppression and exploitation". Further, the needs of workers can only be met in a society run by workers in the interests of workers, ie. a socialist society". It was therefore stated that CAWU would "strive to ensure the leadership of workers in every struggle being waged by the oppressed people of our land". (2)

The union is to follow the general political policy of COSATU, namely that the problems of workers and those of the community are inseparable. It is therefore stated that the union will "actively participate in the struggle for a free, non-racial, and democratic South Africa. This it is stressed should be done by "taking up political struggles through the membership and structures at local, regional, and national level in alliance with progressive community and political organisations and under the leadership of the working class". A third point argues that the "union will strive to ensure that members effectively participate in progressive organisations and campaigns that conduct struggles

against oppression and exploitation". (3)

According to Desmond Mahasha the guiding principle that brought the many diverse unions together was that of "one union one industry". The other principle, according to him, was a commitment to "total workers control and the recognition of the need to have strong shop floor structures".

Conditions in the industry

Bringing together workers in the building and construction industry is no easy task. The industry is diverse (see SALB 11.6 on BCAWU) consisting of workers employed in Building and Construction, Civil Engineering and Construction (eg. road-building), the manufacturing sector which essentially involves Heavy Clay and Allied products (eg. brick and tile making), and workers employed in Stone Crushing. In addition the industry is characterised by seasonal and economic fluctuations and the dispersed nature of work sites. This is compounded by the high number of migrant and casual labourers. Mahasha explained the problem, "Often employers after completing a certain project retrench the entire workforce and then recruit a new workforce at the next site. We have noticed that increasingly women are being taken on, on a casual basis, so that they are not entitled to sick pay, unemployment benefits, and sometimes even compensation in the event of an accident or injury. These workers are usually in remote areas and they know very little of their rights. In these areas employers are paying R60 a fortnight". (4) Working conditions in the industry are also very bad, Billy Sebola at the launch reminded other workers; "We face the most oppressive and inhumane treatment. Daily we are sworn at, we are the workers who are still called Kaffirs. To meet construction deadlines we have to push our bodies to the limits of our strength". (5)

CAWU faces a number of challenges, the most important of which is probably the fight for a living wage. Construction workers are presently receiving an average minimum wage of R1.70 per hour. (6) The other big problem is that of retrenchments. In recent years the industry, hit by an over-supplied market in residential accommodation (whites) and office space has been suffering a severe depression. The two biggest employers associations, the Building Industry Federation of South Africa (BIFSA) and South African Federation of Civil Engineers (SAFCEC) have estimated job losses in their industries as 75,000 and 40,000 since 1982. The period July 1985 to July 1986 saw overall job losses in the construction

industry of 9,700. (7)

However recent state plans to improve township infrastructure and increased manufacture of low cost housing (for blacks) is likely to usher in a slight upturn for the industry. For management the high rate of job losses in the last few years has also presented some difficulties. Retrenched workers do not often return to the work site with the result that labour costs tend to be pushed up during the next upswing. It is therefore possible that 1987/8 may represent a period of renewed investment for the industry, a process which may also strengthen worker bargaining power. At the same time Ron McLennan, President of SAFCEC, foresees a decline in heavy engineering projects in the next year. (8) A large proportion of the workforce is concentrated in heavy construction.

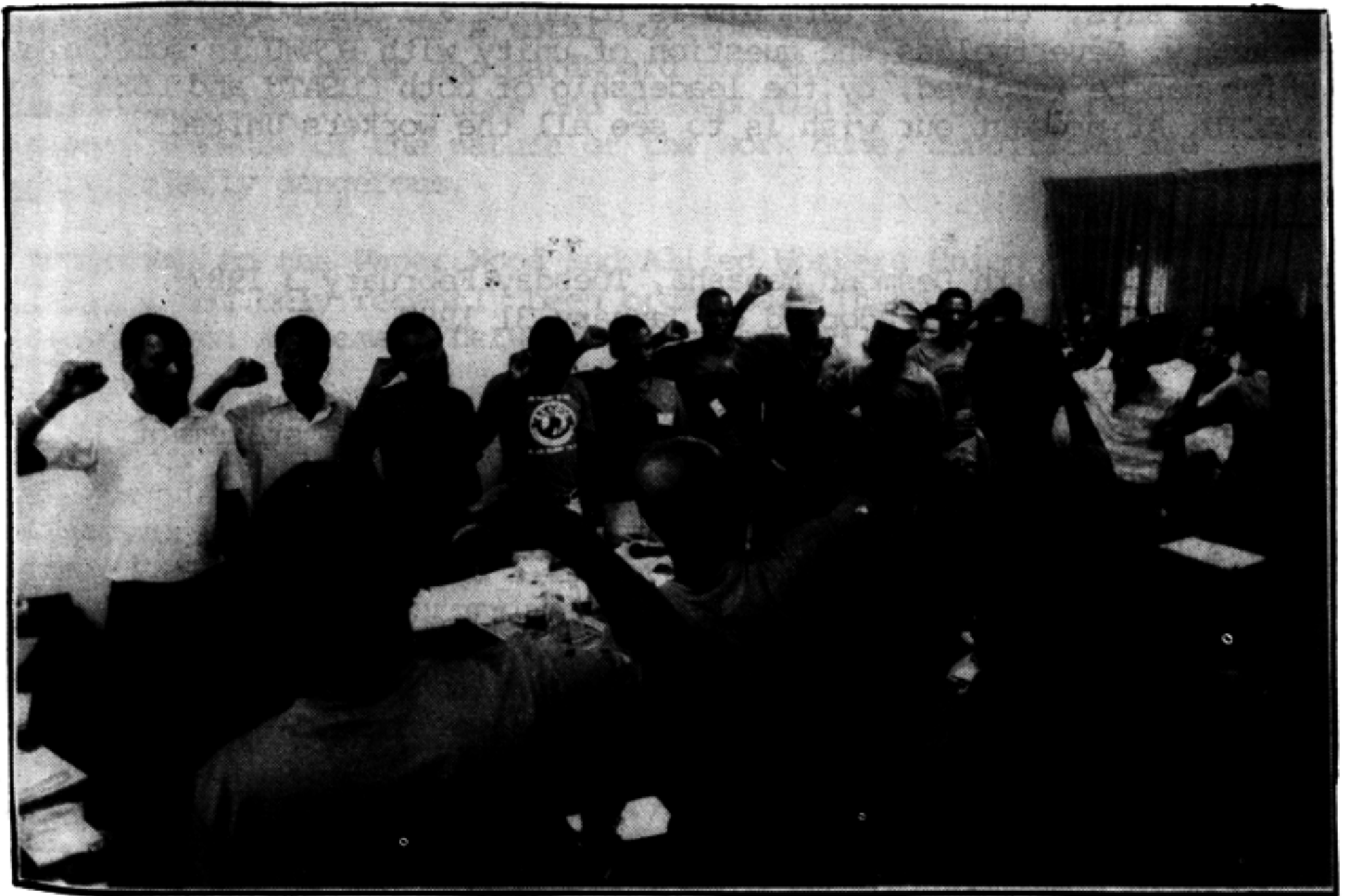


photo: delegates and workers at the launch of CAWU

[Afrapix]

For CAWU the battle against retrenchments will most likely continue, as employers deliberately use this to weaken workers. "We reject retrenchments and would prefer transfers together with

accommodation allowances for workers when projects are finished", says Mahasha. The other priority facing the union is that of achieving more recognition agreements and the right to automatic stop-order deductions. "Some of our members have obtained recognition agreements in certain areas (eg. MAWU members from Northern Natal) but this is not the case for everyone". (9)

For CAWU the way forward is not going to be easy. The 30,000 members who make up the new union are a small proportion of the potential workforce within the industry. Central Statistical Service figures for July 1986 quote the total workforce at about 303,900. In the PWV-area CAWU also has to face the existence of the Building Construction and Allied Workers Union (BCAWU), one of CUSA-AZACTU's largest affiliates. BCAWU claims a total membership of 45,000 of which 22,000 are paid up. (see SALB 12.1) Responding to this, Mahasha says, "our long term aim is to unite all the workers in one industry. Nevertheless the question of unity with BCAWU is something which can be resolved, by the leadership of both COSATU and CUSA-AZACTU. At present our wish is to see all the workers united".

Notes

1. Interview with Desmond Mahasha, Tuesday February 3 1987
2. CAWU Resolutions, adopted on January 31 1987
3. *ibid*
4. Interview with Mahasha
5. Billy Sebola, quoted in COSATU Head office press statement, February 2 1987
6. *ibid*
7. "A Profile of the Building and Construction Industry", unpublished report, Sept 1986, p 4
8. *ibid*, taken from SAFCEC Annual General Meeting, Sept 1986
9. Interview with Mahasha, *ibid*.

(Coletane Markham, February 1987)

Death at Empire Paper Waste

On Friday January 23, Truster Hlatshwayo, a worker at Empire Paper Waste, fell into a paper shredding machine and died. It appears that she had been standing on a pile of cardboard, and was feeding bits of waste into the machine below her when she slipped. The horror of the accident resulted in an immediate work stoppage, as other workers demanded that management take action. Workers claimed that a number of machines at the factory were unsafe and they refused to resume work until their safety could be ensured.

Empire Paper Waste is a small factory in Industria. The three directors who jointly own the factory also function as management at the plant. There is a total workforce of about 70. At the factory piles of waste paper and cardboard are shredded and baled. This is then collected into trucks and transported to a bigger recycling plant. Because of the nature of the work done, conditions are particularly dangerous.

According to the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAU) the factory has only recently been organised. There is still no formal recognition agreement between the union and management.

As soon as the accident occurred the union asked the Technical Advice Group (TAG) to assist them in evaluating safety conditions at the plant. On Monday January 26 members from TAG, a union official and some workers inspected the factory. They were accompanied by a director and a factory inspector. According to TAG conditions at the factory were generally bad. The floor was covered in piles of old paper and cardboard, particularly around the shredding machine and the baling machines. The cardboard on the floor was slippery and difficult to stand on. There were a number of roof leakages and poor drainage. It became clear that a thorough clean-up of the factory was necessary.

At the shredding machine it was found that workers stand on piles of waste while feeding cardboard into the machine. In addition the machine is situated below ground level, so that workers have to bend over while feeding cardboard into it. The workers said that they preferred to stand on the left of the machine so that they could feed paper with their right hands. The single stop switch was however on the right hand side of the machine. This makes it inac-

- health & safety -

cessible to workers standing on the left in cases of emergency. It was also found that the machine takes some time to stop after being switched off. The workers said that it took up to five minutes to stop. There were some missing blades on the shredding machine, meaning that the shaft is probably out of balance. The biggest problem however was that there was no guard between the workers and the machine. TAG recommended that a fence also be built on both sides of the conveyor belt which leads from the shredding machine. This would prevent workers from falling onto the conveyor. Numerous other problems were also discovered at the factory. Workers complained that the dust level in the shredding room was too high. There is inadequate ventilation, the only ventilation coming through the door and windows. The workers said that the paper masks with which they are provided last half-a-day, yet management change these only weekly. Workers complained that heavy duty trucks in the yard had no power steering, of reverse gears not standing in place, and a number of other faults.

As a result of the inspection, the workers and TAG made a number of recommendations which were subsequently included in an agreement with management. The factory inspector ordered the closure of the shredding machine until a guard was put on, as well as a number of other orders. PWAU says that management has now agreed to repair all defects on the trucks and to send trucks to the municipal testing ground for roadworthy tests. All other machines found to be unsafe were put out of operation, whilst the factory was cleaned up. A guard is to be fitted to the shredding machine and a second emergency stop switch, on the left, is to be fitted. A fence will also be built on both sides of the conveyor belts. The union also negotiated the establishment of a "safety committee" at the factory. This committee will comprise of three workers and one director, and will report to the directors in future. They will be trained by the union during working hours at full pay.

At the time of writing, PWAU reported that one machine had since begun working. In the meantime an inquest into the causes of the accident is to be held. The union says that it is still trying to negotiate compensation for Truster's children. At the time of the accident she was 24 years old. She was unmarried and has two children, both under five years of age. The tragic lesson once again is that only workers themselves - through their unions - can ensure health and safety standards on the shopfloor.

(Coletane Markham, February 1987)

Domestics unite

A new national domestic worker's union, the South African Domestic Worker's Union (SADWU) was launched in Cape Town at the end of November last year. Those workers who were present declared 1987 the "Year of the Domestic Worker" - a time when they will stand up and fight for their rights. Domestic workers remain one of the most exploited and oppressed sectors of the workforce, yet this is still the area with the greatest concentration of black women workers.

Until the 1980's domestic workers were weak, they were relatively unorganised, and they remained largely ignorant of their rights as worker's. Things had begun to change with the formation of the Domestic Workers Employment Project (DWEPE), with whose assistance domestic workers slowly began to form their own unions in various areas. The period after 1980 (1978 in the case of the Cape based Domestic Workers Association) was, however, marked by regional variations and lack of cohesion between the emergent domestic worker organisations around the country. The formation of SADWU thus marks a period of consolidation between the regions.

SADWU is the culmination of almost two years of merger talks between the old South African Domestic Workers Association (SADWA), the Western Cape based Domestic Workers Association (DWA), and the Natal based National Domestic Workers Association (NDWA). Two Eastern Cape unions, the Port Elizabeth and East London based PEDWU and ELDWU have also formed part of the merger. Port Elizabeth Domestic Workers Union is a breakaway group from Domestic Workers Association of South Africa (DWASA) which pulled out over the question of affiliation to COSATU. Another Transvaal based organisation, the Black Domestic Workers Union, also remained outside of the merger.

According to the new President, Ms Violet Motlhasedi, the new union "will maintain unity in the working class struggle under the umbrella of COSATU. It will also work with other progressive organisations to fight for a democratic South Africa". (1) The union has also stated its belief that domestic workers and women should play a major role in that struggle, and they have re-affirmed their willingness to take up political action to advance the interests of their members. (2) Other office bearers elected at the launch include, the vice-President, Ms Gertrude Masenuka, the general

secretary, Florence de Villiers, and treasurer, Mary Mkwanazi.

The new union's top priority will be the fight to include domestic workers in the country's labour legislation. This is part of the fight to set one minimum national wage for all domestics. According to Ms Margaret Nlapo, general secretary of the Johannesburg branch, the old domestic worker associations have sent a number of memoranda to the government between 1980 and 1986. "In 1984 we got fed up at the lack of response to our demands and delegates from each region were sent to visit the Minister of Manpower at Pretoria. At this meeting the assistant to the Minister gave us an assurance that the memoranda would be studied and that a response would be forthcoming. The period since then has, however, seen the government using "delaying tactics which simply involves sending us letters from time to time which are full of weak promises and vague assurances" (3) I was also during the 1984 meeting that the unity drive was discussed and initiated. At the launch a resolution was adopted which gives employers and the government an ultimatum to meet these demands by May 1 1987.

The unions next priority will be the fight to redress the present intolerable working conditions under which domestic workers find themselves. The following is an extract from the interview with Ms Nlapo, in which the SALB tried to find out what organising domestic workers entails, and what progress has been made since the launch of SADWU.

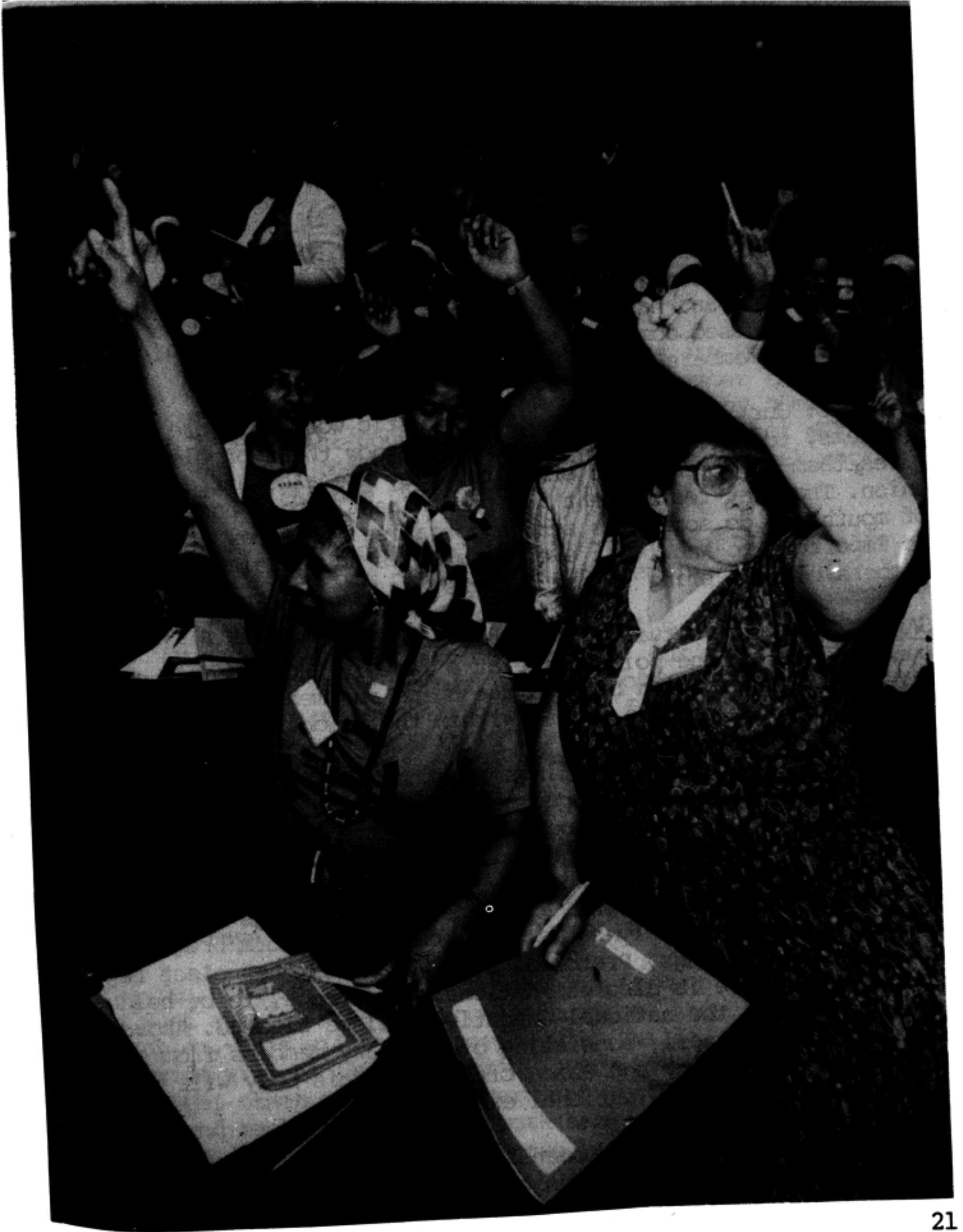
INTERVIEW

SALB: What are the major grievances of your members at present?

Ms Nlapo: The major grievances revolve around questions of dismissal without notification, low wages and long working hours, and the disruption of family life which domestics experience. Employers are hiding behind the lack of legislation to protect these workers. This is the context in which our demands must be viewed. The demands adopted include:

- * A minimum wage of R200 per month
- * Unemployment benefits for domestic workers
- * Normal working hours, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week
- * Workmens Compensation. The union sees this as a very important

photo: elections at launch of SADWU, Cape Town 29.11.86 [Afrapix]



demand. Like any other workers domestics often get hurt at work. Typical examples are dog bites, breaking legs and arms while cleaning windows, etc. For the injured worker there is common law to protect them, but few know of this, and the employers usual response is to simply dismiss injured workers.

- * Maternity benefits
- * Annual paid sick leave
- * Overtime at R2,50 per hour.

SALB: Domestic workers are isolated, dispersed, and usually under almost total control of their employers. Your union claims a membership of 50,000 and has stated the need to organise the other million or so unorganised domestic workers. Given this situation how do you recruit new members?

Ms Nlapo: Our response is to make domestic workers aware of their problems, to give them an idea that we know their problems. This gives them confidence and strength, they are also attracted to the union. Thus far recruitment has predominantly been based on word of mouth. We do sometimes send an organiser to a new area, but it is important to know that every member is an organiser for SADWU. Members usually bring in new members.

SALB: Unlike the situation of other unions, you do not have workers concentrated at one point, like at a factory. How then do you keep lines of communication between the union and membership open. What structures, for example, exist within the union to ensure this.

Ms Nlapo: One of the best things about the last few years is the way our workers have developed structures by themselves, in order to respond to their situation. We have seen the formation of street and area committees on the ground, especially where we are well organised. Some domestics whom we have helped are so grateful that they go out to organise their whole street. Meetings are held at street level on a weekly basis. Area committees form branches, such as Johannesburg, Springs, Pretoria, etc. Branches then elect regional executives. There is also the National conference, to be held every two years where the national executive will be elected. Above this is a National Council, consisting of ordinary members from each region (3 per region) and union officials. This body will ratify decisions taken by the national executive.

SALB: Your problem at the moment is also the lack of time-off for domestics. Does this affect union organisation, like attendance at

meetings, and so on.

Ms Nlapo: Yes, it does affect us. That is why we are also demanding normal working hours. At our Annual General Meetings for example, we usually have to have a follow up meeting the next day, for those who couldn't come the day before. Street level meetings are also affected by this; irregular attendance is one way we see this problem in the union.

SALB: Influx control has historically affected domestic workers in quite a significant way. How will the so-called scrapping of the Pass Laws and the new "orderly urbanisation" affect your members?

Ms Nlapo: It seems to me that most of our members are worse off now. Pass raids may have stopped, but you must remember that the majority of our members are still migrant workers. Many come from the so-called independent countries. These people will not get the new identity booklets, they will not find it easier to seek work in the cities. It is with them that our main concern lies.

SALB: Your members also complain of the disruption of family life. Is there a way that you can redress this problem in the future?

Ms Nlapo: It is very, very difficult. This is the one thing that causes a lot of heartache amongst our members. Our own children are running in the street while we must smile at our employers children. In the cities we may redress this by calling for creches, for time-off, but for our rural workers it is very hard. Ultimately the solution is political, there must be an end to this "Homeland" system.

SALB: Florence de Villiers, your national general secretary has said that SADWU will be more than a union. She has said that the union would also be providing training in skills, worker education, and advice for workers who wish to escape the cul-de-sac of domestic work. How far have you proceeded along this path?

Ms Nlapo: Yes this is true, but the problem is much deeper than this. We must ask for free and equal education, this is the root of the problem. This will equip people with skills. What training we can provide will be limited, besides very few will be able to use this to get other jobs. The government must provide more work; many are forced back into domestic work because there are no jobs. Look at myself, I was trained as a nurse before I went to do domestic work.

SALB: Your union has given an ultimatum to employers and the government to meet demands by May 1. Are you in a position to carry out national protest action?

Ms Nlapo: No, we are not in that position. We are not really that well organised. The other problem is the influence of Inkatha, and their union UWUSA, amongst our members. This is particularly bad in the Natal branch, but also here in Johannesburg. The battle is going to be difficult, our main struggle can really be with employers at present. They must be educated, our workers must be educated. Our union is using the courts at the moment, usually on the basis of workers common law rights. This however gives power to the individual worker, not to the union.

Notes

1. Taken from True Love February 1987
2. Union resolutions, political policy, adopted at UWC on November 29 1986
3. Interview with Margaret Nlapo, general secretary of the Johannesburg branch, February 9 1987

(Coletane Markham, February 1987)

National Union of Railway Workers launch

On November 29 and 30 of last year, some 600 railway workers gathered at the Ipelegeng Centre in Soweto to launch the National Union of Railway Workers (NURW). Present were delegates from most parts of the country: East London, Port Elizabeth, Western Cape, PWV, Eastern Transvaal, Western Transvaal and Northern Natal. The establishment of the national union is the culmination of a process which began with the founding, independently of each other, of worker committees in different parts of the country from early 1986. These committees relied on the initiatives of workers themselves and came to stress principles of worker control and participation. The new union continues these traditions and has said that whilst it is open to talks with other unions operating in the sector, "our precondition for unity with any union will be that we

guarantee an industry-based democratically-controlled union will emerge." (For a background to organising and trade unions on the railways see SALB 12.1)

The new union claimed an initial signed up membership of 5,000, although they say that this figure may well have doubled since the launch especially after a mass meeting in East London held on January 17, when 2-3,000 new members were signed up.

Office bearers

Delegates present at the launch elected the following officers: Mr M Nemasetoni (President); Mr P Mangoloti (Vice-president); Mr Manjezu (Treasurer); Mr Andre van der Haar (General secretary) and Mr M Madasi (Assistant general secretary).

