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COSATU's 4th National Congress
also: ANC's 48th National Conference

NUM
settlement
Africa ICFTU
Conference
Schreiner: restructuring the
National Manpower Commission



NEW FROM RAVAN PRESS

STRIKING BACK is the first history of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the world's fastest growing union federation. The author, Jeremy Baskin, is currently national co-ordinator of Cosatu. He speaks with the authority and commitment of an insider who has witnessed both Cosatu's triumphs and its defeats. He identifies strongly with workers and their struggles. Nonetheless, he provides an exceptionally balanced and constructively critical account of Cosatu's first five years.

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Photos by William Motlala/COSATU

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For in-depth analysis of current developments in the South African labour movement, you need the *South African Labour Bulletin*. Started in 1974 with the re-emergence of independent black trade unions, the *Bulletin* attempts to reflect the constantly changing face of industrial relations in South Africa. Workplace issues, the political interface with unions, and international unionism - it's all in the *Bulletin*. Subscribe now!

South African Labour Bulletin Publication Guidelines

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

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articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.

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

- ◇ *analytical articles and debates* 10 000 words
- ◇ *reviews, documents, reports* 5 000 words
- ◇ *briefs* 500 words
- ◇ *letters* 500 words

3 *Articles* should be submitted in a final and correct form and in duplicate. Some articles may be refereed where necessary; all articles may be edited by the *Bulletin*. In the event of the editors deciding that other than minor editing changes are required, the article

will be referred back to the author.

4 *Briefs* cover topical events and developments of concern to the democratic labour movement. They would usually appear under *Labour Action* or *Broadly Speaking*

5 *Reviews, reports and documents* are intended:

- ◇ to make important statements and information from the labour movement more widely available;
- ◇ for reviewing new literature or other material of relevance to labour;
- ◇ to make more in-depth reports and research available to readers.

6 Contributions should be written in clear, understandable language.

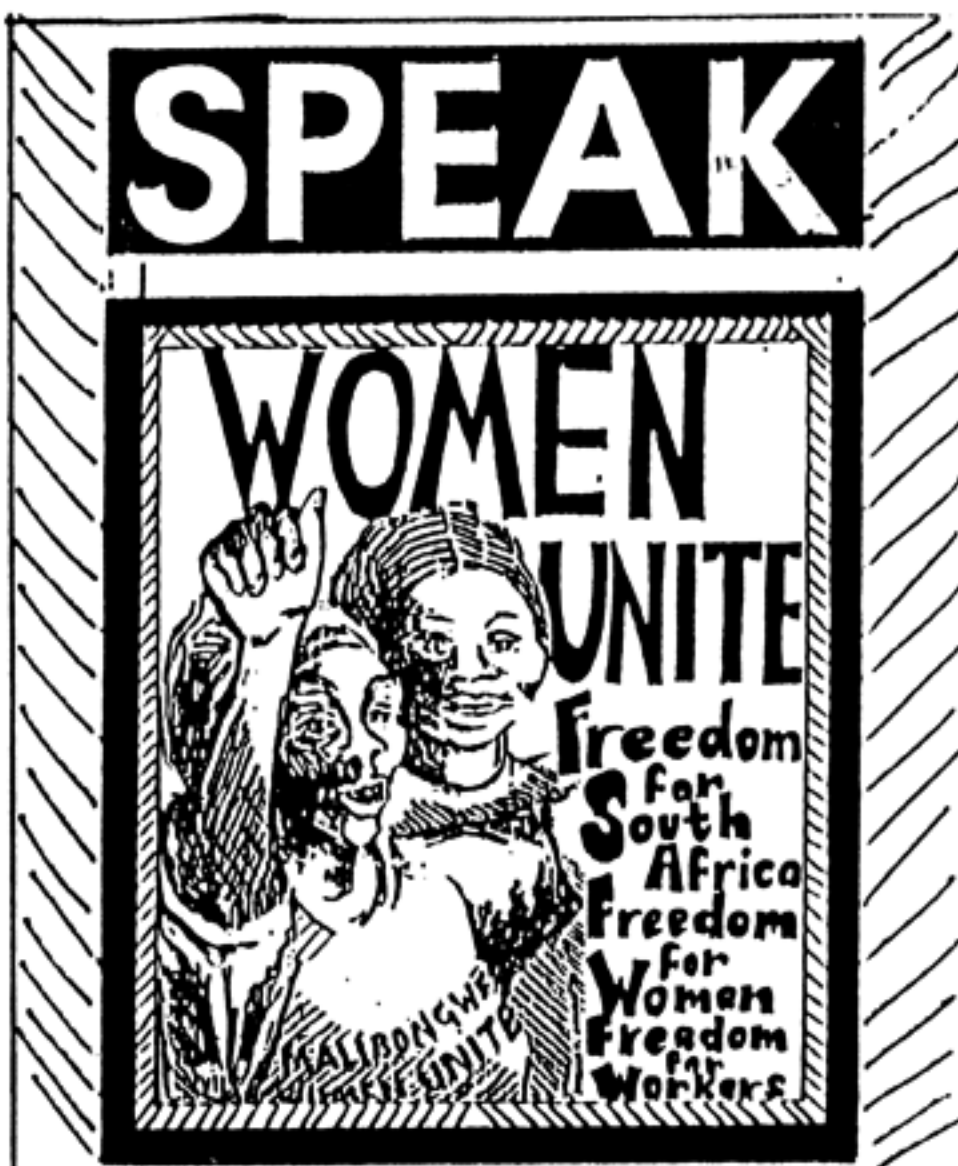
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8 Except in the case of public documents, all material submitted will be treated in confidence.

