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South African Bulletin

"All Blacks" Tour · Rocla Strike
WU · Corobrik · Hostel Association
CAWUSA · Mine Safety · NUM
Jamcol Strike · Workmen's
Compensation · Quality Circles
Coca-Cola · Philippines · Brazil
Belgium · British Miners · K Team
Working Class Culture · Reviews

Organising Women Workers
Marianne Bird

Trade Unions in Botswana
Steve Coop

South African Labour Bulletin

Volume 10 Number 8 July – August 1985

The South African Labour Bulletin

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Errata:

TAG and the NPI

The Technical Advice Group (TAG) acknowledges the following inaccuracies in its article on work study in SALB 10.4:

- * The NPI made provision for increasing staffing levels, eg. tables which link volume to manning levels or working overtime. The NPI did not simply set manning levels according to the period of time during which their survey was conducted.
- * The NPI did take absenteeism into account.
- * The NPI did attempt to explain the survey to the workforce.
- * TAG's article concentrated on labour productivity while the NPI did address other aspects of productivity like training, equipment, management strategies.

TAG regrets any inconvenience caused by the article. However TAG stands by the substantive issues raised in the article, namely:

- * Work study is designed to ensure that changes in production enhance profitability. Work study does not take workers' interests into account.
- * In this current recession, managements may use work study to justify retrenchments of workers or the implementation of adverse changes in employment conditions. This is what happened in the case study quoted in the article.

Chatsworth Health Committee

The Chatsworth Health Committee is not "an association of professional health workers" as stated in SALB 10.7. Membership is open to all health workers and members of the community interested in advancing the struggle for better health. For further details contact the CHC, PO box 45277, Chatsglen 4012, Durban. (phone: 430565/296854)

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BTR

EGOTITE

GETOS

CIOMI

100 STRIKE SAKMCO

Basic

Trade Union

Rights

MHGUNDHNI PHUMHNI

हलुकरानी
नमिसेबेनी
येथी

MHGUNDHNI PHUMHNI

Workers Solidarity

Unite

nit Scab

BTR NEGOTIATE FOR GETOS

SAKMCOL STRIKE - WE'LL FIGHT THE ENEMY

THE UNION MAKES STRONG

MHGUNDHNI PHUMHNI SAKMCO

Editorial Note

Aswin Desai, Shamim Marie and Blade Nzimande join the Editorial Board of the Labour Bulletin. Aswin joins the Eastern Cape committee where he is currently doing research at Rhodes University on the South African Indian Council. As a student he was president of the Black Students Movement at Rhodes and is presently involved with local sports bodies in the Eastern Cape. Shamim and Blade join the Durban committee of the Bulletin. Blade teaches industrial psychology at the University of Zululand and is an editor of the journal, Psychology and Society. He brings to bear a practical knowledge of personnel techniques in industry. He is currently researching the development of a black middle class in South Africa. Shamim is employed as a research officer at the University of Natal where she works on the project: "Class, race and industrialisation in Natal". She is involved in the Women's Resources Centre and is an editor of the women's magazine, Speak.

At the Bulletin's AGM, held in July, the current direction of the journal was restated: to direct the Bulletin towards worker leadership, whilst not neglecting our other constituencies (eg. academic and overseas readership). It was decided to make available to our readers a comprehensive index of the material published in the Bulletin over the last ten years. This undertaking, together with considerably increased costs - both over the last year and anticipated for the coming year - means that prices will have to be increased. As on previous occasions this has been done in such a way as to minimise the burden for those least able to pay (see subscription rates at the back of the Bulletin for details).

Car Workers Reject "All Blacks" Tour

At 9.00 am on Wednesday July 10 Volkswagen management closed its Uitenhage plant and sent home the 2,000 workers. The workers - members of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU) - had downed tools in protest over the company's plans to loan 12 micro buses - painted in All Blacks and Springbok rugby colours - to the South African Rugby Board, as a company promotion exercise. Shop stewards were mandated by workers to request management not to proceed with the loan.

NAAWU issued an official statement:

We are opposed to international links which do not further the interests of the oppressed in South Africa. Our members in Uitenhage are protesting against the building of buses for the pleasure of a privileged minority while our townships burn.

(Les Kettledas, NAAWU Eastern Cape Regional Secretary)

Joe Foster, General Secretary of FOSATU issued the following statement for the Federation:

The action taken is in line with FOSATU's position. Our Central Committee has passed a resolution supporting those opposed to the All Blacks rugby tour.

We have telegraphed our opposition to the tour to the New Zealand Federation of Labour. They replied that they would do all in their power to prevent the tour.

On Friday, July 12, as the Bulletin went to press, workers were still on strike. Report-back meetings were planned. In the meantime Volkswagen has agreed not to release the buses until discussions have been held with the union on Monday July 15.

THERE CAN BE NO NORMAL SPORT IN AN ABNORMAL SOCIETY

(Eastern Cape correspondent, July 1985)

regularly in spite of harassment. We called for the return to offices of officials except those being hunted more than others.

Contact at national level was established, and a decision was taken to hold a CEC [Central Executive Committee] on the 1st July. A whole range of demands were also prepared and circulated for discussion at all levels of the organisation. The CEC meeting also involved local representatives. Arising out of the CEC was a broad plan of action.

The state of emergency was seen as an attack on the people of South Africa and on their democratic and human rights. It was also seen as an attack on COSATU and its affiliates through harassment, detention and office raids. It is a political attack on the labour movement and an attack which we could not allow to go unchallenged. Consequently a systematic programme of action was drafted to achieve the demands that we set out. We called for an end to all harassment of workers, shop stewards and officials; the release of all detained leaders; an end to repression and a move towards democratic solutions to the problems of our country.

We also made demands that related specifically to our continued operation on the shop floor. [The demands included paid time off for shop stewards to attend to union business; guaranteed jobs and pay for detainees; the right to hold union meetings on company property on company time. These demands were largely conceded by the major employers federations. - ed.]

We further decided that if these demands were not met by the 10th July, COSATU would be forced to take further action. This would fundamentally place the whole system of industrial relations into serious jeopardy, but our belief is that these structures that have been won through bitter struggle and negotiation depend on there being a balance in the power relations between labour and capital. The repressive actions taken against us have severely disadvantaged trade unions in their continued participation in these structures. COSATU therefore reserves its right to initiate further action.

After the first spate of detentions there was a spontaneous reaction with thousands of workers coming out on strike, especially in the retail sector, but what began to emerge very rapidly was a more co-ordinated response to the attack on us.

- Rocla strike -

On Monday June 17 another meeting was held with management. When the shop stewards clocked out the rest of the workers followed suit and left the company premises. At this meeting the liaison committee was present again. The shop stewards then decided to leave the meeting and returned to find the rest of the workers on strike. In a hurriedly convened report back meeting the workers decided not to go back until management gave an undertaking to recognise the shop stewards committee and not the liaison committee. They then decided to march peacefully to the Rocla head office which was near the factory. At first management ignored the workers but under pressure by the afternoon decided to approach the workers.

Montanu Dudlane, chairman of the shop stewards committee, explained:

Management wanted to know the reason workers were on strike. They told them that it was because of the clock out which resulted in shop stewards losing money. They also said that they wanted the shop stewards and the union to be recognised as well as the demands of the petition met.

The management of Rocla refused to accede to the workers demands and for two days the workers assembled outside the head office. Although the police were present, and kept a careful watch, no arrests were made. Union telexes and attempts to get management to the negotiating table during the early stages of the strike proved futile.

On Wednesday June 19 BCAWU general secretary, Aaron Nithinya, met management who insisted that no negotiations will take place unless the workers returned to work. When this was explained to the workers they refused to return unless management informed them personally of this. This was done over the public address system and the workers reluctantly returned. Although the strike has ended the workers demands remain to be met.

(Roodepoort correspondent, July 1985)

GWU: Yes to Registration



In November last year the National Controlling Committee decided to call a special conference to discuss the question of registration. It had become clear to the National Controlling Committee that we were facing increasing difficulties as an unregistered union. It was also clear that since we took our original decision in 1979 to

remain unregistered many of the laws covering trade unions have changed.

The staff and the workers all realised the importance of this decision. When we took the decision in 1979 we fought for our view in the trade union movement. Our decision to remain unregistered caused great problems with the bosses and the government. But because we believed in our decision, we fought for it and we grew from strength to strength.

Why now were we considering changing our decision? Was it because we had grown tired of fighting? Or was it because circumstances had changed in such a way that would enable us to fight better with a changed policy?

After the November meeting of the Controlling Committee the issue was discussed carefully in every factory of the union. Each factory elected a delegate to the Special Conference on 23 and 24 March. At this conference it was unanimously decided that the union should apply for registration.

The delegates present all felt that there was little difference between a registered and unregistered union anymore. The two differences that remained are however important. These are over the question of stop-orders and industrial council. For a registered union to get stop-orders it merely has to reach agreement with the bosses. But for an unregistered union to get stop-orders it has to have the permission of the Minister of Manpower. This is causing delays and difficulties in getting our stop-orders.

The other difference concerns industrial councils. Only registered unions can sit on industrial councils whereas unregistered unions are not allowed to. This does not mean that registered unions are forced to sit on industrial councils. The delegates wanted to know what the union would be if we registered: would we be controlled? If we registered, we would have to send the government certain reports each year. We will have to send them our audited accounts, the names of our office bearers, our constitution and our total membership. But we have to do all this as an unregistered union as well, so that our obligations will not increase as a registered union.

After considering the question carefully, the delegates decided that control will not increase if we register. In fact, decisions over matters like stop-orders and industrial councils will be in our hands only. We will not have to ask the government permission for stop-orders and we will be able to decide for ourselves whether to sit on industrial councils or not. The delegates decided then that if we applied for registration, we would be under less government control than if we remain unregistered.

Many delegates pointed out that, registered or unregistered, the union would only succeed if it was democratically controlled by the workers and if the factories were all strongly organised. Thus you could get strong registered unions and weak unregistered unions, or weak registered unions and strong unregistered unions.

Some delegates asked if we would not be collaborating with the government if we registered? A delegate from Port Elizabeth pointed out that in his city some people said that the registered unions were stooges that collaborated with the government, whereas the unregistered unions were militant democratic unions. But this delegate pointed out that the workers knew that this was not necessarily true. In fact in the motor industry, the registered union - NAAWU - was the militant democratic union that was taking the workers struggle forward, whereas the unregistered union had very little support.

(GWU Newspaper: Phambili Basebenzi May 1985)

The Corobrik Strike

Corobrik is controlled by the Tongaat Corogroup which owns approximately 72% of the equity, which is in turn part of the holding company, the Tongaat Hullet Group. Tongaat Corogroup is the major supplier of walling, roofing and cladding materials to the building industry in South Africa - the main products marketed include clay bricks and blocks, roofing and flooring tiles.

Employment conditions at Corobrik are notoriously bad. The work is heavy, unhealthy and dangerous. The hours are long and supervision aggressive and abusive. Wages are appallingly low, although the company prizes itself as the leading producer of clay bricks in South Africa. Its production strategy and response to the recession has been the mothballing of factories and retrenchment of workers. When the building industry regains momentum the factories are re-opened depending on the regional requirements for building materials. Earlier this year, for example, over 2,000 workers were retrenched and 9 factories closed, while production was also reduced at 31 of the 51 plants.

In May this year 1,600 General Workers Union members engaged on a national legal strike which involved 4 Western Cape plants and 1 in Pietermaritzburg, and which came after months of fruitless negotiations over wages. The strike ended on May 29 without securing any further increase in wages. For both the union and management the strike was important in showing the present balance of forces within the company. Although no immediate financial gain was made, the workers emerged organisationally more consolidated and determined to continue their battle for better wages and working conditions. It provided a hard school and major test for the union which gave workers some insight into the extent of management intransigence and capital's power. For management it was a traumatic experience, summed up by the terse comment of the managing director of Corobrik in the Western Cape, Mr Bounds when approached to give an interview: "The strike was an experience I'd like to forget, the sooner the better."

In fact this view reflected the general stance of Corobrik

- Corobrik -

management throughout the dispute. As David Lewis, general secretary of GWU put it: "Corobrik told us that when the strike begins, the talking ends". Corobrik has been well aided in this strategy by a pliable inhouse and totally unrepresentative union - the National Union of Black and Allied Workers (NUBAW) - which was established in 1979. NUBAW is one of the two unions established and financed by the Tongaat Hullet Group - the other is the National Sugar and Refining and Allied Industries Employees' Union (NSRAIEU) in the sugar division of the Group. Both are designed to rubber stamp managerial decisions, keep out democratic trade unions and regulate industrial relations in favour of management. Workers are often forced to join such sweetheart unions.

GWU organises

GWU started organising in Pietermaritzburg and the 4 Cape Town plants of Phesantekraal, Koelenhof, Stellenbosch, Killarney and Somerset West around June 1984. Organising was a gradual process, affected by the disorganising role of NUBAW. In Pietermaritzburg in particular management was very hostile and continued to give NUBAW access to the factory although it did not enjoy support.

But GWU's organising efforts gained momentum as workers began to see the importance of unionisation and appreciate the treacherous role of NUBAW. All categories of workers were organised - office cleaners, skilled artisans, drivers and unskilled workers. The union gained majority recognition in six factories, some just before the wage negotiations began. An important clause in the recognition agreement, which was bitterly fought for, was that Corobrik, if they wished to dismiss workers during a strike, had to dismiss all. On the other hand, if they wished to re-employ, all had to be re-employed. This ensured that active union members would not be victimised.

GWU's wage demand was R1.95 per hour for the Western Cape workers and R2.00 per hour for the Pietermaritzburg workers an increase of 87 cents and 71 cents per hour respectively. The submission was based on 2 arguments: firstly, does Corobrik pay a living wage and, secondly, can Corobrik afford to pay a living wage? The pre-strike wage rates of R1.17 for the Western Cape and R1.29 for Pietermaritzburg were well below

the UNISA minimum living level figures - although the holding group is the eleventh largest company in the country. The GWU firmly opposed this low wage policy. Lewis explains:

We presented very detailed arguments on the cost of living, workers budgets, statistics of price increases and even things such as the affect of the drought in the homelands on the workers families and their roofing requirements for housing.

The union was not prepared to accept or negotiate over cost of living increases when the absolute wage levels remained so low. The union's arguments seemed conclusive. They demonstrated through the latest audited accounts of Toncoro that the annual profits of the group had increased from R9 million to R29 million and that the company was in a position to pay a living wage.

It seems that the pressures in the sugar division of the Tongaat Hullet Group, for example the financing of the R170 million Phoenix sugar mill has necessitated that the building materials division, in particular Corobrik, be used to assist through maintaining low wages and shifting profits to other divisions. The Corobrik, Toncoro and Tongaat Hullet network of financing and loan repayments creates an incorrect view of the financial position and profits of the company because they are constantly being repaid in the form of interest to the holding company.

"Corobrik did not respond to our arguments and had no legitimate case concerning its inability to meet our demands", said Lewis. Errol Rutherford managing director of Toncoro summed up their position:

Our companies were not prepared to increase their offer ...because they considered their final offer fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

The strike

The Corobrik offer was R1.37 per hour. Although GWU was prepared to negotiate on their proposals Corobrik was not. After the deadlock of the conciliation board negotiations, GWU balloted for a strike which the majority of workers supported. Prior to the strike the foremen attempted to discourage so-called coloured workers in the Western Cape from participat-

- Corobrik -

ing, but failed miserably and the workers commenced strike action on Monday May 20.

The 9 day strike action was extremely disciplined with workers picketing at the gate. Holding placards explaining their struggle for a living wage, it was an important schooling which consolidated unity at the workplace. Only one independent cartage contractor managed to cross the picket line. The 45,000 brick stockpile served no purpose as workers ensured that no scabs were employed. They stayed on the factory premises. For management it was a matter of holding out, although substantial amounts were being lost. In fact losses were reported to have been greater than had the company simply agreed to GWU's demands. The rationale for the company's stance was the fact that the NUBAW in the Transvaal had accepted the company's wage offer and to have conceded to GWU would have undermined the sweetheart union.

On the union's part there was constant evaluation of the progress of the strike and after 9 days when management indicated no alternative offer, the workers decided to go back. But the workers do not see this as a defeat. The intransigence of the Corobrik management must be seen as an attempt at union bashing in order to restore the sweetheart union, NUBAW.

The strike has also raised important questions concerning negotiations and official disputes procedures, which have been clearly exposed as working in management's favour. What is collective bargaining when legitimate and well researched arguments are ignored at the negotiating table by management? It is becoming increasingly evident that astute reasoning at the negotiating table is not sufficient to change the attitude of an intransigent management. Class organisation, power and struggle are the ingredients of change. For Corobrik workers this is a clear lesson. Their flexibility in tactics has ensured that the union has survived to continue the battle with a clear perspective of what is necessary, namely the national organisation of all Corobrik workers.

(Marcel Golding, Cape Town, June 1985)

Western Cape Men's Hostel Association

"Dibanisa Intsapho" - unite families - is the motto of the newly-formed Western Cape Men's Hostel Association (WCMHA). But it is going to do far more than this. For the first time, migrant workers are uniting to fight for greater control over their lives.

In the Western Cape there are 27,000 men living in single sex hostels. Langa (Cape Town) boasts the largest hostel in the country with 11,941 inhabitants as at May 1. In the country as a whole there are some 270 single sex hostels holding 300,000 workers (this does not include the 400,000 living in mine hostels). As far as the government is concerned there is no intention of phasing out these institutions, and this year R11,5 million has been budgeted for future construction. (Cape Times 26.6.85)

More than 500 crammed themselves into and around the Presbyterian Church hall in Nyanga in the Western Cape to celebrate the launch of the WCMHA on June 1. Representatives from trade union, community, religious, and educational bodies, among them, AZAPO, the UDF, SALDRU, SAAWU, CTMWA, GWU and the Crossroads Executive Committee also attended.

The organisation, with a current membership of more than 1,000 and a potential membership of about 27,000, aims to fight for family rights for migrant workers living in hostels, a review of the qualifications for contracts for migrant workers and improvements in conditions and facilities at hostels.

Johnson Mpukumpa, president of the General Workers Union and organiser and publicity secretary of the WCMHA, said one of the bad things migrant workers faced was high rent:

We are among those people who pay the highest rent in the Western Cape ... and this is for rooms which are often overcrowded and without ceilings, and there are no street lights. When our wives visit us they have to wait outside until we return from work. We decided that people who have to live under these conditions should have one voice the authorities can listen to.

He said he found it difficult to understand why such an organisation had not been started before:

Workers have organised themselves into trade unions, often under very difficult conditions. Only now have we decided to unite at the places where we live. There is no end to the list of organisations established by the government to look after our interests but they have done nothing about our problems. We must attend to them ourselves.

Bishop Patrick Matolengwe questioned the nature of a government which prevented a man from living with his wife and family. "Your responsibility," he said to workers in the hall, "is to build this organisation so that it can serve you and improve your future. You must not rest until you have won the right to live with your wives and families."

Andy Johnson, speaking on behalf of the trade unions in the Western Cape who are party to the planned new trade union federation, said the unions were not simply fighting for better working conditions but a better society:

We cannot separate the struggle of workers from that of the community because when workers leave the factory they become part of the community.

He said there was a lot of dissatisfaction among workers but that mere dissatisfaction would not bring liberation. Only unity in struggle could do this.

The following people were elected to the WCMHA executive: Mr C Mahamba (chairman), Mr W Zenzile (vice-chairman), Mr S Nkato (secretary), Mr W Nodlela (assistant secretary), Mr N Maphundu (treasurer), Mr J Mpukumpa (organiser/publicity secretary), Mr L Mbebe, Mr R Qublilanga, Mr S Phike and Mr S Gatyeni (additional members). Some of the office holders are already active in trade union or community organisations - Mahamba and Nodlela are organisers for the Liquor and Catering Trades Employees' Union, Phike is the chairman of one of the Crossroads squatter groups, and Mpukumpa is president of General Workers Union.

(Cape Town correspondent, June 1985)

Free State Shopworkers Take Action

Many of the daily struggles of workers on the shopfloor go by unnoticed and unrecorded. Official strike statistics and press reports are only the tip of the iceberg. Below are examples of such struggles, involving members of the Orange-Vaal Branch of CCAWUSA (Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa), in the Free State during the month of June.



Police harrassment

On the 19th of June at Frasers Wholesalers, Bloemfontein, a CCAWUSA shop steward was approached by two security policemen and his manager. The manager pointed him out and he was taken away by the police. The other shop stewards at the establishment went to the manager and asked him for the reasons why the shop steward had been taken away. The manager replied that it would be better if the shop steward in question were thrown out of a window as he is a "politician". The shop stewards then stated that if he were not brought back to work within the hour they would stop work.

After an hour had passed all the workers (approximately 110) stopped work and went to the canteen. The workers demanded that the manager phone the police. After another two hours the police brought the shop steward back and the workers went back to work.

It transpired that the police had asked the shop steward why Frasers workers demanded a R54 increase during wage negotiations and why he went to union meetings in Johannesburg. Many questions about CCAWUSA were also asked. The police also asked why the union had not answered a smear letter that is being circulated around Bloemfontein. This confirms the union's suspicion that the police are responsible for the letter. The union is also under the strong impression that there is close collaboration between Frasers management and security police in Bloemfontein. This is one of the many examples of security police harassment of union officials and members in the area.

- shopworkers -

'Give them hell'

On the same day at a Checkers Store in Bloemfontein a short work stoppage occurred involving all the black workers (approximately 48). Workers in the store have had an ongoing problem with the manager over his poor attitude towards them. On Wednesday the white floor manager was instructed by the manager to give the black staff hell. The floor manager did not agree to this and an argument resulted. The floor manager said he was leaving and walked out of the shop.

The workers then stopped work and went to the regional manager's office, which is in the same premises. Their demand was to remove the manager from the store and to reinstate the floor manager. As a result the manager was demoted and sent to another store and the floor manager returned to work the following day.

More police harrassment

Another short stoppage occurred at the Pick n Pay Hypermarket in Bloemfontein on June 12. The Hypermarket has a large union membership and the police have made a habit of standing outside the store on a regular basis and demanding pass books from the Pick n Pay workers specifically. This has only occurred since the workers have been unionised.

On the 12th, riot squad police attempted to enter the store canteen to apprehend a worker relating to a demand for a pass book. All the black workers stopped work and went to the canteen where they prevented the police from entering.

A week earlier, on June 6, all black workers had stopped work at OK Bazaars, Sasolburg, over the arrest of a fellow worker by the police. That morning a black worker walked past a till and playfully touched the white cashier on the shoulder. She moved forward while he was doing this and it resulted in him touching her cheek as well by mistake.

Two of the customers, who are local policemen, immediately left the queue and arrested the worker, accusing him of assaulting the white cashier. The cashier stated that she had no problem with the black worker touching her but this did not deter the police.

The police eventually left after some discussion with management. A meeting was then held between the shop stewards and management and the matter appeared to be resolved. However an assistant manager then phoned the police and the same two policemen returned and took the worker away.

All black workers then went on strike for most of the day demanding that management organise the return of the worker as they had called back the police. Head office management then became involved and the worker was eventually released on bail. The police are continuing with their charge of assault and have made the cashier become a state witness.

In spite of harrassment and intimidation by police and management CCAWUSA is making significant inroads in the Free State. In addition to the Vereeniging branch office, a second office was opened in January at Bloemfontein and an AGM, attended by 2,000, was held in Welkom during June. The level of organisation is rising rapidly with membership increasing from 400 to 3,000 in the last 18 months.

(Free State correspondent, June 1985)

WORKING WOMEN

A Portrait of South Africa's black women workers

Text and photographs by
Lesley Lawson

Working Women tells of the struggles of South Africa's black women workers. Through interviews and photographs women describe their lives at work and at home. Strong voices speak out against women's oppression. The book shows women challenging the government, the bosses and their own husbands.

(A Ravan/Sached book)

Price: R9.95

RAVAN PRESS



DOCUMENT: The Miners' Bill of Rights

The struggle for safety launched by the National Union of Mineworkers revolves around the following rights:

1. The right to recognition of Safety Stewards for Safety and Health purposes;
2. The right to protection from victimisation for exercising statutory rights;
3. The right to exercise rights on behalf of other's Safety and Health;
4. The right to refuse to work under conditions or practices believed to be unsafe, unhealthy or illegal;
5. The right to report suspected violations or dangers to the inspectorate;
6. The right to request a special inspection of suspected violations and imminent dangers;
7. The right to accompany inspectors during inspection without loss of pay;
8. The right to be informed and right of access to information;
9. The right to adequate Health and Safety training;
10. The right to participate in the development of mining operations plans.
11. The right to attend inquiries and to represent the interests of injured or deceased miners.
12. The right to conclude Safety Agreements with Mine Management.

Towards Safer Underground Gold Mining

In the mines, health and safety is the top priority...
You've got to be alive or uninjured to earn the wages.
Therefore to us, health and safety comes first.