Resolutions and debate

Resolutions passed by the founding conference include:

- * To unite all workers in the railways, airways and harbours of South Africa into one union.
- * To strive towards one union on the railways.
- * To educate workers about their rights in the workplace.
- * To ensure workers control of the union.
- * To fight to scrap job reservation and apartheid in the South African Transport Services and to improve on the bad working conditions.
- * The NURW will strive to work hand in hand with all progressive democratic organisations.
- * Staff associations should be abolished seeing that they work for the interests of the government... They are not democratic. Workers have no say in them and do not even know who these officials are. We did not elect them so they have no mandate from us. That is why the government likes them.

INTERVIEW

The following interview was conducted by the South African Labour Bulletin with office bearers of the NURW on January 21.

SALB: Around what issues have the workers on the railways been mobilised?

NURW: Primarily around the bad conditions and low wages which are usually worse than for private industry. For instance our workers have no rights to UIF and are not covered by the Workmens Compensation Act. Also on the railways, workers do not have the basic rights that workers in other industries have won: there is no freedom of association and workers are forced into staff associations which serve the interests of management. That is why we have called on the officials in these bodies to resign their positions.

Also, on the railways, racism and discrimination is still very strong. You have the situation where black workers and whites are doing the same job under a different name, but are paid very different rates. So you have the white marshall and the black shunter, the ticket collector (black) and the train conductor (white); the white checkers and the black sorters, and so on.

Although these are the immediate concerns, the long term objective of the union is to participate fully in the broader workers struggle against apartheid and economic exploitation.

SALB: The SATS is well known for its efforts to divide workers both on racial grounds and according to grades. How has this affected the union?

NURW: It is our policy to organise all workers on the railways. But apartheid is still terrible. For instance we cannot even enter the white canteen to talk to them. In the longterm we will break that down. But it is impractical at this stage. Even amongst black workers - as expected - the higher grades are still holding back for fear of management reprisals.

SALB: What are the origins of the National Union of Railway Workers?

NURW: Early last year a number of independent workers committees were established: in East London, Port Elizabeth, Western Cape, Johannesburg and Klerksdorp. These were established and run by the workers themselves in those areas. But it was increasingly realised that it was necessary to unite our forces if we were to pose a feasible challenge to the SATS bosses and to have a chance of changing the intolerable working conditions. At that time meetings were held with all workers regardless of political or union affiliation. So there were members present from SARHWU [South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union, a COSATU affiliate] and

ARAHWU [African Railway and Harbour Workers Union, a CUSA-AZACTU affiliate].

In September a "national interim committee" was formed which applied to affiliate to COSATU and for assistance. It was intended to convene a national conference to include members of all the unions currently operating on the railways, on the basis that only workers were to be represented. It was at that stage we found out that SARHWU was to be re-launched.

SALB: It has been argued, by trade unionists sympathetic towards NURW that if you want to be affiliated to COSATU you should have joined SARHWU and worked from within that body. What were the objections to this course of action?

NURW: There was a lot of talk along these lines, but when we looked into SARHWU we found there was little worker control in that body. The executive was in fact made up of officials from another union and it had no proper constitution. Even though SARHWU has now opened offices in other areas it was concentrated largely in the Johannesburg area; it was not a national union. We would have liked to work together to build a truly national union.

In the meantime we felt it was strategically necessary to launch the NURW in order to seek wider unity and in order to provide organisation and education for our members.

Also we saw the failure of unions within COSATU to merge and unite. If even SARHWU and TGWU [Transport and General Workers Union] could not find common ground over organising the railways, we would end up being torn between the two, part of an internal battle.

SALB: Have you considered merging with TGWU, a union with a long history of democratic organisation?

NURW: We have had contact with TGWU on this issue. However, we believe there is a crucial difference between organising transport workers generally, especially in the private sector, and organising SATS workers who fall under the public sector. Before you are in a position to pressurise management - in this case SATS which is backed by the state - it is necessary to organise the entire industry. This is why we believe in the need for a national railway union.

SALB: The old General Workers Union, which was involved in organising railway workers in Port Elizabeth in 1982, was defeated

by intransigent SATS management when their members took strike action. The GWU also concluded that national organisation was required, but they went further. They argued that this would only be achieved through massive solidarity and resources that could only be mobilised by a large union federation. Does not the NURW need this kind of backing to win against such a powerful management?

NURW: Remember that there were only a few hundred workers involved in that strike. It is precisely why we intend to unite all railway, harbour and airways workers under one union. We need such an organisation which will also need the support of other worker organisations on a large scale. We intend to be part of a large union federation. But we have come to realise that the only effective method of organising on the railways is for railway workers themselves to take the initiative. It is true that there are extra problems facing railway workers because of the nature of the railways management. Harrassment is a big problem and two of our organisers were recently detained in Bloemfontein.

SALB: What will be the political direction of the new union?

NURW: We welcome all workers irrespective of political leanings. We do not want to be one-sided supporting one political organisation only as happens with SARHWU and ARAHWU. But this does not mean we are neutral on political questions. We will address these issues at the point of action and where our members are affected we will be participating. We inform members of all significant events and encourage them to participate in the general workers struggle at all levels. But workers themselves must have the ammunition to decide on political direction. We must make sure that when clashes occur over political direction workers will have a forum in which to debate these, something which is seriously lacking.

Members have already made it known that we are to draw up a programme in which we can be part of the struggle to bring about the unbanning of banned organisations, the release of political prisoners, and the end of apartheid and political oppression, through working hand in hand with progressive organisations including student, youth and women's organisations.

Mozambican miners' reprieve

The sudden announcement in October last year to ban Mozambican workers, followed by a major reprieve in December after Chamber protests to the Department of Manpower, focuses attention on the dependence South African employers have on foreign workers. The debacle raises three issues - the government's primary concern over "security" rather than capitalist economic interests, South Africa's dependence (and political clout) upon migrant supplier countries, and the long term trends in the mine labour market and their implications for unions, particularly the NUM.

Security in command

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Mineral and Energy Affairs, Home Affairs and Manpower jointly announced in October that no Mozambican work permits would be renewed. The ban was in retaliation for a landmine explosion near the Mozambican border which had injured SA soldiers. It was claimed the ban would stop the infiltration of ANC guerillas. Many commentators noted that the decision had great potential for destabilising the Mozambican state.

The ban flouted a tacit agreement used to encourage Mozambique to sign the Nkomati Accord. In part exchange for signing Nkomati, Mozambique was promised that recruitment of its nationals would be stepped up from 45,000 to between 70 - 80,000 workers. A massive 118,000 Mozambicans worked on South African mines when the Chamber drastically cut recruitment shortly after Frelimo achieved independence.

The Chamber of Mines, highly resentful at not being consulted on the ban and concerned at the decline in gold production it would cause, vigorously lobbied the government. The effect of the ban varied from mine to mine. Hardest hit would have been ERPM with 43% of its workforce from Mozambique - ironically the state has given this mine subsidies amounting to millions of rands so as to earn foreign exchange and preserve jobs. Other mines that would have been disrupted include the highly profitable West Drie (13% Mozambicans), East Drie (9%), Kloof (11%), Randfontein (19%), Western Areas (31%) and Western Deeps (13%) and the less profitable Blyvoor (21%). State coffers would also have been affected since gold mine taxes are the state's largest source of revenue. The

- mozambican miners -

mines mentioned pay up to three quarters of their gross profits as tax.

By December a reprieve was granted. It permitted workers in group 4 and higher and workers with more than seven years experience to continue working - probably between 40 and 50% of all Mozambican miners. Mines where Mozambican workers comprise more than 20% of the workforce in grades 1, 2 and 3 will be able to phase these workers out over 3 years. The haste with which the government gave the reprieve is striking. It suggests that in the laager mentality of the state, major political decisions are being made with little regard for their economic consequences.

Dependence on foreign labour

The ban was vigorously opposed by the Chamber not merely because of the large numbers of workers involved but because of their valuable skills - a feature of foreign miners in South Africa. The government's assumption that the Mozambican miners could easily be replaced from South Africa's pool of unemployed was simply wrong.

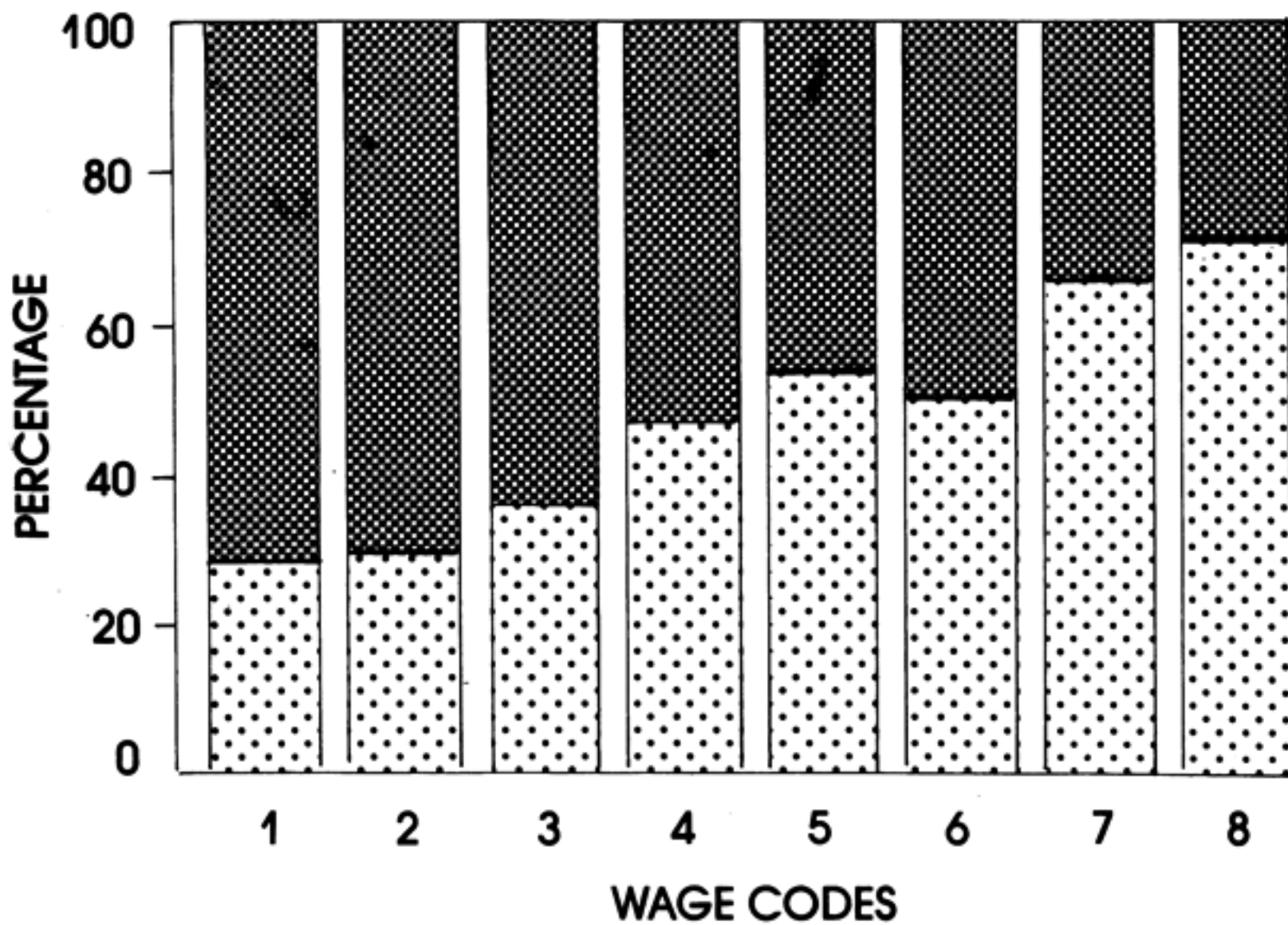
Miners make up the vast majority - 83% - of the 350,000 registered foreign black workers in South Africa. Most are employed on the gold mines. The mining industry's dependence on foreign migrants has declined dramatically in the last 15 years - from 80% in 1972 to 40% in 1986.

A report by ILO researcher Fion de Vletter shows that these foreign migrants possess crucial skills. Using 1986 data supplied by Anglo American - who employ about a third of the gold labour force, and whose foreign to local worker ratio is also 60 to 40 - de Vletter extrapolated a skills profile for foreign gold miners.

(F de Vletter, "A comparative analysis of skills and other characteristics of foreign mine workers on the South African gold mines", ILO SATEP, 1986.) Briefly, his findings are as follows:

- * The breakdown of foreign gold miners in 1986 was Lesotho 97,000 (49%), Mozambique 50,000 (25%), Malawi 20,000 (10%), Botswana 18,000 (9%) and Swaziland 12,000 (6%).
- * Foreign miners dominate in higher skilled jobs (see figure). While foreigners make up only 30% of group 1 jobs, they control 70% of group 8 jobs. Group 8 consists mostly of stope team leaders - crucial supervisors who have taken over the jobs white miners did in the past.

- * Foreign miners are older and are more experienced than the South Africans. Most foreign migrants are between 30 and 39 years old and have worked on the mines for between 5 and 10 years. Local miners are generally between 20 and 29 years old with somewhat less experience.
- * Very few novice workers have been recruited from foreign sources in recent years. Although novice workers accounted for 9% of all workers in 1983-5, only 1-2% of foreign miners were novices.
- * Most miners leave after working for 10 years. This means the proportion of foreign workers will drop dramatically to perhaps less than 20% within five years unless the Chamber drastically alters its recruiting policies.



COMPOSITION OF WAGE CODES BY ORIGIN (%)

 FOREIGN  SOUTH AFRICAN

Long term trends

The Chamber has cut back on foreign recruiting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is much more expensive to recruit workers hundreds and even thousands of miles from the mines than from local homelands and Lesotho. Since the seventies the Chamber has been closing recruiting offices in remote and far-flung areas and concentrating on new areas such as the OFS, Qwa Qwa, Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu.

Secondly, there is a trend in gold mining - although comparatively slow - towards more highly mechanised production. Mechanisation requires a greater proportion of semi-skilled and skilled workers who cannot be easily replaced. Foreign workers, since they are beyond the Chamber's political clout, are a risk for the Chamber. Their sudden withdrawal by a foreign government or expulsion by the South African government for political reasons could jeopardise large amounts of gold production. Thirdly, the risk of AIDs from Malawi where an epidemic threatens, partly contributed to the Chamber's decision to stop all new recruitment there.

Ironically the trend towards reducing foreign labour is likely to strengthen the NUM's position. Although there have been some important exceptions such as the 1985 Marievale strike (when Mozambican miners "hijacked" busses shipping them back home and persisted until NUM won a court decision reinstating them) workers from Mozambique, Malawi and Botswana have been notoriously difficult to organise and are often bitterly remembered as strikebreakers.

(Jean Leger, February 1987)

General Motors strike update

Glen Adler's article in the last edition of the Bulletin analysed some of the dynamics leading up to the GM strike, its wider significance for the disinvestment debate, and developments during the early days of the strike. Since then, of course, the strike has severely weakened, although for 460 of the 1,900 workforce still on strike - including most of the shop stewards and union activists - the struggle is not yet over.

Two weeks into the strike, on Monday November 17, GM management issued a final ultimatum to the effect that workers who did not return to work the following day would be dismissed since they were engaged in an illegal strike. At a mass meeting on the previous Friday, support for the strike had seemed firm enough; why then did the majority of workers respond to management's dictates?

Union sources offer the following reasons: firstly, the police attack on picketers on the Monday morning, and prior to that the eviction of workers from the plant during the previous week; secondly, the fact that workers had received no strike pay; also, the negative coverage given to the strike by the media; and most importantly, the very high unemployment levels in the area and the fact that large-scale scabbing could be expected.

From the start local GM management has simply refused to negotiate over the union's demands:

(i) that the pension fund money should be paid out, with actuaries appointed to determine the amount due to each employee based on (a) employee's contribution, (b) employer's contribution, and (c) profits accrued from investments of the pension fund. Employees would then choose between receiving a lump sum and transferring the funds to a provident fund - the fund to be decided jointly by management and workers, after workers had received the necessary information to make the decision;

(ii) for severance pay of one month per year of service;

(iii) and for a representative on the new board of directors.

The company has also refused to cooperate in industrial council

- GM strike -

settlement procedures or to nominate a mediator. GM has preferred to apply to the Industrial Court arguing that the demands of the strikers constitute an unfair labour practice. NAAWU is still contesting this.

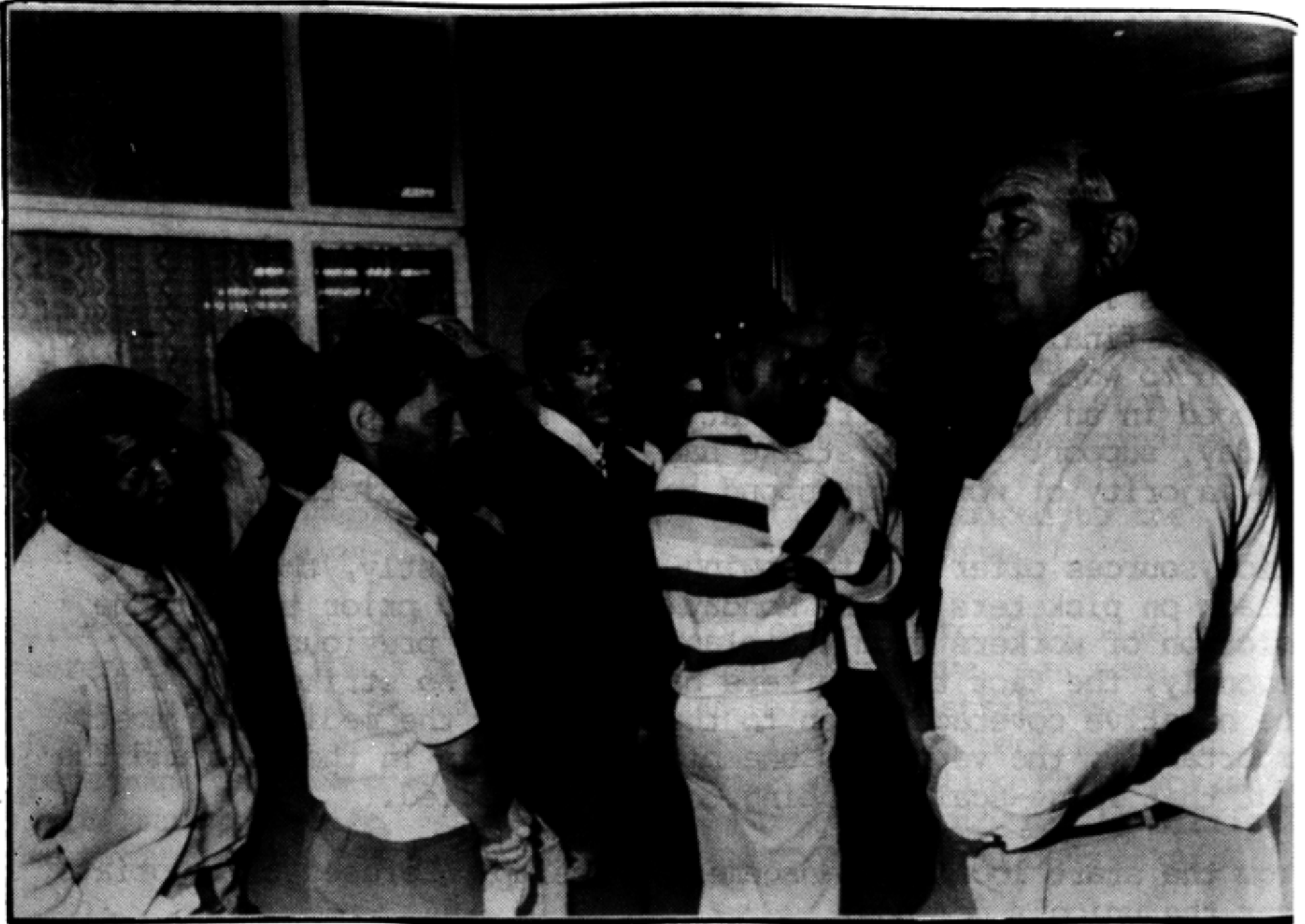


photo: management screens the workers who slept in the plant.
(Afrapix)

The present situation

The 460 workers still on strike have received no money since the funds of the support committees dried up early this year. They continue to meet weekly, and have stated that they are willing to negotiate their terms of reinstatement with no prior conditions. The company, however, which has employed replacement scab labour, denies all responsibility for these workers: they have dismissed themselves and their shop stewards now represent nobody, the company says.

However the settlement of this dispute is still very much on NAAWU's agenda. The union is meeting to discuss the problem and to decide what support other factories can offer. The issue is also being taken up by the COSATU local. Most important is the fact that whilst much of the shop floor leadership remains outside the plant, returning workers are by no means antagonistic to the union (which still represents them) and many are returning to make contact with the union offices. Striking workers, although initially bitter towards those who returned to work, have now realised the importance of working for unity with these workers.

Lessons

The GM strike was the first occasion that workers within COSATU have taken action to determine the terms of disinvestment. The union stresses that the action taken did not represent an attack on COSATU policy of support for the disinvestment campaign. Rather it should be seen as support for COSATU's position that where such disinvestment occurs the wealth created by South African workers should not be allowed to leave the country. In the future the issues raised by the GM workers will form part of a broader set of demands around the terms for disinvestment.

A significant gain of the GM struggle for auto workers in the region has been the cooperation and unity developed between the two unions - NAAWU and MACWUSA - despite a history of antagonism.

For the trade unions one of the biggest problems during the strike has been the hardline attitude of management and their refusal to negotiate meaningfully. Whatever the longterm implications for industrial relations, the onus is now on trade unions to develop strategies appropriate to these new conditions of struggle.

(SALB correspondent, February 1987)

Organising the unemployed

On the weekend of the 9-10 of January, the Unemployed Workers Co-ordinating Committee (UWCC) organised a meeting of unemployed organisations from different parts of the country at COSATU House in Johannesburg. Those attending were:

- (i) UWCC - a co-ordinating committee of different unemployed groups in the Transvaal.
- (ii) The Unemployed Workers Movement - which brings together workers who have formed action committees in various townships of the Western Cape.
- (iii) The East London Unemployed Workers Union - which also has contacts in the surrounding rural areas.
- (iv) Also attending was a group of retrenched workers from Murray and Roberts operating in the Port Elizabeth area.

These groups [other than (iv)] have been operating for the last two years. General activities of the groups include the setting up of co-operatives and other related projects, campaigns around jobs, the 40 hour week, bans on overtime, and UIF; support work of different forms for strikes, and education around questions of organisation and unemployment.

At the national meeting a number of common problems were highlighted such as the need for more funds, problems of transport, the need to develop democratic and accountable structures and the necessity for all groups to work towards regional unity. Groups felt that the regional boundaries used should correspond to those used by COSATU.

The meeting agreed that a national co-ordinating committee should be formed consisting of representatives from each of the organisations, to be called the National Unemployed Workers Co-ordinating Committee. The task of the committee, amongst others is to convene the next meeting of the unemployed. The meeting also agreed that a stronger relationship needs to be built with other organisations and that the structures of all the groups need deepening. On projects it was felt that while these were important in organising the unemployed, there needs to be a more careful assessment of projects and a national workshop should be convened where issues could be discussed.

Interview with the UWCC

Below we publish an interview with Mr Joseph Ncibe, spokesperson for the UWCC, conducted on February 6.

SALB: The national meeting of unemployed organisations took place in COSATU House; what is the relationship of these organisations to COSATU?

Joseph Ncibe: Many unemployed workers were once members of COSATU unions and they still see themselves as belonging. We need to use COSATU's strength to support us. But we are not affiliated to COSATU - although COSATU is on record as being willing to support a union of the unemployed. But we are still organising towards this.

SALB: Is it planned to set up an unemployed workers union, and how would this work?

Joseph Ncibe: Yes it is. It would be based on township structures - with groups organised in each section of the township - each with its own executive. Each executive would send two reps to a township central committee and from there two reps would go to the national body. We are still discussing as to whether members would be expected to pay dues - of say 50c a month.

SALB: On what issues will you mobilise unemployed workers, and what are the main areas you are working around?

Joseph Ncibe: We fight UIF cases, and rent cases, and negotiate for jobs for the unemployed. Also we are organising co-operatives. Also, we are holding talks with COSATU about setting up advice centres in all townships. But at this stage we are also devoting much time to training our people to make all these things possible.