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

For more details, please contact the editor.

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Editorial Notes

COSATU Congress

Our feature on COSATU's Fourth National Congress analyses some of the developments in the federation, as it gears up to these demands and challenges.

We publish too an extract from the newly-published history of COSATU, *Striking Back* by Jeremy Baskin, which discusses the organisational and political questions facing COSATU in some depth. The article by Geoff Schreiner provides a far-reaching analysis of a major new initiative engaged in by COSATU - negotiations with employers and the state over restructuring of the National Manpower Commission (NMC).

Wages and job security

The NUMSA settlement in the metal industry - and even more so the NUM settlement in the goldmining industry - show a new trend (see articles by Howard Gabriels, Snuki Zikalala). Unions are being forced to settle for lower wage increases (at or below inflation) as economic crisis takes its toll. The trade off is that employers are beginning to make concessions on job security and training (metal & engineering, possibly auto) or on union rights (Chamber).

Various agreements signed by NUM supplement low wage increases with bonuses linked to gold price, profit and productivity. This is a new development, compelled by crisis conditions in the industry. Business hailed the Ergo productivity deal as a 'breakthrough', but unions are unlikely to follow this route. Nonetheless, they will increasingly start negotiating around productivity in the future - and this will raise complex new questions and strategies.

All of these trends make it urgent

that unions - and federations - begin to develop wage policies linked to economic strategies. Otherwise we are likely to see increasing fragmentation and division within the working class, as the article by Carole Cooper shows.

ICFTU conference

Finally, we print a report on the ICFTU's African conference in Botswana. This continues the important international debates initiated in *Labour Bulletin* recently, and which will be continued in future editions.

New writer, editors

We are happy to welcome new writer Snuki Zikalala aboard *Labour Bulletin*. A former SACTU activist and journalist, Snuki returned recently from exile. He studied and lived in Bulgaria for ten years.

Three new members have joined our editorial board in Cape Town. They have all been active trade unionists. Henry Chipeya was the first president of CCAWUSA and co-ordinator of Urban Training Project. Currently he teaches sociology at UCT. Dave Lewis was general secretary of General Workers Union in the 1970s and 80s, and then national organiser in TGWU. He is now co-ordinator of Economic Trends Research Group. Howard Gabriels has also been a unionist for many years - starting with GWU. He then became Namaqualand organiser and then education officer of NUM, after which he moved back to SACTWU in the Western Cape. He left SACTWU earlier this year.

We welcome these new members to our editorial board. They will add vigour and breadth to the *Labour Bulletin*. ☆

Letters to the Bulletin

Comment on Cronin

Dear Editor

It is not because of masochistic needs that many management support staff, such as myself, read the *SA Labour Bulletin*. It provides an additional perspective on industrial relations, if only sometimes to indicate how social and political cleavages in our society shape perceptions of workplace issues. Your magazine makes an important contribution to the understanding of the parties involved in this often uneasy partnership, and of the ideologies which shape it.

It is for this reason that the Copelyn/Zikalala v Cronin debate cannot simply be left to them (*SA Labour Bulletin*, March and April 1991). When non-unionists read these articles, they must be struck by the realism displayed by Copelyn and Zikalala. For them, there will be employers in the new society we are forging: perhaps not the greedy Dickensian capitalists which Cronin wants to avoid at all costs (notice his revulsion at the very thought of "class collaboration") but certainly managers who seek to strike a compromise between capital accumulation needed for the survival, development and growth of companies, and the claims of many stakeholders, which would include employees, shareholders and the community at large, and a fair distribution of the harvest. Lest there is an impression that all employers practise "slavery" (Cronin's term), it should be said that many South African companies do make compromises. They recognise representative unions. They negotiate agreements with them. They do not seek a state only operating "in the interests of the bosses", as Cronin puts it.

Where Cronin errs is that, to employ a cliché, he views industrial relations simply in black and white terms, ignoring the many shades of grey. It is of course also true of the ideological stance he adopts: employers need to be caricatured, in order to ensure the solidarity of the working class. Without the enemy out there, compromise/partnership/cooperation/creative integrative negotiation and all the other modes of interaction which some employers and trade unions have developed over the years, may replace the industrial war he seeks to perpetuate. Note the objective that he pursues: "The objective of the socialist struggle is not to perpetuate that struggle, but to abolish employers."