Cyril Ramaphosa

Forty-six thousand gold miners have died in accidents since the turn of the century. Six hundred workers die each year in occupational accidents in South African gold mines. Concern about safety in the gold mines led the National Union of Mineworkers to commission an in-depth report by Jean Leger, a member of the Technical Advice Group and a research engineer attached to the Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand.



The report, entitled "Towards Safer Underground Gold Mining", unlike other studies, focuses on the way work is organised and the adequacy of safety precautions under the prevailing conditions of work. The trend in past studies was to assume that accidents occur as a result of errors on the part of the individual or because of uncontrollable

events. The vast majority of the fatalities result from the stoping operations, the key underground production activity. Teams of 8 to 12 black workers under direct supervision of the black "team leader" perform this production in the stopes. The team leaders in turn are supervised by the white miner. The white miner is charged with responsibility for safety, which is detailed in the Mines and Works Act and Regulations of 1956.

Ninety experienced black underground workers were interviewed. The study found that the actual practice in underground mining deviated grossly from that envisaged by the Mines and Works Act. In fact the role of the white miner has been reduced to exerting supervisory control underground through coercive measures. The situation is further compounded by the

- mine safety -

fact that the white miner is hardly involved in the actual productive functions of the mine, but is still granted huge production bonuses - which produces a conflict since he is also charged with responsibility for safety.

However, the conclusion that the National Union of Mineworkers draws from this report is that the blame for the present unsafe conditions in underground gold mining should be laid at the door of the mining houses. These mining houses have directly and intentionally shaped the productive relations that prevail today.

On 25 June the NUM delivered a letter to the Government Mining Engineer requesting him to hold an official inquiry in terms of the Mines of Works Act into:

1. breaches of the Mines and Works Act and Regulations;
2. breaches of the exemptions the mines have been granted in terms of the Act;
3. the manner in which inspections are conducted by the inspectorate.

The National Union of Mineworkers has taken this unprecedented step to request an inquiry because of the overwhelming evidence we have gathered from our members and some people in high positions in the mining industry, which evidence proves that violations of Mines and Works Act Regulations are the order of the day on virtually every mine.

The National Union of Mineworkers have resolved that they will fight for democratic safety rights at shaft floor level and industry level. It is only when the Miners' Bill of Rights is recognised in practice that we can confidently say we are on the way towards safer underground gold mining.

(from NUM press release, 25.6.85)

Mine Struggles in the Carletonville Region

It is 4.50 pm, Wednesday June 26. The meeting to report back on current wage negotiations to workers of hostel No 9 at Western Deep Levels Gold Mine is about to start. Slowly workers - some still wearing their work clothes, others wrapped in blankets - stream into the arena, over 5,000 in all. The sun is beginning to set, ending another day of labour.



James Motlatsi, president of the NUM and Tshepo Motaung, branch chairman move to the centre of the arena to start the meeting. Speaking through megaphones, they request everyone to stand and sing "Nkosi Sikelele Afrika" which ends with a repertoire of "Amandla Awethu" chants. Motlatsi speaks in Sotho and Motaung translates into Xhosa:

As I told you last week we had a meeting with the Chamber and put forward your proposals. After a long meeting we could not reach agreement. We changed our proposal in terms of the mandate but the Chamber has still not accepted it.

He reads and the Chamber's offer whilst workers intermittently shout their disapproval. "That is the Chamber's final offer. I want to ask you, do you accept their offer?" Before he can finish, workers shout in unison in a deafening chant, "...Asiyfune! Asiyfune! Asiyfune!" (Go away with that offer we don't want it!)

"Ok! Ok! comrades. We know Western Deep Levels can pay more and our proposals were reasonable. We only want a living wages, and better health and safety conditions." "Amandla! Amandla!", shout the workers in approval. They listen attentively. Questions are asked about the implications if they refuse the Chamber's offer. Molatesi explains the problems of last year's legal strike where alot of police violence was employed. He explains that a central committee meeting will be held later that evening and that all the shaft stewards from all the NUM regions will bring their reports so that a proposal can be formulated for the conciliation board meeting with the Chamber. He encourages workers

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to consolidate their organisation and maintain maximum unity. He emphasises that they convey the decision of the meeting to those who were not present. He stresses that discipline is vital and that workers should listen to the shaft stewards when they report back after the conciliation board meeting. The meeting ends with 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika.'

There have been a number of strikes in the Carletonville region. In 1982 East and West Driefontein were involved in the strike wave over wages. In September 1983 West Driefontein took strike action over unsafe working conditions. In February this year in East Driefontein 11,300 miners struck over the induna system and the question of shaftsteward representation. At East Driefontein the shaft steward leadership was arrested and are still awaiting trial, their case having being postponed on a number of occasions.

Over the last 5 months there have been widespread boycotts of concession stores and liquor outlets leading to major gains by mine workers. At Western Deep Levels, the boycotts have resulted in the first negotiated agreement between the NUM shaftsteward committee and local shopkeepers (see below). Workers' grievances include the fact that prices of goods were constantly changing; they were taxed on items which were exempted; rotten food was sold; they were subject to body searches and abuse by the shopowners. Negotiations are still in progress concerning the bars and liquor outlets which workers wish to transform from profit making enterprises into a recreational facility under workers' control.

The SALB spoke to James Motlatsi, president of the National Union of Mineworkers about some of the struggles in the region. Born in Lesotho in 1951, he has been employed for over 15 years in the mining industry. After working as a rock face worker, driller and team leader, he is today a personnel assistant at Western Deep Levels. He has considerable knowledge of the industry and the problems confronting the workers. He has been active in the NUM since its inception and was elected the first president of the union. He spoke about the early organisation and the achievements in the Carletonville region.

Western Deep Levels Gold Mine came into operation in 1962 at a capital cost of R60 million. The mine straddles the Gatsrand or "Ridge of holes", some 70 kilometres west of Johannesburg, on what is termed the West Wits Line, the geographical name for the extension of the Witwatersrand reefs. The mines area extends for 10.8 km from east to west and for 4 km from north to south. Two identical shafts systems, 2.5 km apart, known as No 2 and No 3 shafts are operated. In 22 years of production 1,034,793 kilograms of gold has been mined, representing a total revenue of R4,864 million.

SALB: How was the NUM launched?

Motlatsi: When CUSA passed a resolution we saw this in the newspaper. I met Cyril Ramaphosa by chance and we briefly spoke about the union and then made an appointment to visit Western Deep Levels. We started recruiting members before we even had access to the mine. It was not very easy because management was very harsh; threatened workers; refused to give meeting facilities and were reluctant to allow union organisers to represent members. But because of the workers' determination we soon grew from strength to strength. At present we have a branch committee of 11 members and 102 shopstewards for the 2 shafts.

In launching the NUM the process was to get committees of workers organising at various mines. From these committees we got together 60 people from 8 mines into a planning committee where the draft constitution was examined and amendments made. We then mobilised and made arrangements for our launch at Jouberton in Klerksdorp where over 2,000 attended. At this meeting I was elected president. This was in 1982.

SALB: What are the structures of the union?

Motlatsi: The first level of the organisation is the shaft steward council which represents all the different categories of workers. Next we have a shaft stewards committee which is elected by the shaft stewards council. The shaft stewards committee is also the branch committee where there is only one shaft on the mine. Each mine is usually a branch although at some very big complexes where there are different divisions to a mine, the division comprises a branch (as at Vaal Reefs). We then have a regional committee comprising branch represen-

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tatives. The regional committee then sends representatives to the central committee which is an important decision-making body. Our national executive committee is made up of the regional chairman, president and vice-president, treasurer and general secretary who is the only paid official on that body. Our highest body is the National Congress made up of delegates from the regions and which meets every year and where policy matters are discussed and elections are held.

Each level of organisational leadership handles specific problems. If, for example, a branch shaft steward cannot handle a problem the regional shaft stewards then assist before we even call in an organiser. Many of our regions handle virtually all their domestic problems and negotiations. Our head office does not have to do much at that level except when management refuses to negotiate locally.

SALB: Getting back to the region, how strong is the union at Western Deep Levels? Is there a recognition agreement?

Motlatsi: We represent more than 50% of the workers across the board. We have well over 10,000 members and have recognition agreements for both surface and underground workers. Together with Elandsrand Gold Mine we are the only mines which have recognition for both categories of workers. We are in the process of negotiating a shaft stewards recognition agreement. We envisage to have in the region of 200 shaft stewards to represent all categories of workers.

SALB: When did the boycotts start at Western Deep Levels?

Motlatsi: On April 20, the workers held a meeting at Western Deep Levels No 2 Arena where we discussed the conditions of the shops and liquor outlets. A decision was taken by about 9,000 workers to boycott the stores. This was one of the biggest meetings and participation was great on the pros and cons of the boycotts. Our reasons for the shop boycotts were the same as all the other boycotts taking place at mines.

On the liquor question we attached a few workplace demands because the bars are owned by management. They were demands for toe cap boots for safety, recognition of safety stewards and that management should cover the costs for overalls and jackets for black miners as well as whites. We immediately

implemented the boycotts on 21 April and everybody adhered to the call even if they were non-union members.

The mass meeting served as a forum to discuss the issues and everybody felt that they were not fairly treated. A boycott stewards committee of 35 workers was elected from hostels Nos 2, 3 and 9. This committee was responsible to the general membership, to monitor the boycott and enter negotiations.

SALB: What was the shopkeepers response?

Motlatsi: They were obviously worried. The shops on and near the mines depend on the mineworkers support. They immediately started looking for the people behind the boycott. They telephoned our head office for help. But they were told that the head office had nothing to do with the campaign. When they telephoned me I referred them to the branch chairman and the boycott stewards committee if they wished to negotiate.

SALB: Were there any attempts to break the boycotts by force?

Motlatsi: Well not at the stores. But the success of the boycott of liquor outlet proved a big headache for management. There were police road blocks over the 28 - 30 May. The three entrances to the Western Deep Levels hostels were sealed off and workers' liquor was confiscated. The objective of this was to force workers over the long weekend to buy at the bars, but this failed miserably. The use of force has not succeeded in breaking the boycott. Instead it has made workers more determined to have their demands met.

SALB: Could you estimate the losses of the shops and bars?

Motlatsi: That is really difficult - but it is alot of money. Because of worker pressure and the losses experienced by the shopowners, we were able to force them to concede some demands. But we also insisted that it be formalised in an agreement between the union and the shopowners which recognises our rights as customers. This is a major victory.

SALB: Are there any safeguards to ensure the implementation?

Motlatsi: Yes, firstly if things do not go as the workers want, then we will boycott again. Secondly, there will be

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close monitoring of the situation and thirdly, the workers have made sure that there is no bribery of the boycott stewards. The members of the boycott committee are not allowed to enter any of the shops except for negotiations. They have many eager workers prepared to do their shopping for them. If they have to see any of the items, they will be accompanied by other workers. This is to ensure workers' control and that nobody gets bought over.

SALB: Have the demands on the liquor outlets been met?

Motlatsi: Yes, in principle, but we have not yet opened the bars. Those demands for boots and overalls have been agreed to. The prices of liquor still have to be negotiated. The problem is that management buys liquor in thousands of rands and we are still getting our shaft stewards equipped to deal with the situation, before we open the bars. The workers do not want profits to be made on the liquor. Only the operating costs should be covered. The bars should be brought under the control of the workers.

SALB: What are the lessons of the boycotts?

Motlatsi: It has certainly raised workers' consciousness and assisted in the consolidation of our organisation. It has also shown how different tactics can be used to develop the workers' struggle and secure gains. The gains are important but they are really only the beginnings of our struggle. They have, nevertheless, shown what strong organisation, discipline and unity can achieve when workers struggles are democratically controlled.

Another important struggle in the Carletonville region was the strike on 17 and 18 May of over 10,000 mineworkers at Blyvooruitzicht Gold Mine in solidarity with two dismissed shaft stewards. The spontaneous strike or, more correctly, stay-aways from work, was the culmination of protracted struggles between management and workers over shaft steward rights.

In addition concession store owners, in anticipation of boycotts, requested the Blyvooruitzicht shaft stewards committee to nominate four representatives to discuss on a monthly basis

the grievances of mineworkers concerning conditions and services at the shops. A liquor boycott was launched but then called off to assess the situation.

Blyvooruitzicht Gold Mine, is owned by Rand Mines, and conducts gold mining operation on the far west Witwatersrand. Uranium oxide, silver and osmiridium are recovered as by products of the gold extraction process. Its total working profit amounted to R50,228 million during 1984, down about R17 million on the previous year as a result of the lower gold production, the increase in working expenditure and the price of gold. There are 2 shafts, 3 hostels and a married quarters (housing only 47 miners) on the mine. To date, recognition has only been obtained for groups 3 to 8 of the employees although negotiations for other categories are taking place.

The stay-away from work is one of the tactics used by mine workers to exercise pressure on management. Together with demonstrative stoppages, lengthier strikes, boycotts, work to rule, working half shifts, the stay-away on the mines has become another feature of working class action. The hostel conditions make stay-aways easy to implement although police action cannot be discounted. The stay-away tactic which has re-emerged as a specific form of class mobilisation in urban and rural centres throughout South Africa has now made its way onto the mines, although implementation remains selective.

Active in these struggles was Elijah Barayi, the 53 year old vice-president of the NUM. A personnel assistant at Blyvooruitzicht, Barayi is a seasoned activist with 25 years experience on the mines. Originally from Cradock in the Eastern Cape, Mr Barayi resides with his family in Ekuphakemmi Village, the married quarters at Blyvooruitzicht. He spoke to SALB about some of the issues:

SALB: What were the issues which preceeded the strike?

Barayi: One issue which has caused alot of dissatisfaction has been management's refusal to recognise certain categories of workers where we have overwhelming support. Everytime we send our figures for verification they come back and say we don't have adequate representation. Other grievances include production bonuses; the issuing of free overalls to workers;

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recognition of shaft stewards; opening of union offices; the prices of liquor at the bars; the victimisation of workers underground and dissatisfaction over charging up.

SALB: Did management attend to any of the grievances?

Barayi: No, not initially. The demands we submitted to management were not really taken seriously. To test the general feeling of workers for action, we held a mass meeting in early April. At this meeting, one of the biggest ever held in Blyvooruitzicht, workers emphasised that management was not treating them fairly. For example, liquor went up 3 times a year, while they only received one increase a year. We also discussed the situation of the shops but this was resolved when the owners negotiated with the shaft stewards.

SALB: What caused the mass action on May 17 and 18, and how would you characterise it?

Barayi: I was called in to represent 2 shaft stewards in a disciplinary hearing. While we were discussing the matter with the management, the workers decided not to go to work. Instead they gathered at No 3 hostel singing freedom songs until late on the morning of the May 18. Management then called in the police and mine security to disperse the workers. They used teargas. Workers challenged the police and wanted to know why they were doing this. We were told that management was behind this. The police left after shaft stewards contested their presence. Although our action can be termed a strike it is better seen as a stay-away from work.

SALB: What do you see as the major difference?

Barayi: Well, although our residence is on the mine, our action was centrally located at the hostels and not the shaft. Strike action, I would say, is action on the work-floor. They both have the same effect in that production does not continue, but the location of the action differs.

SALB: What happened on the May 18? How did management resolve the dispute?

Barayi: We had a mass meeting of over 9,000 on the soccer field where we discussed the issues. Workers wanted our

action to continue but we heard then that our head office was to take up the matter of the shaft stewards. It was then decided to go back to work on the Monday.

SALB: Did the workers lose any pay?

Barayi: The majority did not lose any wages. Only a few did not receive. It is unclear why management did this. We are still fighting this discrepancy.

SALB: Were any of your demands met?

Barayi: Only our first demand of a production bonus was met. All the others we are still negotiating with management. The struggle ahead is difficult and it requires us to strengthen our organisation to win these demands. It is only a matter of time.

Postscript:

The failure of the NUM and the Chamber of Mines to reach agreement on wage increases has already led to a spate of strikes and casualties. Over 27,000 miners at General Mining Union Corporation (Gencor) mines - Bracken, Leslie, Kinross and Winkelhaak in the Eastern Transvaal and Beatrix in the Orange Free State - struck in protest against the increase on July 1, the traditional implementation date of black miners' wage increases. One miner died and many were injured as police and mine security fired teargas, rubber bullets and birdshot. Mine property was destroyed, a concession store burnt and 560 workers sent back to the homelands.

In another strike at Lonhro's Western Platinum mine in Bophuthatswana, 3 miners were killed. Police and mine security violence has become a hallmark of the industry - a part of the extended industrial relations system.

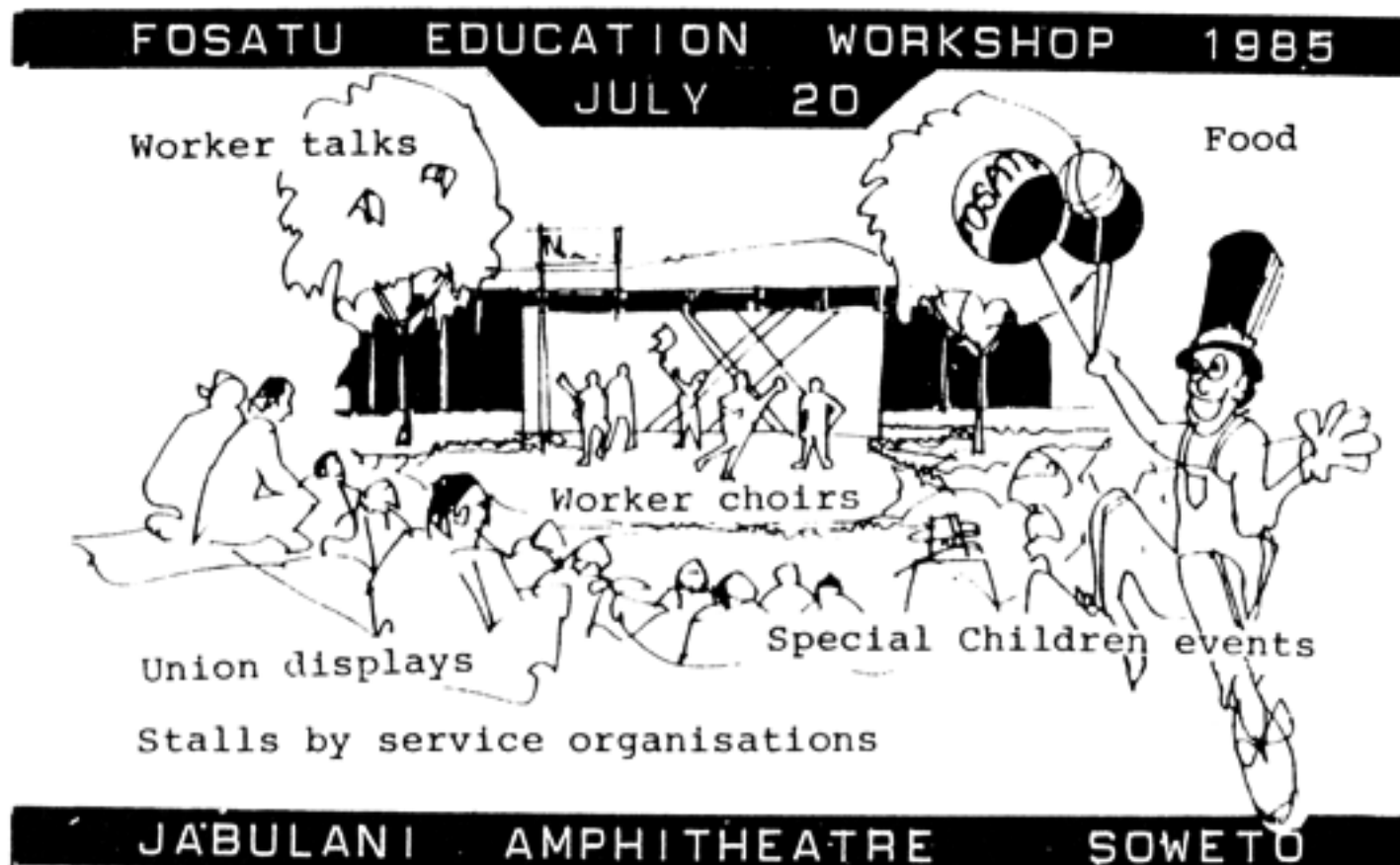
Low wages in the industry has been a major grievance of workers. This year the NUM initially demanded 40% across the board monthly increase, but then reduced it's demand to 22%. The Chamber of Mine's final offer ranges between 14.1% and 19.6%.

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Although it is rumoured that Anglo American Corporation (AAC) would prefer to settle because they will be the most severely affected by strike action - of the 29 mines party to the dispute 18 are owned by Anglo - they are hamstrung by the other mine houses.

On Tuesday July 9, the NUM started their strike ballot at the 29 gold mines and collieries although this is not required by law as NUM is still unregistered at present. The ballots were surrounded by controversy. Rand Mines and Gold Fields were unco-operative and set impossible conditions for balloting, while Anglo Vaal's Hartebeesfontein's 18,000 miners were given only 24 hours to vote. Anglo American Corporation on the other hand complained of the wording on the ballot form.

But beyond these controversies, the key factor remains grassroots militancy. While there was an 11th hour attempt at settling during last year's legal strike, it did not avert widespread activity involving well over 70,000. If no fresh Chamber proposals are forthcoming a legal strike in the industry could affect over 200,000 miners - certainly the biggest industrial action in South African labour history.



DOCUMENT: Agreement Between Deep Levels Supply Store and NUM 3 Shaft Branch

The two parties agree that:

1. The cafeteria manager and staff will treat customers fairly.
2. New prices will be discussed by both parties.
3. Every customer will receive a cash slip showing the number of articles bought and price of each, the sub-total, the money handed to the cashier and the change the customer must get.
4. The manager has undertaken to see to it that all food sold is acceptably fresh and well cooked.
5. A price-tagging machine is to be purchased bearing the name of the shop. The price so marked will be the price the customer pays.
6. The "DO NOT READ BOOKS" sign has already been removed.
7. If a Gaming Machine is out of order, a notice will be displayed against such a machine.
8. No articles will be given as change to customers.
9. Customers can return articles they are not satisfied with for refund.
10. Opening and closing times will be negotiated by the two parties.
11. NUM must be informed of any disciplinary action taken against either employees of the shop or customers who misbehave.
12. No action will be taken against the shop unless such action has been discussed at higher authorities of both parties.

(12.6.85)

TECHNICAL ADVICE GROUP

212 Dunwell House, Jorissen St., Braamfontein
P.O. Box 32358, Braamfontein 2017
Telephone: 339-1340



FULL TIME MICROCOMPUTER PROGRAMMER / ANALYST REQUIRED

The Technical Advice Group (TAG) is an organization of socially concerned engineers and scientists which gives assistance to progressive trade unions and community organizations.

Our activities are in the fields of:

- * occupational health and safety
- * microcomputer based union subscription processing systems, supplying both hardware and software
- * education; health & safety, computer usage & productivity
- * technical/legal representation at accident inquiries
- * advice on management initiated productivity schemes
- * technical & scientific research

We require an additional full time member to:

- a) Develop and maintain small office-type administration systems for use on microcomputers running CPM/86 or MS DOS operating systems and applications programs in dBase II or III
- b) Assist with general office administration.

Experience with microcomputers is essential. Interest in or knowledge of any of the other fields above would be an advantage.

The salary offered is R 14 400 p.a. Travelling expenses and half of the membership fee of a medical aid society will also be paid.

Written applications, including a C.V., should be received by TAG before 22 July 1985.

INTERVIEW: Sarmcol BTR Strike



On June 22 the SALB interviewed Philip Dladla, a MAWU (Metal and Allied Workers Union) shop steward at Sarmcol, Howick, and Phineas Sibiya, a branch committee member and senior shop steward at Sarmcol, about the current dispute. On that day Sarmcol strikers were attending the MAWU AGM in Soweto. They marched behind banners which read: "1000 BTR Workers on Strike for Basic Union Rights", and, "BTR Union Bashers, Apartheid Lackey".

SALB: When did MAWU begin organising at Sarmcol, and what led up to the current dispute?

Sibiya: We started organising over 10 years ago in 1973, but the company refused us recognition although we had a majority. During this time there was constant harassment of workers and organisers. Some were detained in the early days. In 1976 Moses Ndlova, an organiser, was banned for 5 years.

Dladla: In 1983 a court case forced the company to compromise. We gained access to the factory for organisers, stop orders, and a partial retrenchment procedure - but a full recognition agreement was never reached. This is after 2 years, mediation and a conciliation board. It failed because the company refused to accept our demands for the right to strike, a cooling off period and decent severance pay.

Sibiya: This led to a legal strike on April 30 when workers left their machines and sat in the canteen. On May 2 a pamphlet was issued by management giving workers an ultimatum to return to work. Then on May 3 we were locked out and the company told us to collect our pay. We refused until we had legal advice. The company was interdicted to pay only the amount due for the previous week's work. The workers took 10 buses to go and collect the money.

SALB: What are the workers doing now during the strike?