SALB: Is it true that in some areas unemployed workers are already sitting alongside organised workers on locals, and what are the benefits of this?

Joseph Ncibe: Yes, in Springs unemployed workers participate in the local, which has negotiated on their behalf over rents and for public works to provide employment. They succeeded in getting some jobs created and they are also planning a building co-op. The

- unemployed workers -

Springs local also negotiated with local businessmen to freeze repayments on furniture until workers found new jobs - rather than repossessing goods as in the past.

We are organising for all the people of the East Rand to come together to fight for the same things as have been won in Springs - and those people can come along and tell us how they did it.

In other areas the position is that we are still organising, so the priority is to organise the union nationally to take up these issues - and to get the support of workers.

SALB: In the past there have been sometimes conflicting interests between the unemployed and organised workers - if you look at the recent example of strike breaking at General Motors.

Joseph Ncibe: We can help prevent unemployed workers from taking strikers jobs. Also one of the functions of the local unemployed groups will be to negotiate to obtain jobs from local firms - they must not go off and queue up outside the gate individually.

SALB: Looking ahead, what do you see a national organisation of the unemployed looking like in a few years time and what would it do?

Joseph Ncibe: It will look like any union affiliated to COSATU, and at the same time it will provide a home for the unemployed workers which will take up and fight for issues affecting them. But it will also be a great help to employed workers - for example in strikes and stay-aways.

The unemployed union will take up all the issues I have mentioned already - UIF, rents, public works and so on.

Those in the Transvaal - and many others - feel that such a union of unemployed workers should affiliate to COSATU, but must retain relations with other unemployed workers from other federations.

The new union will ensure that the issues affecting the unemployed become a priority for the whole movement.

Sick leave – a worker's right?

Doctors spend a great deal of their time issuing certificates for sick leave and experience many problems in relation to this aspect of their work. The Western Cape branch of the National Medical and Dental Association, in an attempt to throw light on the problems, sent questionnaires to 350 general practitioners in the Greater Cape Town area. 93 doctors replied. Of these 8 were no longer in general practice. Almost all of the 85 practising doctors who replied, practise in the working class suburbs. In the report that follows the numbers in brackets indicate the number of doctors who gave a particular reply.

Doctors' difficulties in granting sick leave

Ideally doctors should be able to issue sick certificates having only to take into account their patients' welfare. 23 of the doctors felt that they experienced difficulties in putting patients off work for the full amount of time they thought necessary for their recovery. One doctor cited the example of putting domestic workers off work and having their "madams" then come to their homes to fetch them for work. He also gave a recent example of a builder who had pneumonia and was booked off work for a week. His employers promptly sacked him.

The most common reason given for difficulty in putting patients off work was the fear that the workers might lose their jobs (12). Other reasons included loss of income for the worker (5) and pressure from the management or company nurse (5). 52 doctors had not experienced this problem and 10 did not complete this question.

A large number of doctors (56) however, had had their sick certificates queried. This was done by management (52), but also by the company doctor or sister (13) and by the sick pay fund (4). The commonest queries were that the worker had been given too much time off for a particular illness (26) or else the diagnosis was queried (26). A part-time company doctor who completed the questionnaire said that he was often (underlined three times) asked to re-examine patients seen by private GP's to see if they were really as ill as the private GP's sick certificate would indicate. Other queries were that a particular worker had been given too many periods of sick leave (18), that the patient's diagnosis was

- sick leave -

demanded (13) and that the certificate had been falsified (10). In one case the query arose when a patient on sick leave was found not to be at home when visited by management. 8 doctors reported that their sick certificates had been overruled by management.

Confidentiality: a worker's right

In terms of medical ethics any information the doctor has about the patient is confidential and should only be divulged to a third party with the patient's consent. 43 doctors reported that they had been asked to divulge confidential information about patients. This was usually done by management (36) and sometimes by the company doctor or sister (12). 7 doctors singled out the "madams", employers of domestic workers, as being "the most inquisitive". 42 doctors had not experienced this problem.

Doctors were asked if they thought the employer had a right to know the diagnosis of a worker being put off work. 29 felt that the employer did not, mainly because information about the patient was confidential (21). 53 doctors felt that the employer should know the diagnosis though some of them (30) qualified their answers with reasons that were sympathetic towards workers. For example, one doctor said, "I don't have a problem with a general diagnosis. It is often very useful for the employer to know the general diagnosis being provided and a patient certainly has a right to refuse disclosure. It is often very useful for the employer to know the general diagnosis in terms of being able to know what to expect of the worker at work, knowing that the worker requires follow up, monthly visits, etc." Doctors emphasised that "sensitive" or "personal" diagnoses should not be disclosed.

Other reasons for supporting provision of information to management included cases of occupational disease, and illnesses which were a risk to other workers. Some doctors emphasised the need to obtain the patient's consent first. 21 doctors gave reasons that were in the employer's interests, eg. employees abuse sick leave, and the employers have to pay the sick leave pay.

Doctor's attitudes

The final question related to patients who belonged to Industrial Sick Funds. Doctors were asked if workers belonging to these funds put pressure on them to be put off work longer than was necessary. 55 doctors felt this was the case. The commonest reason (37) was

that workers would not be paid if off work for less than a specified period of time. The clothing and building industries were mentioned in this regard. 17 doctors also mentioned that workers felt that they were entitled to take all their sick leave each year. 20 doctors felt that they had not been pressurised and 10 did not complete this question.

Doctors were asked to comment in general on the sick pay issue and their responses differed widely:

- * "Very often employers phone to find out about their employee's condition. When referred to the sick certificate, it is indicated that they do not believe either the doctor or the patient or both. In my experience there are very few cases of genuine concern for the employee but merely trying to ascertain whether the patient cannot be put off for a shorter interval or not at all thus avoiding sick pay."
- * "Sick leave is abused by the majority of patients especially at times of long weekends, public holidays. My personal attitude is that practitioners should only grant sick leave when absolutely warranted on medical grounds and then ruthlessly stamp out the "right" some patients claim to have as far as sick leave is concerned."
- * "I resent the feeling when working for factories that I'm a paid employee of that company and my loyalties should be towards the company rather than the patient. Very often the company sister gives one the impression that every sick certificate issued by me is a personal defeat for her (and the company). Everyone is viewed as a malingerer until proven otherwise."

It seems that doctors are not happy with the situation regarding sick certificates. "Sick and tired of writing out sick certificates", wrote one doctor. A number of doctors suggested that a sick certificate should only be required for absences of longer than three days. This is a matter which needs to be discussed by representatives of all parties involved - doctors, employers and workers.

(NAMDA, Western Cape, 1986)

Management strategies: Just-In-Time

South African business's current emphasis on productivity has given rise to new management strategies on the manufacturing scene. One of these is the JIT (Just-In-Time) system, imported from Japan. JIT aims to reduce inventory and stock to a minimum because these are very expensive to any business. Thus raw materials are planned to arrive at the factory "just in time" to keep production from stopping. Also the stocks of finished goods are kept to the minimum necessary to satisfy customer requirements. In order to achieve these objectives far-reaching changes are required in every sphere of the company, and this may also profoundly affect working conditions for all employees.

Another name sometimes used for JIT is "Zero-Inventory" production. Cutting inventory unmask any "bottlenecks" which must be corrected immediately so as not to halt production. Other results include:

- * improved quality
- * faster reaction to the market place
- * reduced working capital
- * enhanced productivity

Some of the key features of the JIT system are: (1)

1. "Total quality control": Quality control is shifted from inspections at the end of the production cycle to quality that is "built in" to the product. Defects must be corrected on the job.
2. "Kanban": The Kanban system allows work-in-progress to be pulled from work station to work station. The Kanban, a card, is used to show when the next station is ready to receive the work item: until it is empty, the parts cannot be passed on.
3. "Zero inventory": Inventory is cut to a minimum so that stock arrives from the supplier directly into production. This system eliminates the tying up of capital in stock, reduces the need for space and warehouses, allows production units to be placed close together to shorten throughput time and allows forecasting to be linked accurately to demand.
4. "Preventive maintenance": Responsibility for machine maintenance is largely given to operators, and specialist maintenance departments are situated on the shopfloor to eliminate any

delays in repairing plant or machinery.

5. Product standardization: The parts used in a production process are standardized to a minimum to allow for efficient changeovers and reduced set-up times. The idea is to produce few variations with broad appeal, rather than custom make every product according to the customer's specification.

JIT - or aspects of it - has been introduced in various South African companies. GEC claims to have improved quality and reduced rejects by 40% to 1.5% since introducing JIT. MSN Products, an Altech company, claims to have increased employee output by 38%, reduced inventories by 26% and cut rejects by 75%. Other companies like Toyota, Rowen Engineering, Fedmech and Wilson Rowntree report similar achievements. (2) Although very few companies have actually implemented JIT, it is receiving a lot of attention from managements because it represents a non-capital method for improving both productivity and profits.

Implications for workers

South African trade unions have not yet responded to this new manufacturing system largely because its application is thus far, so limited. But it remains important to anticipate the potential effects of JIT on workers.

One of JIT's requirements is a flexible workforce. By this is meant that workers must be multi-functional and able to do a number of jobs. If the production process lends itself to rearrangement, work stations are laid out in U-shaped cells, with each cell forming a discrete unit. Within each cell, workers should be able to do all jobs so that the production flow is as quick and smooth as possible. In other cases, workers are directed to other work stations if extra work is scheduled.

This means that job descriptions and evaluation systems must be more flexible. South African trade unions have often insisted on rigid job descriptions, and higher pay for workers who stand in for someone on a higher grade. Therefore this issue is likely to generate worker opposition.

The JIT system also encourages problem solving to be carried out regularly in each cell of workers. Problem solving is limited to issues of quality, maintenance and production as regards the cell's own work. While it provides a forum for workers to con-

- jit -

tribute to solving production problems, it does not give workers any more say in the organisation of production. And it is clear that trade unions do want to be consulted on a wide range of production related issues, as is shown by a recent statement by Jay Naidoo, General Secretary of Cosatu:

We are not interested in the kind of paternalism where a decision is taken, for example to introduce new technology, and management comes to the union to discuss the effects, ie. retrenchments. We want to be consulted first. (3)

Some American trade unions have expressed concern over worker problem-solving groups. They have isolated a number of potential dangers, namely:

- * workers are made to work harder
- * management uses workers' knowledge of the job to its advantage
- * management bypasses the union
- * the size of the workforce is held down (4)

It is unclear whether these effects will be the outcome of JIT. JIT is dedicated to eliminating waste and rationalising production, which may well result in retrenchments in the present South African recession. But JIT is based on the pull system (kanban) which may eliminate some of the places where workers are pressurised on the production line. It is clear that one of the primary objectives of JIT is to improve labour productivity by making workers multi-functional and rearranging factory layout to eliminate lost time. Thus JIT could change the nature of factory life and will inevitably draw a trade union response.

Footnotes:

1. Key concepts are taken from: R J Schonberger, "Just in Time", Institute of Industrial Engineers, Atlanta, USA
2. Financial Mail 16.5.86, p83
3. Finance Week 22-28.5.86, p453
4. American Labour 29, p5

(Technical Advice Group, Johannesburg, July 1985)

Postscript: Smiths Manufacturing announced its intention to install a Hewlett-Packard JIT computer system in their Jacobs factory. One of the benefits will be to make scheduling more efficient so that over-time working can be reduced. (Business Day 24.7.86)

Workers education day

Speech by Comrade Thami Mohlomi (Natal Regional Secretary of COSATU) at the SACHED Education Workshop, Pinetown, August 31 1986

Comrades

We are gathered here today to discuss one of the most important matters in this country which is education. The issue of education together with all the matters related to apartheid has led this country into the crisis in which it is today. So it is easy for us to be clear about what education is really all about so that we can come with solutions to this problem and work out a programme that will directly deal and overcome the problems facing us in this present apartheid education.

To be really clear about the role of education and its contribution to society we need to look at it historically. Since civilization an advent of class divided society education, like everything, fell into the hands of the ruling class, i.e., the slave masters. During slavery education was the privilege of the slave masters and their children. Only those slaves who were co-opted into the ruling class had that chance to get educated.

Education during this time served to justify the slave system and make it acceptable to the slaves. Under the feudal system the same thing happened. Education fell in to the control of the church which was one institution that was a great feudal lord, owning close to a third of European land. The church also used education to justify and defend the feudal system. People were taught that the order of things existing on earth was pre-ordained by God. The class structure of the world is the same as that in heaven where we have God at the top, the arch-angels, the angels and people. On earth we had the king, the feudal lords, the bishops down to the peasants and serfs. People were taught the order of things and no one could change it. Even during this system education was a privilege of the few from the ruling class and those individuals who decided to join the church from the oppressed classes.

The advent of capitalism brought a lot of invention which assisted in producing books and a lot of materials needed to advance education.

- worker education -

This assisted a lot in democratising education and making it accessible to many people. However because of class division even under the capitalist system capitalism could not really allow education to be equal in the sense.

Today we find that there are differences between the kind of education offered to the African children is even of a lower standard than that offered to the children of the white working class. It is in fact not even a second but a third grade education which only enables us to be objects of exploitation.

The capitalist class also realised that education is a very powerful weapon in the hands of a ruling class and the capitalists are actually using education to reinforce their ideas of individualism and justifying the capitalist system. How often do we hear our teachers saying: "You must learn so that you don't become a street sweeper in future". This gives an idea to children that street sweepers are lowly people for whom one has to have no regard and the important people are doctors and lawyers ect. This is the kind of education that the children of 1976 challenged and were prepared to lay down their lives to see the destruction of. It was not of course the first time that this kind of education was challenged. From its inception the progressive organisations such as the ANC challenged Bantu education. With the banning of these organisations there was a lull to the resistance against Bantu education until 1976.

Since 1976 there have been a lot of developments in the education front. For the first time this year we saw the government agree to offer free education to the African children in the form of free books, etc. This is a major victory for the people and it is up to us the workers to see how do we advance this struggle.

Today there are organisations such as the NECC which has its structures all over the country on a regional and a local level. It is up to us to see how do we link up with these structures so as to strengthen them and advance their cause and at the same time strengthen our organisation. COSATU attended the 2nd Consultative Conference of the NECC and was party to the resolution taken at that conference. Now it is our duty to put those resolutions into practice and to decide how to do that. Organisations such as SACHED are doing a very good job by offering to workers alternative education to Bantu education. This is why COSATU encourages its members to attend education classes organised by SACHED because it helps to

WORKERS EDUCATION DAY

'Struggle
for
socialism
to be
led by
working
class'



UGUZELA FUTHI UFUNDISE

ORGANIZE AND EDUCATE

advance the level of education and of understanding among workers.

However, such organisations are short term measures and the ultimate solution to this problem is for the working class to assume power and to put itself in a position of the ruling class. Because as we have seen through the development of society it is only when one has put one in a position of a ruling class that one can decide what kind of education should be in operation.

Therefore we can see comrades what a heavy task lies ahead of us if we want to really solve one aspect of our lives which is education. We have to do away with the whole socio-economic and political system that exists and establish a new one where the workers will be the ruling class.

This is not an easy task comrades and it will need a lot of sacrifice and dedication on our part. However, this does not mean that we should not involve ourselves in the ongoing struggle to improve education in this country and to start short term measures to offer better education to our children and ourselves.

AMANDLA!! FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

A message to all members of COSATU

from the executive committee

From the Executive Committee

1987 - The Year of Consolidation and Decisive Action

We greet you in the name of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. We greet you in 1987 - the year for the consolidation and decisive action of our movement.

COSATU is just over a year old. Today we are closer to the day when we - the workers and youth of our land - must free ourselves from poverty, hunger, exploitation and racism. But a long and bitter struggle still awaits us.

Our struggle has come so far because of the struggle and unity of millions of people, led by the workers and the youth. The path we have travelled has not been easy, and although we have built COSATU into a mass workers' organisation, we can see that the path ahead is even more difficult. The possibilities before us are greater than ever before - but so are the dangers.

We are being attacked on all sides - the bosses, their government and their allies are panicking. They are confused - and in their crisis they can see we are getting stronger.

They want to stop us from advancing. That's why they have imposed a State of Emergency. They have detained thousands of our comrades - among them Moses Mayekiso, Lizzie Phike, Enoch Godongwana, Noel Williams, Matthews Olifant and Amos Masondo.

They have sent their army and police into our townships and into our children's schools and into our worker meetings;

Their allies have sent vigilante death squads to attack and kill workers all over the country - like our MAWU comrades who were murdered at Mpophomeni);

They have tried to crush workers who dare to struggle for what they deserve - at GM and OK Bazaars and BTR and Goldfields and Impala.

We all know the situation is serious. We all know we need the maximum unity if we are to defend ourselves and move forward in our struggle. We all know we need to learn from our mistakes and setbacks if we are to consolidate our gains, strengthen our organisation and move forward in 1987.

Comrades: this year we have to overcome our problems. This year we have to overcome our divisions. This year we have to build the greatest possible mass united action under the leadership of the working class. How can we do this?

ONE INDUSTRY - ONE UNION - NOW!

We have to make sure all our structures - at the local, regional and national level - are consolidated and working properly. To do this effectively we need one union, one industry.

We promised at our launch that we would merge and form big industrial unions within 6 months. It is now 14 months and still we do not have one union in each industry. This cannot be allowed to continue. We have a big job to do comrades. We have to organise millions and millions of unorganised workers into our ranks. We have to bring the millions of unemployed, farm, railway, construction and public sector workers into our ranks. We can only do this by building strong and powerful industrial unions. Nothing must stand in our way. Workers - make sure your union is coming together to form one big union in your industry!

BUILD AND STRENGTHEN SHOP STEWARD COUNCILS

All our structures must be strengthened, especially our local shop steward councils. They are one of the pillars on which COSATU stands. Make sure your views are represented by your shop stewards on the local COSATU shop steward council in your area. If there is no shop stewards' council in your area then you must make sure that one is formed.

Build the COSATU shop stewards' councils as the organised voice of worker unity in every area.

BUILD WORKER SOLIDARITY ACTION

At our launching Congress we said "AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL" will be our guiding light and we adopted powerful resolutions to

- cosatu document -

guide us in the struggle ahead. We have made some progress - but not nearly enough.

Too often we have stood back and watched while our comrades struggled alone against the bosses or the government - like at GM or Crossroads or Impala or OK Bazaars. Too often have we stood back and watched while our comrades were detained - even though we have resolved to fight every attack on our organisation with united action. And when we did take decisions for strong action - like the July action against the Emergency or the December 1 action against the killings of our MAWU comrades - some problems and divisions in our movement weakened our protest.

This is bad comrades. We must build our structures, our unity and our ability to mobilise more strongly and seriously - so that we can take action on what we decide, instead of just having resolutions on paper.

The bosses and the government have seen this weakness too. They saw how we built June 16 and May Day into the biggest national general strikes ever, with millions of people taking action. They were scared. They saw how NUM and some affiliates mobilised the biggest ever national industrial action, against the death of our comrades at Kinross. They were alarmed. But they also saw how we failed to build July 14 and December 1 - and they grew more confident.

We must not forget that the base of our power is in the workplaces. We must ensure that every workplace has strong, democratic structures and active members. And we must not allow our differences to undermine our unity in action. Differences we will always have. They are necessary in every democratic organisation, to find the best ideas for the strongest way forward. That is what worker democracy means. But it also means that once we have made a decision, we are all loyal to that decision - and we do our very best to carry it out in a disciplined and comradely way.

To let differences lead to a split in a union, as happened in NUTW; or hold up the organisation of a region, as happened in the Eastern Cape and Witwatersrand regions; or weaken a local, as happened in the Johannesburg local, is terrible comrades. Please, let's make sure these things do not happen and that we discipline people who try to divide us.

CAMPAIGNS

This year we will be working to turn our powerful resolutions into action. The campaign for a living wage for all workers, for the organisation of the unemployed under the banner of COSATU and for national united action under the leadership of the working class are crucial.

Already, all over the country, workers are building these campaigns in action. The heroic OK workers have been on strike for a living wage for weeks now. COSATU workers have blacked supplies to OK in solidarity with the workers. The youth and all progressive organisations have increasingly been drawn into solidarity action with the workers.

BUILD THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

Together, we in COSATU must take these campaigns forward. The struggle for a living wage will be COSATU's main campaign this year. We must especially organise and unite our mass strength behind a clear, co-ordinated, united, national living wage campaign, and for the organisation of the unemployed.

Our campaign will strike at the heart of the profit system. What we want is what we need to live decently. If the bosses' capitalist system can't provide us with what we need, then we don't need the bosses' system. We want the wealth we created to come back to us, so we can all have decent lives.

BUILD MASS UNITED ACTION

Mass united action is our strongest weapon. As we move forward we must draw behind us support and solidarity from the millions of workers, youth and progressive democratic organisations outside our ranks. In this way we will build a campaign of united action under the leadership of workers, and around our demands.

In all our campaigns, we will get the best results and strengthen our leadership of the struggle if we take the initiative and build the widest possible unity in action behind our demands.

This year we must make sure that our May Day and June 16 campaigns are much bigger than last year so that they truly are OUR national holidays.

We can expect the strongest resistance to our struggle for national united action from the bosses and the government. In their desperation they will try even harder than before to attack our movement.

They will try to create vigilante gangs, especially from the unemployed, to divide and intimidate us. They will try and encourage tribalism, racism, factions and division wherever they can to undermine our unity. We must not let them.

ORGANISE THE UNEMPLOYED

We have to organise millions of unemployed under our federation to strengthen our common struggle for jobs for all at a living wage. We, the organised employed workers, can help the struggle of our unemployed comrades by implementing our resolution for a ban on overtime and a 40 hour week. Let us mobilise support for this campaign and join unemployed workers in fighting for the sharing of all work on full pay and a massive public works programme, paid for by the bosses and the government, that will create jobs and provide us with things that we need.

BUILD WORKER SELF-DEFENCE

We have to organise our own defence to protect ourselves and our struggle against attacks. Already, in many areas, COSATU workers are starting to defend themselves. We have to strengthen this a hundred times over, in every workplace and every township. The attacks are getting so serious, so many people have died, that we must organise self defence in every workplace and every township to consolidate and protect the gains we have made.

No-one else will defend us or our struggle. We must do it.

BUILD DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ORGANISATION

The problems facing us at work and in our communities are the same. Nowhere do we have control over the decisions that affect our lives: the rent we are forced to pay; high transport costs; terrible conditions in the townships. These issues are directly related to the starvation wages workers are paid.

That is why COSATU workers are leading the struggle to build street committees in the townships. Like our unions in the workplaces, street committees will give us the democratic organisation and unity

and strength to fight for all the things we need - including control over every aspect of our lives through our own democratic organisation under the leadership of organised workers.

There is a lot of discussion about alliances and allies in our struggle. The strongest, best and most reliable allies of the working class are the youth. Like us, the youth exploit no-one. They have nothing to lose and everything to gain by marching together with us to a workers' future.

We must do everything we can to build close links with the students and youth and their organisations; to share our experiences with them of building democratic organisation - and to share our vision of our struggle and the future. At the same time we must give maximum support to the struggle for Peoples Education and the building of democratic SRC's.

ORGANISE FARM WORKERS

Farmworkers are starting to get organised under FAWU. As farmworker organisation develops, a solid bridge will be built between workers in the cities and workers in the countryside. Millions of rural workers - together with the rural poor - will join hands with organised workers in the cities to struggle, like in the factories, mines and shops for control over the land where they live and work. We must do all in our power to build this bridge as soon as possible - and to make it as strong as possible.

WOMEN WORKERS COME FIRST

In our movement women workers have a special place because they carry the heaviest load of all. It is the duty of every COSATU worker to make sure that the demands, participation and struggle of women workers are strengthened a thousand times over. If our liberation does not succeed in creating free people, equal to each other in every way, then we would not be liberated.

Our struggles for maternity rights; equal pay for work of equal value; childcare facilities that meet workers needs; against sexual harassment and harmful work must have the highest priority in all our struggles today.

Our leading role in the struggle depends on the courage, determination and leadership of women workers.

ONE FEDERATION - ONE COUNTRY - NOW

Comrades - we are at a crossroads. We see a year of more struggle, more hardship and more suffering - and more hope. Now is the time. If we are to live, then we must go forward together against the bosses system of profit and greed. We can see how far we have come COSATU is the home for every worker in South Africa - employed and unemployed. That is why the old bosses' federation TUCSA has broken up. That is why the bosses are desperately trying to promote UWUSA against COSATU. All their divisive efforts are doomed to failure if we are united. There should now be no obstacle for all democratic unions to come together with us and form one federation in one country.