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Dladla: From May 5 the workers have been meeting daily from 8 to 12 in the morning at Impophomeni Community Hall to keep up the courage of the group and to check there are no scabs. We report back on the latest developments and keep a register of those on strike. The strike is almost 100%. There are nearly a thousand workers, including about 50 Indian workers and almost all are on strike. In 1983 there were 2,000 workers, but there have been many retrenchments. The meetings also organise donations of food because our members are starving. This kind of support is essential.

SALB: As part of its campaign the union has boycotted "white" businesses in Howick. What was the reason for this?

Dladla: This decision was taken because in an earlier strike in 1984 - over wages - local white shopowners had sided with Sarmcol management. During the dispute workers occupied the canteen - but had nothing to eat. The white traders refused to open before 7.00 in the morning to give workers a chance to buy food for the day.

To start with the boycott was very effective. But not so now - because there are 800 scabs being employed and they are buying from the shops.

SALB: How have you dealt with the scabs?

Dladla: We sent people to Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg, Hammarsdale, and to the chiefs in the reserves where the scabs come from. We told them: "don't take our jobs". But there is a lot of unemployment and the company and the police are preventing us from speaking to them. Twenty-one of our members have already been charged with "intimidation". But we know that production is suffering as a result of these new workers with more work being rejected for poor quality.

SALB: What is the next step for the workers?

Dladla: The boycott is falling off. The company has made it plain they will not negotiate - they are willing to use their reserves to crush the union. For this reason we have moved into the second stage of our struggle in order to extend our support. Yesterday [21 June] we came to Johannesburg to hold a press conference and to submit our petition to the BTR head-

quarters in Randburg. The police tailed us the whole time. In addition support committees have been established in Pietermaritzburg and Durban to provide food parcels. MAWU shop stewards are to report to their members and organise support. Dunlop workers in Durban - who are also owned by BTR - have balloted to take strike action in solidarity. We have also contacted unions' overseas to put pressure on BTR head office. We intend to take the company to an international court under the EEC code of conduct. Tomorrow [23 June] we will report back to a mass meeting in Impophomeni and to demonstrate our strength to the scabs.

In the event the meeting of the 23rd was dispersed by police using teargas. The following day, as tension mounted, 2 scabs were killed in a clash with a group of strikers. Riot police patrolled the streets with dogs and teargas, whilst the local commissioner banned all meetings in Impophomeni.

But the union has taken the offensive into the other townships - to Edendale and Imbuli, near Pietermaritzburg, where many of the scabs came from. Leaflets were distributed explaining the reasons for the strike and strikers marched through the townships singing: "Uthinta MAWU undakwe yini" (You must be drunk to play with MAWU).

On Saturday June 29, Sarmcol workers took their fight into the heart of Pietermaritzburg when a convoy of ten buses jammed the main street. Police were caught unawares when 1,000 strikers took to the streets distributing stickers and pamphlets, waving placards and chanting: "Rats out of Sarmcol". Future plans include a possible local stay-away.

DOCUMENT: THE BTR SARMCOL STRIKE - June 1985

In March 1984, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) took the unprecedented step of attending a BTR shareholders meeting to bring to the attention of the directors the sad state of industrial relations at Sarmcol, Howick. MAWU reiterated that management's 10 year refusal to meet the union and their

subsequent attempts to use recognition arrangements to emasculate MAWU and reduce it to the level of a liaison committee had caused tremendous bitterness amongst workers. The union therefore warned that unless the company substantially reviewed their industrial relations policies there would be disastrous results.

No heed was taken of this warning and the company continued with its anti-union, autocratic style of management. The years of frustration at management's refusal to extend basic trade union rights to MAWU at BTR Sarmcol in the form of a standard recognition document coupled with the repeated failure of conciliation machinery eventually decided workers on a path of lawful strike action.

Management's response to the lawful strike was to fire all 1,000 workers after two days and to replace the entire workforce with scab labour from Pietermaritzburg and its environs. BTR Sarmcol has refused to speak to the union since the strike and has stated that there is no point in meeting MAWU to discuss the dispute because "it does not have any members at the company".

BTR in Britain has told unions which approached head office on this matter that it would not entertain "gratuitous representations" in regard to BTR Sarmcol as these were "wasted and misguided." It has gone on to express full support for local management's actions.

Such exercises of union bashing in the South African context are certainly not unknown but when they are perpetrated by giant multi-national companies one is seriously forced to question whether foreign investment is of value to the oppressed workers of our country.

Trade unions are one of the few legitimate forms by which black workers can advance their positions. It is for that reason that trade unions come under constant attack from the state. When such attacks are exacerbated and abetted by multi-national companies the odds against South African black workers are massively increased. "Constructive engagement" must be assessed on the facts not on the basis of what might or should be. Workers at BTR Sarmcol have their own views but we call on you to seriously consider the question especially in

the light of BTR's continued refusal to comply with the provisions governing the operations of multi-nationals in foreign countries.

BTR and the international codes

BTR's operations in South Africa are governed primarily by the European Economic Community's Code (EECC) and the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multi-Nationals and Social Policy (TDPM). Many of the provisions of the two codes are similar and only the most flagrant breeches by the company are mentioned here.

1. Employment

"In view of the flexibility which multinational enterprises may have, they should strive to assume a leading role in promoting security of employment, particularly in countries where discontinuation of operations is likely to accentuate long-term unemployment." (25 - TDPM)

"In considering changes in operations (including those resulting from mergers, take-overs or transfers of production) which would have major employment effects, multinational enterprises should provide reasonable notice of such changes to the appropriate government authorities and representatives of the workers in their employment and their organisations so that the implications may be examined jointly in order to mitigate adverse effects to the greatest possible extent." (26 - TDPM)

- * BTR Sarmcol has succeeded in reducing its workforce from nearly 2,300 to 1,000 over a five year period.
- * This massive redundancy programme was initiated without any discussions whatsoever with MAWU and resulted in hundreds of workers being put onto the street without compensation.
- * The process was temporarily halted by the union by legal action in 1983 but subsequently MAWU's success in stemming the tide of redundancies has been very limited. Most of the capital intensive machinery had already been introduced and major job cutting projects like the new mixing plant were well under way.

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- * Subsequent to the strike further redundancies have actually taken place as evidenced by the fact that 800 scab workers have been employed and the company claims to have no further vacancies. This means a twenty percent job cut.
- * This is Sarmcol's contribution to employment in South Africa.

2. Wages

"Wages, benefits and conditions of work offered by multinational enterprises should be not less favourable to the workers than those offered by comparable employers in the country concerned." (33 - TDPM)

"When multinational enterprises operate in developing countries, where comparable employers may not exist, they should provide the best possible wages, benefits and conditions of work." (26 - TDPM)

"The minimum wages should initially exceed by at least 50 per cent the minimum level required to satisfy the basic needs of an employee and his family." (EEOC)

BTR Sarmcol's current wages compared with the HEL and SLL as well as the group's profits and increase in sales per employee are as follows:

Grade	Monthly Wage	HEL April 1985*	SLL April 1985**
1	R336,26	R438,68-	R410,09-
2	R342,19	(family of 5)	(family of 5,98)
3	R356,04	R498,91-	
4	R375,82	(family of 6)	
5	R405,49		
6	R445,05		
7	R462,85		

* HEL - Household Effective Level - Potgieter, University of Port Elizabeth, figures for Durban area

** SLL - Supplemented Living Level - UNISA Market Research - Standard family 5,98 - Durban area

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Profit before tax (millions)	19,867	24,750	16,772	7,723	12,735
%increase - sales per employee	31,2	13,7	16,3	8,6	22,0

It is important to realise that the HEL and SLL are just gauges of poverty levels below which starvation becomes imminent. Indeed starvation has manifested itself in a serious way in Impophomeni where a survey by the union's medical advisors has revealed that twenty per cent of the children aged 2-9 years are below eighty per cent of expected weight which indicates severe malnutrition. Forty five percent of the children have weights which fall in the bottom ten percent of the weight distribution of a normal population.

Given BTR Sarmcol's monopoly position it does not have major comprehensive competitors but if one takes comparable plants on the basis of size, locality or industry then BTR Sarmcol has by far the lowest wage structure (30 per cent plus) of all the plants considered - AECI, Dunlop Industrial Products, Scottish Cables, Huletts Aluminium and all rubber tyre manufacturers.

3. Industrial relations

"Workers employed by multinational enterprises should have the right, in accordance with national law and practice, to have representative organisations of their own choosing recognised for the purpose of collective bargaining." (48 - TDPM)

"Consequently, the companies should allow collective bargaining with organisations freely chosen by the workers to develop in accordance with internationally accepted principles." (EECC)

BTR Sarmcol's entire history has been one of vicious anti-unionism and not by the longest stretch of the imagination

can their standards of industrial relations be considered to be in line with even the most reactionary of South African companies. As has been previously revealed the final recognition agreement draft submitted for signature to BTR Sarmcol and rejected by them was adopted as an opening draft by Barlows in their negotiations with another FOSATU affiliate, the National Union of Textile Workers.

International principles of collective bargaining require inter alia good faith negotiating with the aim of reaching agreement and the right of trade unions to take lawful strike action after the exhaustion of all conciliatory procedures.

At BTR Sarmcol MAWU has faced: (i) three years of procrastination over the recognition agreement; (ii) mass dismissals after two days of a lawful strike; (iii) attempts to selectively re-employ; (iv) permanent employment of scabs; (v) a refusal to negotiate a settlement to the dispute - all are flagrant breaches of international collective bargaining procedures.

And the primary issues at stake? A refusal by the company to accept provisions in the recognition agreement relating to consultation and the application of LIFO (last in first out) in the case of retrenchments. These provisions are in fact established requirements of the Industrial Court but the company was not willing to allow retrenchment to be governed in this way - they required of the union that it cede these rights in law.

4. Migrant labour, fringe benefits, desegregation and equality of opportunity

"The system of migrant labour is, in South Africa, an instrument of the policy of apartheid which has the effect of preventing the individual from seeking and obtaining a job of his choice; it also causes grave social and family problems. In the meantime employers should make it their concern to alleviate as much as possible the effects of the existing system." (EECC)

"For this purpose company funds could be set aside for use; in housing of black African personnel and their families; in transport from place of residence to place of

work and back; in providing leisure and health service facilities; in providing their employees with assistance in problems they encounter with authorities over their movement from one place to another, their choice of residence and their employment; in pension matters; in educational matters; in improving medical services." (EECC)

"In so far as it lies within their own competence, employers should do everything possible to abolish any practice of segregation, notably at the work place and in canteens, sports activities, education and training. They should ensure equal working conditions for all their staff."
(6 EECC)

"Constructive engagement" dictates that multinationals will challenge socially unjust legislation in South Africa and will pressurise the South African government to dismantle apartheid which has been the cause of so much bloodshed in our land.

In fact, however, far from challenging legislation forcing migratory labour, BTR Sarmcol continues to aid and abett the system by recruiting migrant labourers and housing them in archaic single sex hostels. No families or children are allowed to stay in the hostels. No efforts whatsoever have been made to provide housing for the workers and their families. It would increase costs and therefore eat into profits.

"Constructive engagment also dictates that multinational enterprises will assist workers in developing their communities and invest in improving the appalling lack of any basic facilities for so many people of South Africa. BTR Sarmcol's investment in recreation, housing, health and education facilities in Impophomeni, Howick West, Haza, Sweetwaters, and Mafakathini has been zero. In fact far from upgrading and improving workers' communities BTR is actually actively destroying them by recruiting scab labour from distant parts which will leave the Howick communities without finance and people without food.

No effort was made to dissuade the state from "relocating" Howick resident's to Impophomeni some 20 km from the factory.

Racial discrimination exists at all levels even to the point

of different "race groups" having to use different toilet facilities at the company. Subsequent to the strike large numbers of white employees were taken on as scabs and will be given permanent posts at the expense of African and Indian workers.

Conclusions

These are the benefits of foreign investment reaped by the employees of BTR Sarmcol, Howick despite the required objectives of such investment outlined in the preamble of the TDPM:

"multinationals can also make an important contribution to the promotion of economic and social welfare; to the improvement of living standards and the satisfaction of basic needs; to the creation of employment opportunities, both directly and indirectly; and to the enjoyment of basic human rights including freedom of association, throughout the world."

- * The workers at BTR Sarmcol are demanding the full recognition of their union and their unconditional reinstatement.
- * If the company is allowed to destroy their trade union by dismissing the entire workforce then BTR's gross abuses will undoubtedly continue. Only effective trade union organisation can prevent this and bring about civilised industrial relations practices.
- * The struggle at BTR Sarmcol also has ramifications that extend beyond the particularities of this current dispute in that if the company is allowed to continue its "union bashing programme" then this will open the way for other multinationals to follow suit.
- * If BTR workers do not succeed in their demands therefore they will call for BTR to get out of South Africa.

(MAWU communique, June 1985)

Compensation – A Worker's Story

Mr Maqhashu is 64 years old. He worked for a company that transports asbestos for his whole working life. Neither he nor his workmates knew that asbestos is dangerous to health by causing diseases of the lungs when you breathe it in. Before the union came, the workers had only been screened for TB with the small Xrays called the mini Xrays.

When General Workers' Union organised the transport workers, they told them of the dangers of asbestosis and did a survey of the workers with the Industrial Health Research Group (IHRG) to find out how many workers had asbestos disease of the lungs (asbestosis). Mr Maqhashu was one of the workers who was found to be suffering from asbestosis. A claim was sent in to the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner in October, 1983. A year later Mr Maqhashu was compensated. Rufus Rwexu of the IHRG interviewed Mr Maqhashu:

Rufus: When did you start working for the company?

Mr Maqhashu: I am not sure about the year, but it is the first and last company that I ever worked for since I started working. I might have worked there for more than 28 years.

Rufus: When did you realise that you were handling asbestos?

Mr Maqhashu: Well I really do not know, because nobody ever told us the names of the things that we used to handle. We became aware of asbestos like other things that we used to handle after a long period. Sometimes the supervisors tell us to go and load asbestos. This is how we got to know the name.

We were not even told that asbestos was a health hazard. We were also not aware that there are different Xrays - a mini-Xray for showing only TB, and a big one which shows asbestos. As I am speaking to you now, I am just wondering how many people have been suffering or killed by asbestos but are told that they are suffering from TB. The union brought light to us.

Rufus: How did you get to know that your application for compensation had been approved?

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Mr Maqhashu: I got a copy of the letter telling me that my application has been approved by the Workman's Compensation Commissioner. In October 1984, not long after, I received a sum of R3,952.22 paid from the time that I was retrenched in June 1983. I was at the same time told that I would be getting a monthly pension of R254.15.

I was very happy because this money would help me in feeding and educating my children who are now at school.

Rufus: What word of courage can you give to other workers?

Mr Maqhashu: I appeal and encourage them to stand behind their union, because I strongly feel that if I was not a member of a union, I would not have got this money.

(Industrial Health Research Group)

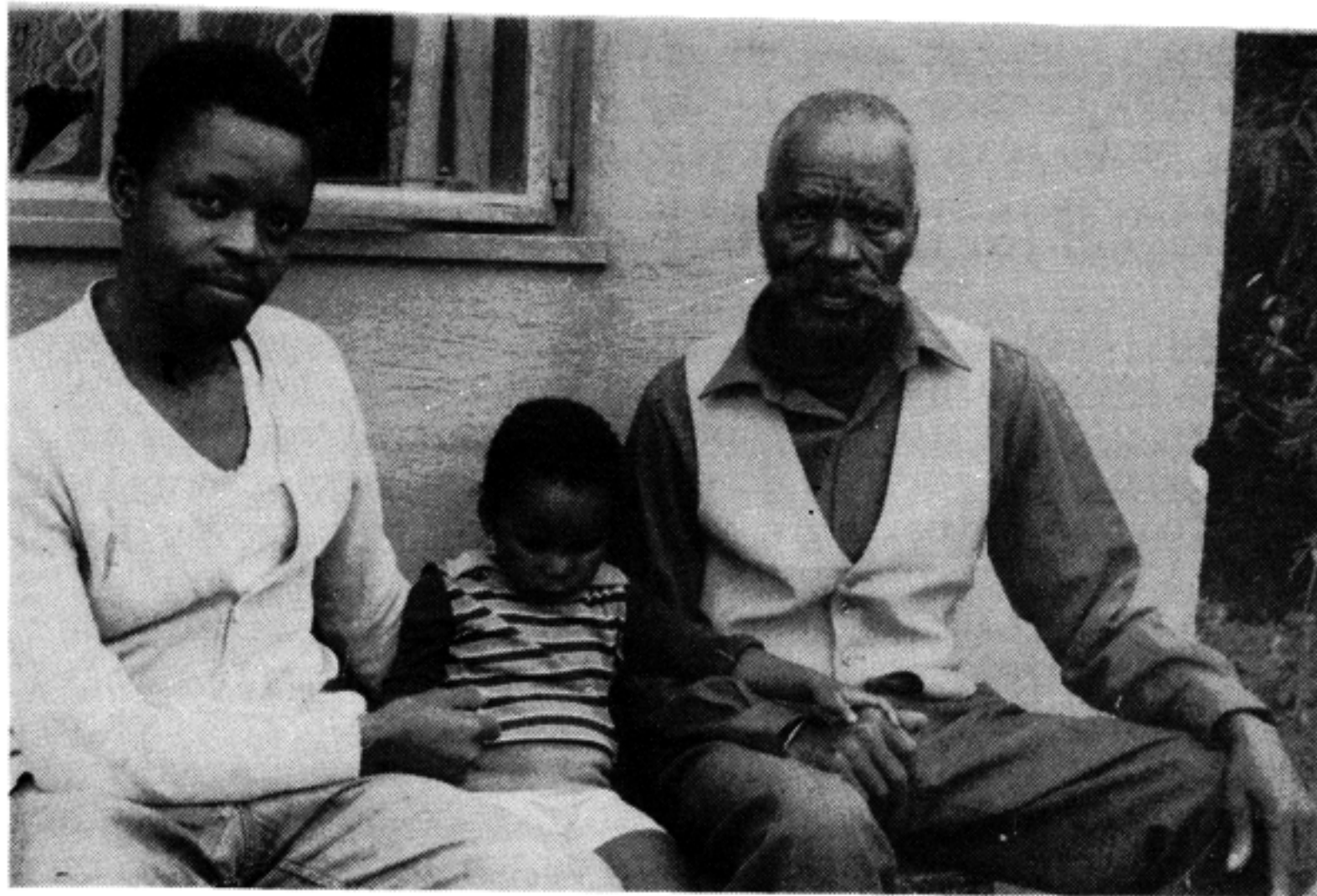


photo: Mr Maqhashu with his family

Workmen's Compensation Procedures: A Backward Step

Historical situation

The procedure has been that the Workman's Compensation Commissioner handles the legal side of establishing the presence of a compensable occupational disease, as well as the medical diagnosis for compensable diseases of systems other than the respiratory system. Medical opinion for the diagnosis of pneumoconioses (respiratory diseases caused by the inhalation of fibrogenic dust), has been handled by the Director of the Medical Bureau of Occupational Diseases. The Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases was until 1984 under the Department of Minerals but is now under the Department of Health. The Bureau has traditionally been involved in processing claims for compensation for pneumoconiosis cases from the mines. Because there has been no similar service for industry, nor any industrial health service per se, the Bureau has also given opinions for cases from industry.

This arrangement has, however, not been satisfactory. The Workman's Compensation Commissioner is known to be chronically understaffed. This has meant that the processing of claims for compensation for pneumoconiosis has taken between one and two years. The lump sum payment, which serves as backpayment for this period, should the claim be successful, does little to ameliorate the financial and emotional hardship and uncertainty for a worker with a respiratory illness. In this long period of uncertainty, the worker experiences loss of earnings, medical costs, legal and administrative costs, and pain and suffering. The last is not compensable under the Workman's Compensation Act.

The decisions and workings of the Workman's Compensation Commissioner have been relatively inaccessible and not really publically accountable. For instance, there are not even published figures for claims for occupational disease compensated or rejected by the Commissioner. Historically it has not been easy to communicate with the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases about the basis for their decisions. Under this system it appears that the opinion of the Director of the Bureau leads to rejection or acceptance of the claim.

- compensation -

Alternative route

An alternative route became available last year through the joint Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases/National Centre for Occupational Health panel. This comprised doctors from the Bureau and the Centre. Panel doctors were drawn from a larger group on a rotation basis. The collective readings of this panel provided the basis for medical certification of cases of occupational lung disease seen at the National Centre's occupational diseases clinic in Johannesburg. It was also possible for medical practitioners to refer records of suspected cases of pneumoconiosis from outside the Johannesburg area to the panel for medical certification. Certification by the joint panel appeared to be accepted by the Workman's Compensation Commissioner as diagnosis of an occupationally induced disease, and for compensation, although this was not inevitable.

The diagnosis of pneumoconiosis in terms of legal presumptive standards in South Africa is by Xray. Xray diagnosis is universally recognised to be difficult and subject to considerable individual error (bias) by the Xray reader. In consequence compensation authorities (as in the UK) usually set up panels of experts to provide opinions on the presence or absence of disease. The use of a panel ensures that the claimant benefits from a balanced collective opinion which is more objective by virtue of the minimisation of reader bias.

The joint panel that operated in 1984 included experts from the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases, the University of the Witwatersrand Medical School, and the National Centre for Occupational Health - a body which specifically concentrates expertise and knowledge particular to industry, as distinct from the mining sector. It would seem that such an arrangement ensures maximal fairness to the claimant, through participation of people with experience of disease in both mining and industry, and medical academics.

The nature of the panel not only increased the objectivity of the medical opinions by broadening the base of decision-making, but also provided a larger pool of competent doctors for the process of diagnosis, thereby increasing the potential ability to handle claims by the compensation apparatus.

To facilitate the passage of claims for suspect cases which were to be submitted to the Workman's Compensation Commissioner, full occupational and medical histories together with Xrays could be sent to the panel for their expert opinion. As there is no state or other diagnostic facility for occupational diseases outside of Johannesburg, this facility amounted to a welcome decentralisation of the services of the National Centre for Occupational Health.

The fact that this joint panel was open to approaches of outside medical personnel, and provided easy and direct exchange of information, meant that it was possible to build up a relationship of confidence. This type of open relationship is crucial to the independence of a state certifying authority. It also facilitated the important learning process for the referring doctors about occupational diseases.

The referring doctors' perception of the panel as an objective, open, and independent authority meant that its decisions were extremely unlikely to be contested. This obviated loading the Workman's Compensation Commissioner with legal contestations.

If the decision of the panel was negative, the claim would not be submitted to the Workman's Compensation Commissioner, thereby eliminating much unnecessary bureaucratic work for the Workman's Compensation Commissioner and the submitting doctors.

If the decision was positive, a claim for compensation would be submitted together with the other relevant paper work to the Workman's Compensation Commissioner. Using this route the total delay in processing a claim could be decreased from anything up to two years, to as little as two months.

Alternative route closed

In January the panel's functions were redefined at the request of the Workman's Compensation Commissioner. It now only has the authorisation to give opinions concerning those cases that have been personally worked up and investigated at the National Centre, and its opinions on the Xrays and medical reports referred by outside doctors do not have official status with the Commissioner. The patients themselves would

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have to be referred to the National Centre for occupational health in Johannesburg for personal examination there, which is obviously impracticable. Only then would the opinion of the panel be officially acceptable, leading to compensation if positive.

Outside practitioners must now revert to the old system of submitting all records and paper work directly to the Workman's Compensation Commissioner, who will then send them to the Director of Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases for medical certification.

Implications

This step is retrogressive for several reasons:

- a) the procedure is once again more secretive and closed to public scrutiny;
- b) the basis for making medical decisions about occupational diseases is contracted and bureaucratized. Workers who are exposed to fibrogenic dusts causing diseases that are difficult to diagnose will no longer have the benefit of more independent and objective decision. This disadvantages all parties involved;
- c) the only route of appeal against future medical decisions is through the Workman's Compensation Commissioner's court, involving lawyers, inconvenience and expense;
- d) bureaucratic delay will again disadvantage workers in obtaining rightful compensation;
- e) with access to the panel closed off, an important means of sharing knowledge and learning has been closed for outside practitioners who are concerned to improve their diagnostic skills in the area of occupational diseases, thus again disadvantaging workers. The National Centre for Occupational Health will thereby find it more difficult to pinpoint problematic areas of industry, and there will be adverse consequences for prevention;
- f) the Centre - a body specifically dealing with occupational health in industry and concentrating much expertise and knowledge in this field - is now excluded from diagnosing occupational disease in the very area for which it is responsible - general industry. It will also be prevented from extending its services and facilities to outside practitioners operating in the field of occupational

- health. Geographical areas outside of Johannesburg will be cut off from these services and facilities. What could have been a decentralised function at little or no cost to the state has now been withdrawn. This runs counter to the legislation introduced last year - particularly the intentions behind the Occupational Medicine Bill;
- g) in the current economic climate bureaucratic handling costs are likely to be increased for the Compensation apparatus.