OUR TASKS

We are committed to the leadership of the working class in the struggle. This year we must show what this means by consolidating and uniting our organisation, COSATU, in decisive united action with other progressive organisations under the leadership of organised workers.

To do this we will need the widest possible democratic debate, through all our structures, on our weaknesses and our strengths, so that we can come to our National Congress in July with the program for the workers' way forward.

We must, through our organised strength and unity and clarity of purpose, really unite and really lead the vast mass of our people to a new, transformed society - a society where the needs of workers will be paramount. How we build this society and what it will be like must be deeply discussed in our affiliates and in COSATU structures before the Congress and after it.

Comrade workers - the future is in your hands. The struggle depends on you and you alone. Make sure your organisation, COSATU, is united. Make sure your union is participating fully and actively in all the structures of COSATU. Make sure COSATU is democratic. Make sure COSATU is doing what you want under your control. The workers united can never be defeated.

CONSOLIDATE AND ADVANCE

BUILD MAXIMUM UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS

ONE UNION ONE INDUSTRY, ONE FEDERATION ONE COUNTRY

COSATU and independent working class politics

1. Introduction

It is generally argued that the formation of COSATU has placed the social, economic and political interests of the working class firmly on the agenda of opposition politics in South Africa. Indeed, it is true that the independent trade union movement has been pivotal in developing and nurturing an embryonic socialist position. A recent writer has noted that "the socialism of the unions remains embryonic...it is present in the public pronouncements of leading trade unionists...it is present in the fierce assertion of independence and in the strong emphasis on workers control and it is most evident in the mode of organising of the major unions with the powerful emphasis on workers control". (1)

However, it is agreed that the embryonic socialism of the unions is not sufficient. What is necessary, it is argued, is that the struggle for socialism should unite the various disparate classes and groups of the oppressed and exploited in racial capitalist South Africa under the leadership of the working class. (2) But how this is to be done is not always clear. Also, there seems to be no clarity on what independence of the working class means. These issues are not fully exhausted - though a promising sign is that they are beginning to be addressed. This article is a contribution - incomplete as it may be - to that process.

It is argued in this paper that the notion of the independence of the working class is interpreted in different ways within COSATU. This difference in interpretation reflects COSATU's historical inheritance. It is further suggested that a common and fully developed understanding of working class independence can most readily inform working class militants as to the best possible method of enhancing working class hegemony and control over society. But first, it is necessary to briefly deal with how this notion of working class independence came to emerge.

2. An attempted history (3)

The independent working class position, no doubt, has its origins in certain sections of the emergent trade union movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Unions such as those affiliated to

FOSATU argued for first establishing a strong factory floor presence before embarking on overtly political issues which would lead to direct confrontation with the state. (4) The arena of "state politics" (5) was not actively contested. Rather it was postponed to an indefinite future. This strategy it should be noted, was informed by primarily two factors:

- (i) the harsh political and economic climate which then prevailed. The intransigent attitudes of the bosses and the state provided formidable stumbling blocks to the few emerging trade unions; and
- (ii) this "survivalist ethic" was coupled with a conception that it was SACTU's association with "populist politics" which finally led to its demise in the early 1960's.

Against this background then, the FOSATU unions distanced themselves from the sphere of state politics. This strategy evoked strong criticism from unions that identified closely with the dominant nationalist political tradition, ie. SAAWU, GAWU etc. The early FOSATU position engendered a narrow economic outlook and inspired the emergence of a "syndicalist" position. Independence of the working class (implicitly defined as meaning only organised workers in the factories) came to mean organisational independence not only from the state, but also from politics altogether.

The formation of the UDF on August 20 1983 once again raised the issue of the relationship between the popular movement and the working class movement best represented by the trade unions. Most major nationally organised industrial unions refused to affiliate to the UDF on the grounds that they wished to maintain their organisational independence. (6) What they would do, was to encourage their respective members to support campaigns and efforts initiated by popular organisations. Their non-affiliation stance was based on the following:

- (i) the multi-class nature of these organisations which would preclude workers being in the driving seat of campaigns - for historically in South Africa, there has been a tendency for the professional elements of the national liberation movement to dominate leadership positions;
- (ii) the different methods of operation and organisation between the two where the emphasis on rank and file participation, mandates, report-backs and accountability of leadership, is severely lacking in popular organisations;
- (iii) the fact that many of their members subscribed to different political ideologies and an identification with a specific

one would incur the risk of splitting the unions.

In addition to the above telling points, the politics of the popular struggle, with its predominant emphasis on securing the vote as a form of democracy was characterised - incorrectly - as petit bourgeois. Incorrectly, I argue because the struggle for the vote as a form of democracy has no inherent fixed class position. As a form of democracy, the franchise does not necessarily represent the interests of the black petit-bourgeoisie or any other class in society for that matter. (7)

Secondly, these unions (and here I am referring to unions which were then affiliated to the now defunct FOSATU as well as GWU, FCWU, CCAWUSA and CTMWA) felt that there was little to suggest that the petit-bourgeois leaders of the popular movement would seek to transform the politics of the dominated black majority by rooting it firmly within the black working class. These two points were important factors in the decision of these unions to attempt to steer away from "state-politics". However, through a process of self-criticism, criticism from unions which indentified closely with the dominant nationalist tradition, pressure from their rank and file and the wider political climate which thrust itself upon these unions, we saw certain FOSATU unions taking on more overtly political issues. (8)

To sum up then, the notion of working class independence could roughly be characterised as follows:

- (i) a recognition of the fact that the working class has social, economic and political interests that necessitate its organisation as a separate class;
- (ii) the methods and ways the working class in progressive trade unions organises is distinctively different from popular organisations such as the UDF - with regard to mandating, report-backs, accountability etc., and
- (iii) implicit in the notion of working class independence was the recognition that workers identify with different political ideologies. But despite these differences workers strive to act and continue to attempt to act in a unified manner in struggling against capital and the state. This obviously requires open and free debate and discussion within the organised (and broader?) sections of the working class.

These issues raise crucial political questions about the nature of democracy in a post-apartheid South Africa. In particular, will

- debate -

our democracy be solely a one-party democracy or will it be a plural democratic state?

These then were the crucial components that defined working class independence. However, this notion was still relatively under-developed politically as a strategy. In particular, the question remained as to what is the relationship between working class independence and political issues - how does the working class ensure its independence whilst taking on the state and its allies?

3. The birth of COSATU

It was at this time that COSATU was born. COSATU, as is well known, represents a synthesis between two traditions - the more class-based approach of the old FOSATU unions and those unions which identify closely with the nationalist political tradition. It is then not surprising that the notion of the independence of the working class is understood and interpreted differently.

There is support within COSATU for an interpretation of working class independence as meaning non-affiliation to the present political groupings. This indeed is a strong identifying characteristic of "working class independence" as outlined above. But independence of the working class does not mean non-affiliation per se. It also means that workers need to be organised as a separate class and that they, more than any other group in society, have an objective interest in the overthrow of capitalism. To this end then the socialist content of working class demands needs to be generalised throughout society. Working class independence also implies that the way in which workers organise in the progressive trade unions is radically different from the organising methods of the popular organisations: most importantly the emphasis on democratic structures and practices, and on rank and file initiative and workers control. All these traditions are present within COSATU but have not as yet gained the ideological and practical expression necessary to entrench and solidify the concept of working class independence.

COSATU correctly argues against both (i) workerism, and (ii) subsuming itself in the gulf of populism with its ill-defined freedom and lack of scientific analysis. COSATU correctly realises the need for it to play a more politically active role. But how this is to be done is still not clearly spelt out. In fact there exists an ambivalent tension within COSATU that is the subject of much debate.

On the one hand COSATU's politically active role in the arena of state politics is based on an analysis of South African society that facilitates the emergence of "political unionism". We are being told that unions in South Africa, quite rightly so, have a political role. "Non-political unionism is undesirable", says Jay Naidoo. (9) Despite this recognition that political unionism has its foundations in the very nature of South African society, there still exists the wide-spread interpretation that the unions' political role is merely to supplement the existing political battles being fought by existing political organisations. Their political role is restricted to the confines of the national democratic struggle. It is usually argued that union's simply cannot engage in the wide variety of activity that is necessary to successfully challenge the state and create a society in which workers have control. This statement, I argue, implies limiting the potential political role of the unions. The unions' political responsibilities according to this school, are merely to reinforce and reiterate present political demands voiced by the political organisations. The unions' task is not to deepen and transform the nature of these demands and trade union participation in state issues merely represents the workers' arm of the broad opposition to apartheid.

On the other hand, another view exists within COSATU: that the reiterating of national popular political demands by workers and their organisations will not automatically ensure a worker controlled society. This viewpoint argues that not only is it necessary to identify and align with national political demands, but it is also essential that these national political demands be deepened and transformed in such a way that they challenges capitalism at its very foundations. The ambiguities and silences of national political demands to be found in the Freedom Charter should be recognised. It is necessary for the trade unions to formulate their own goals and aims which would enhance the realisation of a worker controlled society. COSATU has already started this process by committing its organised membership to workers control. Presumably this means that COSATU demands the right to govern the country alongside other representative political organisations. Presumably it means that nationalised industries would be democratically controlled by the workers, their unions or any other democratic organisations of the workers which would be involved in the running of the economy. All the above obviously means negating the viewpoint that the political arena can best be left to the existing political organisations. Instead unions should not be afraid to address political issues directly. In doing this they should un-

- debate -

equivocally state how they see the future worker controlled society and the structures and institutional forms central to this. The aims and objectives formulated by the trade unions need not necessarily stand in opposition to the Freedom Charter. What this merely does, is to deepen the conceptualisation and understanding of democracy and working class struggle by putting forward worker own demands. It is only in this way that workers will see that the Freedom Charter will not liberate them entirely.

4. Alliances

This brings us to the most crucial question of all. What should the relationship be between an independent working class position and other anti-apartheid forces? How does COSATU attempt to deal with this issue? Here again there exists an ambivalence which needs to be teased out. The position that is presently vociferously and publicly asserted in COSATU, is the one of "disciplined alliances". This position correctly realises that the form of South Africa's capitalism provides the objective basis for alliances. Not only is the black working class nationally oppressed and grossly exploited but the black petit-bourgeoisie and the small black capitalist class also suffers national oppression. It recognises the need to build the widest possible form of unity amongst the oppressed and exploited in order to isolate the government. Hence, COSATU says it will form alliances with organisations who have the interests of the workers at heart and whose organisational practices further the interests of the working class. (10)

This obviously provides a strong guideline. But it is in need of further clarification. Up until now, what has emerged is a rather uncritical policy of alliances. Entering into alliances does not mean uncritical joint action with other groups or political organisations. It does not mean that students and the broader members of the public should sit in on each and every meeting of the workers irrespective of the nature thereof. It does not mean that whatever action taken by other oppressed groupings and organisations must be supported by the organised working class without actually looking at the issues critically and questioning whether such activities will exhaust our energies and resources rather than those of the state. It is indeed true that the working class must forge alliances, but what is necessary is for those alliances to be pursued in terms of the goals and interests of the organised working class. Here, it is instructive to note that the initial 3 day national stayaway call by the NECC and the UDF to commemorate

June 16 was changed to a 1 day stayaway at the instigation of COSATU.

Entering into alliances also means that working class militants should have as their priority the development and establishment of working class organisation both inside and outside of the factory. For, it is only through workers developing strong organisations of their own that their leading role can be asserted and fought for.

Alliance politics, as presently understood and practised, has meant worker organisations simply reiterating and supporting demands formulated by political organisations and not transcending them. Hence, COSATU stops at the demand for one-person-one-vote in a unitary democratic South Africa. Although the dangers of formal democracy are sometimes referred to, precisely what these dangers are is not spelt out. In order to avoid these dangers, the issue of formal democracy needs to be systematically teased out and criticised. For example, in the demand for one person one vote a conspicuous absence is the principle of accountability and recall of leadership. Simply put, is the vote once every 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th year enough, or do we need to have structures whereby we can exercise accountability of leadership and be in a position to remove leaders if they do not fulfil their tasks? The western advanced capitalist democracies with their elections once every 4-5 years, the non-existence of accountability and recall is the precise opposite of what our demands mean. Thus, COSATU in pursuing alliances with other groups must now state the institutional forms and organs that would give meaning to the notion of worker control over society.

COSATU's policy of "disciplined alliances" has meant in practice, thus far, only alliances with organisations sympathetic to the dominant national political tradition, ie. the UDF and its affiliates. Why is it that alliances are not extended to other organisations and political groupings. We need more debate as to how COSATU reconciles its commitment to a united working class movement, but in practice, engages with only one political grouping - dominant as it may be. Surely within COSATU and its affiliates, there exists alongside UDF supporters also members who pledge their allegiance to AZAPO, NEUM, and even Inkatha for that matter. With such a divided working class in South Africa (due to various historical reasons) it is surely an immensely difficult process to build a united working class movement. Difficult as it may be, we will not be addressing this problem if we behave and act as if it

does not exist. What we need is open and honest debate on whom to work with and why.

5. Conclusion

It is historically true that nowhere in countries where social change has occurred, has one social class played the sole role. In all societies where changes occurred - eg. in Russia, Chile, Bolivia etc. (even if the latter two were not successful, for reasons beyond the scope of this paper) - workers formed alliances with the peasantry and the middle-classes. But what is often overlooked is that these workers through their own organisations formed alliances with an explicitly socialist ideology, sentiments and programme. But in South Africa we see the call for alliances and unity on a national democratic platform. Why is it that the demand for a Workers Charter is viewed as divisive? It is really strange that the women and students - correctly so - can have their own respective charters, but when one talks of a Workers Charter it is deemed to be divisive. But how then is the struggle for workers control to be secured in the absence of a socialist programme? How are workers to lead the struggle without a clear political programme of aims and demands? The need for debate, discussion of socialism and construction of a Workers Charter is a very urgent task indeed.

Footnotes:

- 1 D Lewis, "Capital, trade unions and the liberation struggle", SALB 11.4, 1986, p36
- 2 D Lewis, "Recession and the working class", SALB 11.5, 1986
- 3 This section on the attempted history does not deal with a central feature of the early trade union movement - which was its emphasis on being independent from the state. This obviously is an issue that will be of crucial concern for the trade union movement in a post-apartheid South Africa.
- 4 See Joe Foster, General Secretary of FOSATU, keynote speech in SALB 7.8, July 1982
- 5 Following Burawoy (1985, p11) a distinction is made between "state politics" and "production politics". The latter means that the production process itself is political and involves a set of political relations. "State politics" refers to the fact that the state remains the decisive nucleus of power in capitalist societies in that it guarantees the constellation of power outside the state, in the family, the factory and the community.

See M Burawoy, The politics of production, Verso-NLB, 1985, especially the "Introduction" for a more extended discussion on this point.

- 6 The best summary of this argument is to be found in the GWU's position on the UDF. See "GWU on the UDF", SALB 9.2, Nov, 1983
- 7 The demand for full franchise/vote does not necessarily represent a bourgeois or liberal demand. The securing of the vote is an important victory for all classes in South Africa, including the black working class for whom it would open up new and important ground. The vote, as a form of formal parliamentary democracy reflects no necessary class content. But, it is precisely because of this, that the vote as a form of parliamentary democracy is not only a potential gain for the working class, but also a potential problem. In this connection see S Gelb, "Some sociological perspectives on race, class and democracy in South Africa", ASSA conference 1984, p11
- 8 The best known example of this is FOSATU's 1984 campaign against the tricameral parliamentary elections
- 9 J Naidoo, "The significance of COSATU", SALB 11.5, 1986
- 10 COSATU resolutions 1986, p2

(Keith Browne, November 1987)

Comrade Mutandare of the ZCTU

Below we publish an interview with Comrade Mutandare, President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, conducted on July 8 1986.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, can you tell us about your own personal history and how you came to be involved in the labour movement?

Mr Mutandare: I used to work for Anglo American in Bindura for 13 years, on the mines there. I became involved in the union because of the very poor working conditions prevailing at the time. There were wildcat strikes, and in the normal course of events management would call in the police and army, arrest the ringleaders, imprison us... We saw our salvation in the unions - at that time it was a white-led union. It was a very, very difficult time for us - we were labelled as communists, and terrorists; our mine was on the

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North-eastern border where people were infiltrating from; and at that time you had to be very courageous to voice grievances, make demands. I myself was arrested several times, and held without any charges. There was a law in Smith's time that would allow you to be detained for 90 days without any trial at all.

SALB: And how did you come to be the head of the ZCTU?

Mr Mutandare: Well, I became active in the mineworkers, and we became involved in the national federation. At that stage the ZCTU was not exactly throbbing, there were a lot of opportunists within the trade unions, and a lot of people there who didn't have the workers' interests at heart. I, and a number of people thought the we should go in there and change that, and that's what we did. And I was elected President of the ZCTU in July, 1985.

SALB: Could you tell us something about the structure of the ZCTU

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well the ZCTU has 29 affiliated unions. On the presidential side, there's a President, a Vice-President - who's responsible for education and planning, and another Vice-President responsible for political affairs and co-operatives. And, on the Secretary-General side, we have a Secretary-General, a Deputy Secretary-General for administration, and a Deputy Secretary-General for finance. We also have a Treasury Department, and then we have a large number of committees, eleven I think. These deal with education, international affairs, legal affairs, health and safety labour relations, labour relations tribunals, resolutions and constitutional amendments, retrenchments, the University of Zimbabwe, labour relations board, prices control board, the credentials committee, the Women's Committee; we have a May Day Committee, and we also have a Labour College Committee; we plan to - at some stage in the future - build a labour college.

Now these committees submit their reports to the General Council of the ZCTU every 3 months. The General Council is our principal governing body, and is comprised of representatives of each of the affiliated unions. In fact, the larger unions tend to have more than one representative therefore they tend to have numbers of people who hold office ex-officio, me for example: I'm not counted as a mineworkers' delegate, but I'm part of the Mineworkers' Union

SALB: Can you tell us about the principal affiliates of the ZCTU?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well the Mineworkers' Union is the largest - we have 27,000 members. Building and construction has about 17,000; railways 11,000; textiles 10,000; clothing 10,000; agricultural labourers 15,000; domestic workers 13-14,000. Our total membership of the ZCTU is about 200,000, out of a potential of 1.1 million.

SALB: That seems like a rather small percentage, can you explain why there hasn't been more widespread unionisation?

Mr Mutandare: I think we must put that down to the fact that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to organise in Smith's day. Workers were scared to identify themselves with the labour movement. They, labour, were labelled as agitators, terrorists; people were very scared at the time, it was very difficult to do any organising whatsoever. It is only really since 1980 that we've been able to organise more openly, and we are at the moment on a major recruitment drive, and I think we are likely to see a large number of new members joining our affiliated unions.

SALB: Can you comment on the Labour Relations Act, that seems to be the principal piece of legislation governing labour relations in Zimbabwe. In your view is it a good piece of legislation?

SALB: Yes, it is, but we have reservations, and we have geared ourselves to press for changes. Some clauses need to be amended, and others need to be changed altogether, scrapped.

SALB: What are some of the principal problems as you see them in this piece of legislation?

Mr Mutandare: Well, firstly, I think it conflicts with certain ILO conventions; the large majority of unions are classified as being in "essential services", and so are not allowed to strike. There's too much Ministerial influence, too much Ministerial interference: the Minister hears from one of his blue-eyed boys that such and such a union is not so good, for whatever reason, and he can over-rule any constitutional decisions that they've taken. More than this, the Minister has control of assets, and salaries of union leaders; the Ministerial sanction is needed for any wage agreement that we reach; the Minister can direct that employers not send dues straight to the union but that these dues be placed in a trust fund. So, all in all, the Minister has got very draconian powers, powers to throttle the unions if he so wishes. And who is the Minister to control all these aspects, what is this to do with him? It's the concern of the workers, and the workers alone! So

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we're looking for changes in all these things.

SALB: Now in Zimbabwe, Mr Mutandare, there have been a large number of wildcat strikes, particularly immediately after independence. What has been the attitude of the ZCTU to these strikes?

Mr Mutandare: Hell, let me say that there has never been a legal strike in this country! The law is too cumbersome, so that by the time you get out there and have the legal capacity to declare a strike, no one would remember what the strike was about.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, in your view has the position of the workers, improved substantially since independence?

Mr Mutandare: To a degree, yes. Wages are somewhat higher; the Masters and Servants Act has been abolished; there is provision now for maternity leave; conditions of service in domestic service and agriculture have been improved. So there have been some changes - not to exaggerate what these changes have been - they have been important, but they are not dramatic changes.

SALB: Can you tell us something about the controversy over wages in the agro-industry that rocked Zimbabwe some while ago?

Mr Mutandare: The trouble was that the government, in their own wisdom, decreed that workers had to be paid an industrial wage. They said that these workers working in the sheds, on the plantations, were industrial workers and that the provisions and wages in respect of industrial workers should apply to them.

The employers, of course, then got up in arms, and said that they would not be competitive on the international market, that they would have to close down, etc., etc., And the state succumbed to employer pressure and stipulated a lower wage.

Now the whole thing was very messy. You had a chap cutting and carrying getting half the wage of the guy in the processing shed, for example, because the one was classified as an industrial worker. So that you had all sorts of things that didn't fit together. I think what is showed ultimately is that the government is susceptible to employer pressure, and employers are very powerful in this country.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, before you became the ZCTU President the so-

called "Gang of Four" were very much in power in the ZCTU. Can you explain why they were able to keep power for so long?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well that's very simple: they were contriving with certain unscrupulous politicians. They were stealing, they were corrupt, and the government knew this but they felt that they would rather keep them, because they had a compliant group there and they felt that they wanted a compliant group there in control of the unions. And until there was a change in the Ministry, when we had a change in policy, and of course, once the policy changed - once they lost governmental support - then they lost their power, the government ditched them. And here is the problem of being an appendage of the government. Some of these people were even fired by their own unions, they were a group of people simply concerned to curry favour with the government, and not in any way to represent the interests of their members.

SALB: Can you tell me something about your education campaigns, and their objectives?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well we attach great importance to the whole question of education. The only way in which we can deliver the goods is through sharper negotiations. We have to provide our membership, our frontline people and also our rank-and-file, with the necessary tools to negotiate on behalf of the members. We have to be seen to be delivering the goods, and enlightening our frontline officers, and our rank-and-file as to what they can achieve in negotiations, allowing them to get the best possible deal for the membership.

It is no use having the blind leading the blind. You have to have people knowing what they are doing in terms of negotiations, and these things are very complicated and they require considerable education programmes.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, can you comment on the whole question of so-called socialism in Zimbabwe. Do you see this as a socialist society, and how does the ZCTU view the question of socialism?

Mr Mutandare: Well we don't have any socialism here in Zimbabwe, I think we'd be deceiving ourselves if we claimed to have socialism here. 85% of the economy is controlled from London, Zurich and New York; we are tied to the international system, we are attached to the Western economies; when it booms overseas, it will boom

- interview -

here. We cannot socialise what we don't even control, you have to own the productive assets in order to nationalise, to socialise. Its simply not a practical policy for Zimbabwe at the moment.

Here the government people talk about socialism. Of course, they talk about socialism in the day, and they're socialists in the day time, and they're capitalists at night. But we know that there are real limitations on what we can achieve at this point in time. We believe in socialism, we think that we should gravitate slowly towards socialism, not rapidly, otherwise we get a disaster like in Tanzania. We do support it; workers get a better deal under socialism than under a capitalist economy. But we have to work within the practicalities of things. And the practicality of it is, that we are at this point in time, not able to control many of the productive assets in our society, and it would be a disaster to attempt to do so.

I don't want to be considered a reactionary. Let me say that I do believe in socialism, I think we have to start right away. But I don't think we can do it rapidly. We are particularly alive in Zimbabwe to the disasters of other countries that have tried to move too rapidly on the path of socialism. We do support the concept, but we have to move towards socialism systematically.

SALB: Could you tell us something about your factory- or plant-level organisation?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well we have functioning workers committees and all local matters are taken up here, by the workers committees. It's only when there's no agreement here, that we take it up at the more national scale. As far as possible things must be sorted out at the workplace.

SALB: Do you have a system of shopstewards?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, we do. We have a Shopstewards' Council, with a Chairman and a Secretary, with the shopstewards being responsible for decisions taken. The shopstewards are all elected and this varies, but in the mineworkers - which is the one that I know best because I'm a miner myself - this happens once every year in March.

SALB: Is the ZCTU affiliated to any international organisations?

Mr Mutandare: No, the ZCTU is not affiliated to any international

organisations. Our affiliated unions are affiliated to their international secretariats, but we are no part of the ICFTU etc.

SALB: Do you see a special role for women, in the unions? Is it especially important to organise women, and how do you go about it?

Mr Mutandare: Well, we have a special department for the organisation of women, headed by a woman, and we have women predominantly in certain sectors in our economy, like textiles and clothing. We are trying to galvanize and organise women. We are not going to appoint a woman just because she is a woman. We are not discriminating against them, this must be understood. We believe that women must be directly, actively participating in union affairs, but we would not appoint a woman to office just because she is a woman - that would be discrimination in reverse. But all in all, I would say that the number of women members that we have is very small, I don't know the exact figure.

SALB: The official "ideology" for negotiations in Zimbabwe is that there should be a tripartite arrangement with the government on the one side, and unions and employers. Do you think that's a good system?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, it's a good system, if all parties negotiate in good faith.

SALB: Are there any major labour organisations which exist outside of the ZCTU?

Mr Mutandare: Not really, except for teachers and government services, and there are particular problems with that, the public sector - but at the moment they are outside the ZCTU.

SALB: Have things improved with the new Labour Minister? Do you have a better working relationship with him?

Mr Mutandare: You know, this is a very dangerous thing to say, I don't want to be seen to be crossing swords with the Minister, you know we have to get along, and I'd rather not comment on the various Ministers of Labour that we have had.

The price of gold paraplegic injuries on the mines

Shelley Arkles*

After the accident my biggest problem was how my wife is going to go on living with the children as they are still very young, who is going to help them go to school, how are they going to be clothed, how are they going to be fed... The accident has completely changed our life.

The conception of industrial accidents as "rare events in the experience of individuals..." (1) completely overlooks the fact that "the men and women who get caught up in these "events" may have to live out the rest of their lives with the consequences - and that others live alongside them". (2)

The consequences of industrial accidents in South Africa pose particular problems for injured mineworkers, as the overwhelming majority of them are migrant workers coming from the labour supplying areas of Southern Africa. The transformative effect industrial accidents have on these people's lives has to be seen in the context of the underdeveloped nature of these areas; the lack of adequate healthcare facilities; the fact that most of these workers are the sole breadwinners in the family and that the possibilities for re-employment as a disabled person are negligible. Accidents have ramifications into the countryside that are not taken into account by the Mining Houses or the office of the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner. The missing link in the rehabilitation chain is the failure to acknowledge the individual as a part of a family and a community.

In the absence of any published figures regarding the number of spinal injury cases, it has been estimated - on the basis of adding up the yearly intake of spinal injury cases in the various mining hospitals - that between 100 to 150 paraplegics (and quadriplegics) are being produced by the mines annually.

* For further details see S Arkles, "The social consequences of industrial accidents - A case-study of paraplegics injured in the gold-mining industry", Hons thesis, Wits, Univ, 1984.

This article will focus on the post-hospital phase, ie. what happens to paraplegic ex-mineworkers (and their families) once they've been discharged from hospital. A number of possibilities exist. Either they are repatriated to the rural areas where they live with their families; or they stay at the mine hospitals until the mines on which they were injured are able to take them back and provide some form of re-employment. In the case of miners from the Anglo American Mines only, a further possibility is the Ithuseng Rehabilitation Centre, where paraplegics and quadriplegics are housed and re-employed (providing there is space available for them there).

While the experience of disability for disabled miners varies - depending on when they were injured; at which mine they were injured; where they went after being discharged from hospital; the extent to which the family and community is able to provide some form of support system - it is possible to identify a number of problems common to all disabled mineworkers. The two major issues confronting paraplegics (and indeed all injured workers) are those of compensation and re-employment.

Compensation - the workers view

Under the old system of compensation miners received a lump sum payment as compensation. This was calculated according to the person's degree of disablement, and earnings at the time of the accident. In the case of spinal injuries (100% disability according to the Workmens Compensation Act - WCA) an amount of anything between ten to fifteen times the wage being earned at the time of the accident was paid out in the form of compensation.

The new system of compensation which became operative as of June 1, 1977, meant that African mineworkers with spinal injuries now receive a basic lump sum payment of R500 (3) in addition to a monthly pension calculated at 75% of the wages being earned at the time of the accident.

Three of my informants were recipients of the old system of compensation (having been injured in the early seventies). They thus received lump-sum payments of R1,000 (in two cases) and R2,000 (in one case) - for being rendered paraplegic. The complete inadequacy of this system seems to be acknowledged by the Rand Mutual Assurance Company which awards special allowances to seriously disabled indigent Black ex-mineworkers,

- injuries on the mines -

whose lump-sum Workmen's Compensation Awards have been exhausted. One of my informants, who has been unable to find re-employment on a mine, has been awarded such an allowance. He receives R78 a month on which he supports a wife and four children in Lesotho. For miners who have been legally compensated according to the WCA in the early seventies, such payments constitute their only income. These "charitable" awards do not, however, alleviate the constant struggle to exist of affected families.

The insecurity of their children's future is one such problem. An interviewee spelt it out: "In 1981, these first two children didn't go to school for the whole year because there wasn't any money... It's difficult out of this R78 a month... We have to pay for one child one month, and the next month another one. Now that the school knows how I am, they allow me to pay the school fees in instalments, but sometimes the child is sent home to wait for the money."

The effect of the accident in many cases is to deprive the injured miner of formal employment while forcing the wife into the informal sector:

My compensation wasn't adequate, as I have so many problems. Also, because I know it is very difficult to get a job or to find some means of getting money. My wife used to brew beer, so that she could at least get soap, sugar and all the other things used in the family. She was forced to do that because there was no other means of getting money.

Many wives of injured mineworkers have expressed the desire to find work in order to supplement inadequate compensation. However, their predicament is a "catch 22" one. Not only are their chances of finding jobs in places like Lesotho or the Transkei virtually non-existent, but even if it were possible, they cannot take a job that will involve their being away from home, where they look after their disabled husbands.

Some families although dependent on wage labour for educating their children, clothing and so on, had access to other means of subsistence as well. As a result of the accident, their overall position was severely undermined. One of my informants, who received R1,000 for his injury explains:

There were many changes when I got the accident. Before when I was working the family was going alright. But when I got the accident came many changes and problems. First of

all, when I go home [in between mine contracts] myself I was going to the fields to do the jobs, and to look after the cattle in the mountains and other things. And I was a salesman of goods like shirts, in the Transkei. Then I stopped because I cannot walk now. After I got the accident then came the problems. I cannot go to the fields. I cannot be a salesman again...

This miner has in effect lost the means of three employments. He now lives at the Ithuseng Rehabilitation Centre, where he is re-employed, receiving R140 a month. His present situation at Ithuseng, is really a survival option. His choice of where to be rests solely on where his family can best survive:

The problem of money and other things put me here. I want to stay at home, but when I am here, I get the money at the end of the month, and send the money home. Then here, I get food and other things for myself.

While this miner is well cared for at the centre, his family face a daily struggle to exist in the Transkei. His relative well-being at the centre, obscures the underlying anxiety he feels regarding his family's plight.

The situation applies equally to other men at the centre. They are men who have either been rejected by their families, or do not want to go home. Their reasons relate to the very prominent theme of having failed as breadwinners:

They live here because they are afraid to go home. Because let's say, when there is not much that you do for the family, there is no money for the family, the family goes hard. They worry about that.

They live at the centre not only because their families cannot sustain an unproductive member in the household, but also because of the general state of underdevelopment in these rural areas. Conditions there are totally inadequate for people who are paraplegic. Adequate facilities, such as clinics for example, and proper sanitation, are crucial, especially in the light of the fact that the two major medical complications of paraplegia and quadriplegia are pressure sores and bladder infections. For disabled miners who do live in these areas, a familiar problem is not having a proper toilet. This can result in pressure sores going septic. One of my informants, in precisely this position, has travelled back to Rand Mutual Hospital in Johannesburg from

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his village in the North of Lesotho, ten times, since 1970.

Two of my other informants were injured in 1983, and are thus recipients of the new system of compensation. The first one a quadriplegic, living in Lesotho, received a monthly pension of R300 (he has not yet received any lump-sum). The compensation he receives, although an improvement on the former three cases, fails to take into account the full loss of present and potential employment earnings: "My monthly salary was R400 at the time of the accident. Sometimes it used to go a little bit higher, overtime, dangerpay..." In addition the compensation fails to take account of the extra expenses accrued as a result of the accident:

Because of the accident we need extra money because, for instance, I was told by doctors to eat certain foods, eggs, milk, oranges, meat, beans, peanuts... and the food mentioned is really very expensive. (4) Also there are medicines and pills that I sometimes need... I used to get these things mentioned here, but now as time goes on, it is very difficult to get all this stuff. Sometimes if we try to get this food mentioned, you'll find that the R300 is not enough to go on for the whole month. It takes two weeks and the other two weeks there is nothing.

The second informant, injured in 1983, is the only one whose dependants are not in a desperate situation. He received a lump-sum payment of R1,500 in addition to his monthly pension of R300. As he is re-employed doing surface work, he gets an additional R140 a month. While clearly in a much better position than the others mentioned, he explains why he feels additional compensation is justified:

The first point, I was getting R329 a month before the accident. Then when I go home, I was going to do everything myself, build the house... and the money was saved for the family. Now there are changes because the things which I want to do, like planting, I must ask somebody to help me; but they say they want money for that job. You're going to pay R15 a day then he'll plant...

The dissatisfaction regarding his compensation (although substantially higher than the others mentioned) has to be seen in the context of the changing experiences and expectations for miners brought about by the changes in migrant labour over the past decade or so. This miner who started working on the mines

in the late seventies in a period of improving conditions (higher wages and increased although limited possibilities for job advancement) has suddenly had all possibilities for social upliftment pulled from under his feet:

This year I am a winch driver but next year I could get a position to be a "bossboy" or teamleader...Yes, if I work there at the mine, I know I can get a position to go up, then the salary goes up.

Either way, the experiences of these miners is such that, in the words of one of my informants: "After the accident we go backwards not forwards."

Re-employment - the workers' view

In the light of inadequate compensation, the need for suitable re-employment - particularly for those miners compensated under the old system - is paramount. In addition to the financial imperative of re-employment, the psychological effects of re-employment are indispensable to the rehabilitation process. The responsibility of providing employment for disabled workers, rests with the mines, on which miners were injured. As one informant said, "Nobody will employ me because of this injury from the mines. Those people are responsible for my life."

While some miners are usefully re-employed by the mines, many find themselves in situations where there are no jobs available for them, or the nature of the work is unacceptable to them. Where paraplegics (and even in certain cases quadriplegics) are re-employed they do a variety of surface jobs. (5) Consequently their pay corresponds to the amount paid for surface work, (the lowest category of pay on the mines) rather than to the rate paid for underground work where they received their injuries.

Dissatisfaction with re-employment goes beyond financial matters. It relates also to the type of work performed, and therefore has a bearing on the person's sense of dignity and fulfilment: "It's not really work I can say, because the mine is just keeping me there. Sometimes I take my needles and sew some things."

Not only is the work not fulfilling to the miner or useful to the mine, but there hasn't been job creation in any real sense.

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For workers in this predicament, the result is extreme insecurity and confusion: "At the moment I am here at home [Lesotho]. I was told to come home, stay for six months, and after that six months, I will be able to go back again. There is no choice, there is a "law" that I should come home."

Clearly this disabled miner has no rights, or if he has is totally unaware of them. The mine feels "morally" compelled to re-employ disabled miners. However, this is a privilege rather than a right, and by its very nature can be withdrawn. The question of re-employment, certainly in the above miner's case, seems to operate on a rather "ad hoc" basis. One can only presume that not enough jobs for the disabled are being created and that they operate on a rotation basis.

While this worker is re-employed at the mine, he gets R150 a month. Being only for six months of the year, it amounts to R75 a month. In the context of no other means of subsistence, the need for a "living" wage as well as guaranteed employment is obvious.

The need has also been expressed by paraplegics for training in work that is both useful to the mine and can be done when the person is home in the rural area. Some of the jobs envisaged are: wireless repairs, shoe repairing, sewing, knitting, leather work and electrical work. The significance of being able to learn skills that can be used in the rural areas has to be understood in the light of the fact that the work previously done by miners, when they returned home, in between contracts, is no longer an option for them because of their disability.

Employer's responsibility - the workers' view

The responses of many of these miners regarding the questions of contact after and responsibility for the accident, illustrates their spontaneous expectations of responsibility from the industry, and reflects a consciousness of their rights as workers. In addition, there are expectations of the Government to provide sufficient clinics and health workers at strategic locations in the rural areas. Some disabled workers are very bitter about the fact that "after being discharged from the hospital there was no contact from the mine or from the hospital... They kept quiet." They are adamant that some type of communication network be established so that "those people at the mine and

at the hospitals, might know how I am, because I worked there while I was "alive", and now that I'm in difficulty they have to know what is happening. I'd like them to know how I am".

Some of the demands are very specific:

The mine should come at least and check to see whether I have a house to live in, whether my children are getting enough education for their future and to see what problems I am experiencing.

Capital's approach

The present situation with respect to the rehabilitation phase, is such that "contacts between mine doctors and the patients' homes, are for practical purposes non-existent... The same applies to contact with local services, which in turn, are ignorant of the health and medical services provided at mines for employees." (6) All efforts towards rehabilitation are thus centred on the urban areas - either on the mines themselves, or at the various mining hospitals and associated rehabilitation units.

What seems to have emerged in the past decade or so, is an urgent call to the industry on the part of various mine medical personnel for not only a concerted attempt, but also a particular approach to the question of disabled African mineworkers. The question of what constitutes rehabilitation, far from being a static phenomenon, is integrally related to broader developments within the industry as a whole. These developments in turn are both reflective of and responsive to the changing social, political and economic conditions of the subcontinent as a whole.

Some of the changes in migrant labour ushered in by the 1970's include: moves towards stabilisation, albeit applicable to select pockets of the workforce at present; the necessity of attracting a more educated worker, the necessity for skills training; the desire to attract local labour; the idea of mining as a career for black workers; the relative improvements in living and working conditions on the mines; and importantly the changing balance of power on the mines between black and white workers, and between labour and capital as a whole.

The relationship between the changing nature of migrant labour and the changing face of mine medical practice is expressed by an industrial medical officer when he notes, "In the past, with a plentiful supply of unskilled labour, one of our main tasks

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was to keep the maximum percentage of the complement at work. Where prolonged illness or physical defect following an accident resulted in the employee being unable to resume his former occupation, he was repatriated." (7)

In keeping, however, with the broad trends taking place in the industry, he suggests that, "with progressive mechanisation of the mining industry and the growing shortage of labour..., rehabilitation will become of increasing importance in South Africa." (8) Further, "...it is necessary to avoid wastage of experienced labourers and to return these after recovery to their former occupation..." (9)

Although paraplegics and quadriplegics are in themselves not a productive component of the workforce, improvements to date - although not yet fundamental - have to be seen in terms of a general improvement in what can be called the social security package being offered to migrant workers on the mines. The payment of higher wages, relative improvements in living and working conditions - although selective and inconsistent, the desire to attract local labour and a more educated and committed type of worker to the mining industry, would be inconsistent without the reassurance of adequate care in the event of a serious accident or illness.

These developments thus involve looking at changing approaches to the question of rehabilitation, of which the issue of re-employment for disabled mineworkers is a crucial component. (10) It is ostensibly with the imperative of returning the person to a normal productive life, that the deliberations within mine medical circles have been principally concerned. It is here that retraining and placement in alternative work applies, as an integral part of the rehabilitation process.

In the past where workers have been housed and employed on mines that were prepared to accept them, a number of problems were revealed. The medical superintendent at the Ernest Oppenheimer Hospital (EOH) (11) in the early seventies, noted that problems arose in situations where "the demand for goods produced by the workshop is not constant. During slack periods, the men have very little to do and very little is expected of them..." (12) The current industrial medical officer at the Ernest Oppenheimer Hospital, reflecting on the situation of disabled miners on those mines at the time, extended the

problem to include one of inadequate supervision. It was problems such as these that resulted in certain members of the mine medical personnel proposing a number of alternatives to the industry. A few possibilities were considered and it was eventually decided to build a large new rehabilitation centre with hostel and workshops specially designed for paraplegics, quadriplegics and the severely disabled. (13)

The implementation of the Ithuseng Rehabilitation Centre, however, has brought with it a number of further problems, which point to the need for greater resources from the mining industry for their disabled workforce. Firstly the place is overcrowded and as a result there are a number of men with spinal injuries waiting for a place in the centre. Secondly, as the Industrial Medical Officer at the Ernest Oppenheimer Hospital pointed out: "These men are migratory workers. They are here because they are employed by the mines. The moment they are not employed by the mines they have got to go back to their homes, for example, Transkei or Lesotho... They are here to work for the mines, so we have to keep them on the mining books and employ them as miners. They obviously can't work underground, and obviously can't do a great many of the surface jobs, so we have to find special jobs for them... A further problem is that you're not allowed to trade on mine property, so we can't sell our products on the open markets; we can only sell them to the mines. Thus we're very limited in the number of jobs we can do and can sell... The question of retraining for certain jobs scarcely arises under these circumstances... so at the moment not a great deal of retraining is done." (14)

What this situation amounts to in effect, is that, "the pressure is on in a different way. We [at the centre] can no longer just absorb all the industry's paraplegics without questioning, nor give them a job for life and a home to live in... so we are forced to do something a little more active in the way of rehabilitation." (15)

Further, something needs to be done about those miners (ie. non-Anglo miners) who do not have access to such facilities. The present trend is that individual mines on which workers are disabled are going to have to accept full responsibility for the paraplegics and other miners injured during the course of production.

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Clearly, one of the major challenges to the mining industry regarding disabled workers is the necessity for systematic, enforced job creation and training opportunities in useful and meaningful work. This may involve the scrapping of certain by-laws such as not being able to trade on mine property. Within the context of the need for survival and adaptation under changing conditions, it is felt that, "mine doctors should play a key role in researching and developing a new approach to labour matters." (16)

These principles it is felt, need to be extended to matters concerning the health and well-being of the workforce. This is particularly so in light of the growing power of the National Union of Mineworkers which has already demonstrated its commitment to health and safety on the mines.

State intervention

The extent of the state's intervention with respect to the post-accident phase, concerning injured African mineworkers, is embodied in the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1941. While the mining industry has maintained its own Fund which is responsible for financing and handling compensation claims, the WCA of 1941 has meant that the industry is answerable to the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner and the clauses embodied in the Act. Regarding the situation of severely disabled mineworkers, such as paraplegics, there are two clauses in particular, which warrant closer inspection. The clause relating to "Advances against Compensation" seems to acknowledge two things. Firstly, the delays that usually accompany compensation payments, and secondly, the desperate predicament workers and their dependents often find themselves in, as a result of accidents. What this clause amounts to, is that in anticipation of the award of compensation, and where the pressing need of the workman warrants it, the Commissioner may make an advance of a sum, not exceeding a specified amount, to such a person.

The Act also seems to acknowledge the extent to which a condition such as paraplegia, might create permanent dependance on another person; and apparently appreciates the need to subsidise such help. The provision relating to "Allowance with Respect to Constant Attendance" applies to cases where the disablement is of such a nature that the employee is unable to perform the essential actions of life without the constant

help of another person. To this end, the Commissioner may grant an allowance towards the cost of such help.

Despite the presence of such clauses it would seem that disabled workers are not informed as to the provisions of the Act. Particularly in the case of paraplegics who live in the rural areas with their families, the "Allowance with Respect to Constant Attendance" would help alleviate some of the burden placed upon the "carer" (the person responsible for looking after the disabled miner, usually the wife). Either it would provide financial assistance towards the cost of such help, or it would enable employment of a person specifically for the purpose of looking after the disabled miner, while the wife is freed to go and look for work and carry on with her own life. In the case of "Advances against Compensation" desperate situations - such as the one where an informant received nothing for the entire year while in hospital - could be avoided.

It was only in the seventies - particularly the late seventies - that compensation for African mineworkers began to improve. Firstly, in line with the wage increases of the seventies for African miners, compensation which is calculated as a percentage of the wage earned at the time of the accident, rose accordingly. Secondly, and of much greater significance, the form of Workmens Compensation changed for disabled African mineworkers as of June 1, 1977. This entitled all those workers injured from that date onwards to a monthly compensation or pension which was, as already mentioned, calculated as a percentage of salary scales which were significantly higher in the seventies than ever before. This important development resonates with the changing profile of migrant labour from the seventies onwards, discussed earlier.

NUM - the union's approach

The formation and subsequent phenomenal growth of the NUM since November 1982 must rank as one of the most important developments in South Africa's mining industry. With specific reference to the case of spinal injuries, it is significant that NUM has created the infrastructure whereby issues relating to the post-accident phase can be dealt with.

The fact that the Ernest Oppenheimer Hospital Complex (incorporating the Ithuseng Rehabilitation Centre) has been recognised

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as a branch of the union, has paved the way for negotiations concerning paraplegics. As a result, most of the paraplegics have joined and are according to the union "very active". They participate in the union by "attending meetings, with some of them sitting on our regional committees..." (17)

One of the paraplegics from the Ithuseng Rehabilitation Centre is the branch chairman of the EOH complex, and is a very influential shop steward. He has the potential contacts to mobilise and organise paraplegics over compensation, re-employment and other matters affecting their situation.

It is highly significant, both psychologically and strategically that these disabled men are seen as workmen rather than as patients. The latter position would thrust them into a situation of passivity and would marginalise them from other workers.

The present moves in the industry, to devolve the responsibility for injured mineworkers on to individual mines, will result in new approaches on the part of the union concerning the disabled. Paraplegics will become part of the union at those mines. The benefits the union wins for the workforce, will be applicable to them as well. As far as bargaining for a single paraplegic with a specific problem on a particular mine, for example, "shop stewards can handle the problem at a much more local level." (18) While paraplegics in unionised mines and hospitals have some bargaining power, those in the rural areas, however, remain voiceless.

Conclusion

In South Africa, it is evident that miners and their families have always experienced, and still do experience, the full weight of the wider consequences of accidents that occur at the workplace. Capital's approach to the problem of disability, however, has only relatively recently begun to shift away from an "event-based" consciousness to a more consequence oriented consciousness.

The change from the lump-sum compensation system to the payment of a monthly pension is significant in the sense that it recognises the need to keep some form of contact with the disabled person while he is alive and also realises the inadequacy of the lump-sum system.

The building of a centre like Ithuseng recognises the importance of providing facilities necessary for disabled miners coming from rural areas. The facilities it provides and the contact with other people in the same position are all important steps in the person's rehabilitation process. However, the presence of such a centre should be seen as a transitional phase in the rehabilitation procedure and should not obscure the need for more fundamental forms of responsibility on the part of the industry, in the form of increased compensation and systematic job creation for disabled miners.

The differences in the experiences of the miners, outlined in the article, illustrate some of the changes taking place in the industry. The similarities of their experiences, however, are more marked. This is because the changes we are witnessing are not as yet systematic or rigorous due to the conflict and resistance within the industry itself, over the manner in which new patterns of labour power reproduction should replace the old.

One of the most dramatic developments in the mining industry at present is the emergence of the NUM as a "watchdog" over health and safety matters. Just as it is challenging the gap between ideals in accident prevention and the reality of their implementation, so must it challenge the chasm between rhetoric and reality in the post-accident situation. This is both imperative and inevitable while the production of gold entails the production of injuries.