During 1984 it would seem that about 150 or so cases of suspected occupational lung disease were submitted, using the alternative route. These were workers exposed to asbestos, silica dust and cotton dust. About 45 of these cases sent to the joint panel have now been returned to the submitting doctors for resubmission directly to the Workman's Compensation Commissioner. In addition the progress of some claims submitted to the Commissioner, which had been diagnosed by the joint panel as suffering from an occupational disease, has been halted. The Commissioner has recalled the medical evidence on which the Centre's diagnosis had been based, presumably for re-evaluation in the wake of the abolition of the joint panel.

The number of claims resulting from cases certified by the joint panel would appear to have overloaded the Commissioner. The problem is that figures for cases submitted, compensated or turned down by the Commissioner are not published, and so the true situation remains obscure. It is however highly likely that these cases represented a substantial proportion of claims for compensation for occupational disease in 1984.

The discovery of occupational diseases in workers has long been very poor indeed, especially for black workers. Since the advent of trade unions representing the interests of black workers, there has therefore been a sharp increase in compensation claims upon the Workman's Compensation Commissioner. These claims have arisen from surveys commissioned by the trade unions to determine the extent of the occupational disease problem in several industries. This is likely to increase in the future. Occupational disease is at present an uncharted territory. It is clear that there are many undiscovered cases in many industries, some of which are for the first time beginning to surface.

- compensation -

It does not seem rational that the response of the authorities should be to make claim processing more difficult in the face of the increasing ascertainment of occupational diseases. This response can only be interpreted as being an attempt by the Workman's Compensation Commissioner to block or retard this process by making things more bureaucratic, complicated and inaccessible. This runs counter to the legislation introduced last year, and is likely to increase bureaucratic costs to the Compensation Commissioner while reducing compensation benefits to deserving workers.

The new arrangement constitutes a blow to occupationally ill workers and their organisations. It is important for trade unions to take a stand on this issue and to think about ways in which the interests of their members could be protected.

Some possibilities for action are:

- a) to have the reasons for the closure of the joint panel to outside doctors made public;
- b) to seek to open the Workman's Compensation Commission to public scrutiny about past performances in terms of claims success and rejection statistics, and current diagnostic and certification practices;
- c) to pressurise both employers and the state for a return to the more objective joint panel certification process that would inspire public confidence, and generate a reputation for fairness;
- d) to have independent trade unions represented on the Workman's Compensation board of assessors.

(Johannesburg correspondent, May 1985)

Quality Circles Threaten British Unions

The popular view of quality circles is that they are a technique created and developed by Japanese management, and exported back to the West by courtesy of American multi-nationals. This view is misleadingly oversimplified, and may lead British workers to conclude that such a "foreign" management tool presents no danger here, because our culture and industrial traditions are different. In fact, the idea on which quality circles is based - of small semi-autonomous, problem-solving groups of employees - was originally developed for use in Britain, by management-oriented social scientists at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, as long ago as the 1950's. The idea was not taken up at that time for two major reasons. First, to a backward management, such groups appeared to carry the threat of an experiment in industrial democracy. Secondly, and probably more important, the trade union movement was growing in size and strength and was, with justification, suspicious of such techniques in so-called "human relations".

Japanese management, however, ever watchful for good ideas, spotted this idea and modified it to fit their own requirements. In the early 1960's, the expanding Japanese economy was having difficulty exporting its goods, particularly to the lucrative markets in the West. The label "Made in Japan" was widely seen to denote poor quality. To improve quality, management made the entire workforce responsible for quality control. The technique they employed to achieve this was the quality circle - a basically Western idea modified to deal with a specifically Japanese problem. The reason why management were able to introduce the circle concept onto the shop floor without much concerted resistance was that the major independent trade unions had been smashed in the preceding few years and "yellow" company-run unions installed in their place. These unions then collaborated with management in introducing a wide range of techniques in worker manipulation.

The success of circles in tapping workers' expertise and ideas was rapid and they spread to most sectors of industry. There are now over a million circles in operation in Japan involving ten million workers. To begin with, they concentrated on

- quality circles -

ideas for improving quality. However, after an initial burst of good suggestions, there was an inevitable tail-off. At this point, the circles became more blatantly involved in discussions of productivity and cost-cutting generally. In recent years, as circles have found it more and more difficult to come up with ideas on improving the production process, members have been forced back into making suggestions like cutting pay or not taking holiday entitlement, in order to fulfil their quota of cost-saving recommendations.

A concept comes home to roost

The idea of introducing quality circles back to the West was pioneered by American multinationals like Lockheed in the 1970's. By the end of that decade, over 750 major corporations and government agencies had adopted them. By 1982, a New York Stock Exchange survey showed that 75% of large manufacturing companies (those with more than 10,000 employees) had used them. American managements have been quite open about the benefits of circle development. Gone is any pretence that they are only to be concerned with quality improvement - higher productivity and the improvement of management's image are stressed as the chief aims.

The appearance of quality circles on the British scene has been more recent. British Leyland began limited experiments in 1978, but the real expansion dates from 1980. Articles published in the management journals emphasising the potential of circle development, and in the Financial Times played a major publicising role by running a series of articles early in 1981. Since then, they have spread rapidly. A recent report by Barrie Dale of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology suggests that over 200 major British companies have introduced quality circles. Though it is difficult to get comprehensive evidence of where circles are in operation, often because management call them by other names, a number of firms with household names are known to participate. These include BL, Rolls Royce, Ford, Jaguar, Dunlop, British Aerospace, Imperial Tobacco, May and Baker, UB Foods, Marks and Spencer, ICL, ITT, Philips, Mullard, Chloride, and Wedgewood. Moreover, circles are spreading to service organisations like British Airways, British Rail and the Central Electricity Generating Board. At least one District Health Authority is known to be considering their use.

This rapid take-off has been by no means accidental. Behind the scenes, circle development is being pushed to management by a number of government and unofficial bodies. Conferences, training sessions and teach-ins led by managers experienced in introducing circles have been arranged around the country and huge amounts of publicity and information distributed. In the wake of this fanfare has sprung up a host of specialist trainers and self-styled "consultants".

The advantages to management

The exploitation by management of what has been recently termed the "gold in the mind" of their employees has resulted in considerable cost saving. Circle promoters generally reckon that the savings will be in the range of five to eight times the cost of setting circles up. Yet, even if a group of workers in a circle never provided a single useful suggestion, the circle would still provide two valuable advantages for the employer. First, quality circles encourage workers to develop a management perspective on work - to think about how costs can be cut and productivity improved. In many cases, the circles are given instructions to work in this direction and the participation of front-line supervisors keeps them firmly on the management track. Secondly, circle meetings are used by management to keep tabs on workers. The meetings allow supervisors to identify pro-management employees and pick up useful information about what is going on on the shopfloor.

The potential danger posed to trade union organisation by quality circle development is clear. Whilst in the short term participants may indeed derive satisfaction from being able to contribute ideas, what they should bear in mind is that in the current state of the economy, suggestions as to how to improve efficiency are more likely to result in redundancy than an expansion in the firm's activity. From the point of view of the union rep, circle schemes may well be seen as an attempt to re-establish the authority and status of the supervisor, with a consequent weakening of the ability of the shop steward to hold his or her members together. At plant level, circles may lead to a fragmentation of the workforce, with circle members seen as "favoured" in the eyes of the rest of the employees and the circles themselves encouraged to compete.

More dangerously, there is evidence that union-busting con-

- quality circles -

sultants have used quality circles as an early phase of their campaigns. In the US, the Council on a Union Free Environment places great emphasis on the usefulness of circles. One British researcher who has studied circle development there has revealed that some managements do indeed see circles as a prerequisite to campaigns for the withdrawal of union recognition. In Britain, "management consultant" Roger Rosewell (renegade ex-Trotskyist who was once full time industrial organiser for the Socialist Workers' Party) who has advised foreign multinationals on how to keep unions out of their plants, is on record as recommending quality circles as a way of undermining union power.

There is a good reason, for trade unionists to regard quality circles with some suspicion. In workplaces where union organisation is very strong and a close watch is kept to ensure that they do not cross rigid boundaries laid down by the unions, circles may have a limited advantage in convincing workers of their collective creative ability and to enable them to question the function of management. But in the long run, a genuine mobilisation of workers' untapped talents will demand a more thorough-going redistribution of power in favour of the organised workforce. That is something which quality circles are most definitely not designed to achieve.

(Roger Smith, Centre for Trade Union Studies, Polytechnic of the South Bank; John Humphrey, Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool. Taken from International Labour Reports 8, March/April 1985)

Working for Coca-Cola

Coca-cola is a huge and powerful multinational corporation, whose tentacles reach all over the world. But the workers' movement is also growing in many parts of the world - winning improvements and beginning to challenge the rule of international capitalism.

Guatemala: Coca-cola revisited

Since 1975 workers at the Guatemala City Coca-Cola plant have been fighting for recognition for their union (STEGAC) and to save their jobs after the local company staged its own bankruptcy (see SALB 10.1, Aug-Sept 1984 for background). On February 1st 1985, the STEGAC union, the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) affiliate, representing workers at EGSA bottling plant in Guatemala City, signed an agreement with the new Coca-Cola franchise holders in Guatemala City. The agreement specified that the plant would commence operations by 1st March, guaranteed job security for 265 workers and recall for the remaining 85 workers when job opportunities became available. It also covered a new collective bargaining agreement. The agreement, reached after long and arduous negotiations since November 1984, also guarantees recognition of STEGAC.



The IUF action in support of the STEGAC workers, both in 1984-85 and in the earlier 1979-80 campaign, was the largest ever carried out by the IUF, and indeed by any international trade secretariat. The recent campaign involved 90 IUF affiliates, nearly twice as many as in 1979-80. The involvement of organisations in the Nordic countries was strong in both campaigns, but the IUF's report of the campaign shows a marked increase in and consolidation of solidarity activity at local level.

Another major progress was the increased involvement of North American IUF affiliates. The IUF attributes this to the functioning of the recently-formed IUF North American Regional Organisation, indicating the import-

ance of establishing strong regional structures within the IUF.

The broad base of the 1984-85 campaign, which involved IUF affiliates working in close co-operation with the church, public interest and solidarity groups worldwide, was crucial in mobilising public opinion. At the same time, the IUF recognises in its report that, "the secretariat and affiliates clearly made the error of claiming a victory too early". Even when Coca-Cola management finally met with STEGAC in the presence of the IUF, and signed the agreement on May 27th 1984 in San Jose, Costa Rica, crucial issues were still left uncovered.

One of the lessons of 1979-80 was the need for regular and reliable information to counter company propaganda. This need was largely met by Coca-Cola Information, the regular bulletin produced by the solidarity visits undertaken by the North American affiliates.

The 1984-85 campaign also involved for the first time the use of visual media in order to reach potential supporters more quickly and effectively, through the making of the film, The Real Thing. It provides a graphic demonstration of the value of international solidarity. Part of the income derived from the film will be donated to the IUF to defray the substantial sums it has donated to STEGAC.

During the campaign, the acute financial hardship of the striking workers prompted the donation of almost R150,000 by over 100 organisations and individuals in 18 countries, for food and other basic necessities. The IUF also made a special levy on its members to finance the campaign. Clearly, if campaigns of such scope are to be conducted in the future then the IUF must establish the financial means to cover such unforeseen costs.

As the IUF's report notes, "the closing of EGSA (was) not a closure as experienced in many other cases". Coca-Cola's conduct throughout the dispute constituted a clear attempt to damage the IUF's credibility in its dealings with trans-nationals in all countries. In rising to this challenge, the importance of the IUF's Coca-Cola campaign in Guatemala cannot be overestimated.

(from the IUF's Special Report on Coca-Cola, 30 January 1985)

Coca-Cola in South Africa

CUSA's Food Beverage Workers Union (FBWU) won a significant victory for workers this month when it successfully negotiated an agreement to reduce the number of planned lay-offs at three Coca-Cola plants from 203 to 63 - saving 140 jobs. Coca-Cola announced the first retrenchments in February. It would have affected 104 workers at the Bedfordview and Benrose plants. After FBWU stepped in the number of planned retrenchments was chopped down to 20. The rest of the workers agreed to work on a rolling-leave system: they would go on unpaid leave every sixth week.

But just when FBWU thought it had won the battle, Coca-Cola announced more retrenchments at the beginning of this month - this time 99 workers would have lost their jobs at the Devland branch. However, after negotiations with the company, the number was reduced to 43. Workers were once again prepared to go on rolling leave - work every 20 days and lose two days of their monthly wages - or work for a limited amount of unpaid over-time to save costs (and jobs).

The company also agreed to implement some of FBWU's suggestions to save the jobs of remaining workers:

- * the rolling-leave system;
- * no new employment;
- * no over-time;
- * no casual labour;
- * early retirement; and
- * a limited freeze on the company's expenditure on capital equipment.

FBWU also won an agreement with Coca-Cola that there would not be any further retrenchments this year. This represents an important victory for workers - it shows that workers are no longer at the mercy of the bosses, and that it is possible to protect workers' rights even in the middle of a vicious recession.

(CUSA: Izwilethu May 1985)

Brazil: Union Wins at Sao Paulo Coke Plant

A minimum 2% across-the-board increase, a 10% hike for all workers previously earning under the minimum wages, a 100% cost-of-living increase, an additional quarterly cost-of-living adjustment of 100%, and uniform rates for all jobs on the basis of the highest present level - these were among the benefits achieved by the workers at the Campinas Coca-cola concentration plant (in the state of Sao Paulo) and their union, the Federation of Food Industry Workers, in an agreement signed with management on April 16.

The success came after a nine-day strike by the plant's two hundred workers which completely stopped all operations. The IUF, which supported the union, also expressed its solidarity with the position of the workers at the Brahma plant in Rio de Janeiro where there is a dispute with management over a wage increase and other issues.

Hong Kong: Coca-Cola Workers Win First Contract

In March, the staff union of Swire Bottlers Ltd., a Coca-Cola franchise in Hong Kong, won a 10% pay increase for 1985 with their first labour agreement concluded with management. The contract also provides for an increase in annual leave allowance. However, the union sees these gains as only a beginning and is seeking greater improvements in negotiations to take place later this year.

(IUF News Bulletin No 5-6, 1985)

philippines: 350,000 Workers Celebrate May Day

More than 350,000 workers joined this year's May Day marches and rallies organised by the KMU (Kilusang Mayo Uno - May 1 Movement) in Manila and major provincial centres. In Manila, the press reported, 60,000 workers converged from seven assembly points across the metropolitan area for a rally at Liwasang Bonifacio. They protested against the anti-labour laws of the Marcos dictatorship and the ever-present United States interference in the economic and political life of the Philippines. The march was joined by 100 foreign delegates to an international solidarity conference being held in Ilagan City on the main island of Luzon. Other large marches were reported in the Bataan Export Processing Zone in Central Luzon (20,000), in Bacolod City on the island of Negros (30,000), and Davao on Mindanao (15,000).

The marches and rallies took place despite the denial of march permits, arrests of union activists, and other harassment from the Marcos regime. It was reported that three farmers were murdered by the military on their way to the march in Central Luzon.

Union upsurge

The May Day demonstrations come on the crest of an upsurge in militant union strikes. According to the April 1985 issue of the Filipino Workers' Times, the Philippines Ministry of Labour and Employment released figures showing an all-time record of 282 strikes in 1984, involving twice as many workers as in the previous year. Despite intensifying repression this trend has continued into 1985, the Times reports, with as many as 65 strikes, involving 18,000 workers, in the first 10 weeks of the year. Already, seven striking workers or their supporters had died this year in attacks on picket lines by police and company goons - the latest being killed outside a Manila factory on May 6.

At the centre of the May Day actions, especially on the island of Negros, were the workers of the sugar mills and plantations organised in the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW). The Philippine sugar industry, 60 percent of which is concentrated in the province of Negros Occidental, has been devas-

- Philippines -

tated by the slump in world sugar prices and by domestic consumption. On top of this, opposition politicians charge that Roberto Benedicto, a Marcos supporter who heads the Philippines sugar marketing authority, has been using imported sugar to profiteer and force down sugar prices (and payments to sugar planters) on the domestic market.

Bosses' offensive

The plantation and sugar mill owners are attempting to place the burden of this crisis on the sugar workers, through slashing wages and laying off tens of thousands of plantation and mill workers. The Far Eastern Economic Review reports that, "Most planters now pay their workers on a piece-rate basis to cut costs, so workers get only a third of the otherwise mandatory P32 [R3.00] daily wage for agricultural workers." And the Filipino Workers' Times reports that more than 200,000 sugar workers are expected to be idled for the next six to eight months until the new milling season starts.



photo: Filipino workers celebrate May Day

The plantation owners have also sought to use terrorism to undercut union organisation in the plantations and mills. KMU leader Calito Rallistan gave the example of a National Federation of Sugar Workers organiser who was murdered after he began to organise the union among his co-workers on a plantation on Negros. "He was pinpointed by the plantation's owner. Up to now his head has not been found. He was beheaded. This happened also on a plantation on Mindanao." It is in this context that the sugar workers' federation organised 50,000 sugar workers for a May Day march on Bacolod City, in Negros.

The National Federation of Sugar Workers plays a central role in the KMU on a national level. Its president, Roberto Ortaliz, was elected the new secretary-general of the KMU at the March 9-10, 1985, KMU special congress. He replaced Crispin Beltran, who had been detained by Marcos for more than two years until he escaped and went underground in late 1984. At the congress it was announced that the KMU membership now exceeds 500,000, making it the second-largest trade union federation after the pro-Marcos Trade Union Congress of the Philippines.

Mindanao "people's strike"

On the southern island of Mindanao, where one-third of Marcos' armed forces are deployed against the guerilla fighters of the Moro National Liberation Front and the New People's Army, the May Day action spilled over into a two-day "welgang bayan" (people's strike), according to reports. The strike was in protest against the effects of the economic crisis on working people, and demanding the demilitarisation of Mindanao. It involved industrial and transport strikes, barricades, demonstrations, and a student-teacher boycott, and paralysed all economic activity. The Marcos regime responded to the "welgang bayan" with predictable violence. Two people were killed, 14 arrested, and four injured by army patrols.

(Manila correspondent, May 1985)

Belgium: "Youth for Jobs" Campaign

Throughout Europe - as in the rest of the world - young workers have been particularly hard hit by unemployment. The present capitalist crisis means that millions of young people have never worked and have given up hope of ever getting a job. In Belgium, the unemployed youth have organised in a broad united front campaign called: "Youth for Jobs". The demands put forward by the campaign include: a 32 hour working week without loss of pay in order to create new jobs; an end to second-class, low-paying casual jobs; an end to the daily check on unemployed people and the delay in obtaining unemployment benefits; and other demands on training.

Early organising efforts in 1982 culminated in a demonstration in Brussels of 30,000 young people against unemployment. The demonstration was attacked by the police. Thereafter "Youth for Jobs" was subject to a sustained campaign of vilification by the bourgeois media, and activists and meetings were regularly harrassed by police. As a result a second demonstration was attended by only 15,000. But this does not reflect fully the achievements of "Youth for Jobs" - which sent shockwaves through the political establishment.

The Belgian ruling class was terrified by the success of the 1982 demonstration and its rejection of government austerity measures designed to solve the economic crisis at the expense of workers. "Youth for Jobs" put forward clearly anti-capitalist demands which were accepted by the largest organisation of young workers - Christian Worker Youth (JOC) - which comprises thousands of young militants. This radicalisation threatens the working class base of the main bourgeois party in Belgium - the Christian Democratic Party (CVP/PSC). JOC is affiliated to the Christian Workers Movement which in turn is linked to the Christian Democrats. The "Youth for Jobs" campaign also challenges the conservative leadership of the two big unions (the one led by Social Democrats, the other by Christian Democrats). The campaign has secured support from large numbers of young workers within the old unions. As such the "Youth for Jobs" campaign provides an alternative, at a mass level to policies of class collaboration. It holds out the hope for a joint mobilisation of workers and the unemployed against austerity, unemployment and the capitalist crisis.

Brazil: Half a Million Workers Strike

Brazil has been swept by a massive wave of militant labour strikes since late April, involving some half a million workers, particularly in the heavily industrialised region around Sao Paulo. The strike wave began just as Jose Sarney became Brazil's first civilian president since 1964. One of the Brazilian ruling class's motivations for opting for civilian rule after two decades of military dictatorship was the hope that it would help diffuse the mounting labour and political ferment that the generals were no longer able to contain. By drawing the main bourgeois opposition parties into the government, they also sought to use those parties' political influence to conclude a "social pact" with the unions, in which the workers would restrain their wage demands in the face of austerity policies demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

That has clearly not happened. The workers have downed tools, and in some cases occupied their factories, to fight for higher wages, shorter working hours, and union rights. They are doing so as a continuation of the struggles they originally launched under the former military regime.

Police attacks

By May Day, there were already some 40 different strikes underway in the country. These and later strikes included airline workers, post office employees, teachers, railway workers, electricity workers, metalworkers in Sao Paulo's auto and auto parts plants, and migrant cane cutters on sugar estates in the Sao Paulo region.

Though most such strikes are still illegal under the former military regime's anti-strike legislation, the Sarney government has thus far not invoked those laws. To do so would undercut its claims that it is bringing "democracy" to Brazil. Nevertheless, selective repression has been used against some of the strikes.

Military police personnel have been used to disperse picket lines of striking bus drivers and conductors and to protect scab drivers. This led to clashes with the police and the

arrest of 136 strikers. In late May, police attacked pickets of striking migrant workers in Ribeirao Preto in northern Sao Paulo state, injuring 20 and arresting more than 50. According to union sources, this strike involved some 100,000 sugarcane cutters and orange pickers. In Pitangueiras, police broke up pickets that had blocked the city exits to halt the transport of scabs. The military police anti-riot force also took over all the roads leading to Serrana and attacked any groups of striking migrant workers who resisted.

Metalworkers strike

The most persistent strike has been by some 300,000 metalworkers employed in Sao Paulo's auto and auto parts plants. This sector of the Brazilian working class has been one of the most militant. It launched some of the first major strikes under the military regime in the late 1970s and provided an important impetus for the formation of the Workers Party (PT) and the 1.5-million-member United Workers Federation (CUT), an independent union federation which is committed to defending the interests of the working class.

The metalworkers have been on strike since mid-April, demanding a reduction in the work-week from 48 hours to 40 hours and salary increases every three months instead of twice a year. (This latter demand is in response to Brazil's astronomical inflation rate, which reached 223% in 1984.) The auto companies, however, have resisted these demands.

At a large May Day rally in Sao Paulo, Jair Meneguelli, the president of the CUT and a leader of the metalworkers, stated that these actions and the May Day rally could be the starting point for a general strike this year. Five days later, at a metalworkers assembly involving 10,000 unionists at the Sao Bernardo do Campo stadium, the workers decided to intensify their action by occupying factories. This was followed by occupations of plants by metalworkers in Sao Caetano do Sul.

Some of the strikes have been settled, with modest gains for the workers. The sugar cane workers' strike ended after a week with the signing of a statewide collective agreement affecting some 300,000 cane cutters and related workers. The airline workers, railway workers, and others also went back after winning wage increases. In a nationwide address on the eve of

May Day, President Sarney announced a doubling of the minimum wage. But it is still a meager R120 a month.

Slander campaign

Besides using direct repression against some strikes, the authorities have launched a major smear campaign against the strikers. Government officials and media commentaries have frequently blamed the strikes on "infiltrators" and "agitators" ostensibly seeking to undermine the new "democratic" civilian government. In particular, bourgeois newspapers have accused PT leader, Luis Inacio de Silva, known as "Lula", (who is also a leader of the metalworkers), of seeking to "exploit" the strike for political purposes. Industries and Commerce Minister Roberto Gusmao charged, "The strikes have been fanned. Not only by the PT, but by all the parties with a leftist, and even revolutionary, ideology, who want to use the movement as a platform."

An article in the May issue of Em Tempo, a monthly that supports the PT, responded to Gusmao's accusation: "This is a complete falsification. It is not the PT that is making the strikes. It is the strikes that have made the PT."

Besides Gusmao, there have been other government ministers who have been unhappy with the way the strikes have been handled, arguing for a greater use of repression to bring them to an end. Communications Minister, Antonio Magalhaes, openly called for outlawing of the postal workers strike. That strike was subsequently broken when 28 union leaders were fired and the government moved to hire scabs to replace the strikers.

"Truncheon still works miracles"

In mid-May, General Octavio Medeiros, a former minister and head of Military Intelligence, urged his civilian colleagues to crack down on the strikes, stating that "the truncheon is no saint but it still works miracles."