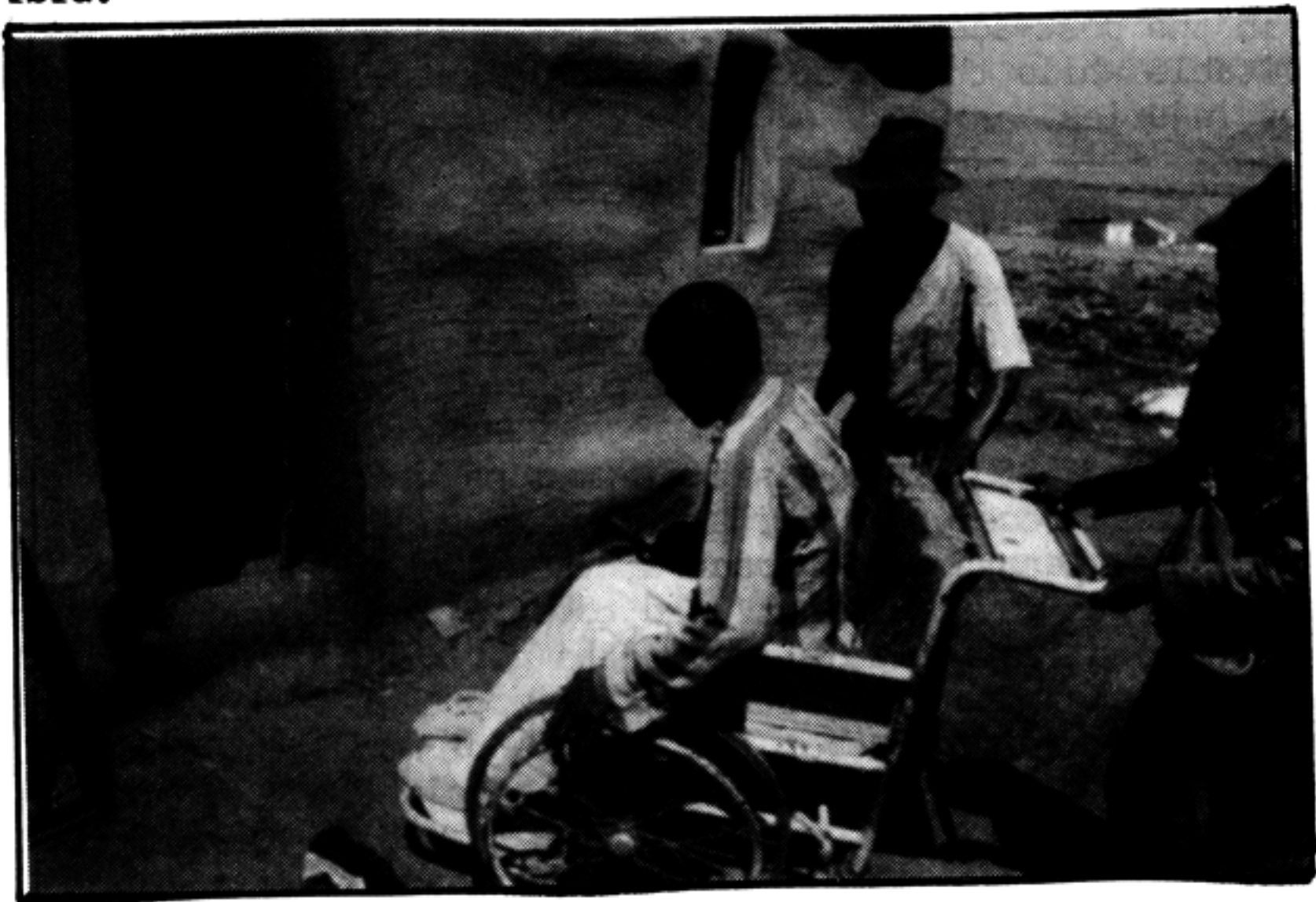
Footnotes

- 1 Nichols P, and Armstrong P, Safety or profit - Industrial Accidents and the Conventional Wisdom, Falling Wall Press, Bristol, 1973.
- 2 *ibid*
- 3 The lump-sum of R500 is a basic minimum payment. Miners can and do in fact receive larger amounts, depending on a number of variables: length of contract at the time of the accident; extent of bonus pay the miner used to earn; wages accrued during hospitalisation relative to the period off work, etc.
- 4 A well-regulated diet is particularly important in the case of para- or quadriplegia for the purpose of muscle build-up.
- 5 Some of these surface jobs include: first aid dresser; boot repairer; the painting of signs; making wire hose clamps; repairing hard hats; tailoring; woodwork; Fanagalo instructor

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and in the case of literate paraplegics jobs like compound clerks, welfare assistant and so on.

- 6 O Martiny, "Socio-medical problems in the mining industry in relation to altered recruiting and recruiting practices", in Proceedings of the Mine Medical Officers' Association of South Africa, LVIII.427, May 1979 - April 1980, p8.
- 7 L F Dangerfield, "Rehabilitation" in Proceedings of the Mine Medical Officers' Association, March 1966, pl03.
- 8 ibid
- 9 ibid
- 10 See footnote 5 for a list of some of the employment possibilities for disabled mineworkers.
- 11 The EOH is a major mine hospital catering mainly for miners from the Orange Free State mines.
- 12 I Potgieter, "Rehabilitation of paraplegics, quadriplegics and other severely disabled African mineworkers", May 1973.
- 13 This centre financed by the Anglo American Corporation would be open only to those mineworkers injured on Anglo mines.
- 14 Interview with Industrial Medical Officer at the EOH, 1984.
- 15 ibid.
- 16 Martiny, "Socio-medical problems", pl2.
- 17 Interview with Cyril Ramaphosa, General Secretary, National Union of Mineworkers, 1984.
- 18 ibid.



Nationalisation, socialisation and the freedom charter

Robert Davies*

The Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress of the People on 26 June 1955 includes the following wellknown and much discussed clause:

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people; the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole..."

This extract from the Charter represents one of the most direct, and controversial, statements of economic policy by the national liberation movement. Formulated at a moment in the struggle when liberation was a distant goal, it represented a general statement of aspiration. It showed the movement's awareness that the achievement of national liberation would depend on the radical transformation of the capitalist economic system in a way which would undermine the stranglehold of the monopolies.

However, the Charter itself, understandably, did not attempt to identify the extent of monopolisation of the economy nor to discuss the implications of transferring monopolies to public ownership. The aim of the present paper is to contribute certain tentative reflections to a debate on the contemporary significance of this section of the Freedom Charter in a post-apartheid society. It will do no more than try to raise certain pertinent questions about a process of transferring the monopolies to the ownership of the people under current conditions. No attempt at all will be made to discuss two related sections of the Charter: the clause stating, "All other [non-monopoly] industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people" and the section headed, "The land shall be shared among those who work it".

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Policies stated in both these areas will, of course, be of critical importance in a liberated South Africa. The non-monopoly sector, although small relative to the monopoly sector of the economy, is quite substantial in comparison with that in other African countries. As in other African countries, it can be expected to be an important site of potential class formation and struggle after apartheid restrictions are lifted. The question of how non-monopoly capital is to be controlled to make sure that it serves the interests of the people is thus of central importance. Likewise, the land question opens up a number of critical and thorny issues - how should the land be redivided; what will be the new forms of production to be created; what will the relative balance be at different phases between state farms, co-operatives, small and large scale capitalist agriculture, and family production; and how will a transfer of agricultural monopolies be effected. Important though these questions are, they cannot be adequately discussed in the present paper, which will instead confine itself to the issue of transferring the monopolies to the people.

The paper will begin with a discussion of the extent of monopolisation of present day South African capitalism, highlighting developments in the period since the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. It will deal with the various forms which nationalisation can take, emphasising the distinction between nationalisation as a change in the legal form of property and socialisation. It will argue that if nationalisation is to be part of a broader process of socialisation it needs to be accompanied by concrete changes in the organisation of labour processes and decision-making at enterprise level, which permit the working masses themselves to progressively gain control over their means of production. Indeed, it will suggest that in some cases prior advances at this level may lay a firmer basis for later socialist transformation than premature defensive nationalisations. In this respect the paper will offer some brief reflection on the Mozambican experience. The paper will conclude by pointing to the importance of developing policies which allow for a prioritising and sequencing of tactical objectives within an overall strategy aiming at achieving the objectives defined in the Freedom Charter.

1. The development of monopoly capitalism in South Africa

It is generally known that South African capitalism has long been dominated by monopoly capital. The onset of deep level gold mining in 1896 led to a very rapid process of centralisation and concen-

tration of capital in the mining industry. Within 20 years, the industry was controlled by a small number of mining "houses" or "groups", with strong links to financial institutions. These were organised in the Chamber of Mines, which ran its own monopoly labour recruitment organisations as well as presenting a common "industry point of view" in state structures.

However, although the mining industry was characterised by monopoly capitalist relations of production from a very early period, other sectors were not. It was only in the post-Second World War period that monopoly capitalism began to penetrate other sectors of the economy. A number of phases in the development of contemporary South African monopoly capitalism can be identified. (1)

The first phase, from 1945 until the post-Sharpeville crisis of 1960-3, saw the emergence of monopoly capitalism in secondary industry. This was part of a general global trend, which saw the "multi-nationalisation" of certain capitals based in the metropolises of capitalist production. In South Africa, as in a number of other peripheral social formations, foreign industrial capital began establishing subsidiaries based on the transfer, in a certain form, of the technologies and the corresponding organisation of labour processes from the centres of advanced capitalist production. Subsidiaries or associates of foreign concerns became the dynamic force within the South African manufacturing sector, stimulating a process of concentration and centralisation of capital in the industrial sector. The Nationalist regime, although rhetorically committed to an anti-monopoly stance, eventually opted for a pragmatic approach, confining its interventions in practice to seeking favourable terms for "Afrikaner capital" in the emerging dominant relations of monopoly capital. Throughout this phase, however, capitalist agriculture remained characterised by competitive capitalist relations of production.

The second phase corresponded to the post-Sharpeville "boom" of 1963-73. This saw the consolidation of monopoly capitalist relations of production in manufacturing and the beginning of a continuing process of concentration and centralisation of capital in the agricultural sector. Between 1960 and 1980 the number of "white farmers" fell from 106,000 to 70,000. By the 1980s it was estimated that 40% of white owned farming land was held by just 5% of farmers. (2) The other feature of this phase was that it saw the start of a process of interpenetration between monopoly capitals. Mining monopolies, such as Anglo American, began investing

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in industry, finance, property and agriculture, establishing subsidiary holding companies to control interests in these sectors. Monopolies which developed initially in the industrial sector, such as Barlow Rand, acquired mining subsidiaries. Financial groups, including the Afrikaner banks and insurance groups - Volkskas and Sanlam - as well as established non-Afrikaner institutions such as SA Mutual, acquired substantial industrial, commercial, agricultural and other subsidiaries. Sanlam too acquired a mining subsidiary - Gencor - virtually handed over to it in 1963 by Anglo American in an attempt to "encourage moderation" among important forces within the Afrikaner nationalist alliance. As a result of these developments, sectoral differences between capitals became less and less important. Moreover, non-Afrikaner monopolies, Afrikaner monopolies and foreign multi-nationals all began buying into one another, thus reducing the importance of the different "national origins" of monopoly capitals. The monopoly conglomerate, with subsidiaries in many sectors and substantial investments in other conglomerates, emerged as the dominant force in South African capitalism.

The period from 1973 to the present constitutes the third phase, corresponding to the multiple organic crisis of the apartheid system and state. With the exception of the 1979-81 temporary "upswing" resulting from the sharp rise in the gold price, this phase has in general been one of low or negative growth. As is generally the case in periods of capitalist crisis, the current recession in South Africa has seen the elimination of a large number of small capitals and a corresponding further centralisation of control over capitalist production in the hands of the monopoly conglomerates. It has also seen a process of further centralisation within the conglomerates themselves. For example, in The Struggle for South Africa written in early 1983 on the basis of data for 1981, eight private conglomerates - Anglo-American, Sanlam, Barlow Rand, Volkskas, Rembrandt, SA Mutual, Anglovaal and SA Breweries were identified as the controlling forces within South African capitalism, together with state corporations and a small number of foreign multi-nationals. (3) A number of medium sized conglomerates pursuing policies of aggressive acquisition were also mentioned, two of which - Liberty Life and the Kirsch group - were described as the most important. Since then one of the major conglomerates, SA Breweries, has ceased being an independent corporation and now falls under the control of Anglo American; SA Mutual has assumed effective control of Barlow Rand; the Kirsh group has been swallowed up by Sanlam; and there has been

a high level of interpenetration between the conglomerates and banks (SA Mutual/Nedbank and Rembrandt/Volkskas in particular). (4) Liberty Life, on the other hand has entered the "big league" controlling assets valued at R13,535 million in 1985. (5)

This process of further centralisation of power in the hands of the monopoly conglomerates has been accelerated by withdrawals by foreign multi-nationals from direct investments - a reflection of the general loss of confidence by foreign capital. Thus, within a few months of the removal of exchange controls in February 1983, three major foreign owned companies - Premier Milling, Rennies and Metal Box - were sold to Anglo American, SA Mutual and Barlow Rand respectively at a total cost of R604 million. (6) The first deal strengthened Anglo's stake in the food industry and also gave it effective control over SA Breweries. The second gave rise to the merger of Safmarine and Rennies, giving SA Mutual effective control over the vast bulk of all shipping and forwarding operations in Southern Africa. The third reinforced Barlows already substantial stake in the packaging business. By mid-1986 an estimated 34 foreign companies had quit South Africa, most of them selling out to South African monopolies. Perhaps the best known of the more recent deals was that leading to the incorporation of Ford's South African operations into the Anglo controlled Sigma Motor corporation. (7) Such deals have of course not only expanded the asset base of the domestic monopoly conglomerates, but also altered the relative weight of local monopoly and foreign capital in favour of the former.

2. Current indices of the monopolisation of South African capitalism.

Several calculations of the extent of monopoly control have been made. More than ten years ago, the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Regulation of Monopolistic Conditions Act of 1955 concluded that there was "an exceptionally high degree of concentration of economic power in the major divisions of the South African economy". (8) A study undertaken by the Commission calculated that in 1972 10% of firms in the manufacturing, construction, wholesale, retail and transport sectors controlled 75% or more of the market, whilst 25% of the firms controlled approximately 90%. (9)

Another way of examining the extent of the economic power of the major monopolies is to consider the assets they control. The Appendix represents an attempt to update the analysis made in The

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Struggle for South Africa. It shows the assets in 1985 of the mining, industrial, construction, trade, transport and finance companies listed in the Financial Mail's "Top 100" and "Giants League", controlled by the major conglomerates. Comparing the 1985 table with that for 1981, a number of important changes are evident.

Firstly, the total value of the assets of the top 130 or so companies has more than doubled from R157 billion to R371 billion. This represents an annual average rate of increase of 23.98%. This is in excess either of the annual average rate of inflation, which varied between 10.97% and 18.45% in the period since 1981, or the annual average rate of depreciation of the value of the currency against the US\$ on the foreign exchanges, which works out at 20.15% in the period until just before Botha's August 1985 "Rubicon speech". (10) It is thus a reflection of the fact that the recession has been a period of further centralisation of capital in the hands of the big corporations.

Secondly, the proportion of the total assets held by state corporations has declined slightly from 26.61% in 1981 to 24.59% in 1985. This is largely due to the selling off of Safmarine to SA Mutual in 1983. Nevertheless, it is extremely relevant in any discussion of nationalisation and socialisation to remember that nearly one quarter of the total assets of the top companies are in the hands of state corporations. These not only control central banking, communications, and the bulk of the transport sector, but also key strategic production sectors, notably iron and steel, energy (electricity and synthetic fuel from coal) and armaments production. In addition, through the Land Bank and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), the state has a substantial effective stake in capitalist agriculture and the non-monopoly industrial and service sectors. Moreover, the rate of accumulation of some of these corporations has been extremely rapid. The assets of Sasol, for example, have increased from R1,232.5 million in 1981 to R5,120.8 million in 1985 as a result of the substantial investments (partly private financed) in the Sasol II and III projects.

A third important change since 1981 has been in the composition of the "top non-state group": the result of the swallow up of two formerly independent groups (SA Breweries and Barlow Rand), the interpenetration of two groups with banks (SA Mutual/Nedbank and Rembrandt/Volkskas), and the entry of one newcomer (Liberty Life). Instead of eight it now consists of six corporations.

Finally, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of the total assets of the top 137 companies controlled by the leading conglomerates. Thus, in 1981 the top 8 controlled 61.66% of the total assets of non-state corporations. In 1985 the top 6 controlled 71.26%. If we compare the position of the top three (Anglo, Sanlam and SA Mutual/Barlow Rand) with that of the same companies in 1981, we find that their share has gone up from 50.68% to 57.78%. Most dramatic has been the increase in the Sanlam group's share from 16.82% to 18.62% and the SA Mutual/Barlow Rand/Nedbank group's from 10.29% to 18.06%. These figures reflect a process of extremely rapid centralisation of capital which has occurred over a short (four year) period.

A similar conclusion about the extent of monopoly control has been reached by Robin McGregor through a study of the percentage of the total Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) shares controlled by the different groups. McGregor estimated that 80.2% of JSE shares are controlled by four groups, while 90.5% are controlled by 10 identifiable groups. The top four are Anglo American, Sanlam, SA Mutual and Rembrandt, of whom Anglo alone controls 54.1%. (11)

The above figures are all of course indices of the centralisation of capital in South Africa. There is no equivalent aggregate data to show the precise extent to which the process of rapid centralisation has been accompanied by a concentration of capital. However, recent studies of particular industrial sectors have documented how the transition to monopoly capitalism in the late 1960s and 1970s led to profound reorganisations of production into larger production units based on more mechanised labour processes. (12) A similar trend has also been evident in the mining industry since the mid-1970s, and current plans envisage both the combination of existing mines into "mega-mines" and the further mechanisation of a number of production processes. (13)

However one looks at it, it is clear that South African capitalism is today characterised by the domination of a few conglomerates over all sectors of production, distribution and exchange. At the time of the Congress of the People, monopoly capital controlled the mining industry and banking and was beginning to penetrate manufacturing. Today the monopolies dominate all significant sectors of the economy - mining, manufacturing, agriculture, banking, wholesale and retail trade and even service sectors like hotels, entertainment and tourism. The conglomerates control vast empires with hundreds of subsidiary and associated companies penetrating

into all spheres of the economy. There is no significant production, distribution, exchange or service sector in which these do not control the vast bulk of "economic activity". This has important implications for any discussion of the contemporary significance of the Freedom Charter. It means that under today's conditions the objective of transferring the monopolies to the ownership of the people can mean nothing less than establishing popular control over the major part of every sector of the entire economy.

3. Nationalisation and socialisation

Transferring ownership of the monopolies to the people is sometimes regarded as equivalent to a call for some form of nationalisation. However, nationalisation is of itself only a change in the legal form of property. More precisely it is a transfer of legal property rights to a state. As such it may take a variety of forms, occur under different forms of state, and in the context of several possible patterns of social relations of production.

In common parlance, the term "nationalisation" has been used to describe such diverse situations as that where a state:

- (i) takes a minority shareholding in an enterprise (usually termed partial nationalisation);
- (ii) takes a majority shareholding, but leaves managerial control in the hands of the private minority shareholder(s);
- (iii) takes over, with or without compensation, 100% ownership of an enterprise but enters into a management contract handing over management to private capital;
- (iv) takes over the management of an enterprise which continues to have a minority or majority private shareholding.
- (v) takes over, with or without compensation, both 100% ownership and management of an enterprise.

Any of the above, may or may not represent an attempt to subordinate the actions of enterprises to some form of state plan.

Nationalisation, in any of the above forms, may take place under very different state forms. In advanced capitalist social formations, nationalisations of ailing and unprofitable industries and sectors, which are nonetheless socially necessary (from the standpoint of national capital accumulation) have been undertaken by openly bourgeois as well as social democratic regimes. In peripheral social formations, regimes dominated even by comprador bour-

geois elements have nationalised certain enterprises and created para-statal to provide an opening for capital accumulation by domestic class forces. In apartheid South Africa, we have already noted that a substantial state sector, embracing strategic areas of production as well as central banking, transport and communications already exists - created by successive racist minority regimes.

There has been some debate about whether the Freedom Charter "really" represents the interests of the working class. Taking up this point, Raymond Suttner and Jeremy Cronin have written:

This doubt sometimes arises from a confusion between working class demands that are also in the interests of other classes, and demands which are primarily beneficial to workers... While the Charter is not a programme of the working class alone, it nevertheless primarily reflects its interests. Some of the clauses in the Charter are socialist in orientation and are addressed much more profoundly to working class interests than would be the case with any bourgeois document. (14)

Billy Nair makes a similar point saying:

Right the way through [the Charter] you will see workers' interests represented, but not in isolation from other popular classes. Take for instance: "The people shall share in the country's wealth". That is fundamentally a working class demand but the emphasis on the people is still relevant in that it shows the broad unity of all classes. (15)

In short, the Charter is a document formulated in the process of struggle, articulating the demands and aspirations of an alliance of class forces, in which the working class has a leading role. As such, although it is true that "the economic clauses in the Freedom Charter are not specifically socialist", (16) the demand to transfer the ownership of the monopolies to the people clearly envisages more than a transfer of legal property rights to a state seeking no more than the creation of opportunities for capital accumulation by some new exploiting class. Put another way, the Congress of the People was not calling merely for the creation of new Iscors, Escoms and Sasols. The Freedom Charter is quite specific on this. It calls for much more than an extension of state ownership. It calls for a transfer of ownership of the monopolies to the people.

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For a transfer of the monopolies to popular control to be complete it is necessary for the people to assume both the powers of economic ownership and the powers of possession in sectors currently under monopoly control. The former refers to the powers to determine how resources will be invested, how the products of labour will be distributed and how the social process of accumulation will be controlled. Transferring these powers to the people would imply establishing popular control over investment decisions, policies relating to the distribution of products and decisions on the use to which accumulated surplus is put. The powers of possession refer to the powers related to the actual organisation and direction of labour processes in productive enterprises. (17) A necessary condition for achieving a transfer of the ownership and control of the monopolies to the people is clearly the establishment of a form of state in which "the people shall govern" and the working class assumes "the leading role" within a broad alliance of oppressed class forces. However, nationalisation - as a legal transfer of property - is not, even under such a state form, a sufficient condition for a transfer to the people either of the powers of economic ownership or possession.

The socialist classics have long made a clear distinction between nationalisation and socialisation. (18) In particular, socialisation can in no sense be reduced to nationalisation. While nationalisation is a change in legal property relations, socialisation is a much broader process of collective re-appropriation by producers of control over the means of production. Nationalisation by a peoples' state is a necessary element in a process of socialisation, but only in conjunction with other transformations. More specifically, if nationalisation is to contribute to a process of socialisation it needs to be accompanied, first, by the introduction of a process of planning in which social need rather than profit increasingly becomes the criterion in decisions about the allocation of resources, and, second, by transformations in the organisation of management and labour processes which permit direct producers to assume increasing control over decisions at enterprise level currently the preserve of capital. The dialectical relationship between the centralising tendency of the macro-economic planning process and the decentralising tendency of greater workers' control at enterprise level is one of the most important issues in any experience of attempted socialist transition.

The sine qua non for any process of socialist transition in South Africa is clearly the creation of a peoples' state, in which the

working class assumes the hegemonic role. Although there are many battles still to be fought - and the national liberation movement is quite correct in giving priority to organising and mobilising for these - advances in popular struggles in recent years have raised for the first time the possibility of the establishment of a peoples' state in South Africa in the foreseeable future, and thus placed on the agenda of serious political debate some of the issues being raised in this paper. As ANC President Oliver Tambo put it in his 1986 New Year message, the developing mass struggles have reached the point where the Botha regime has lost the strategic initiative. (19) This is reflected in its inability - either through restructuring ("reform") or repression - to produce any long term solution to the deepening crisis.

The creation of some form of popular state in South Africa in the foreseeable future is thus becoming a real possibility. However, the limits and the possibilities, as well as appropriate strategy, for a struggle for socialism will depend to a large extent on the precise balance of class forces under which such a state was established as well as the outcome of class struggles taking place after liberation. Both the balance between formerly oppressed/exploited and former oppressors/exploiters and among the different class forces among the formerly oppressed/exploited will obviously be relevant. These by definition are currently unknown elements - to be determined in future struggles - and no attempt will be made here to speculate about their possible or likely outcome.

Nevertheless, it is clear that monopoly capital is preparing to do battle on the terrain of a post-apartheid - or at least post-Nationalist Party ruled - South Africa. Ideally, it would like to force through some kind of federalist or consociational system, which would permit the emergence of a "black government", but severely constrain its capacity to transform the basic structures of capitalist power or mechanisms of capitalist exploitation. As a fall back, it would probably be prepared to eventually settle for a deal which offered guarantees protecting certain legal property rights for big capital but probably not precluding nationalisation altogether. In this respect it is notable that leading figures associated with the monopolies have "accept[ed]...a measure of state planning and intervention...to compensate for the errors of omission and commission of the apartheid era". (20)

The rest of the paper will argue that whatever concessions may or may not have to be made to monopoly capital in the course of

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struggle - and even if in the end no concessions at all have to be made - the struggle to achieve the objectives of the Freedom Charter in so far as the transfer of control of the monopolies is concerned can only be seriously conceived of as a protracted process. It is one which will necessarily pass through various phases and stages. Moreover, while nationalisation by a peoples' state will in South Africa as elsewhere be an essential element of a process of socialisation, it is necessary, in my view, to break from the kind of mechanistic conception which sees nationalisation as a process which has to be completed before the struggle for other transformations can begin. Significant advances towards socialist planning and workers control at enterprise level may be taken before the achievement of full nationalisation and, indeed, these may lay a firmer basis for nationalisation as part of a process of socialisation than premature offensive or defensive nationalisations by a state lacking sufficient cadres to take over the running of enterprises.