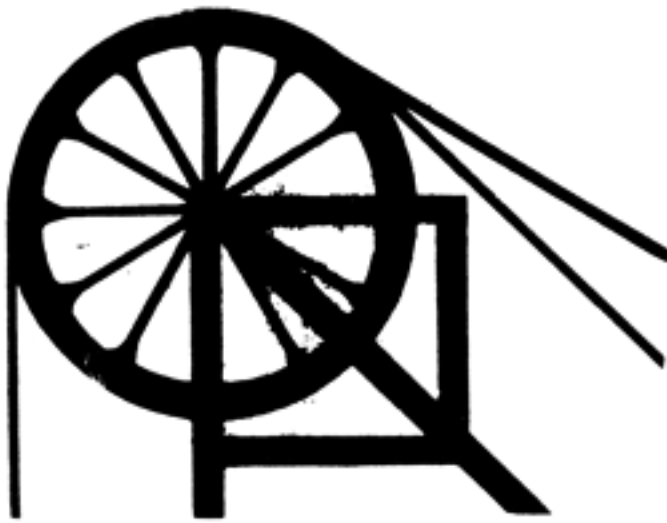
At the same time these strikes have been unfolding, the PT and CUT have continued to demand greater democratic rights, such as the right to strike and direct elections for the president. (Sarney was initially chosen as vice-president by an Electoral College, then became president when Tancredo

Neves, also chosen by the college, died before he was ever sworn in. Sarney and other bourgeois political figures have been stalling on the question of when direct elections for a new president would be held.)

In late April, PT leader Lula called for setting a date for direct elections and full trade union rights, including the right to strike. On May 6, while introducing a one-hour PT programme on a national television and radio network, Lula declared, "We are struggling for a direct balloting system for the election of mayors in the capitals. We are struggling for the convocation of a national constituent assembly." The PT's main concern, he said, centred on social questions: "We are being hit by unemployment and land and housing shortages." The PT, he said, has proposals "on new labour laws, on labour union freedoms and on the right to strike. Without these things, Brazil will not be a democratic country."

(Sao Paulo correspondent, June 1985)

British Miners - A Reply



The miners' strike is over, but its analysts rumble on. And so they should, for it is only by analysing the strike that the appropriate lessons can be drawn from the dispute. Yet in looking at the strike it is important not to mythologise what

took place. Although the strike had the backing of almost all sections of the British labour and trade union movement, this emotional support was not translated into real support. In trying to find out why this was the case we should not try to fool ourselves or others, as Jeremy Krikler attempts to do.

For in his article he concludes that "the conservative bureaucracies of many unions, of the TUC and the Labour Party must bear a great portion of the blame for the miners defeat." This analysis is itself a version of the ritual denunciation that is peddled by the British ultra-left at the end of every

unsuccessful industrial dispute. The normal version goes something like this. The working class are in a militant, pre-revolutionary frame of mind (there is always some apparently good reason for assuming this) and is champing at the bit, only waiting for a lead from the leadership of the labour movement before they leap forward and devour capitalism. Sadly the leadership, either because of its inherently conservative nature, or because it has sold out, is unwilling to give the lead. And so the struggle is not escalated to its natural conclusion (the general strike and the overthrow of capitalism), and ends in defeat and confusion.

This version of events is particularly attractive, since it allows one to continue to assert that the working class is in a militant, pre-revolutionary phase, only waiting...no matter how many defeats it has suffered, or how many reverses it has sustained. No time is ever spent actually analysing what workers actually think or want (since they are by definition revolutionary) and no thought is wasted as to why they continue to be so foolish as to elect a leadership that is bent on betrayal.

After Scargill took what Krikler rightly calls an uncompromising position, and continued to call for escalation, the ultra-left had to seek another scapegoat. So they turned on the leadership of the rest of the labour movement. The problem with this position is that it ignored (and apparently continues to ignore) a number of pertinent facts. For it is far from clear that "the brilliance of the NUM's initial strategy developed it becomes clear that the decision not to hold a national strike ballot was the Achilles heel of the entire dispute.

In saying this one has to remember that the NUM is a federation. Each area is more or less an autonomous unit, with its own history, tradition and elected officials. It is an autonomy that is jealously guarded by every area.

Only by holding a national ballot can the union feel assured that local level decisions will be overturned in favour of a national consensus. So although Yorkshire may have voted for a strike in its area, Nottinghamshire had voted (again on an area basis) not to join the strike. And just as the Yorkshire miners were stubborn in defending their decision, so the

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Nottinghamshire miners backed their position. So when the Yorkshire miners arrived outside the Nottinghamshire pits, and put pickets across their gates, it was a direct challenge to the autonomy of the area, and the democratic process within Nottinghamshire area NUM. The result was a split in the union, with each side feeling that it was the aggrieved party. The situation then escalated with larger and larger pickets attempting to stop the Nottinghamshire miners from getting to work. So far from being "brilliant", the strategy split the union.

With an increasingly bitter split within the NUM it is hardly surprising that the rest of the labour movement was less than enthusiastic to be drawn into the dispute. Even when the union leaders called for support for the strike they were on the whole unable to convince their members that they should do more than pass resolutions or give money to those miners out on strike. Support was therefore fatally flawed. Calls from union leaders were repeatedly ignored, with some notable exceptions, such as the railwaymen. It was the refusal of the truck drivers to heed the call from the leadership of the Transport and General Workers Union, not to take coal into the power stations, that broke the stranglehold on the power supplies that industry depended on. Without this rank and file support the strike, although heroic, was doomed.

It is this reality that the ultra-left refuse to face. Instead they invent traitors. The Labour Party leader, Neil Kinnock is singled out for particularly venomous attacks. Krikler argues that Kinnock opposed the strike from its inception and left the miners politically isolated. This is simply not true. Kinnock used every opportunity to argue the case for coal, and did his best to oppose the government in its attempt to use the full might of the state against the miners. He did, it is true, condemn the use of violence against working miners, but anyone who thinks that violence is a good substitute for argument and debate knows little of the long tradition of democratic decision-making in the British labour movement. It is this tradition that is the only sound foundation upon which the labour movement can rebuild itself, after what has been a shattering defeat.

(Mike Hale, London, June 1985)

INTERVIEW: Culture and the Workers' Struggle

The SALB interviewed members of the Durban FOSATU Local Cultural Group about their work. Present were Qabula, Ari, Nisa, Matiwane and Hlatshwayo. We began with a history of the Group and the main projects which they have undertaken.

Cultural Group: In the early days of the union at Dunlop Ari said we can make a play. The Dunlop Workers' Stage Play dealt with the way the management was treating us. It was about how MAWU [Metal and Allied Workers Union] organised. It told the story of the old Durban Rubber Union which had been there for whites and "coloureds". Africans were not allowed to join. When MAWU came, then the Rubber Union said the Africans could join.

There was argument. Workers were divided into 2 groups. Some joined the boss's sweetheart union. Others said, where does it come from? It was there since 1947 but we were not allowed to join it.

The play starts with a Bekazela party - a retirement party organised by management. After persevering for 25 years you get a watch, some tripe and beer - 1 dumpy each and you are told not to get drunk; also 1 piece of cake to take home to the "piccanins". This was the entry point: an old man remembers his days with Dunlop.

This was a "hot" time, with canteen boycotts and strikes. Some 15 workers - mostly shop stewards - were involved. The play was first shown at the 1983 MAWU AGM and was then circulated. Some continued with the cultural work and we were joined by Nisa. Some started doing their own writing: Qabula, Nisa, and in this we were encouraged by FOSATU.

In 1983 workers from Frame in the Pinetown Local - together with some MAWU members - workshopped a play called Koze Kophe Nini (How long will we suffer?) written by Phumzile Mabele.

Why Lord?

In early 1984 we produced a play called "Why Lord?" with

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people from Dunlop, and Nisa and Jabu from Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union. The play was done on a workshop basis. Why Lord? deals with the life of a migrant worker: the difficulties in getting accommodation and jobs; during the drought with nothing to plough and cattle dying. The man is forced to seek work in Durban, although his wife opposes this. He sends back letters - but they do not reach her. After 10 years she sets out to look for him. Her husband is working 6 to 6 at night as a security guard. The wife gets a day job at Frame working long hours. So even though they now live in the same place, they still never see each other.

The husband gets involved with another woman who was a friend of the wife. But even though they discuss their men they do not know it is the same man. The wife always uses his full Xhosa name, whilst the other uses the shortened version he adopted in town (because Xhosa names are difficult to pronounce). Also because of the working hours they never see each other together.

The wife is also having problems with the rent - because she receives peanuts at Frame. She becomes involved with the landlord who wants to marry her. Finally a wedding feast is arranged.

At the same time the husband decides to give up his job in order to deal with the problem of never seeing his wife. He arrives at the wedding feast. There is silence. The landlord and the other woman break the silence. The migrant worker and wife attack each other at first. But when they talk they see that such things are caused "when things are evil around you". It is the system which causes families to break up.

The play was first performed to Dunlop strikers in September-October last year and at the Jacobs Local. Also in 1984 Qabula was giving oral performances from Secunda to Richards Bay, and at the FOSATU Education Workshop. (see SALB 9.8)

The Dunlop strike of 1984 unleashed new energies for stage performance. In the early days only shop stewards were involved. Now other workers came forward. Some had township drama experience. Four had taken part in Gibson Kente's Zulu version of Macbeth in the 1970s. Some had even toured overseas. But that kind of work has no security so they were

working at Dunlop. They helped us develop the technical side of our performance. They had some experience of mime. During the strike we did some mask and mimes. To start with our work was linked to the strike. But we also started work on another play dealing with relations between workers and the boss.

May Day

In 1985 the expanded group met to plan. The first focus was May Day. Also poems were beginning to accumulate. As well as Qabula, Mi Hlatshwayo of Dunlop Sports had come to the fore during the strike. His work includes "Black Mamba Rising". He was also working with youth groups in Claremont.

For May Day four plays were planned: Why Lord?; a play with Frame workers which Qabula was working on; Usuku (The Day) by Mi; and a play with Port Natal Administration women workers who Nisa was working with. She had met these workers through the FOSATU complaints service. Their conditions and wages were very bad.

On May Day other events included gumboot dancing by school children, directed by Siphso. It is important to feed the children into the trade union network. They first performed for the Dunlop AGM.

There was also a play by CCAWUSA members about their struggle against Spar. It dealt with attempts to mobilise support amongst traders - who said "Yes brother" - and then you caught them in town loading up from Spar.

Also by this time cultural work was beginning in the Pietermaritzburg Local. Some factories have choirs - like Prestige - and plays are starting. In 1984 Mooi River NUTW branch produced a play. In 1984 TGWU members began work on a play. A bus driver had knocked over a white woman. The Director of the company said: "If that was my wife, I would shoot you!". Also there are a lot of musicians coming through.

Qabula's play about the countryside

Its title means "If you don't want to listen, you'll learn when the blood comes" (or loosely "once bitten, twice shy"). It deals with parent-child relations and "morality" in a mig-

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rant labour environment where parents lose their moral standards and children become anti-social. The play is about a young girl who wants her independence - to leave home for the urban areas in order to earn money for herself. She plays off her mother against her father to get their permission. She threatens her mother that she will run off unless she gets her father to agree. This leads to a fight between her parents. The mother steals her husband's money so that the child can leave for the town.

Once in the urban areas she is stranded. An old woman offers her a room for which she must pay. She uses her money for this and does not find a job. She falls in love with a Tsotsi - who buys her presents when he wins at gambling. He makes her pregnant and then disappears. When he returns he tells her he has many children and girlfriends.

She loses her room. She is desperate - going mad - when she is recognised by a homeboy who tells the family. When she returns home she learns that her mother killed her father because of her. Shortly after her return her mother also dies. The play ends as the girl marries the boyfriend who she left to go to the town - but it is not a happy resolution.

Usuku (The Day)

The play begins as workers are concluding a meeting. They have decided on "the day" and not even death will come in their way. The boss hears of this and wants to know what this is and when it is to happen. He tries to bribe workers. He tries to put pressure on one older worker who has been helped in the past by the firm. Their daughter is at college and ill, and needs money for an operation. This is a lever for the boss who offers R3,000 if the worker will tell the secrets of "the day". The old worker puts this to his fellow workers. They say no, and hold a collection - but only raise R200. The worker is torn between the struggle and his family. The child dies.

His wife - an educated woman - blames the workers. The funeral is a lower class, Zionist affair - and she refuses to be involved. At the service a letter arrives, via friends, from the daughter. She talks of her pride for her father's stand against the boss and the need for unity in the workers'

struggle. The point is made that the struggle also involves sacrifice.

As the play draws to an end the boss speaks to the old worker. He says, "let us be friends. I behaved like an animal." But despite his remorse he adds, "I behaved like any other employer in my place would - and I still want that day." The worker refuses: "That day belongs to the workers."

There was no time to perform Usuku on May Day. The play was performed later at the Natal Transport and General Workers Union AGM.

Women street cleaners play

During this time Nisa was working with a group of amapondo women street cleaners from the Transkei. They live in Kwa Mashu and work for Kwa Zulu under the Port Natal Administration. Their contracts specify R52 per month for 20.83 hours work. But in fact they work 7.00 am to 2.00 pm each day. In April they receive a small increase to R65 per month. The workers met with Nisa in the afternoons for work on the play.

As a small group of amapondo they are rejected by many in the township as outsiders. The play says we are also human beings - and are exploited like you: poor wages, no workmans compensation; no sick leave. These workers are so poor they live a life similar to that in the rural areas.

SALB: How important is cultural work? Why are you involved in the area?

Cultural Group: This question must be asked to people who have been exposed to the work we do. For us it has been important in three ways: (a) it takes a step, a small step towards pushing workers to start controlling their creative power. So far this power has been used by everybody in power and with money, for their own purposes. Brother Mi Hlatshwayo will be talking about this at the July workshop: how we have been culturally exploited and impoverished; (b) it creates a better sense of unity amongst workers: poems, songs, plays etc. and the struggle to make them available to our brothers and sisters, enriches us. We are not united because of need

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or hunger alone; (c) it educates people about our struggle and puts across a true picture of things - our picture. You see we are involved in this, however hard it is for us after work, because we believe that our struggle is not only there to destroy the oppressive powers that control us. It is there to also build a new world. To do this, we must begin now.

SALB: What is the future direction of cultural work to be?

Cultural Group: We cannot predict the direction it will follow. But we would like to see some developments like: (a) the work must be deepened, for the workers to gain more skills in the factory, and at the local and community levels. This is a lot of work for us to do so the work can happen smoothly; (b) we must think seriously of the correct spaces and venues for it to happen; (c) more care should be spent in making the work reflect our moral vision - for example, it should be democratic, it should attack division on lines of colour and rank, it should actively encourage women to come to the fore, it should communicate better...

SALB: Are there any organisational gains from cultural work?

Cultural Group: On this you must ask the Dunlop or the Frame shop stewards. If it awakens the need for unity and the need for justice; if it educates correctly, then it is a help to organisation.

SALB: Do you see your work as having a specifically working class character? How does this contribute to, or conflict with the wider tradition of black cultural resistance and protest?

Cultural Group: There are very strong cultural traditions: we are schooled in them from childhood. But 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. They speak a language we don't understand. Our task is to take our rich or poor heritage and make it satisfy working people, their families and any other suffering people in South Africa.

SALB: What are the implications of a move from "performance" to written work? Will this make your work less immediately accessible to a broad audience?

Cultural Group: It is not true that our work is mainly becoming pieces of paper. No, there are a small number of us who also write. But there are hundreds performing. At this stage, for every black worker who picks up a pencil and forgets about the bottle, there's a victory. But most of the work is for performance in any place where people and workers meet.

SALB: How does management view these plays - where they are often the subject of attack or ridicule?

Cultural Group: Management has not seen much of the work. There were some tensions about the Dunlop Play. But overall some of them are irritated because they hear they are ridiculed.

SALB: Thus far the plays have clearly acted to reinforce the work of the unions. No union can be perfect - can plays also have a critical role - highlighting problems in order to discuss, and improve the working of the union? Perhaps to confront areas of division or potential division?

cultural Group: Criticism is what happens everyday between workers and shop stewards, shop stewards and trade union officials. Cultural workers as well are involved in criticising conditions - it cannot be otherwise. Either you tell the truth or you might as well become laughable. The difference is that we don't criticise in order to divide workers but rather to do the opposite: to strengthen the unity of workers, and make the leadership accountable to us. The imbongi's role remember was always to praise and criticise.

SALB: Are you aware of the articles written on working class culture in the SALB? What do you feel about them?

Cultural Group: Yes, some of it. The culture issue made us

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think a bit. There are two criticisms: (a) None of the people we know, like in music, was discussed. Also the exploitation of black and worker creators was not discussed. (b) There was no challenge to the work we do so we can sit down and think carefully about mistakes. But overall it was OK because our friends and families now can see as well that we are serious. (laughter)

SALB: How far has this cultural work been taken up by other workers and become generalised?

Cultural Group: A lot of cultural activity is just taking off spontaneously. People see things happening and want to do things themselves. At every union AGM another group springs up. Now we need to give coherence to all this energy. This is not just entertainment, it is a weapon. We have to work collectively, but also allow space for individuals to develop. So with the plays - some have been written by one person - others have been workshopped by all the participants. There has been more emphasis on individual writing recently - as we see in the pages of FOSATU Worker News.

The cultural work is important in breaking down barriers between different unions and groups of workers - and also between workers and their families; and between the factory and the community. Much of the recent work shows a concern with these broader social issues.

For Music Action – Call the “K Team”

They came, they saw and they sang. You may not have heard of them but they are the latest music sensation in the labour movement – the Kelloggs Choir – known affectionately as the "K Team". Originally formed in early 1983 by Agrippa Xaba and his 3 brothers, the group declined, but was recently revived in January this year. All the 11 members hail from rural Natal near the village of Kwaceza and have developed the distinctive traditional music style of "Scathamiya" and includes a repertoire of song and dance. All the items are composed and choreographed by Agrippa. The majority of the members are former Kelloggs employees but are now unemployed. All reside in a Kwa Thema hostel in Springs and regularly get together to compose songs and rehearse.

Songs which have been very popular deal with Chris Dlamini's detention, the SASOL dismissals, the death of Andries Raditsela and the importance of a trade union. Their first smash hit was a praise song to FOSATU. The chorus line goes:

FOSATU is a federation which represents the people.

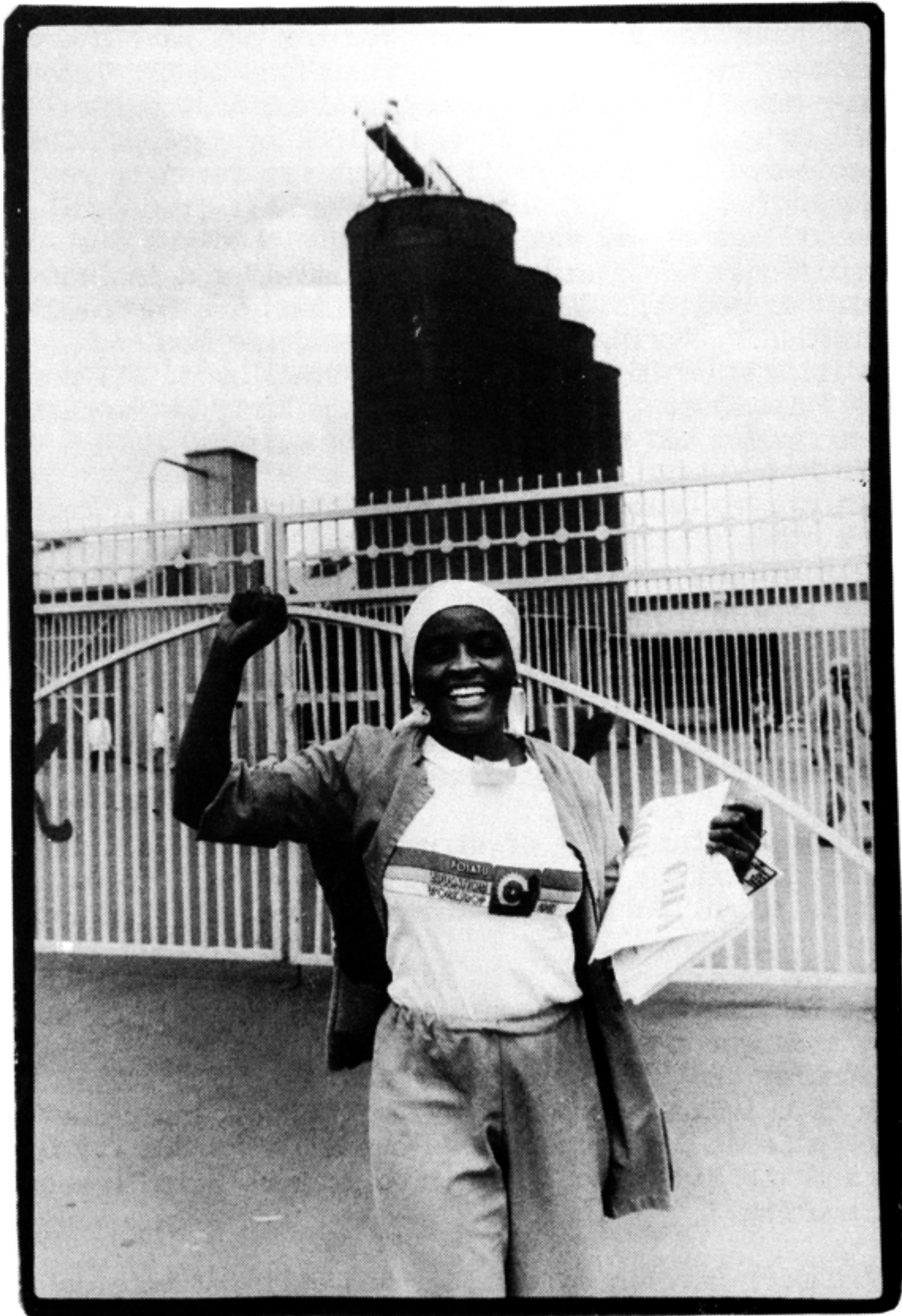
FOSATU is an organisation the workers must belong to.

David Mashele, manager of the K Team, in an exclusive interview, explained that they only sang in Zulu mainly because of the origins of the group:

Our songs are basically of struggle, or as we call it "Soyibanda Insimbi Ishisu" which means we will go on even if it is tough. We'll grasp the iron even if it is hot.

Although the choir desires self sufficiency it is extremely difficult because 8 of them are unemployed. Mashele says there is a danger that they would disband because of financial pressures and because workers need jobs. The K Team received a R900 travel sponsorship from Kelloggs management and have sung at such big worker occasions as the SASOL May Day meeting and the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union's annual general meeting.

Workers' choirs have added vitality and cultural impetus to the workers' movements. Don't miss the K Team. They will be performing live, together with other choirs and cultural groups at the FOSATU education workshop.



Organising Women Workers in South Africa

Adrienne Bird*

Outside of domestic service and agriculture, black women workers have been conspicuous by their absence. Except for a few isolated pockets, women hardly entered the sphere of wage labour at all until recently. In 1946, African women accounted for only 1,8% of all production workers in South Africa. In 1960 it had increased to 6,2% (quoted by J Yawitch, SALB 9.3, p87). In February 1982 the figure stood at 12,8%. Bozzoli has explored the possible reasons why black women entered the labour market relatively late (Journal of Southern African Studies 9.2, April 1983, p140). This paper will not focus on these historical issues, but rather looks at where women are employed in industry at present, the problems they experience there - and the challenges this presents to the emerging independent trade union movement.

The situation women find themselves in

Up until very recently there was no attempt by unions to pull together their growing experience of organising women workers into a separate debate. This is partly because women constituted such a minority, partly a pragmatic question of resources and partly because women have not, until recently, begun to see themselves as a separate sub-grouping in any real sense. All these things are now changing. But perhaps these comments beg the question: why are women a distinct constituency in the working class as a whole? The answer lies in the particular problems which face women. Perhaps an example can best illustrate this.

The following factory was recently organised by the FOSATU affiliate, Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union. I spoke to the women who had been fired for union membership. The factory processes and packages sweets and chocolates. It employs 129 workers of whom around 90 are women. Men and women

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do the same or similar jobs but do not get the same pay. The women earn between R22 and R33 a week. The men earn R49 to R52 a week. Over time there has been a tendency to replace men by women - to reduce labour costs. One young woman packer, earning R22 a week after 4 years, asked her employer for an increase - she was told that if she needs money she must go and sleep with men in the nearby hostel! This same woman is the sole supporter of herself, her young daughter and sick mother. She pays R80,86 for rent, water and an electricity scheme called "master plan" which as yet has not produced any electricity. Only by a stockvel arrangement with four friends at the factory, and by borrowing, is she able to meet her basic bills.

In January 1984 the workers were given individual increases - most women got R2 while the men got R6 to R8. On weekdays workers work from 7.15 am to 5 pm with 15 minutes tea-break in the morning and a 45 minute lunch break. On Saturdays they have to work overtime from 8 am until 4 pm with only a 30 minute lunch break. For Saturday working women get R6 and the men get R8 to R10. Workers are fined R10 if they fail to work this overtime once, R15 the second time and so on. But it is not only as regards basic wages that the women are worse off than the men. The boss imposes R2 fines on any woman found talking, even if she is working at the same time. Men are not fined in this way. Women, not men, are made to sign a register when they go to the toilet.