Under the concrete conditions of South Africa, the struggle to place the monopolies under popular control will, in my view, have to be seen from the outset as a war of position involving action on a number of fronts. It will have to base itself in the first instance on consolidation in the two areas where the forces of the people are likely to be relatively strong - in the apparatuses of the central state, and in shopfloor organisation at enterprise level. Coordinated and mutually reinforcing action at both levels will be necessary if an advance towards socialism is to be achieved under the likely concrete conditions of a post apartheid society. A one sided reliance on action at the level of apparatuses of the central state may result in the predominance of statist, bureaucratic and ultimately undemocratic practices. A one sided reliance on shop floor power will tend to spawn workerist practices, unable to distinguish between the short term interests of particular groups of workers and the longer term interests of the working class as a whole.

4. Some reflections on the Mozambican experience

Some aspects of Mozambique's experience of attempted socialist transition would seem to be relevant to a discussion of the relationship between nationalisation and socialisation, as well as the possible role of shopfloor organisation. However, this is decidedly not to hold up the Mozambican case as either a positive or negative "model". The Mozambican experience has its own specificities - its

own concrete conditions determining the limits and possibilities of a process of transformation, and its own history and traditions of struggle - all of which are very different from those in South Africa. Nevertheless, it offers some points for reflection in a discussion of a possible process of transition in South Africa.

After it came to power in 1975, Frelimo nationalised as a deliberate policy measure only the health service, legal practices, education, funeral services and rented property. Later, during the war with the Rhodesian Smith regime, the oil refinery and fuel distribution were taken over. Apart from these areas no deliberate decision was taken to nationalise productive enterprises. Nevertheless, by 1982 only 27% of "industry" (including construction and service activities) remained in private ownership - the rest being either state owned, "intervened" (state managed) or mixed state/private. (21) No equivalent figures for agriculture are available, but it is clear that the major part of former settler owned farms as well as plantations had become state farms. The process under which the state in Mozambique came to control the vast bulk of productive enterprises as well as the banking sector, retail outlets and the service sector was essentially one of defensive nationalisation. The abandonment of property by former settler capitalist owners, frequently after prolonged processes of asset stripping and even physical sabotage, forced the state to intervene and take over the management of enterprises. Later these were in a number of cases restructured and incorporated into state companies. Likewise, the banking system was taken over and restructured following the virtual collapse of the sector in the wake of the nationalisation of rented property. While the process was at one point seen as positive in the sense of creating a base for socialism, it was in fact extremely disruptive to production, overstretched the existing cadre, and made the introduction of a planning process prioritising and hierarchising specific tactical measures within an overall strategy difficult. State intervention became in many cases a reactive response to emergencies created by the actions of fleeing settler capitalists. State appointed managers, frequently with no previous experience of the sector to which they were assigned, could often do little more than engage themselves in a day to day ad hoc struggle to restore production under existing conditions.

Under these circumstances, which were probably largely unavoidable in view of the specific conditions of labour coercion on which capital accumulation in colonial Mozambique had depended, the fact

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that the production decline was arrested in 1977 and that production increased by 15% in real terms between 1977 and 1981 were remarkable achievements. Nonetheless, the fact remained that the state was technically unable to effectively manage and control all the nationalised enterprises, while the working class was far from having assumed collective control over the means of production. In short, from the perspective of socialist transition, the process of nationalisation - the change in the legal form of property - had in the case of Mozambique far outstripped that of socialisation and indeed had reached the point where it was impeding the processes of establishing an effective planning process and transforming production relations in enterprises.

However, while the above represents a sketch of the general situation, there were within the broad Mozambican experience a number of cases where a different pattern of transformation was evident. An example here is the case of the TEXTLOM textile factory in Maputo, studied by the Centre of African Studies of Eduardo Mondlane University in 1980 (22) - before the onset of the current crisis. What was notable about TEXTLOM was that it became a nationalised enterprise (technically intervened) not through the usual process of abandonment by previous owners and an intervention from the top, but as a direct result of workers' struggles on the shop floor - struggles which directly challenged management's prerogative on key issues affecting the control of the enterprise. Moreover, this was done on the basis of a relatively high degree, by prevailing Mozambican standards, of shop floor mobilisation.

The TEXTLOM company was established in 1966 by a consortium of Portuguese and settler capitalist interests. The factory was completed and began producing in 1973. It was the second largest textile plant in Mozambique and one of the most modern factories in the country. When independence came, the initial investment had not been paid off and the capitalist owners stood therefore to make a significant loss if they abandoned it.

Prior to the Portuguese coup of April 25 1974, there was little by way of labour organisation or workers' action. With the coup, however, workers began to organise and put demands on the firm's management. A workers' committee was formed in June 1974, which demanded an end to racial discrimination in the factory; a revision in the wage scale; and the desegregation of facilities - the canteen and the firm's buses - restricted to Portuguese workers and assimilados. When this was refused a strike broke out in July

1974. Management's response was to call in the police, who in the new conditions refused to break the strike and instead persuaded management to make concessions. The workers returned home that night in the previously segregated buses, having won a clear victory. Thereafter management was compelled to recognise the workers' committee as a force. It was consulted on a number of key issues and negotiated several wage increases and other benefits. This situation continued for some time after independence, until in 1976 another conflict erupted. Management, responding to the exodus of Portuguese foremen and technicians, attempted to reinforce its position by promoting to supervisory positions a number of its lackeys. This move was opposed by the workers who both considered the new appointees unqualified and the promotions themselves as a manoeuvre to consolidate management control. The workers refused to accept the new appointees or to take orders from them. Deadlock ensued and when the state structures refused to back the position of management, the senior managers resigned and TEXLOM became a state intervened (effectively nationalised) enterprise.

The point about the TEXLOM example is that the firm became nationalised as a result of workers' struggles which challenged the prerogative of bourgeois management on key questions, and not through action from above. When the Centre of African Studies visited TEXLOM in 1980, it was evident that the experience of workers' shopfloor organisation and struggle in the factory had created a much more secure base for state management than in many other intervened enterprises. Workers had already begun to participate in the administrative decision-making process previously the exclusive preserve of bourgeois management. The production council, elected by the workers, was represented on the management council and made a significant input to management decisions. Regular shopfloor meetings were held to discuss a variety of problems and by 1980 there was also some rudimentary but real involvement of the workers preparing plans for the enterprise - a practice which has unfortunately not continued. Since 1980, there have been many changes and TEXLOM has been affected by the crisis brought on by destabilisation and the bandit war. Nevertheless, at a particular moment and in the context of a specific concrete historical situation, it represents in my view a relevant experience with potential lessons.

5. Conclusions

Returning to the South African case, it is clear that the level of

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shopfloor power of the working class is much greater than it was in Mozambique. Over a million workers are organised in unions, which have a history of militant struggle and an established presence in the industrial, mining, distribution and service sectors. Already questions of workers' control have been raised in the course of concrete struggles. For example, the current struggle against redundancies has seen unions demanding information about companies' plans and challenging managements' projections and plans. Moreover, the South African working class has developed a tradition of democratic, collective organisation not only in unions, but also in community and political organisations as well as, more recently, in the embryonic structures of popular power that are being created in residential areas. (23) These are obviously points of strength in the broad liberation movement which will have to be built on and developed in a struggle for socialism in a liberated South Africa.

On taking power a peoples' government in South Africa will, of course, inherit the existing already substantial state sector. At the same time, it will undoubtedly be obliged to make a number of immediate interventions in the existing "private sector". For example, it will be necessary, even as a defensive measure, to establish effective state control over the banking system at an early stage. There is already a substantial and increasing outflow of capital from the country. For some years all the major monopolies have been making large investments abroad. (24) If and when a process of socialist transition begins, we can expect a rapid acceleration in the rate of capital outflow if adequate controls are not imposed immediately. In addition, state intervention will, of course, be necessary from the outset in the struggle to realise the objectives in relation to employment, housing and social services defined in the Freedom Charter. To take another example, we can expect a rapid increase in the rate of urbanisation after liberation. Yet the trend in capitalist production is towards increasingly mechanised production with a corresponding expulsion of labour from production. In such circumstances, "market forces" are not going to provide employment for the growing urban population. The establishment of new productive state enterprises producing goods to satisfy the needs of the people as well as providing employment will have to be an urgent priority.

It will also be necessary at an early stage to submit the existing "private sector" to a measure of supervision and control, and create conditions for a transfer of the monopolies to popular

control. In this respect, the current structure of monopoly control might ironically in the end be turned to advantage. It has created a small number of control centres over the vast bulk of capitalist production. In principle, gaining control (through partial or full nationalisation, or even through the introduction of regulations) of the parent boards of Anglo American, Sanlam, SA Mutual, Rembrandt/Volkskas, Liberty Life and Anglovaal should provide a basis for a substantial measure of real control over the major "macro" decisions affecting the vast bulk of capitalist production without having immediately to take over the management of each of the hundreds of component enterprises.

None of these or any other of the likely immediate priorities of a transformation process would, however, necessarily be enhanced if the available cadre were absorbed in taking over the day to day management of the large number of existing enterprises as a result of a process of premature nationalisation - either forced or willed by a conception that socialism depends on an immediate far reaching change in the property relations. It is precisely here that the question of shopfloor workers' organisation will be of crucial importance. Workers organised at the point of production will be an indispensable element of a process of controlling the actions of the existing bourgeois managements, elements which will have to remain at their posts for some time if severe disruptions of production are to be avoided. At a certain point, as the TEXLOM example suggests, the defensive struggle of workers to control or resist manoeuvres by bourgeois managements is likely to pass over into a struggle in which their continued control over the enterprise is called into question. This is one possible route through which part of the process of transferring the ownership of the monopolies to the people might be accomplished.

At all events, what will be necessary will be the sequencing of tactical measures within an overall strategy. All will not be possible on "one glorious day". Priorities will have to be selected within the range of possible actions. Above all state action and the actions of workers organised at the point of production will have to be mutually complementary and reinforcing. Only in this way will it be possible to realise the objective of transferring control of the monopolies to the people.

(This paper was originally presented to the Conference on the Southern African Economy after Apartheid, University of York, UK, 29.9.86 - 2.10.86)

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Notes and references:

1. This section is based on the analysis developed in R Davies, D O'Meara and S Dlamini, The struggle for South Africa: a reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, London, Zed Books, 1984, Chapter 2
2. *ibid* p118
3. *ibid* pp58-61
4. R McGregor, McGregor's who owns whom, McGregor, Purdey Publishing, 1985: has been used as the basis for determining ownership patterns
5. See Financial Mail special survey: Top companies, 23.5.86, p150
6. This was analysed in a Centre of African Studies dossier, (23.40) "Background on recent disinvestments by foreign capital from South Africa", Maputo, 25.7.83.
7. See Sunday Times 29.9.86
8. Quoted Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, *op cit*, p57
9. *ibid* p58
10. On the average annual rates of inflation see The Citizen 21.1.84 and 22.1.86. This calculation of the rate of depreciation in the value of the Rand was based on the rate for December 25 1981 given in the Financial Mail (R1=\$1,033) and that just before the "Rubicon speech" given in Business Day 6.2.86 (R1=\$0,48). The rate before the speech was used as many of the asset figures in the Financial Mail survey refer to mid year
11. Quoted in Weekly Mail 13.3.86
12. See, for example, E Webster, Cast in a racial mould: labour process and trade unionism in the foundries, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985
13. See Financial Mail 17.1.86, 31.1.86 and Centro de Estudos Africanos, "Changing labour demand trends on the South African mines with particular reference to Mozambique", mimeo, 1986
14. R Suttner and J Cronin, 30 Years of the Freedom Charter, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, p143
15. *ibid* pp145-6
16. *ibid* p129
17. On this see C Bettelheim, Economic calculation and forms of property, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, p69
18. See V I Lenin, "Left-wing" childishness and the petty bourgeois mentality, May 1918, Part III
19. "Message of the National Executive Committee of the ANC on January 8 1986 delivered by President Tambo"
20. See article by Gavin Relly in the Sunday Times 1.6.86

21. See Economist Intelligence Unit, Country profile: Mozambique 1986-7, p8
22. Centro de Estudos Africanos, Capacidade produtiva e planificacao na TEXLOM, Maputo, 1980
23. On this see T Karon and M Ozinsky, "The working class in national democratic struggle", Work in Progress 42, May 1986
24. See D Kaplan, "The internationalisation of South African capital: South African direct foreign investment in the contemporary period", African Affairs 82, 329, October 1983

APPENDIX: CENTRALISATION OF CAPITAL AS REFLECTED IN THE FINANCIAL MAIL'S "TOP 100" AND "GIANTS LEAGUE" 1985

GROUP	GROUP'S ASSETS (R MILLION)	% TOTAL ASSETS TOP 137 COMPANIES	% TOTAL ASSETS NO STATE COS
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1. STATE CORPORATIONS

Escom	31,252		
SATS	17,262		
SA Reserve Bank	13,500		
Landbank	7,939		
Post Office	6,825		
Sasol	5,120.8		
Iscor	4,486		
IDC	2,882		
Armcor	1,635		
Uscor	253.2		
Sub-total	91,155	24.6%	

2. ANGLO

Anglo	14,546		
De Beers	9,823		
Angold	5,325		
AMIC	4,516.8		
Southern Life	4,437		
SA Breweries	3,594.6		
Vaal Reefs	2,855		

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JCI	2,783		
Premier	1,902.7		
AECI	1,800		
Tongaat	1,634.7		
Dries	1,589		
Hiveld	884.6		
OK Bazaars	670.1		
LTA	390.3		
Edgars	371.5		
Argus	370.5		
Suthsun	304.5		
Amrel	272.8		
Afcol	233.2		
McCarthy	216		
CNA Gallo	149.8		
Ovenstone	145.1		
Cullinan	136.7		
Subtotal	58,951.9	15.9%	21.1%

3. SANLAM

Bankorp	13,612
Gencor	10,473
Sanlam	7,785
Trustbank	7,277
Sappi	1,981.7
Saambou	1,723
Sentrachem	1,393.8
Fedvolks	1,380.8
Kirsch	1,029.1
M&R	870.3
Messina	486.5
Haggie	481.5
Tedelex	479.2
Protea	442.3
Malbak	441.3
D&H	438.9
Fedfood	400.4
Kanhym	371.5
Kohler	251.7
Ellerine	213
Trek	192.4
Group 5	171.3

Abercom	169.5		
Sub total	52,065.2	14.1%	18.6%

4. SA MUTUAL/BARLOW RAND/NEDBANK

Nedbank	14,561		
Old Mutual	13,501		
Barlows	9,607.7		
CGS Food	2,494.6		
Safren	1,987.4		
Rand Mines	1,450		
Tiger Oats	1,438.2		
Nampak	1,128.2		
Plate Glass	782		
PPC	649.3		
Reunert	573		
Metal Box	548.9		
ICS	514.9		
Wooltru	329.8		
Romatex	316.4		
Robor	233.5		
Frasers	188.6		
Plevans	163.4		
Sub total	50,467.9	13.6%	18.1%

5. REMBRANDT/VOLKSKAS

Volkscas	11,402		
Rengro	3,114.3		
Lifegro	1,857		
Metkor	1,409.6		
Dorbyl	1,041		
Bonuskor	165		
Sub total	18,988.9	5.1%	6.8%

6. LIBERTY LIFE

Liberty Holdings	6,867		
Liberty	6,668		
Sub total	13,535	5.7%	4.8%

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7. ANGLOVAAL

Anglovaal	2,170		
AVI	1,195.5		
Anglo Alpha	1,093.9		
Consol	272.7		
Grinaker	235.9		
I & J	190.3		
Sub total	5,158.3	1.4%	1.9%

SUB TOTAL TOP 6 199,167.2 53.7% 71.3%
PRIVATE CONGLOMERATES

8. BRITISH MULTINATIONALS (listed companies only)

Barclays	22,944		
Stanbic	19,310		
Goldfields	4,098		
Afrox	423.7		
Dunlop	177.6		
Lonsugar	162.7		
Sub total	47,116	12.7%	16.9%

9. BUILDING SOCIETIES

(5 companies) 19,306 5.2% 6.9%

10. OTHERS

(3' companies) 13,906 3.8% 5.0%

GRAND TOTAL 370,650.2

Source: Financial Mail survey of top companies 23.5.86.

Note: The caveats in notes A and B on p64 of Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, The struggle for South Africa, apply equally here.

New words rising

Kelwyn Sole

REVIEW: A T Qabula, M S Hlatshwayo and N Malange, Black mamba rising: South African worker poets in struggle, Worker Resistance and Culture Publications, c/o Department of Industrial Sociology, University of Natal, King George V Ave., Durban 4001; or from COSATU Workers' Cultural Local, P O Box 18109, Dalbridge 4014; R3.50 for workers, R6.00 standard.

In 1985 the South African Labour Bulletin carried an interview with several members of the Durban FOSATU Cultural Group (now called the Durban Worker's Cultural Local), in which this group outlined the purpose and scope of their cultural work. They see that their cultural work, mainly to do with poetry and plays, is "not just entertainment, it is a weapon". They see culture in the trade unions as a powerful tool for educating people, creating a sense of unity and enriching political struggles. It should put "across a true picture of things - our picture".

They emphasize that the fight for a working class culture is not just a way to help remove the present wave of repression in South Africa, but that it should also direct itself with questions of how to build a new world of justice, freedom and an end to worker exploitation by capitalists and the middle classes. They see their work as a model which may inspire other workers to start creating culture for themselves. Their work can begin breaking down the barriers that exist between different groups of workers, between workers and their families, and between workplace and community. (1)

Black Mamba Rising contains poems by Alfred Temba Qabula, Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo and Nise Malange, all of which they first performed in 1984 and 1985. All three were present at the interview described above. All three are union members (the two men of MAWU and Malange of TGWU), and all three have been involved at a shop steward or organiser level. They come from slightly different backgrounds. Qabula hails from the Transkei and has worked as a migrant in the cities of the Transvaal and Natal for over twenty years; Hlatshwayo is the child of a poor urban working class upbringing in the Durban area; and Malange, in the words of the introduction, is "the wander-

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ing youth of the 1976 generation", shuttling between Cape Town, the Ciskei and Natal in her youth. All three were central to the creation of the Durban Worker's Cultural Local in 1985, and at the end of the same year were part of the development of a Trade Union & Cultural Centre in Clairwood alongside the area's shop-steward council. They have taken part in the revival of oral poetry in trade union circles, and perform regularly at trade union functions, meetings and other events of political importance. This and the fact that they - with the exception of Malange - compose their poems in Zulu and Xhosa first and later translate them into English has made their work popular with a large audience of people who have difficulty with literacy and European languages.

Transforming tradition

Thus, at least some of the poetry in this book can best be seen as both a revival and a transformation of traditional izibongo, or praise poetry. Praise poetry in South Africa is usually thought of as related to traditional and ethnic power (Matanzima and Inkatha, for instance, have their own praise poets, as has the Zulu king): but here it is used by those who are challenging established power. It is yet another example of how izibongo can be transformed by political changes and history. Three previous instances immediately spring to mind: the Mfecane brought about a change in the form and length of praise poetry at the beginning of the 19th century; by the end of the century those chiefs who collaborated with colonialism were being almost openly and ironically criticised by their poets; and praise poetry has more recently been used as a weapon for political criticism and propaganda during the disagreement between chiefs over the question of Transkei's independence in the early 1960's. (2) Even in the Durban area this is not the first time izibongo have been used in trade union matters: in 1930 a traditional imbongi, Hlongwe, was active praising Champion and the ICU. (3)

The poetry in Black mamba rising resembles praise poetry to some extent in both manner of delivery and style (devices such as exhortation, repetition, various forms of linguistic parallelism as well as political commentary couched in allusions and symbolism can be found, in particular in Qabula and Hlatshwayo). The introduction therefore warns us that "the poems printed here in translation and outside their context suffer: they lose much of their oral power; the songs, the chants, the ululations, their improvisatory nature and of course, the popular responses that accompany their oration."

However, the poetry here shows a broader social vision than traditional praise poetry, and uses other devices which are obviously not retrospective. This poetry is, in short, a modern, radically transformed oral poetry. All three poets comment on a world especially meaningful to a black worker audience and readership. Among the subjects dealt with are tributes to unions, union activists and the black working class; evocations of the lives of migrant workers and the unemployed; laments about the demise of traditional Africa; poems about the need for unification; and poems attacking racism and faction fighting. As one commentator puts it, these poets attempt in their poems to build aesthetic, political and moral values which will sustain the workers in their struggle for a better life, using images rooted in popular and traditional symbolism. (4)

In Qabula's "Praise poem to FOSATU", the trade union federation is seen as both a protection and a refuge for workers, a "moving forest of Africa" akin to the forests used as a place of resistance and ambush during past resistance to European conquest. In Qabula's and Hlatshwayo's poem first performed at the launching of COSATU in 1985 ("The tears of a creator"), the new federation is likened to the huge tornado-snake of traditional mythology, Inkhanyamba. Other usages of such symbolism abound; Hlatshwayo describes militant textile workers as "Regiment\Of NUTW once halted\With the spears of retrenchment.\Once stopped\With the spear of the industrial council" ("Sprout further Jabulani Gwala") and the Frame management as "The trickster\The red cobra\The devourer of households" ("A salute for Samson Cele").

Working lives

These images of traditional and rural origin are counterbalanced by Christian and modern symbols. Thus, to Qabula, FOSATU is "our Moses" and "the metal locomotive that moves on top\of other metals\The metal that doesn't bend that was sent to the\Engineers but they couldn't bend it" ("Praise poem to FOSATU"). Hlatshwayo bemoans the fate of Africa under the lash of colonialism and capitalism in "Worker's lamentation for ancient Africa": "Even water\Gift of the skies\Has been made scarce\to be paid dearly\In Rands and Dollars\In an Africa\Of long and meandering\Rivers..." These poems do not simply praise the past. A powerful sense of irony, of contradiction, of the disappointments and dislocations workers face emerges. The workers' fight does not always succeed; Hlatshwayo describes it as "Dying and resurrecting like\A dangabane flower" ("The black mamba

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riser"). And, while some poems name and praise heroes of history and contemporary resistance, the leaders do not always perform what they promise ("Time and again we have been electing leaders.\ Electing people with whom we were born and grew\Up together.\People who knew all our sufferings,\Together with whom we were enslaved.\ on the\Top of the mountain,\And they turned against us" (Qabula, "Praise poem to FOSATU"). An apocalyptic tone is present too, especially in the work of Hlatshwayo, who makes various references to the day of the "new Jerusalem" which will end social exploitation.

A great deal of this poetry gives us a viewpoint up until now little represented in anthologies of South African poetry, and exhibits much technical skill. Some of these poems are excellent by anybody's standards. In "I, the unemployed", Malange gives an evocative and powerful insight into the consciousness of the growing number of unemployed and poverty-stricken people in South Africa, those who are dumped to manage as best they can ("I spit at the sun\Shining on me\Blazing everyday\I am waiting for the rain to come\And I cannot plough this beautiful piece of earth.\Here I am: unemployed\...I am here but invisible"). And the tone is not only sombre and stirring. In "Praise poem to FOSATU", Qabula hilariously depicts a conversation in fanakalo between a manager and an impimpi during a strike ("Baas, Baas, thina bukile lomvukuzane buya losayidi\Kalofekthri kathina." \ "Yah, yah; What is the mvukuzane, my boy, tell me,\What is it?\Is it one of FOSATU's unions?\You are a good muntu\Mina bhilda wena 6 room house\Lapha lohomeland kawena.\Thatha lo-machine gun, vala logates\Skathi wena buka lo-union\Bulala lo-union...").

Worker poets and popular culture

The poems in Black Mamba Rising exhibit clearly the way in which layers of class, ethnic, religious, nationalist and sexual identities are enmeshed in the minds of both these poets and the wider audience of black workers: indeed, the very title 'black mamba' (meant as a descriptive metaphor for the black working class) has subconscious masculine connotations. In some poems I got the feeling that "the nation" was used as the basic building block of consciousness: in Usuku, Hlatshwayo's play performed elsewhere, the main character speaks of the black working class as "my people, we workers of Africa, our nation" (5). Culturally, the consciousness of any individual South African worker will of course be filled with ways of identifying himself or herself which are not specifically those of class. The point is whether or not (and to what extent)

one's class consciousness is mixed with and transforms the other modes of identity present. These poets are obviously aware of the need to contest these identities, and not just leave them to go by default to middle class or populist organisations to tap their emotional appeal in a vague way.