As if this is not bad enough, women are continually sexually harrassed by the management - verbally, by the use of words such as "bitch" and "cow", and physically; management seems to feel completely free to touch their breasts and their crotches at any time. One particular woman was hired on the understanding that she would sleep with the boss at R15 a time. However when he tried to implement the agreement she flatly refused. He sulked for weeks afterwards, and now she is one of the workers who has not been re-employed. The factory fired all its workers when the union asked for recognition. It has selectively re-hired some of the workers - union activists were not re-employed. With such a catalogue of discrimination, it is very difficult to know where to start. And it must be appreciated that the union is in a very weak position even though it has nearly 100% membership, particularly because the factory is small and the workers unskilled. It is

very easy for replacements to be found. This example may seem extreme, but it is only a matter of degree. All over, but particularly in the textile and food industries where the proportion of women is high, such practices are common.

Where women work

Before looking more closely at the problems, and at the strategies unions have adopted to challenge them, it is first necessary to clarify exactly where black women do work in South Africa. Table 1 below highlights the growth of women's involvement in manufacturing, commerce and the service sector since 1970.

Table 1: African Women Workers by Industry Divisions, 1970-81

	1970	1981	% change
Agriculture	43,9%	16,6%	- 27,3%
Mining	0,1%	0,4%	+ 0,3%
Manufacturing	3,5%	10,7%	+ 7,2%
Commerce	2,6%	15,0%	+ 12,4%
Services	38,0%	54,4%	+ 16,4%

(Negligible % in Electricity, Construction, Transport)

SOURCE: South African Statistics, Central Statistical Services, Pretoria, 1982

Table 2 below is a closer breakdown of the industrial sectors in which black (African, "coloured" and Indian) women are employed. As can be seen by far the majority are trapped in traditionally non-union areas of work, domestic labour in particular. However, from a trade union point of view, those in production present an immediate challenge. They can exercise collective bargaining power against employers, are not isolated and powerless in the way domestic workers are.

Over the period 1973 to 1983, wages for labourers rose in real terms. Employers did not accept these higher costs without resistance. This was also a period - in the first part at least - of economic growth necessitating increased employment. Instead of taking on more men, Debbie Budlender in her

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Table 2: African Women Workers by Industry, 1981

Industries where more than 5,000 women work	Total number	% of black employees in the industry
Total community, social and personal services	889,920	59%
Domestic services	685,060	83%
Agriculture	289,280	25%
Wholesale and retail	183,840	39%
Wearing apparel, not shoes	91,360	74%
Schools, (primary & secondary)	69,340	51%
In-patient institutions	63,340	66%
Catering	31,200	60%
Accommodations services	30,400	44%
Public administration	21,220	7%
Spinning, weaving & finishing	16,180	45%
Canning fruits and vegetables	11,760	51%
Textiles	11,180	42%
Motor trade, accessories & repairs	10,380	11%
Made up textile goods	10,060	57%
Footwear	9,280	40%
Slaughtering & preparing meat	8,400	32%
Knitting mills	7,900	63%
Laundries	7,460	46%
Banks & building societies	7,400	42%
Welfare organisations	7,380	69%
Sawmills	6,540	36%

SOURCE: South African Statistics, Central Statistics Services, 1982

1984 paper to the Carnegie Conference notes that women were employed in greater numbers. According to the biennial Manpower Survey of the Department of Manpower, the employment of African, "coloured" and Asian female labourers increased by 10,2% between 1973 and 1983; male labourers fell by 4,2%.

Women and the independent, emerging trade unions

A great deal of debate about the relationship between women workers and the trade unions has taken place in countries

like Britain. And what literature is available comes from the same source. However it is not possible to simply import the debate wholesale. The trade unions into which women workers are now being recruited in South Africa are militant industrial unions - very different from the hostile craft-dominated trade union movement in Britain. The black male workers in these South African unions suffer similar hardships of low pay and poor working conditions as the black women. The vast majority of black men are unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Some of the demands that British women trade unionists are making, such as more equal training and promotion opportunities for women workers and less discriminatory recruitment practices are not even on the negotiating table for black male or female workers in South Africa. Firms still legally advertise for "coloured women workers" or "African men" - this is illegal in Britain. Similarly positive action to encourage more girls in the schools to take the sciences to help them qualify for apprenticeship is not on the agenda given the discriminatory nature of black education in general. However as the following discussion hopes to show, women are at the bottom of the pile here as elsewhere. So, with the South African situation, the question still arises as to whether or not the new unions have been able to effectively challenge the ultra-exploitation of women workers.

Low pay

The first question to consider is that of low pay. According to a 1980 United Nations report, women put in two-thirds of all the hours worked in the world but receive only one tenth of the world's income. In South Africa it is certainly true that women, black women in particular, are clustered in the very low income brackets. (see A Bird, "Organising women in South Africa", ASSA Conference, 1984, graph 1.) It is also true that the 1984 Basic Conditions of Employment Act makes it illegal to set separate wage rates for women, nevertheless, as we have seen from the pattern of female employment, this is unlikely to make any substantial difference to the income of black women in general - as most women are segregated into so-called "womens' jobs".

The question here is - where unions exist and have been strong enough to negotiate wages, has their strategy advantaged or disadvantaged the very low paid grades where women

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tend to be employed? For FOSATU unions, the answer is very clearly positive. Unlike many unions in Britain, where a great deal of weight has been given to the "Family Wage" (where male wages meet family needs and female wages are extra argument) and to negotiate for percentage rather than flat rate increases - FOSATU has actively resisted this tendency. In an early resolution this was made clear:

FOSATU believes that management has attempted to justify the system of wage exploitation by the use of so-called scientific surveys of an adequate wage to support the needs of black workers and their families... FOSATU does not accept concepts such as the Poverty Datum Line (PDL) or the Minimum Effective Level (MEL) where these have been worked out without consultation with organised workers and are based on some abstract formula on what workers need to live. These scientific surveys are normally inaccurate because they talk about a non-existent family of five, something which few African workers know about... FOSATU demands that employers now start paying workers a living wage as a combination of two factors:

1. What workers themselves decide they require to live on,
2. What workers are able to get from their managements... based on the Company's ability to pay, its profits and the ability of the union to get higher wages.

FOSATU believes that an acceptable minimum wage level is R2 per hour. (1981; as from 1984 the target was R3.50)

This policy clearly backs up all groups of workers trapped in low-paying wage grades. To take an example from 1984 Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union negotiations with Simba Quix - the factory had 500 workers of whom the vast majority are women in the lowest grades. Using the living wage argument the union was able to increase minimum rates from R40 to R85 per week. Another example can be taken from National Automobile and Allied Workers Union negotiations with a motor components factory where women machinists sew and trim seat covers for cars. The minimum rate was increased from R1.31 to R1.80 per hour in addition to which the number of grades was reduced from 11 to 5. Such a reduction in the number of grades helps the low paid in that the differential between the lowest and the highest paid tends to be reduced. The biggest FOSATU union, Metal and Allied Workers Union, has recognised this principle but has not succeeded in negotiating any reduction because of strong, organised employer re-

sistance, particularly in the industrial council and because an industry-wide negotiated grading system operates which doesn't exist in the motor industry. Employers tend to believe that more grades and wage differentials help production because they provide incentives for workers to work harder and get more training. However many workers dismiss this argument in favour of giving the biggest increases to the lowest paid - in appreciation of need not greed.

Where the "living wage" target could not be reached unions have at least tried to negotiate for flat-rate increases for everyone rather than percentage increases because the latter tend to increase the division between the low and high grades.

The broad policy then is highly advantageous to women in low paying jobs. There is, however, one clause which is potentially discriminatory in the living wage resolution:

FOSATU demands that remuneration and benefits should be linked to long service with the company.

This is a well tried and tested trade union principle, but it fails to recognise that women are seldom likely to accrue the same length of service as a man, because of time spent having children - and the termination of service this frequently brings. This is an example where blindness to the differences between men and women workers can lead to inadvertent discrimination. Where a woman returns to the same company after giving birth, clearly the solution is for her service to be regarded as unbroken, or at least cumulative if not continuous, and a clause to be inserted into the agreement to this effect. Where the woman is forced to find a new job after confinement the problem is very much more difficult to solve. Good maternity agreements are important here.

Unequal pay

Fighting for the "rate for the job" to do away with unequal wages being given to men and women is apparently straight forward. It has long been an accepted negotiating principle within FOSATU. However, the problem is more complex than would first appear as the following example shows. At SA Fabrics, a textile factory in Durban, management started in 1980 recruiting women for jobs at less than half the rate that they were paying the men. In February 1981 there was a

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3 day strike over the issue. In the end the case was taken to arbitration. As a shop steward at the factory put it: "The finding became very sweet to the union, and very sour to the company... the company was ordered to close the wage gap between male and female workers. Thereafter the company became so hostile to the workers that they started retrenchments. In those retrenchments most of the workers were women. The company has now only two female workers left from those who were employed during the big rush. One of those workers has been saved because she is making tea for the bosses. The other one is just there by sheer good luck".

In this example the union had not yet won a retrenchment procedure agreement to control the pattern of dismissals, but had the union had its way, it would have used the LIFO ("last in, first out") principle which would still have meant that women went first. There is a difficult problem here which has been highlighted time and again within the textile industry - in particular with the Frame group - that if women demand equal wages then employers will replace the women either by men or machines.

Winning the "rate for the job" is difficult enough. There are many examples where unions have been battling for years to reduce the pay differential between men and women doing the same job. Some of these struggles have been successful. The Chemical Workers Industrial Union managed to win equal pay for Grade 4 machine operators at a General Tyres subsidiary. Before the negotiations women were getting R49 while men got R65 a week. The union won R65 for all machine operators. However these same negotiations highlight a second aspect of the problem of unequal pay. The least skilled workers in the same factory are in Grade 1. The women are trimmers and earn R44 per week. The men are labourers and earn R60 per week. The union tried to argue that the same pay should be given to all Grade 1 workers, but the management said that it would replace the women by machines if the claim was pressed. Total job segregation of women into specific grades, which are in turn rated low and paid accordingly, is an extremely common problem for women workers. Putting women into "light industrial work" and men into "heavy industrial" was ground for Smith and Nephew to pay women 30% less than the men. The labels themselves become part of the justification for lower pay. But why should it be women who

do these jobs? It transpires that women have special qualities - "their nimble fingers" for example enable them to sort rotting rags into colour bins in the textile industry or "their creativity" which enables them to stick flower transfers onto enamel pots day in and day out. If these qualities are so admired, why are women so often the lowest paid! This difficult battle has yet to be won both here and in other countries. Job segregation is extremely common in England - with the same consequences of low pay ghettos.

Overtime

The law has recently been changed in South Africa, lifting the limitations previously placed on women doing overtime. Women are now legally entitled to do the same overtime as men. This has not changed discriminatory practices on the part of employers, however. In particular, managements often recruit men rather than women arguing that men are more willing to work overtime. This happens particularly when women and men are both earning the same rate. An example of this was experienced by MAWU at Krost. During 1983 many women assembly workers were retrenched. After business started to pick up again around Christmas, more overtime was temporarily worked. The union argued that the original women workers should be taken back and less overtime worked. They were partially successful - many women were re-employed. However, many of the jobs were filled by men, because it was said they could work overtime.

At a SFAWU company 6 women were fired. When they queried their dismissal they were told they were doing "men's work" (taking intestines out of animals killed at the company's abattoir) and that the company had no facilities for women - no separate change rooms or toilets. This seemed a strange argument given that the women had been specifically employed to do this work in the first place. It seems that the real reason was that women were only prepared to work until 6 pm while men frequently worked after 8 at night.

Problems around overtime clearly highlight women's dual role as homemakers and as paid workers and also highlight women's subordination. It is taken as a god-given fact of life that they are the ones who must carry the domestic responsibilities of childcare and therefore that they are the

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ones who must limit the time they spend on paid work.

The fear of sexual or other forms of violent assault late at night further underlines women's relative powerlessness in fighting questions of overtime. A union policy of banning all overtime working would best suit the needs of women workers, but this is not possible while workers in general need to work overtime in order to earn enough money to live on. Once the struggle for a living basic wage is won, the overtime battles have a better chance of success.

In recognition of the fact that women experience particular problems regarding overtime and night shift working the National Union of Textile Workers has tried to retain, through plant-level negotiations, protective provisions for women. Until the recent law change, women covered by the knitting industrial council were protected from doing any compulsory overtime. Night shift work was also voluntary. With the change in legislation, these protective clauses have had to be removed. The NUTW, which sits on the industrial council, tried to argue that protection did not constitute discrimination, but as they discovered this interpretation is not recognised in law anywhere in the world. So they took the battle back to the factory where they argued that women's conditions of employment could not be changed, "midstream". Management conceded the point for old employees but said new women employees would be expected to do compulsory overtime like the men. The union's reply was that you can't have women in the same plant employed under different conditions, because the effect would be to force all women to do compulsory overtime. The general question about protective provision remains. Protective clauses are potentially double-edged swords. They can be used as grounds for excluding women from certain (often higher paid) jobs. The question of whether they are in women's long term interests is debatable. But clearly unions need to continue fighting for improved hours of working for all workers - and here there is no substitute for organisation.

MAWU and NAAWU are presently arguing for a reduction in the length of the working week to 40 hours in wage negotiations. This would advantage women - but the employer opposition is very strong indeed at the moment.

Job security and retrenchment

Over the last 3-4 years retrenchment has been the number one issue facing many unionists. As the recession has eaten away markets, more and more companies have been cutting back on production or cutting costs and hence laying off workers. Some smaller companies have gone out of business altogether, while others have been taken over by the giant monopolies that control South Africa's economy. This is a traditionally difficult time for trade unions to win anything. Unionists are forced to negotiate at best short-time working and job sharing, and at worst, who goes, not if anyone goes. The LIFO ("last in, first out") principle has been widely used to protect older workers with long service who might otherwise be in danger of being out with no recognition of the service given to the company. But as has already been noted, agreements based on length of service can discriminate against women. However the situation is not simple. Many companies apply LIFO department by department. So if predominately women, or women only, work in the assembly department of a metal factory then management applies LIFO amongst those women. But where there are mixed departments, then women may suffer. A compounding factor is that many women do unskilled jobs where finding replacements when work picks up is no problem, particularly in the current climate of unemployment. "Women's jobs" are hence likely to be the first to go.

Maternity rights need to be considered here. Without job protection, women can find that maternity leave becomes retrenchment. As one woman put it "when management sees you are pregnant, you just get fired that day".) The Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa maternity agreement with Metro (SALB 10.5) illustrates what is possible, where women are a significant force in the industry. But there is still a long way to go in the battle for job security after maternity leave. Getting pay for women whilst on leave is even more difficult. Employers seem to be fiercely opposed to setting any precedent on this question. Although strangely at Kelloggs, a SFAWU company, the workers get a third of their normal pay - but without any guarantee they'll get their jobs back. As with the example given at the beginning, it seems that most women tended to get their jobs back when times were good (although many did not get the same pay - one woman in Pretoria earned R23 a week before

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maternity, and afterwards was told to be grateful for a job at R17 a week). However during recession it has been much more difficult for women to regain their jobs after maternity. In general it is probably true that maternity has now become an important negotiating issue.

Health

There are health hazards that only women suffer from, and others which both men and women suffer, but because there are more women in the particular job which causes the problem, we see more women suffering. A problem which only women suffer from is that of spontaneous abortions; or the birth of handicapped children. This can be caused by a number of things - carrying heavy articles for example. At a SFAWU factory some women complained that the loads of salt they had to push on trolleys were too heavy - they were told that if they couldn't cope men would be employed in their place - they had to accept the loads. There is another problem that many women in the food industry suffer from, that is working in extremely cold refrigerated spaces, without adequate protective clothing. Gangrene easily develops in situations like this. Then there is the problem of night shifts where women work all night and then have to go home to take care of the house. They end up sleeping very very little. Stress-related diseases are very common amongst night workers.

Problems can occur with medical aid schemes as well. An interesting case was recently taken up by the motor union, NAAWU. A company wanted to exclude pregnancy and VD from the company medical aid scheme. The union opposed. The medical aid scheme, MCG, to which most FOSATU employees belong specifically excludes contraception. This is discriminatory because women invariably have to take responsibility for this.

In general then, it is clear that women trade unionists need to be continually vigilant to see where gains can be won from employers, that their interests are not overlooked by default - for example on long service clauses, or on questions of contraception etc. Perhaps watchdog committees need to be established in the union structures to perform this function?

Sexual harassment

In the British TUC book on women workers sexual harassment is defined as "any verbal or physical approach, including jokes and innuendoes, right up to actual assault, that's unwanted, that makes a woman feel uncomfortable, is continual and affects her work". Apparently when this was told to a young English hairdresser, she said, "Oh that, that goes on here all the time". And unfortunately the same can be said of South Africa: "it goes on here all the time". The example from the sweet and chocolate factory cited at the beginning underlines the point. Sexual harassment is a trade union issue, but it is often difficult to win. At the end of 1983, however, members of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union at a Dunlop factory gave us an example of how it could be tackled. The workers all knew that the training officer was demanding sex from women he employed. The women felt powerless because they needed the jobs.

So the shop stewards decided to lay a trap for him. (SALB 10.8: for an account of the struggle given by Andries Raditsela) When the security workers next saw him entering the training centre with a woman they were to tell a shop steward who in turn would summon top management. This was duly done, and the training manager was caught "with his pants down" (literally) and fired on the spot, the woman was not even disciplined. For subtler forms of harassment perhaps women workers need to devise methods of ganging up on men with "roving fingers".

Trade union women at home

At a talk on women workers organised by FOSATU as part of its Education Workshop, Lydia Kompe described the constraints that women workers and trade union activists operated under - constraints directly related to their position in the household, and particular, related to the expectations placed on them by men. She damned the independent trade unions saying: "Women have shown commitment in the trade unions, they have shown bravery. They have been active in the shop stewards' committees. We have got unions where the majority of members are women. But why have we not seen a woman as chairperson of one of these unions? And I don't expect the answer because they are women." She continued: "Women start

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to feel the pressures at home. Not only is it dangerous for a woman to attend meetings late at night, but she also knows that when she gets home she will find everything as she left it. Her husband will be sitting idle. And he might not believe she's been in a meeting - he will accuse her of going around." (Some unions have been forced to write formal letters to husbands to get around this problem) "She doesn't want to lose her family for the union, even if she's committed to it. So the organisation becomes weakened. The people who weaken it are those who say they are committed but don't see the need to assist in the liberation of women".

But women's problems don't end at home. As one shop steward put it "it is not always easy to work actively in union matters at work, because men tend to want to defend their positions." She gave us an example: the fact that women use a short, direct language, whereas men talk more without necessarily having more to say. Men interrupt women more often than the reverse. Women are often ignored when they speak.

British women trade unionists have also complained of the hidden messages within the movement for example union publications tend to convey the idea that trade unionism is a male arena. Fortunately this does not seem to be a problem here - Fosatu Worker News frequently shows women in the struggle. In education we are particularly aware of the possible danger of featuring the "invisible woman" - we try to get around it by ensuring that women are used to exemplify points as often as men.

The big question is whether South African women trade unionists need a separate forum in which to build their confidence, gain experience in articulating their needs and so on. British trade unionists have found that positive action is helpful in promoting women's participation in the union's activities, for example:

- reserved women's seats on executive and other bodies
- women's conferences
- women's advisory committees - nationally and regionally
- women's only training courses for shop stewards
- appointment of national women's officers.

In the Transvaal, we have set up a study group, open to men and women, which hopes to consider the position of women

workers more carefully. The group is accountable to the regional education committee of FOSATU. Whether further action is needed will depend on the response to appeals made - appeals such as that by a male comrade at the FOSATU Education Workshop:

Brothers, its high time we surrendered... This is the struggle and for the sake of the struggle we should be hand in hand. If we're both in the struggle - my wife and I - and we are both working, then when I get home I must expect to rest while my wife carries on for 24 hours... We say we are the oppressed nation, but women are more oppressed. They go to work and then start again at home. It's high time we showed the bosses we're equal.

Indeed the bosses create and exploit divisions wherever they can. That women and men workers often have identical interests is true, but not always. The challenge to the new independent trade union movement is simply: how to acknowledge the different objective conditions of women and men workers in order to forge real, meaningful equality and unity in the working class struggle in the long term?

The first task is to pull together the lessons that have already been learnt and information that is already known and to integrate these into broader strategic planning. For example, to always provide for maternity within agreements containing long service clauses. This requires a more integrated approach to negotiations than has been possible to date.

Secondly, there should probably be an ongoing watchdog grouping within the movement to check that women's voices are heard and that their points are taken up in democratic discussion. In this way the obstacles which intervene to inhibit women's involvement in union affairs, eg. not only questions of confidence, but the timing of meetings, the issues discussed etc, can be systematically tackled.

These strategies will be needed to help the unions build the necessary ammunition to counter the deeply divisive, exploitative and discriminatory practices of employers.

Andries Raditsela: Monitoring the Protests in Natal

In Durban, the death of Raditsela was first discussed formally on Wednesday May 8 at a meeting called by the "new federation unions" (FOSATU, GWU, CCAWUSA and FCWU) to evaluate the May Day stoppage and celebrations. (For details of decisions taken elsewhere see SALB 10.7) The meeting, made up of organisers and secretaries of the unions, decided to hold a second meeting to consider reaction to Raditsela's death. This meeting, on May 9 - a council of FOSATU shop stewards from Durban and Pinetown locals - was felt to be a more appropriate forum to discuss the issue. This meeting was also attended by the other new federation unions.

The meeting on the 9th felt that there had to be a response to the issue in the form of work stoppages. Proposals by shop stewards for a stoppage ranged from a whole day to a half an hour. In the course of debate it was decided that shop stewards ought to get a mandate from workers in the factories before meeting again. This decision was communicated to the executive committee of FOSATU before its meeting of May 11. In the meantime, in Natal a consensus was reached that there should be work stoppages for a maximum duration of two hours with management getting prior notification by May 14 - the day of the funeral.

Two separate decisions were taken - by FOSATU nationally and in Natal by the local councils - but they more or less corresponded. It was left to workers to make decisions on the duration of the stoppage and on how to approach management in each factory. However, some unions felt that the call lacked precision or that they had been given inadequate time to make sufficient preparations. Others had already negotiated stoppages with management on their own. As a result, participation varied in form and extent fairly substantially. Little communication between the "unity" unions and others occurred.

Durban-Pinetown area management survey

On the afternoon of the work stoppage, a survey of the day's events in Durban industries was planned. In addition in-depth interviews were made with management and trade union repre-

sentatives. The media coverage of the stoppage also was monitored. The Department of Statistic's Manufacturing Census, (modified through the use of regional economic statistics from the Department of Economics, University of Natal) was used as a basis for sampling firms. Employers of some 52,000 workers, approximately one-third of the industrial labour force of Durban-Pinetown, were earmarked for contact. Ninety firms, chosen through strict quota sampling, were divided between the following sectors:

Food & Beverage	15
Textiles	9
Clothing & Footwear	12
Wood & Wood Products	5
Paper & Printing	8
Chemical	9
Non-Metallic Mineral Products & Plastics	8
Metal Products, Motor Vehicles	12
Other	10
Total	<u>88</u>

Management was asked to respond to eight questions on the telephone as follows:

1. Was there a stoppage in the factory and, if not, any other type of appropriate action?
2. What was the duration of the stoppage and when did it happen?
3. What form did the stoppage take in the factory?
4. Was it paid or unpaid time off for employees.
5. Were employers forewarned and, if so, what type of negotiations followed?
6. What number of workers were involved in the stoppage?
7. What unions, if any, participated in the stoppage?
8. What was the employers' response to the issues?

The response rate was in general excellent:

Food & Beverage	100%
Textiles	87.14%
Clothing & Footwear	100%
Wood & Wood Products	60%

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Paper & Printing	100%
Chemical	78%
Non-Metallic Mineral Products & Plastics	100%
Metal Products, Motor Vehicles	100%
Other	60%

Unfortunately, the few negative responses included the largest textile manufacturing firm which particularly served to bring the figures down. Firms that responded were estimated to employ 42,100 workers. Of these, stoppages involved some 7,850 workers or just under 19% divided between the following sectors:

Food & Beverage	44.25%	3,100
Textiles	8.57%	600
Clothing & Footwear	0.00	
Wood & Wood Products	0.00	
Paper & Printing	0.00	
Chemical	25.6%	1,000
Non-Metallic Mineral Products & Plastics	56.25%	1,800
Metal Products, Motor Vehicles	14.3%	1,000
Other*	36.66%	950
Total		<u>7,850</u>

* Basic Metal, Cementmaking etc.

In order to arrive at the total number of Durban-Pinetown workers involved in the stoppage, it was decided, after examining trade union figures that later were claimed for the stoppage, that a factor of 2.2 was not unreasonable. This would give anticipation of 17,270 in all. The correct figure must range, however, somewhere between a multiple of 2 (15,700) and 3 (23,550). In addition, attested figures from other sources supply a minimum of 1,037 non-industrial employees in the region involved and 5,670 in other centres in Natal. Thus in Natal as a whole, 23,870+ workers can be said to have been involved.