Yet the fact is that populist and nationalist movements - whether reactionary or progressive - are strongest ideologically on the terrain of popular and traditional symbols. The general movement of the democratic unions towards wider community politics has great possibilities: but how, then, are unions to play a role in this ideological sphere without having their voice drowned, or simply seen as one among many cultural voices which go to make up the national culture? For the goal for working class activists in the unions, surely, is not just to include working class heroes in a pantheon of black nationalist heroes, or just to use slogans like 'Heyta Comrade Barayi, Heyta Comrade Mayekiso' so that workers can know their leaders and praise them (6). Cultural workers in the unions need, to my mind, to build slogans and enact stories around the need for democratic socialism and for a future in which working people play a politically dominant role as well. It is not enough to speak vaguely of a "calculated involvement" in wider arenas of political and cultural struggle as one COSATU official has done. (7) The question is: how is it to be done? How is it more exactly to be done? While there is a need for flexibility in these matters, a completely ad hoc approach is surely not enough. It is true that in Black mamba rising the poets are changing traditional and popular symbols in a way which will benefit the working class, as working audiences hear "the form (of)...the lay-preachers of the poor people's churches done by an ordinary worker...the brotherly context without hierarchies and chiefs - the shop steward led strike." (8) Yet still one is left with an uneasy feeling that too much faith can be placed in the transformative power of traditional symbols alone. They have their own historical weight and resonance, and activists should be aware that there can at best be limited control over how an audience accepts them. On paper, there is an ambiguity present in such symbols and images which can lead to widely differing interpretations of their usefulness and effect.

Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Malange are aware of these problems, as their book shows. They speak constantly about the future as well as the past, and about the need for a new era of social peace and justice to come. This differentiates their poetry markedly from the Inkatha poet CDS Mbutho's poem "Sikhuleka kuwe Silo SikaNdaba",

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which seeks only to legitimize Buthelezi in terms of Zulu heroes of the past and a narrowly conceived ethnic nationalism. They are furthermore aware of the problems of class difference in black society. When asked in 1985 to what extent their work had a specifically working class bias, and to what extent it drew on wider traditions of resistance and protest, they said: (9)

There are very strong cultural traditions... at the same time there is no one tradition, there are many. Of course it has many political elements from the past. But it also has many new ones. Where it gets its character is quite simple: it starts from our experience and our unity. So it has to draw a line against any exploiter in the factory or the townships; against impimpis; against white and black politicians who betray us; against divisions. It also differs from a lot of black creators who have a patronising attitude to us: a lot of people with a ticky's worth of education have a superior attitude towards us.'

The notion of a culture of resistance is strong in this book. This can best be seen in who these poets castigate most often in the poems: black and white managers, white politicians and capitalists, racists, impimpis and so on. For instance, in "Today" (meant to be performed at the FOSATU Education Workshop in June 1985) Malange evokes the presence of all those who have died in the political struggle in South Africa's history. In contrast to heroes such as Biko, Aggett and Raditsela, who are "holding our hands\...Moving through all our bodies\Like a bloodstream", the traitors present weep and "cannot hold our hands" and those who were uncommitted during their lifetimes "now want to put their arms around us and sing: Hlanganani Basebenzi". In a poem of vision and apocalypse akin to Hlatshwayo, Malange here shows a desire for unity from which those who have wilfully gone against the struggle for freedom will be excluded. Here the divisions are clearcut, with those who resist oppression on one side and those who cause it on the other.

It is in the earlier poems of this volume that the poets most obviously demonstrate a more specifically working class consciousness ("Praise poem to FOSATU", "The black mamba rises", "Migrants Lament", "The tears of a creator"). The later shift in 1985 possibly reflects the movement of union activists into community issues. While the taking up of wider community issues is totally necessary, the terms of such involvement need to be re-examined all the time. It is far too easy to let a militant nationalism - at this time present in black workers as well as other classes -

overcome the unique demands of the working class. At worst, the class specificities in some of these poems begin to slip away: and it is interesting to note that it is the migrant worker, Qabula, who seems to avoid this tendency. While Black mamba rising is not really culpable to any extent in this regard, there is a sense in some trade union utterances at the present that the black petty bourgeoisie is supposed to be on the workers' side because they are black: one can point out that in many other African countries this trust and faith has been betrayed since independence. For instance, the SWAPO poet Mvula ya Nangolo describes the exploitation by the black middle class in Lagos at the present time as follows: "From airconditioned automobiles\into servant-slave infested palaces\They clap hands or press imported little buttons\attached to wires and then;\Half a dozen servants-slaves appear in uniform\to serve, to swallow indignity, degradation, etc.\merely to receive a meagre salary\when the new moon is sighted."

Political diversity and self-criticism

Any large scale spread of culture in this country to those less privileged classes so long denied a voice will probably result in an increasing plethora of cultural forms and a range of political opinions coming to light, which would make any simple slotting of people into "progressive" and "reactionary" categories more difficult to uphold. Symbols of unity as presented in this volume would constantly need to be tested against an awareness of cultural and social differences and desire for democratic discussion. Inkatha poses this problem in an immediate way for progressive trade unions. It makes promises of liberation to black people, it uses similar forms of traditional culture, it has strong roots in ethnic identity, it even has an official praise poet. Some of its members are also members of progressive trade unions, and will possibly be puzzled by the virulent distinction cultural workers make between Inkatha\UWUSA and the democratic trade union movement, at least in terms of the culture propagated. There is obviously a crucial area of cultural struggle emerging here, but how is it best approached?

Issues of criticism and class dynamics are perhaps easier approached through the medium of worker plays: the emotional and declamatory nature of praise poetry makes it a difficult form to use for such ends. And it must be said that these poets can only be partially criticised with regard to these issues: they do not readily fall into the traps of sloganising and ignoring social differences in the manner, say, of black consciousness writers in the 1970's.

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Furthermore, they themselves have pointed out that critical debate and a questioning attitude serve to strengthen unity in the long run and make any leadership more accountable to its members.

If one of the roles of trade union cultural activists is to educate and conscientise, then they must also play a critical role in pointing out problems and ask questions. Alongside the tasks of politicisation and unification, self-criticism and open debate are necessary priorities. Alongside the other educational organs of the trade union movement, such as literacy and higher educational classes, creative writing can perhaps serve to instill readers and audience with a sense of history, with the tools to forge their own opinions about political and other events, and with some knowledge of the problems that beset not only capitalist countries, but those countries which call themselves socialist too.

The poems' representation of figures and events from South African history is also powerful and to the point. Yet in one instance Qabula and Hlatshwayo let the use of traditional symbolism and emotional explanation overcome their critical consciousness. In "The tears of a creator", they say "COSATU\Stop now\Listen to our sound\You'll hear us sing\That the rulers\And employers\Are sorcerers!\Do not smile\Do not dare disagree\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?\They emerged\They were poisoned\Then\They faded!". Surely "sorcery" is not an adequate explanation for the failure of these unions? Neither is it a helpful way of informing workers what the problems were: which is the only way such problems can be avoided in the future. An adequate explanation of the failure of the ICU, for example, would need to look at many issues such as state repression, the depression, corruption among union officials and a vacillating leadership who were inclined to make grandiose promises to the workers which they did not carry out.

Spreading the message

This book is well worth reading and pondering on. For those who are interested, it also contains the Durban group's talk for the 1985 FOSATU Education Workshop, which was never delivered. As Hlatshwayo has pointed out in another context, Black mamba rising shows that "I with other millions of the working class are beginning to write, to organise and to learn - about ourselves, about our power, about others, and about our land". (10) What is

especially heartening about the cultural activity coming from trade union members at the moment is that it provides a way for many people to express themselves. The fact that this process is beginning is in no small way due to the energy and commitment of cultural workers such as Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Malange.

Black mamba rising is an important and exciting book. One can hope that in future others will follow this example, hone their skills and express their experiences, insights and desires in performance and on paper: for it is necessary for workers not only to use oral but also written means of communication in South Africa today. Literacy, education and writing skills are also crucial if workers are to gain access to political and social power in the country. As Qabula observes, "People must write. They must take out their pens and paper and write. It doesn't matter if it is good or bad - the voice of the workers must be heard." (11)

References

1. Durban FOSATU Cultural Group, "Culture and the worker's struggle", South African Labour Bulletin 10.8, 1985
2. See M Kunene, "An analytical survey of Zulu poetry", MA thesis, University of Natal, 1961; A Jordan, Towards an African literature, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, p62; A Mafeje, "The role of the bard in a contemporary African community", Journal of African Languages 6.3, 1967
3. P La Hausse, "The message of the warriors: the ICU, the labouring poor and the making of a popular political culture in Durban", History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987, pp47,51
4. A Sitas, "A black mamba rising", Transformation 2, 1986
5. Quoted in Sitas p51
6. Hlatshwayo, quoted in the "The worker poets", p21 and C Bauer and I Powell, "Culture as you don't see it at the City Hall", Weekly Mail November 21-27 1986
7. Anonymous COSATU official, "Winning away Inkatha's base", Work in Progress 45, 1986, p29
8. Sitas p54
9. Durban FOSATU Cultural Group, "Culture and the workers' struggle", pp72-3
10. M Hlatshwayo, "We workers are a worried lot!". FOSATU Worker News June 1985, p8
11. Anonymous, "The worker poets", Learn and Teach 3, 1986, p21.

Release Moses Mayekiso

The General Secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, Moses Mayekiso, was held in solitary confinement at John Vorster Square for 7 months. He was refused all visits by his family, his lawyers and a private doctor for 6 months.

On 26 January 1987 he appeared in court and was remanded in custody. He is now held at the Johannesburg Prison.

After more than 7 months, the police are still unable to produce a charge sheet or indictment.

WE CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL
RELEASE OF MOSES MAYEKISO

MAWU also condemns the detention of the following MAWU members.:

Veli Mjiako: Office bearer of the Jhb shop stewards council;

Gerald Dan: shop steward at Siemens Pretoria;

Isaac Mahlong: shop steward at STC Benoni;

Silvester Sibozza: member at Ferrometals, Witbank.

MAWU calls on these companies to pay full wages of these workers held in detention without charge or trial.

WE CONDEMN DETENTION AND THE CONTINUED
ATTACKS ON THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Issued by Metal & Allied Workers Union, 268 Jeppe St, Jhb.

Samora Moises Machel 1933 – 1986

The first President of the Peoples' Republic of Mozambique, along with 33 other people was killed in an air crash on the night of Sunday October 19.

Samora Machel was born on September 29, 1933 in the village of Xilembene, in the Limpopo Valley, in the Gaza province of Southern Mozambique. He was the third son of a peasant family, and grew up herding his father's cattle. His early years were influenced by a number of social and historical features of life in Southern Mozambique. The independence of the Gaza state under Ngungunyane had been crushed by the Portuguese in the 1890s, but the history of resistance to colonial rule was a living tradition passed on by elders who had participated in these struggles, and became one of the points of reference for the nationalist movement in the 1960s.

Machel's father, Moises, was an early convert to the Protestant faith of the Free Methodist Church which had established itself in the area shortly after the turn of the century. The colonial administration, with its direct links to the Catholic Church, barely tolerated the protestant churches viewing them, with some justification, as a direct threat to the Portuguese colonial order.

The Catholic church was handed direct control over colonial education following the 1941 Concordat between the Salazarist state and the Vatican, and Machel was himself forced to convert to Catholicism in order to write the 4th grade exam which was the effective hurdle preventing access to jobs above the level of simple manual labour. Machel's access to secondary schooling was blocked by the authorities and he was advised to go to a Catholic seminary instead. He refused, and trained as a nurse at what is now Maputo Central Hospital, pursuing secondary education at night school. His disdain for the Catholic church after independence stemmed from his personal experience of the mystifying and repressive role it played in denying education to black Mozambicans.

The migrant labour system dominating Southern Mozambique also stamped itself on his consciousness. His father had worked on the mines from 1912 until 1926 when he ceased migrating, having managed to accumulate capital sufficient to escape the system and set himself up as a peasant farmer. Machel's older brother did not escape.

He died on the mines, sharing the fate of thousands of other Mozambican workers since the inception of the system in the 1880s.

In the 1940s the Salazarist state introduced forced cotton cultivation into the valley where Machel's family lived as part of its programme of creating self sufficiency in raw materials to back up its drive to industrialise the metropolitan economy. Direct physical coercion was employed on a large scale, and food production was severely reduced, rendering the peasant economy vulnerable to drought, natural disaster and hunger. The colonial state's preference for a Portuguese peasant-settler option in the post war years saw the creation of large-scale irrigation schemes in the valley, which displaced the African peasantry from the fertile soils and involved the population in forced labour, digging irrigation canals.

Machel's experiences of discrimination at work combined with his observations of colonial society were crystallised during a period of growing nationalism and anti-colonial struggle in Africa and the third world.

Gradually, I saw that nothing would help but collective action. A man on his own couldn't achieve anything. At that stage - it was after 1956 - I began to understand what the key problems were, the key economic and political problems, and just why it was that we Africans were handicapped. Then 1960 taught me more - the independence of the Congo and its tumults. I began to think seriously about the possibilities of Mozambique becoming independent... Then it was that consciousness of being oppressed, deprived, exploited, began to have its effect, as well as those ideas about independence. (1)

FRELIMO

It soon became clear that Portuguese colonialism was incapable of reform and peaceful decolonisation. No political parties were allowed to operate in Mozambique, and so they were formed in exile in various neighbouring countries. In 1960 the colonial authorities massacred six hundred peasants in the northern town of Mueda where they had gathered to protest the arrest of their co-operative leadership. The repression following the massacre caused thousands of Mozambicans to flee the country and begin planning armed struggle.

When the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) was formed in 1962 under the leadership of Eduardo Mondlane, Samora Machel left

Mozambique and made his way to Dar es Salaam where he joined the movement in 1963. He was amongst the first groups of FRELIMO cadres that went to Algeria for military training. On his return to Tanzania he took an active part in launching the war for independence. In 1965 he led the opening of the front in the eastern sector of Niassa province, before being placed in charge of FRELIMO's main rear base and military training centre at Nachingwea in southern Tanzania. It was here that he played a decisive role in laying the foundations for the successful political military line employed by FRELIMO in its struggle against Portuguese colonialism.

After the assassination in 1966 of Filipe Magaia, the FRELIMO secretary of defence, Samora Machel was appointed overall military commander, and was drafted on to the Central Committee. When FRELIMO experienced its first major crisis with the intensification of the struggle between left and right wing factions of the movement for control over its political orientation, Machel's support for Mondlane consolidated the dominance of the progressives. The revolutionary line which emerged much more clearly within FRELIMO in the 1970s had its roots in the concrete realities of mobilising a peasantry for a national liberation struggle. The reorganisation of production and distribution in the liberated zones laid the foundations for the emergence of a socialist practice by FRELIMO.

In FRELIMO we always emphasise the importance of production. To our army we give the tasks of fighting, producing and mobilising the masses. To our youth we give the tasks of studying, producing and fighting. In our discussions, in our documents, we constantly stress the importance of production, pointing out that it is an important front in our fight and a school for us. We can see that production is satisfying our everyday needs at the same time as liberating and uniting us. (2)

After the assassination of FRELIMO's President Dr Eduardo Mondlane by parcel bomb in Dar es Salaam in 1969 Samora Machel was appointed to the three-man council of the Presidency, a provincial leadership body created to block conservative moves to take control of FRELIMO. In 1970 the council was dissolved, one of its members representing the right wing having left the movement, and Machel was appointed President ad interim by the Central Committee.

Having successfully overcome its first major crisis FRELIMO grew in strength under Machel's leadership. In 1970 the Zambezi River was crossed and the armed struggle was opened up in southern Tete

province. FRELIMO withstood a major Portuguese counter-offensive codenamed "Operation Gordian Knot" in 1971, and in 1972 opened up a new front in the strategically important provinces of Manica and Sofala. Following the Lisbon coup of April 1974 Samora Machel, as President, conducted the negotiations culminating in the Lusaka Accords of September which laid down the mechanisms for the transfer of power in Mozambique.

Mozambique since independence

Samora Machel became Head of State of a country deep in crisis. Not only was the economy distorted by the manner of its integration under Portuguese rule into the regional subsystem dominated by South Africa, but it was also in a state of near collapse. Under Machel FRELIMO was faced with the potentially contradictory task of keeping the remnants of the colonial economy together to avoid disaster while beginning the long term structural transformation to which it was committed. The creation of organs of popular power and a series of nationalisations accompanied by the extension of FRELIMO's style of popular leadership developed in the liberated zones enabled the successful management of the first major hurdles of independence.

In 1977 FRELIMO held its third congress and transformed itself into a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party committed to the transition to socialism. In FRELIMO's formulation the working class was to be the "leading force" and peasants the "main force" of the revolution. The formulation was an attempt to deal with the class realities of a situation in which the industrial proletariat was "historically recent, numerically weak and with a low level of class consciousness", while the majority of the working population was either involved in migrant labour outside Mozambique or in various forms of peasant production.

In 1976 Machel announced the closure of the border with Southern Rhodesia and the full application of sanctions against the illegal Smith regime. He played a key role in organising Front Line State support for the Zimbabwean liberation movement, and was deeply involved in the political negotiations leading to the Lancaster House conference and the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980.

The political victory of the Zimbabwean liberation movement and the creation of the SADCC held out the prospects of peace and regional cooperation badly needed by Mozambique, which had paid a high price

for Zimbabwe's liberation in human and economic terms. In 1980 Machel announced a series of new organisational and political offensives designed to combat inefficiency, corruption and bottlenecks in the state run sectors of the economy.

From 1980 the MNR, under South African sponsorship, increased the scale of its operations in a new phase of regional destabilisation by Pretoria. Attacks by armed bandits further disrupted production in many provinces of Mozambique, and exacerbated the growing crisis of the rural areas due to prolonged drought and FRELIMO's failure to develop effectively the peasant economy. FRELIMO's fourth congress held in 1983, at which Machel was re-elected President of the Party, was the occasion for a critical re-evaluation of main policy directions in the face of a growing security threat and the collapse of the rural economy. A strong "grass roots" line re-asserted itself at the congress, and detailed critiques were made of class formation and class struggle within the Mozambican state, society and party.

Trade unions

In 1983 Machel announced the creation by FRELIMO of Socialist Trade Unions. (3) These were to be "weapons" in the "the battle against negligence, apathy, theft, corruption and bureaucracy" in the economy, rather than independently organised expressions of working class power. Emphasis was placed by Machel in his speech on the role of trade unions in raising the technical and scientific capacity of workers and upon their "organisation and work discipline" in the interests of development. The conception of trade unions outlined by Machel highlights some of the ambiguities of a socialist transformation in situations like Mozambique's, where the working class is fragmented and weak, and the vanguard party takes on the historical tasks of the working class, on its behalf.

Machel's diplomatic approaches to the Western European and American states in 1983 were designed to obtain capital investment and aid for an economy in crisis and to persuade South Africa's allies that Pretoria's policy of destabilisation was a major threat to peace in the region. Machel's signature of the Nkomati Accord showed him to be a leader of great resilience and stature who was prepared to risk his political reputation in the interests of avoiding a regional war.

Since Nkomati the South African state has intensified its belliger-

ence in the region, and Mozambique is again faced with the prospect of mass starvation, this time entirely due to the effects of war. Samora Machel's death is a further blow to an embattled people and a setback to the prospects for peace, removing a cool headed and far sighted leader at a crucial stage in the region's history.

Machel was both a Mozambican patriot and an internationalist who made his own very personal contribution to the development of the theory and practice of revolution in the African context. The collective nature of FRELIMO's top leadership will ensure continuity in policy but his individual contribution was irreplaceable. Perhaps more than any other single person Samora Machel symbolised for many Southern Africans the struggle for a future in which the peoples of the region would live in peace and control their own destiny, free of exploitation. His death has not destroyed that goal, but has created another martyr on the road to freedom.

Notes

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(Jeremy Grest, December 1986)

Statistics and economic notes for trade unions

INFLATION - In 1986, price rises were the highest for 60 years. Inflation was 20,7% in January 1986 and the year ended with a December inflation rate of 18,1%.

	Consumer Price Index (1980=100) December 1986	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year) December 1986
Cape Town	242.4	17.3%
Port Elizabeth	240.1	19.3%
East London	226.4	16.8%
Durban	242.3	14.8%
Pietermaritzburg	244.0	15.2%
Witwatersrand	245.5	18.8%
Vaal Triangle	251.4	18.3%
Pretoria	257.1	20.4%
Klerksdorp	241.7	22.1%
Bloemfontein	228.6	14.4%
OFS Goldfields	252.2	19.1%
Kimberley	234.2	15.9%
SOUTH AFRICA	244.9	18.1%

SOURCE: Central Statistical Services

All the economists agree that inflation will still be high in 1987. They do not agree on their guesses of exactly how much prices will rise, but most estimates are between 16% and 19%. Some expect that inflation will be lower in 1987 than last year, but others say that any decline in the inflation rate will not last. They talk of inflation being over 20% in 1988. Inflation is here to stay. The inflation rate needs to be the "bottom-line" in negotiating wages. A wage increase below the inflation rate means a fall in workers' standard of living.

Wage trends

In general, employers made sure that wage increases in 1986 were below the rate of inflation. The latest P-E Corporate Services survey of wages showed that the gap between wage rises and price

- statistics -

rises is worse than ever before. On average, the buying power of the wages of black workers covered in the survey has now fallen every year since 1983. (Business Day September 12 1986)

In the building industry, the wage increases in the first nine months of 1986 were the lowest since 1979. In the September quarter, the labour cost index (an indicator of wage levels) was only 7,4% above the previous year, while prices were rising at a rate of 19,7% per year! (Building & Construction 1 (4) December 1986)

1986 was another bad year for minimum wages. In December 1986, 86% of minimum wages set for labourers in the industrial council system were lower, in real terms, than a year before. Everyone knew for a certainty that the inflation rate would be high in 1986. But over a third of industrial council agreements and over half of wage determinations gave no increase at all in labourer minimum rates (Source: SALDRU database). The legal minimum wage system is becoming more defective by the year. Employers, unions and the government are letting it go to ruin.

Enlightened negotiating?

Andrew Levy, who modestly calls himself "South Africa's leading labour relations consultant", is worried that bosses are "negotiating in the dark". 600 companies bargain with unions every year and, says Levy, "Lack of relevant information probably causes more unsatisfactory wage negotiations with trade unions than any other factor. He says that "union groupings such as COSATU, formulate a central war policy, which is well communicated across their area of influence - as are settlements achieved, now ensuring that when the unions sit down to negotiation, they have a broader idea of the emerging bargaining trends."

Managers need the same information, and so Andrew Levy has started a "Wage Settlement Survey". This is a secret survey for bosses only and costs over R1,500 per year. It will spread among managers details of union bargaining demands and strategies. It will summarise wage settlements and agreements on holidays, work hours and May Day. Once a year there will be a "negotiators forum" for the bosses to exchange information and work out common strategies. The survey is particularly aimed at the industrial relations manager so "he will know where he is going and where he can be expected to settle".

(Labour Research Service, P O Box 376, Salt River, 7925)

SALB Publication Guidelines

The South African Labour Bulletin is a journal which supports the democratic labour movement in South Africa. It is a forum for analysing, debating and recording the aims and activities of this movement. To this end, it requires contributors to the Bulletin to conform with the following publication guidelines.

* Constructive criticism of unions or federations in the democratic labour movement is welcome. However, articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.

* Contributions to the Bulletin must not exceed the following lengths:

analytical articles	8,000 words
debate, reviews, documents, reports	5,000 words
briefings	1,000 words

Articles should be submitted in a final and correct form and in duplicate. Articles are refereed and may be edited. In the event of the editors deciding that other than minor editing changes are required, the article will be referred back to the author.

Briefings should concern topical events and developments of concern to the democratic labour movement. They should be easy to understand and keep footnotes and references to a minimum. Debate, reviews, reports and documents are designed to make more widely available important statements emanating from the labour movement; reviewing new literature or other material of relevance to the movement; making available more in-depth reports and research; and allowing for debate on important contemporary issues.

* Contributions must be written in a language that is clear and understandable.

* All contributions to the Bulletin must be typed and where applicable include proper footnoting and references.

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* The editors reserve the right to recommend to the author of any submission that it be placed under another category to that under which it was submitted.

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