Participation in the stoppage correlated closely with membership in the industrial unions associated with the proposed federation, primarily FOSATU but also Food and Canning Work-

ers Union and General Workers Union. Within FOSATU organised factories, 56.67% took part. By contrast, workers not in unions and those organised in SAAWU and in TUCSA unions, were completely uninvolved. Interestingly, we estimate that the African and Indian workers in the factories covered in our survey divide roughly equally between FOSATU (31.85%) members, TUCSA members (27.59%) and the unorganised (29.12%). In addition, we estimate 8.31% SAAWU members, 1.91% GWU-FCWU and 1.24% other unions.

Finally, we estimate that some 63% of workers involved took part in commorative services or stoppages lasting for half an hour, 30% being lunch-time prayer meetings or extended tea-times and 33% were during working hours, 30% lasted more than half an hour and 7% involved a half-hour stop followed by the workers leaving the factory without resuming labour. At another Pinetown firm, workers were effectively locked out and proceeded to union offices for the rest of the day.

Survey summary

A number of significant results came out of the survey as follows:

- a) We estimate that some 17,270 workers participated in a variety of symbolic actions as a response to the call of protest in Greater Durban-Pinetown. The Natal total was certainly well over 20,000. Outside Durban-Pinetown, reports reached us of stoppages, among others, in textile mills in Hammarsdale and Corobrick in Pietermaritzburg.
- b) The protest was confined almost exclusively to workers in FOSATU, together with those unions planning to participate in Federation. Among these, we estimate that more than half were involved as opposed to 19% of the industrial workforce in general.
- c) As a result, it was the food and beverage, non-metallic minerals, chemical and metal sectors that were most affected. The stoppage achieved some success in the important textile industry mainly outside Durban-Pinetown.
- d) Despite the rather widespread nature of the stoppage, actions involved tended to be quite brief (63% of half an hour only) and often took place at lunch hour or over an extended tea break. Most of the longer stoppages lasted one hour.

From our interviews, management expectations, perceptions and responses varied. There were some common threads:

- a) Managements received directives and information from the Chamber of Industries. It advised them that they should expect "something big" and that they should not provoke further union or worker antagonism. They should furthermore, it advised, press where they could for half an hour commemorative service preferably during lunchtime. Any working time lost should be unpaid.
- b) In the factories organised by the "new federation unions" all expected something to happen and were genuinely worried because they did not know what form the action would take. But after the May 11 decisions (nationally and in Natal) many were approached by shop stewards and held discussions over the issue. Some expressed surprise about the fact that they were approached at all, thinking that the stoppage would happen without prior warning. Similarly, companies once approached, bargained hard with shop stewards to minimise the effect of the strike on production runs. A smaller number of firms (4) were hostile to the steward's demands. Finally, 10 companies organised by the trade unions were not approached at all. Overall, there was anxiety about what would happen, which was enhanced by unclear media coverage, as claimed by managers.
- c) After the stoppage managerial perceptions varied according to the degree of action on their shop floors. There were three dominant patterns:
 - (i) Some were sympathetic, they claimed, to the circumstances of the unions' discontent; nevertheless expressed anger that they should have their production runs affected by an issue which had nothing to do with them. In some instances where the stoppage exceeded 2 hours the companies complained about losses and, in the food sector about deliveries to the retail sector. In tune with this, anger was also directed at the unions who "thought they now control (led) the country..."
 - (ii) Many were pleasantly surprised at the "reasonableness of workers" who defied FOSATU's call for stoppages (as they understood the issue). They found "their" stewards co-operative and ready to see management's point of view. For example, a manager asserted that:

We had geared ourselves up because we were told that this is going to be a "big thing". But for

our group it was a damp squib. Our workers requested a stoppage between 11 am and 12, but we told them we couldn't stop production. We had a fairly good relationship with our shop stewards and so many decided to mourn during their lunch hour.

Another one stressed that:

They requested a stoppage but we told them it would be very disruptive. There was a nice spirit of understanding between us and they agreed not to. A stoppage would have established a bad precedent. I don't think the stoppage was a strong issue. In my opinion it was a bit removed from the guys here.

- (iii) Some simply expressed hostility to workers' initiations on their shopfloor seeing no legitimate grounds for stoppages. The Daily News asserted that Raditsela "did not work for us and if we had to give workers time off every time there was a death in detention we would be stopping every five minutes...Some used the recession, short-time or hinted at dismissals as a lever to prevent any action.

Trade union response

The scale of positive response to the stoppage call was extensive in the "new federation unions" organised factories of Durban-Pinetown. The one significant independent initiative from outside came from the NFW (National Federation of Workers). Why wasn't it even more overwhelming? Interviews with unionists suggested the following reasons: both related to the delegation of the decision-making process to individual shop stewards to such a significant extent, each operating with a particular set of managerial constraints. For one thing, it proved difficult in some structures to respond with the speed required where the final decision was only arrived at the day before the stoppage was meant to take place. Some unions considered that the general guidance that they received at this point was insufficiently clear. Secondly, response varied, in the end, with the confidence union members felt in challenging management prerogatives. This was striking in the case of the smallest factories and those industries where retrenchments were ongoing. Thus, when management reaction appeared to be quite hostile, many workers felt that they

- Andries Raditsela -

could not press the issue. These factors also need to be considered in accounting for the length of the stoppage and whether it occurred during normal production time in particular factories that did come out as well.

Media coverage

Selective monitoring of media aimed at Natal audiences was also undertaken in order to establish whether the extended content of such coverage might have influenced worker action in the province. This would have been the case particularly for those workers outside the unions that organise the action. Media coverage, moreover, has an impact on employer response as well as on the conscious or unconscious reaction of the general public to the entire course of events.

Generally speaking, media coverage of issues relating to the death of Andries Raditsela and events leading up to the work stoppage was remarkably inadequate. In some cases, it was virtually non-existent while in others, it was inaccurate or clearly selective. Confusion marked yet other accounts. The confusion related to where the action was planned, (with reference only to Transvaal activity), what form it was to take (that it was a stay-away rather than a stoppage for those workers who could not attend Raditsela's funeral), and when the action might take place. The one striking exception in Natal lay in the Natal Witness, which provided relatively accurate and well-informed coverage consistently. The example of the Witness indicates that no insurmountable barriers existed to an improved and acceptable coverage. The following table summarises a range of responses:

SABC Radio/SATV: Concerned mainly with employer reaction and police reassurances for those who aimed to go to work; confused in referring only to a stay-away. Coverage on the day emphasised "failure". Referred only to Transvaal; characterised action as a stay-away which was not stopping people from going to work; numbers attending funeral were belittled.

Capital radio: Referred in advance only to a Transvaal action. No reference to stoppage on morning of action. Thereafter, image of failure picked up from SABC was echoed here.

Daily News (Durban, Argus): Reasonable coverage of Raditsela's

death up to May 10, when it was concluded that "major trade union and black community organisations have called for workers throughout the country to down tools for two hours next Tuesday" and information about the funeral. Afterwards, nothing until an article date-lined Johannesburg appeared under the headline "Workers ignore stay-away call" referring to a purported one-day stay-away call. Incongruously, information within the article does refer to thousands of Natal workers downing tools.

Natal Mercury (Durban): Reference to Raditsela's death, mainly in the context of others' deaths under related circumstances, with no discussion of an impending work stoppage at first. The one reference, the day before the stoppage was planned, was to an entirely inaccurate SAPA report of demands for Transvaal workers to be given a day off to attend the funeral. Never referred to possibility of Natal action at all.

Natal Witness (Pietermaritzburg): Coverage included unionist meetings to plan response to Raditsela's death, call for stoppage of 2 hours nationally reported with some assessments, notably one making a comparison with a potential stoppage bigger than that in response to the death in detention of Neil Aggett. After the stoppage, assessment was fairly positive with the ASSOCOM manpower secretary saying that the "call had a fair response - in fact there was a good response to the calls for prayer."

Sunday Tribune (Durban): No reference to an impending stoppage. Article entitled "lobola party called off while young trade unionist lay dying."

Illanga, Leader, Graphic Post: Weeklies and bi-weeklies aimed at African or Indian audiences. The more frequently appearing Post and Ilanga only had articles on Raditsela's death, but not on any planned action. Ilanga, a Zulu language paper, is the only one to come out at the start of the week and its final issue before the stoppage had no relevant article at all.

Shortly after the Raditsela stoppage some, 2,000 supporters of Inkatha participated in a polite protest opposing disinvestment outside the home of the United States consul in Durban. This was given widespread publicity and extensive editorial comment by the Durban dailies. The editor of Natal

Mercury felt confident that they represented "the majority of 6,000,000 Zulus". (May 20) The contrast between this and coverage of the national work stoppage speaks by itself of the extent to which the media can determine the significance of a story. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that most Natal coverage of this story was picked up from Transvaal sources anxious to minimise its impact, pre-judge it as a failure and making little effort to get the facts right.

Management responses

A notable characteristic of managerial response to the death of Raditsela was, apart from the anxiety over what was to take place, that it forced them to think politically: the result was a great amount of confusion. The undoubted sophistication of industrial relations procedures, the directives from the Chamber of Industries gave them a starting point from which to attempt to minimise the effects of stoppages on their production runs. In a number of cases they succeeded. There was consensus that either trade unions should stay out of politics or if they do participate, it should not affect production. But it did, and it is on this terrain that their responses wavered: managements lashed out at the police for damaging the reform process underway; some criticised the trade unions and the state; some were accomodating and others poured out pure hostility over the issue. However, we wish to suggest that the responses encountered here could be situated within the broader inter-management debate in South Africa about their political role.

There seems to be three emerging positions: (a) intolerance to trade union political attitudes and hostility to issues pertaining to opposition to the government's reform programme; (b) economic liberals who eagerly want the withdrawal of the state from industrial involvement; (c) a new position which seems to be that the lack of political rights add to the frustrations of workers' experience. Economic reforms alone cannot depoliticise industrial relations.

There was in short no political consensus. Interestingly hostility was not a feature of the small more vulnerable factories alone, but it carried over into the statements of some of the larger conglomerates noted for their liberal sentiments; it involved both multinational and local giants. Future de-

politicisation of industrial relations seems unlikely.

A new power on the shop floor

Furthermore, the growing unionisation of Pinetown's industrial workers has created a new but fragile balance of forces in the factory through democratic shop steward structures. These structures, the source of much vitality and prowess in trade union affairs, were faced with a significant challenge. The delegation of choice, as concerns the form the commemorative action would take, to the respective factories undoubtedly increased their range of experiences bringing new lessons about factory politics to each one. At the same time, this delegation of choice and responsibility created a patchwork of independent worker initiatives and negotiations. These initiatives add up to the largest worker action in the area since the Durban strikes of 1973. They are more sizeable than the Aggett stoppage here, which involved 12,500 people in Natal - 75% of whom were outside the Durban metropolitan area. Still, with each factory's shop stewards deciding on the cut and thrust of their relationships with their particular managements, the action did not cohere as a demonstration stoppage in the area. What cohered instead was a significant event combining a variety of symbolic actions. Nevertheless, in some of the unions the response was both swift and aggressive. As a trade unionist commented:

We responded because we are in a political crisis. It's in the interests of both the state and capital to separate worker organisation from political organisation. This allows the state the opportunity to smash political organisations then to turn on the trade unions. Their intention is always to depoliticise the working class. This is not momentary in passing, its endemic. We would have been doomed to political irrelevance if we had ignored it. We cannot stand aside from the political issues that affect us. We needed to show the government that we were capable of responding to attack. We are not going to stand by while our comrades are murdered. We can't be treated like this - they are killing us like dogs. It's our people who are being killed. We had to respond, we had to demand that the police and the army be removed from the townships. We had to show solidarity with a comrade who had been murdered.

Trade unionists interviews reflect an ambivalence: they were

both pleased and frustrated by the commemorative actions. Pleased, because a large number of workers showed solidarity and exposed their grief over the event despite difficulties, of time constraints and unclear developments. Frustrated because it did not cohere into a fundamental challenge to authority - a demonstration strike which would have resolutely demonstrated their anger over the death. They pointed to the inevitable tension between demands for swift action on the one hand, and democratic participation of membership in the decision-making process on the other. For some trade unions, this factor proscribed the ability to achieve a coherence. Others felt rapid mobilisation around issues outside the factory is facilitated by developing a certain organisational style. This implies a debate about the relationship between the political and economic struggle in South Africa.

This action nevertheless points to some of the inherent limits and possibilities of demonstration stoppages: firstly, they always have been and will be events that demand mass mobilisation at breakneck speed. The greater the coherence, the greater the impact. Secondly, they are demonstrations: as such, over the above coherence, size and numbers are important. Even if the new federation unions mobilised all their members, there would be at the moment over 60% of the labour force outside their reach. The test in this situation was not carried out: would unions outside the federation bury their differences in situations like these and would they have participated and thus increased its impact? Would community organisations have influenced the participation of unorganised workers?

Finally, the media's role in the stoppage points to very worrying signs on the horizon. Both the space and importance, the press attaches to trade union interests is diminishing as our survey showed and reports from other regions corroborated. The clarity of public information reaching workers has been diminishing too. This is happening in volatile times as both an economic and a political crisis sharpens in South Africa. Simultaneously, it is seizing the unions at a time when their own alternative press cannot substitute the functions of the daily press let alone transform it.

(Labour Monitoring Group, Univ. of Natal, Durban, May 1985)

Unions in Botswana: Comparisons with Lesotho

Dave Cooper*

Roger Southall's article on trade unions in Lesotho in the recent issue of SALB is most welcome. (1) This is by far the most detailed and analytical work on trade unions in Lesotho, and no such similar study exists on other states on South Africa's borders. (2) Despite the lack of such detailed information on Botswana, it is worthwhile making some brief comments on the trade union movement in that country in comparison with Lesotho as outlined by Southall. Although these comments are made very tentatively, they will hopefully stimulate further research. Another reason for this brief comparison is that Southall's information suggests to me certain important similarities with the Botswana case. Most importantly, I shall argue, such a comparison gives significant insight into the class struggles which have been occurring in such countries of Southern Africa.

The recent "Nkomati Accord" has firmly put on the agenda the question of the types of societies that have been forming on South Africa's borders. A very useful way of getting insights into this question is to examine and compare the trade union struggles in these countries. This question of type of society has actually been discussed for a long time in studies on Botswana - but not with reference to the trade union movement. Some have seen Botswana as a vibrant liberal democracy, providing broad freedoms and a form of welfare-state capitalism for its population; Botswana is also seen as having taken a strong and principled stand against apartheid and South African political domination. Others, at the opposite extreme, see Botswana as dominated by "western" and South African capital to such an extent that all these freedoms, economic development and political independence, are a myth. The ruling class within the country is seen as so weak that the term "governing elite" is preferred (parallels are drawn with the

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so-called "Jonathan clique" in Lesotho and the "royal clique" in Swaziland). (3)

What all these views lack is a serious consideration of the internal class forces of these societies. As soon as one begins an in-depth look at trade union struggles, as Southall does in his article, this question becomes crucial. He shows how there has been an ongoing struggle in the Lesotho labour movement: he provides excellent insight into the ways certain internal (and external) classes have acted through the state apparatuses to exert control over the emerging labour movement since independence. I extend these ideas to Botswana, suggesting how the overall class struggle has affected the nature of the labour movement since its early days. (4)

The 1950s

Virtually nothing has been written on the history of Botswana unions in the early period except for a very good, short study by Gilbert Sekgoma. (5) He discusses how the first Botswana union developed in the colonial trading town of Francistown in 1948. This union, the Francistown African Employees Union (FAEU), organised among shop assistants, garage workers, government manual workers, teachers and the lower ranks of the civil service. The union registered under the Bechuanaland Protectorate Proclamation No 16 of 1942, adapted from similar legislation established in other British colonies in Africa in the early 1940s. The British High Commissioner in Mafeking in 1942 claimed it was better to have trade unions in the open than underground. (6)

According to Sekgoma, (7) the FAEU was based mainly in Francistown, its constitution stressed non-political functions but it did establish relations with the unions in Ghana and Zambia as well as with the ICFTU. It was involved in wage demands and negotiations; it reached its peak in 1958, but was always weakly organised around a small leadership group. Before the 1960s, Sekgoma notes that only two other unions existed: the European Civil Service Association formed in 1948, and the Bechuanaland Protectorate Workers Union (BPWU) formed in 1958. The BPWU, despite its national name, was largely confined to Serowe, the capital village of the Ngwato "Tribal Reserve". Interestingly, this union was started by the Ngwato chief, Tshekedi Khama, and its pres-

ident Lengeletse Seretse was to become a Minister of Agriculture much later. Both the FAEU and the BPWU were very weak by the early 1960s, according to Sekgoma. In his study he makes no mention of the sort of early South African trade union links noted by Southall in early Lesotho union developments - perhaps further research in Botswana might show more connections.

Looking at both Southall and Sekgoma's evidence, a number of points stand out. In both Lesotho and Botswana, unions had begun to emerge by the 1950s. But the external proletariat - migrants in South Africa - far outweighed the small internal proletariat. The internal working class was mainly in the "service sector" associated with the colonial economy - civil administration, shops etc. Unions did push for some wage demands and sometimes even raised issues around colonial racial practices. But essentially they were weakly organised, dependent on one or two "big men" at the top, and were carefully watched by the colonial administration despite their relatively weak political orientation.

This fact, of an internal proletariat, numerically and organisationally weak, is generally ignored in discussions of the political struggles of the early 1960s before independence. Yet the fact is crucial for an understanding of the type of societies which have emerged in the ex-High Commission territories including Swaziland. It is well-known that Britain moved forward the timetable for independence for these three territories quite rapidly in the early 60s, because of the events that were occurring outside these territories, in the rest of Africa. So an aspirant internal petty bourgeoisie quickly found itself in a strong position in each of these territories. This was not simply due to the usual explanation, that this class received support from the colonial administration and foreign capital in general. It was also because a weak labour movement offered a very fragmented opposition.

After independence in Botswana, the internal proletariat grew rapidly - more so than in Lesotho. It was no longer numerically weak. So a central task for the internal ruling class was to keep this proletariat organisationally weak. The trade unions were thus an important site of struggle, as will be seen below.

The 1960s

To discuss these struggles within the labour movement in Botswana just before and just after independence in 1966, it is useful to mention first the "end result" - ten years later. For by 1976 in Botswana, the local petty bourgeoisie had established itself in a far stronger position economically and politically than its counterpart in Lesotho as described by Southall. To summarise briefly (8), by 1976 this internal ruling class had built a base in cattle farming, in the upper levels of the civil service and the few mining multi-nationals, and in trading, particularly in the large villages. Cattle ranches were beginning to be developed by Botswana around privately owned boreholes. This resulted in an enclosure movement, with peasants being pushed off communal land which was transformed into leasehold for the borehole owners. State loans for borehole construction were crucial for these developments. So was the cattle market structure, involving the export of Botswana beef to the EEC under special terms. The civil service expanded enormously after independence, with high salaries for the upper levels. Mining developed unexpectedly, with American (AMAX) and South African (ANGLO) multinationals involved in copper-nickel; De Beers took control of diamonds. Diamond mining brought in enormous revenues. In addition, Botswana received massive foreign aid from "western" governments - as much as twenty times the Commonwealth average in the 1970s.

All this provided not only a base for the emerging ruling class. It also generated employment - the number of people employed in wage labour grew from around 10,000 in 1960 to around 60,000 in 1978. This figure was greater than the number of Botswana working in South Africa at the time, thus making Botswana relatively much less of a "labour reserve" economy compared to Lesotho. (9) Jobs, as well as health, primary school and some agricultural services grew for a fairly wide section of workers and peasants. Material improvements in Botswana has been one factor (not the only one though) making possible a "multi-party capitalist democracy", with the ruling party easily defeating its opponents in the regular elections since independence.

Many of these aspects of post-independence development in Botswana have been well-outlined in recent literature. What

has not been analysed in any depth, however, is the fact that the conditions for these developments had to be struggled for. Particularly in the 1960s, the aspirant petty bourgeoisie in Botswana had to win these conditions, to block off other possible directions of development. It had to use not just the carrot of economic development, but also the stick, in order to hold back opposition from a growing working class. More research on the various areas of trade union struggle needs to be done; but current information does suggest that the labour movement was one crucial area of struggle.

The struggles just before independence show a remarkably similar pattern in Botswana and Lesotho. Southall outlined in his article how the nationalist Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), which had ties with the South African ANC, began to mobilise against colonial rule in Lesotho in the early 60s; the Basotho National Party (BNP) under Jonathan, expressing the interests of the lower chieftaincy and some of the petty bourgeoisie, emerged in opposition and was backed by the colonial authorities. The BCP became linked to the Basutoland Federation of Labour (established in 1962), the BNP linked with the Lesotho Council of Workers (established 1963/64).

Sekgoma's Botswana study reveals a parallel process. (10) The nationalist Botswana Peoples Party (BPP, established in 1960), also with South African links, initiated the Bechuanaland Trade Union Congress (BTUC) in 1962. The BTUC got involved in political rallies of the BPP, and generally made demands around wages, working conditions and racial practices, ie. broad anti-colonial issues. In 1963 the BTUC even published a research report attacking the exploitation of cattle herdsman of subject peoples (Basarwa, Bakgalagadi), whom it stated were inherited by their owners like cattle. (11) This must surely have shaken the Tswana tribal aristocracy, especially since the BPP was becoming known as anti-chief. (12) Meanwhile in 1961 the Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP), under the leading chief Seretse Khama, formed in opposition to the BPP. The BDP broadly represented the "moderate" educated petty bourgeoisie and sections of the upper and lower chieftaincy. It gained the backing of the colonial administration. In 1965 the BDP formed the Bechuanaland Federation of Labour (BFL) to counter the influence of the BPP-linked BTUC. Unity talks between the BTUC and the BFL, initiated by the colonial labour officer, Murray Hudson

(later multinational mining company representative in Gaborone in the '70s), failed in 1965 because of ideological differences, according to Sekgoma.

The BDP easily won the elections in 1965 just before independence for a variety of reasons - broad chiefly support which brought in peasant votes, support of the colonial administration, the status of Seretse Khama, good financial and administrative organisation, splits in the BPP etc.

It is well-known that the BDP soon saw the Botswana National Front, formed in 1966 under the avowed Marxist leader Kenneth Koma, as an important threat. The BNF wanted a broad popular front against what it termed the "feudals, the neocolonial BDP, and the foreign imperialists". (13) This threat was increased when a leading chief went over to the BNF. What has not been analysed is the equally important threat from the emerging working class, as perceived by the ruling BDP which still had a new and shaky hold on the state apparatus. It is essential to see each of the following in this context: (i) the government response to the government workers' strike of 1968; (ii) the new trade union laws of 1969; (iii) the establishment of a trade union education centre in 1971 with American funding. The information available on each of these will be discussed briefly. I shall argue that the late 1960s to early '70s was the crucial period in Botswana, when the state established tight control over the developing labour movement - much earlier than in Lesotho, where Southall shows control is weaker and still being struggled over.

The massive growth in employment in the state apparatuses after independence was an important factor leading to the strike of government workers in 1968. Government "mental" workers, generally with at least Junior Certificate (3 years secondary schooling) and termed "public officers", formed into the Civil Service Association. Government "manual" workers, termed "industrial class", became organised in the National Union of Government Manual Workers (NUGMW). (14)

Sekgoma (15) shows how the NUGMW soon became the biggest union, spreading also quite quickly outside the capital and soon having a membership of just under 1,000. He argues that some of the leading unionists were transferred out of Gaborone to remote areas or promoted to supervisory positions (and

hence non-eligibility for union membership). The crunch came in 1968 over the firing of the union general secretary. This led to an extremely bitter 10 day strike which spread to other centres. The government viewed the NUGMW as linked to the opposition parties, and on the radio the Labour Minister accused the union of bringing politics into the union. (16) A speech years later in 1979 by government minister, Peter Mmusi, who had been Commissioner of Labour in 1968, described the situation in this way: "a wave of industrial unrest broke out...it was very clear that many of the unions were unions in name only and had either no following, or no mandate from workers to speak on their behalf". (17)

The reality was however that unions like the NUGMW were beginning to grow in strength. This was seen as a threat to the type of society the ruling party was hoping to create. Mmusi in 1979 was quite clear about the solution of 10 years earlier: "Government felt that the time was long overdue, therefore to introduce legislation to ensure the orderly development of the trade union movement...we therefore introduced in Parliament a Trade Unions Act and a Trade Disputes Act, together with the Regulation of Wages and Conditions of Employment Act. These three acts became law in August, 1969 and required that all unions would have to re-register". (18)

The laws of 1969 established extensive and tight control over the emerging labour movement. They seem considerably tighter than anything yet established in Lesotho in the 1980s. Briefly, these laws provided for compulsory registration, with unions narrowly defined as bodies "for the purpose of regulating relations between employees and employers".(19) Unions were placed under a registrar of trade unions with wide powers, no "general" unions were allowed, political strikes and sympathy strikes were made illegal, no foreign funding could be received without ministerial approval. There was also a long and detailed procedure to be followed before a strike could be called, and the minister could refer a dispute to an industrial tribunal at any point. Industrial Councils were set up to regulate wages at an industry level, deflecting much wage bargaining into bureaucratic channels.

Shortly afterwards in 1971, the African-American Labour Centre (AALC) helped set up and finance the Botswana Trade Union Education Centre. This has been the central point in Botswana

for union education around wage bargaining. Already by 1967 this centre claimed to have run 90 weekend courses for 400 rank and file participants, as well as having organised a number of courses for leading union officials. (20) Sekgale provides interesting information about the origin of the centre in Botswana. (21) He describes how in 1967 Seretse Khama visited the United States on the invitation of the Ford Foundation. There he met Irving Brown, head of the AALC (later part of the AALC delegation which visited South Africa in 1983). Brown agreed to send an AALC representative to Botswana, who arrived in 1969 and played a big role in setting up the education centre. It is clear therefore that there was close cooperation between the Botswana government and American groups, to help steer the labour movement in the "right" direction.

What can one conclude about these events just after independence in Botswana in comparison with Lesotho? I do not want to overstress the role played by the Botswana labour movement. It was admittedly still relatively weak, numerically and particularly organisationally. Yet it was developing - and just as important, the government believed that it could pose a threat in the long term. So what emerges strongly from the discussion above is that, by the early 1970s, the Botswana ruling class had moved clearly and sharply to control the labour movement. Lesotho politics since independence, as described by Southall, has been unstable, factionalised, often contradictory. In contrast, the power bloc in Botswana was more unified and was developing a clear political direction. The basis was laid in the late 1960s for the capitalist accumulation process to take place in the 1970s, in the interests of foreign capital and local petty bourgeoisie. One important foundation stone in this process was the early establishment of control over the emerging unions.

The 1970s and 1980s

Despite this extensive control, the Botswana government still felt the need to extend it further in the 1970s. The procedures for strikes seemed unworkable - there were a series of brief and relatively unorganised strikes leading to the eruption of the biggest strike at the Selebi-Phikwe mine in 1975. After this strike the Commissioner of Labour was to say: "There has never been a legal strike in Botswana". (22)

In response the government in 1977 helped to initiate the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions, which has drawn in all the major unions of the country. Funded by the AALC and the German Friederich Ebert Foundation, this federation sits on the National Employment, Manpower and Incomes Council together with the government and the employers' federation. This further bureaucratises the wage negotiating process. In addition the government clearly hoped that a tighter structure, with a national executive committee of the federation at the top of the trade union movement, would dampen the demands for strikes amongst the rank and file.

However, things have not worked entirely to the government's satisfaction. This has led to a revision of the trade union laws, as seen in the Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations Act of 1983. One reason for this legislation was the government's feeling that leading positions in the new federation were being captured by supporters of the opposition BNF, and that the federation was not toeing the line. (23)

This new Act has been opposed by the federation. The introductory paragraph of the Act states that its purpose is simply to bring all federations (of unions and of employers) under the umbrella of the 1969 law. (24) However, there were clauses in the 1969 Act that might have seriously affected the employers. For instance there was the clause stipulating that trade union officials had to be Botswana citizens. Yet in the 1983 Act the minister can waive this rule, which can obviously affect many leading employers who are not citizens. And many of the clauses in the 1983 Act specifically refer to the unions and do not mention the employers' federation.

A reading of the old and the new laws often suggests that the 1983 Bill is simply a rewrite of the 1969 laws, bringing within its clauses the new union federation and, in some cases, the employers federation. Still, the most important change appears to be the new role of the Minister of Labour. For instance the Minister is legally permitted to attend every meeting of the union federation (the employers federation is not mentioned), whereas previously the union federation simply used to extend a formal invitation. And the Minister can refuse to register a trade union federation, with the decision being final; in 1969 (and still in 1983) a refusal to register a trade union by the registrar of trade

unions could be appealed against in the High Court.

With these and other new provisions in the Act, it is clear the government is showing it has wide powers at its disposal, if the trade union movement steps out of line. It seems clear from Southall's article that the state in Lesotho is belatedly trying to move in the same direction, by actively encouraging the formation of the new union federation there in 1984, through which it hopes to exert control.

Interestingly Southall also suggests that, despite a relatively larger working class inside Botswana, Lesotho has a considerably higher level of unionisation. (25) Perhaps one reason for this is that Botswana workers have experienced such a tightly controlled structure since the late '60s that: (i) the benefits of belonging to a union are not always clear to them and (ii) they take action independently of a union when their frustration reaches too high a level, as in Selebi-Phikwe in 1975. It will be interesting to see whether the Botswana labour movement follows the new tendency described by Southall in Lesotho, of organising strongly at the base amongst the rank and file. This tendency has to a large extent always been lacking in Botswana, right from the days of the first union in Francistown in the 1940s. And this lack of a strong base has made it much more difficult for the unions to fight against the government controls imposed on them since the late 60's.

Footnotes

- 1 R Southall, "Trade unions and the internal working class in Lesotho", SALB 10.3, December 1984
- 2 The most useful, but short, published work on Botswana trade unions to date had been carried by the SALB, see: 2.5, 1975; 5.5, 1980; 8.7, 1984
- 3 A good example of the first approach is J Wiseman, "Multi-partyism in Africa: the case of Botswana", African Affairs, 76.302, 1977; speeches by political party opposition leaders in the 1984 Botswana election at times reflected the second approach
- 4 The most useful works which look at the class structure of Botswana are by Jack Parson, especially his "Political economy of Botswana: a case in the study of politics and social change in post-colonial societies", unpublish-

ed Ph.D thesis, University of Sussex, 1979; and L Cliffe and R Moorsom, "Rural class formation and ecological collapse in Botswana", Review of African Political Economy 15, 1980. See also D Cooper, "An interpretation of the emergent urban class structure in Botswana: a case study of Selebi-Phikwe miners", unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Birmingham, 1982.

5 G Sekgoma, "History of trade unionism in Botswana 1940s-1978", unpublished B.A. dissertation, University of Botswana, 1979, based on oral interviews and archival sources.

6 *ibid*, p10

7 *ibid*, pp22-29

8 This is discussed in more detail in Cooper, "An interpretation"

9 Figures for Botswana are for the "formal economy" and exclude domestic servants and workers on cattle posts; see D Cooper, "An overview of the Botswana urban class structure and its articulation with the rural structure: insights from Selebi-Phikwe", in R Renee Hitchcock and M R Smith (eds.), Settlement in Botswana, Heinemann, 1982, p245. There is a problem in the term "internal proletariat" since most Botswanan urban workers are also involved in agriculture. I prefer the term "peasantariat", which is discussed in this 1982 article

10 Sekgoma, "History", pp30-39

11 *ibid*, p33

12 R Nengwekhulu, "Some findings on the origins of political parties in Botswana", Pula, Botswana Journal of African Studies 1.2, 1979, p64. I have drawn on this article for information on the parties in the 1960s

13 "The Botswana National Front, its character and tasks", BNF Pamphlet No 1, mimeo, around 1966

14 For discussion of the mental/manual divisions amongst the Botswana working class, see Cooper, "An overview", p248

15 Sekgoma, "History", pp40-49. The NUGMW was at first the Government Industrial Workers Union (established 1965)

16 Sekgoma, "History", p44: mentions the brief emergence in 1969 of Lentswe La Badiri (The Working Peoples Voice), of the NUGMW with other unions. Articles in the paper spoke of "socialism", "the national and foreign bourgeoisie" etc

17 Speech by P S Mmusi in "A selection of Ministers speeches on the role of trade unions 1979-80", Ministry of Home

- Affairs, Gaborone, around 1980, p38
- 18 P S Mmusi, p39
- 19 These laws are discussed in J Parson, "Political economy", pp302-311; and D Cooper, "The state, mineworkers and multinationals: the Selebi-Phikwe strike, Botswana 1975", in P C W Gutkind, R Cohen and J Copans (eds.), African Labour History, Sage publications, 1978
- 20 Sekgoma, "History", p51
- 21 *ibid*, p45
- 22 in Cooper, "The state"
- 23 in SALB, 8.7, 1983, pp4-5, and interviews conducted by the author in Gaborone in January 1984
- 24 "Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations Bill 1983", Bill No 2 of 1983, published 14 January 1983, final form of the Act gazetted 9 September 1983
- 25 Southall, "Trade unions", p107

REVIEW: Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of BLACK TRADE UNIONS in South Africa

Don Ncube

(Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1985; 176pp + xvi; R8.95)

There is very little new material in this book. The historical sections rely heavily on recent scholarship whilst the contemporary material is largely drawn from official union statements or other secondary sources. Notwithstanding, Ncube's book makes available to a general readership some important subject matter on South African trade unions.

Black Trade Unions is divided into five sections:

- * "Black workers in the mining industry" which gives a good introduction to the system of labour exploitation which developed on the mines;

- * "The emergence of trade unionism in South Africa" which deals largely with the problems of the ICU;
- * "Black industrial unions" which goes up to the decline of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions;
- * "Black trade union federations" which takes us from SACTU to the trade union revival of the 1970s;
- * "The independent trade union movement" which gives a summary of the main trade union groupings to emerge since Wiehahn.

In the introduction Ncube gives the method he has adopted to explain the development of black trade unionism in South Africa: this "consists of the following different theoretical frameworks: the Unitary, the Pluralist, and the Marxist frame of reference". (pxiii) This is motivated as follows: "the arbitrary choice of one framework could be construed to be a biased approach which is expedient to advance a preconceived stance". Unfortunately there are a lot of preconceptions in the book. There is no attempt to synthesise the three theoretical frameworks which are discussed separately in the conclusion. The section on the "marxist perspective" presents a complete caricature. Fortunately these "theoretical" concerns do not impinge too heavily on the subject matter of the intervening chapters.

The material is summarised and conveyed in very readable language. But with this goes a tendency to oversimplify or condense arguments. A case in point: on page 54 Ncube argues that one reason for the decline of the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions after 1929 was the "extreme left-wing policies" of some Communist Party members (citing the author of this review as his source). What was at issue here was the ultra-left strategy of "bolshevisation" pursued at a specific period in the history of the Third International (body made up of communist parties from different countries) - not an attack on left-wing policies in general.

Another case: on page 21, Ncube collapses Johnstone's arguments about the origins of colour bars on the mines. Johnstone argued that the roots of the colour bar system are to be found in the class imperatives of the particular capitalist production process on the mines. High capital costs and a fixed gold price forced mineowners to reduce their labour costs in order to maintain profits. Hence the "exploitation colour bars" - compounds, pass system, contract system etc - by which

the mineowners secured an unfree and ultra-exploitable black labour force. And hence the "job colour bars" - a direct response from white workers to attempts by the employers to increase their profits by substituting black for white labour. Ncube's rendering ignores these class dynamics. He writes: "According to Johnstone there were two forms of racial discrimination in the mining industry."

The last point is symptomatic. Despite recognising the importance of "class", in the end, Ncube reduces most things to a question of "race". On page 23 he mentions the mechanisms used by the old craft unions to exclude unskilled blacks. In fact these unions excluded all unskilled workers. Moreover, some of them, in the Cape and Natal at least, admitted skilled black workers to membership. Ncube concludes on page 24 that all white workers formed a labour aristocracy. But this was the outcome of a long historical process during which certain groups of white workers waged important struggles against their conditions of exploitation. We need to be sensitive to such cleavages in the white working class, both historically, and perhaps even today.

Ncube interprets the International Socialist League's role in the Industrial Workers of Africa in the same racial terms: "the influence of white political interest groups that capitalised on black socio-economic grievances". (p26) Paradoxically, given his concern for autonomous black trade unionism (p86), Ncube actually understates the leading role of black activists. On page 49 we are told that the first black industrial unions were formed by white communists. A few lines later we are told who these communists were: Weinbren and Thibedi! Similarly there is much detail about Max Gordon's work in reviving trade unionism in the 1930s, but nothing about Dan Koza who worked with him and later ousted him. The general point is that we know much too little about the early black socialists and worker leaders in South Africa.

Ncube has some strange views about the workers themselves. On page 12 he discusses migrant workers:

since this labour was basically rural and unsophisticated it was not only hard-working and industrious, but loyal and malleable, especially as there was no external Black trade union interference.

Recent research shows that black miners were already developing strategies for resistance even before the advent of trade unionism - and in the last resort they showed their loyalty by simply deserting. Again on page 92, in describing SACTU's organising problems, Ncube writes:

The problem was exacerbated by the fact that SACTU was recruiting the most destitute and least sophisticated workers who could neither afford to pay union dues nor easily comprehend the concept of unionism, let alone politically oriented unions.

The statement on page 148 borders on liberal paternalism. During the second world war the CNETU unions largely refrained from strike action:

This action illustrated the level of responsibility of the Black union leadership and served to challenge the myth that Black leaders were susceptible to abuse union power.

The final sections of the book deal with the different groupings which comprise the emerging trade union movement: FOSATU, CUSA, SAAWU and BAWU (for the 1970s). The treatment is very evenhanded - although, given the pace of developments, now somewhat dated. The book does not mention the recent revival of black consciousness unionism - with AZACTU - and deals with SAAWU at its height. Also Ncube's conclusion is too simple, that: "In the main these unions were underpinned by two dominant ideological schools, namely non-racialism and Black Consciousness". (p114) In the case of FOSATU at least (and others that are not mentioned in the book) non-racialism was inextricably bound to an independent working class position and the principle of working class unity. Again, Ncube's real concern is with the "racial" question.

(Jon Lewis, June 1985)

REVIEW: Black Working Class Women in South African Society

L Lawson & H Perold, Working Women: a portrait of South Africa's black women workers, Sached/Ravan, 1985, R9.95 (discount available to trade union members); F Meer, Factory and Family: the divided lives of South Africa's women workers, Institute for Black Research, University of Natal, 1985, R5.00 (worker price 50c); J Barrett, A Dawber, B Klugman, I Obery, J Shindler, J Yawitch, Vukani Makhosikazi: South African women speak, Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1985, R.500.

Three books have recently been published in South Africa, dealing with black working class women in South African society. They deal with women's oppression in the workplace, family and society generally. This is definitely an event in South African history.

All three books portray a horrific picture of the daily lives of black working class women in South Africa. A desperate struggle for survival against immeasurable odds, where all forces are pitched against them. Yet at the launch of the book Working Women, the women present sang and danced, a spirit of joy and hope prevailed and as was said there, hopefully the book would be used by women as a reference book - a working book.

To quote from Vukani Makhosikazi: "But above all, the mood of these women is a mood of determination and endurance," and "Men won't change the problems that face women, that's a fact of life. Until women deal with them they will continue." These books offer no direct solutions but the definite theme running through all of them is that the problem of women's oppression must be dealt with. All 3 books have interviewed women, they are factual stories, they have now been recorded.

It does seem a strange irony though, that all three books have been researched and written by academics. That the books have authenticity is not in doubt, all have interviews and research done with and amongst working class women. Certain

questions - of an organisational nature - remain unanswered. The women interviewed and many others that share very similar experiences are going to read about their own lives - where to after that, one wonders? Nevertheless these books should contribute in placing women's issues on the agenda. This is an event to be celebrated.

In all 3 books the workplace has been used as a point of departure, basically showing how women have been brought into the economy where they occupy the lowest places. They then go on to include the home, family, society and involvement in other activities.

What seems to come to light on the question of familial structures in all three books - although to a lesser extent in Factory and Family - is the extent to which traditional structures are being broken down; with many women choosing to remain single and single parents because of men's non-participation in household chores, their drinking habits etc. In the case of African women, alot of them are indeed the sole breadwinners or have to survive without their husbands because of state legislation.

Factory and Family is a result of a survey done by the Institute for Black Research and edited by Fatima Meer. 992 women were interviewed. Women were questioned about their lives and the results written up in a very accessible manner with pictures. Page 7 of the book aptly describes what the book is about:

The book is an articulation of their situation and demands expressed by the 992 women interviewed - it is the results of the survey. The book does not deal with anything outside of that.

In other words, there is no suggestion of the way in which these problems can be dealt with. In fact, the book reads quite harshly at times: for example p49, on the question of involvement in community organisation:

We don't have time for meetings. We would like to belong to clubs and to work with organisations that do good work. We think that there is a need for women to get together and to improve their situation. We would like to join such a group but we do not know where to find the time. This view is somewhat modified by the picture on the same

- review -

page of women members of SAAWU (South African Allied Workers Union).

And on p50, under the heading, "The men in our lives":

The men in our lives are our fathers, brothers, husbands or boyfriends. These are the people who control us and whom we must obey. We live in a man's world and men are superior to women...Men are the breadwinners they need jobs more than women do...

But perhaps the situation speaks for itself, it is an indication of just how deeply women are exploited and how deeply the problem is internalised. Interviews in this book were with African, Indian and "coloured" women and reminds us of the fact that there is a large working class population among those classified coloureds and Indian.

Unfortunately there are a lot of spelling errors in Factory and Family and it is just generally badly put together.

Both Working Women, with photos and text by Leslie Lawson and edited by Helene Perold, and Vukani Makhosikazi which was workshopped by a Johannesburg women's group and edited by Ingrid Obery deal with the situation of African women. They show how African women have been brought into the workforce, as the most lowly paid workers, with the most menial jobs. Vukhuni Makhosikazi has a section (pp45-51) that effectively shows how African women have been brought into industry and the conditions they work under. Both books deal with the sectors within the economy where African women are mostly concentrated, eg in agriculture and domestic service and industry. They also deal with issues to be fought for at the workplace (eg Working Women pp54-70).

Vukani Makhosikazi has a very well researched section on women in the rural areas (pp177-211). Although women in the rural areas are in a desperate situation they have started to get together to do something about their situation: for example the Mgwali Women's Group and the Magopa Women's Group. The book also has a section on community organisations such as UWO (United Women's Organisation) and FSAW (Federation of South African Women) which is part of a tradition that continues from the Women's Charter which was originally drawn up on 17 April 1954 by the FSAW (pp238-40).

Both books have sections on trade unionism. Reproduced on p141 of Working Women is a paper that was presented to the management of AECI by women members of NAAWU (National Automobile and Allied Workers Union) listing demands for women workers.

All of the books in their own way deal very comprehensively with most of the issues that affect working class women's lives in South Africa: from living so far from the workplace to the double shift. Vukani Makhosikazi even deals with women political prisoners in South African jails. And the pictures in Working women by Leslie Lawson are compelling. The sections on women in domestic service and farm labour are particularly shocking.

Even now things have not improved much for African women; in fact with the tightening up of influx control laws conditions have worsened. To quote from Working Women (p37): "Domestic work! You earn peanuts - even when you do a part-time job as well," says Elsie. Women in industry are not much better off. To quote a floor manager at the Knitmore factory: "Last year we were pressing 1,000 pieces a day. I wanted 2,500 pieces and I couldn't get it. One day, suddenly after months of seeing no-one at the door looking for jobs, there were five. So I took them all on. I trained them without firing anyone, but those who didn't pull up their socks I eventually fired. I now have double the production." (Vukani Makhosikazi p50)

Despite the absolutely appalling conditions, as was said earlier, a spirit of hope prevails, there is a way out! To quote Mam' Lydia (branch secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union on pp136-137 of Working Women) "I think it's time for women to come together and see that this thing is a major problem for us. So that eventually we achieve the same rights. And we must think of many ways of doing it. It's a problem that will go ahead from one generation to another if we don't actually work on it now." And from Thandi Dyosi, of the Mgwali women's group, discussing forced removals:

When we meet as women, we discuss about our rejection of going away from Mgwali, because Mgwali is our home, our place of birth. We want to be united in what we do, because if there is a gap between us, they, our enemies, will find a way to defeat us.

(Penny Narsoo, July 1985)

How to Handle a Sarcastic Employee

For the benefit of management students amongst our readers we publish below extracts from the Sowetan's management series (19.6.85). Ernest Mcunu, an Executive Board member of the South African Institute of Management, deals with a problem.

The problem: manager, George Seoka, is reading through the annual performance report for an employee, Jabulani Nkosi: Jabulani is a bright, ambitious kind of worker, but more often than not, it is his mouth that gets in the way of his career advancement.

Seoka has already heard on the grapevine that:

Nkosi was a good enough worker, but he always seems to be making sarcastic or mocking remarks about the company, about the company's management and so on.

Nkosi is summoned: he enters Seoka's office and says:

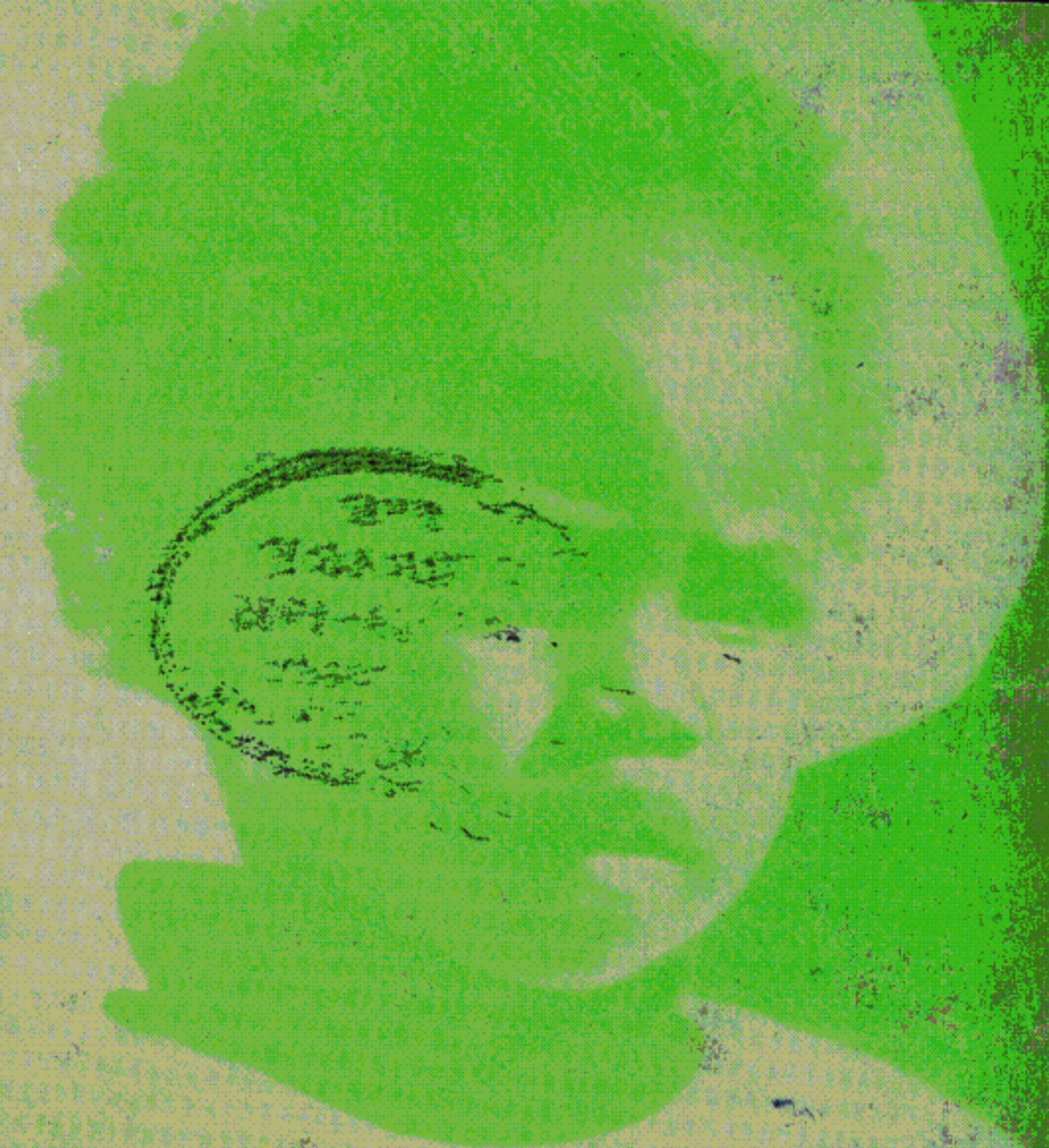
Well Mr Seoka, I guess you called me in to give me a big raise, right? Or maybe a promotion?

Nkosi's attempts at humour were met with a blank expression by Mr Seoka... Seoka walked to his window and took a few minutes to collect his thoughts:

Solution: Explain to him carefully that he is a good worker; it is just that his mouth gets in the way of his career advancement... Impress on him that making progress up the corporate ladder depends to a great extent upon how well one communicates with others, and that a sarcastic or cynical tone in one's voice, does nothing positive, either for the individual or for the company... And, once he begins to think twice before saying anything, he will be on his way to becoming a more respected individual and the corporate doors will be open for him.

Mr Mcunu concludes by asking the readers to write in with their own suggestions for solving this "problem". But maybe the problem is the whole co-optive strategy of "black advancement". Nkosi's questioning approach to management is much more realistic - solution: Nkosi should go back to his fellow workers, use his talents to help organise a union, and then tell Mr Seoka to get stuffed.

(with apologies to the Sowetan)



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