Cronin then seeks to explain the collapse of the Eastern European economies on the basis that internal democracy (read a coalition between political party and trade unions) would have prevented the growth of a self-serving bureaucratic elite, which is now the convenient Judas' goat. If we extend this argument, it would lead to a social contract to abolish all employers and private ownership, in its logical conclusion, of everything, and we would find ourselves in Utopia. Everyone works for the State (or for non-owned co-operatives), for what the State determines their contributions are, to be rewarded for what the State determines their needs to be. Of course there cannot be trade unions, because if the trade unions and the State are one, who is then the enemy? Or are "collaborative" relations sanctified by the choice of a partner?

When one puts this view to a hawker on Prague's Wenceslas Square, he says it is hogwash. He tells you about outdated factory technology and lack of market in-

formation, because of a cosy barter trade economy with the USSR and other Pact countries. He talks about a totally inadequate product distribution system. He says that people revolted finally because they were denied their rights to property and free trade.

The parallels between the repression of the East European people and the majority of our population are very obvious. There is, however, the danger that those intellectuals who have not yet made the passage from Kronstadt to Kroonstad will propose that we replace one form of totalitarian rule by another : from fascism to marxism in three or four (or perhaps two) steps.

The grey area which they miss, is the social democratic state,

– where a strong private sector flourishes next to a strong public sector

– where trade unions are independent, where social needs are met, where the helpless are protected and the young are trained

– where commonality of interests are built on the shop floor in a (Hegelian?) resolution of the basic conflicts which distinguish the bargaining parties in the first place

– where unions recognise new breeds of brethren, in white coats and clipboards, but are not threatened by them

– where unions participate in joint enterprises with management to run unemployment insurance schemes, provident and pension funds, training schemes, and even banks and supermarkets.

These social democracies exist, because people want them. Socialist states collapsed, because people did not want them. This is the lesson that Cronin still has to learn.

Yours sincerely,

Sirk van Wyk

Advice needed on organising

Dear Editor

I am a civil engineer, working for a company of consulting engineers which is involved in many multidisciplinary projects throughout the country.

Our company employs the following categories of people: professionals (eg, civil engineers, town planners, architects), technical staff (technologists, technicians, laboratory personnel), secretaries, receptionists, gardeners etc. Some of these people are not permanent employees and others are not regarded as permanent, though they have been working consistently for two or more years. Our Durban branch has about 30 white collar workers and 20 blue collar workers. But the whole company (throughout SA) has about 600 white collar workers and 200 blue collar workers.

The employees of this company are not unionised. This is not because they do not want to be, but because they have never been organised or canvassed by any union.

I have approached several union members and leaders, highlighting the problems we are experiencing by not being organised, but none of them

has come with an answer. There are many similar companies in the country (consulting engineers, architects, project managers, town planners, lawyers, quantity surveyors, chartered accountants, medical practitioners etc) where employees of such companies experience the same frustrations as some of my colleagues.

My main questions are:

1. Can't these people be organised by a particular existing union?

2. If not, is it not possible to form a union to cater for these people? How?

3. If all the above is not possible, can't there be a way of defending the rights of these people?

Yours faithfully

Lambada Mapholoba
Durban

SACCAWU replies:

1. SACCAWU is the union which organises employees in the areas you have described. Joining the union would certainly be the best way to defend their rights.

2. The best start would be to approach SACCAWU's national organiser, Important Mkhize, at SACCAWU's Head Office in Johannesburg (Tel: 331 8751), who will provide further information and advice.

3. Once a majority of employees at your workplace have been signed on as union members, you can inform the company managers and negotiate recognition. ☆

Red Eye

Red Eye gets a letter from the British Embassy!

Dear Editor

Red Eye's absence from the British Ambassador's farewell party in Cape Town must account for his uncharacteristically ill-informed account (*SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 8). Yes, Mrs Thatcher was there, but the only problem we Embassy officials had was in keeping her many admirers, representing all shades of political opinion in this country, from overwhelming her.

Next time we will try to remember to invite Red Eye too. We have not seen so much of him of lately, but we are delighted that SALB goes from strength to strength and that the publishing equipment the British Embassy donated to you a few years ago is still being put to good use.

Yours

RJ Sawers

First Secretary

Red Eye answers: As we said in 1988, thanks a million, mate! One does wonder, though, why you assume Red Eye to be a man? In the last issue of *Labour Bulletin*, Red Eye remarked on the sexism of Marxist-Leninist polemic. Maybe male chauvinism is the one thing the British Embassy shares with Leninists? By the way, Red Eye's sources are impeccable. See you at the next party! ♦

Social contacts for social contracts?

By an unfortunate typo-error in the report on the recent mining summit our correspondent seemed to be warning against the dangers of co-option for unions entering into

"social contacts" rather than social *contracts* with management.

However, Red Eye has since discovered that social contacts are indeed blossoming. In what the Chamber of Mines refers to as "The Year of the Relationship", trade union representatives are now being invited to join their counterparts in delicate 'finger lunches' in the breaks during their meetings. Gone are the days of a coke-and-a-bun for NUM negotiators on the kerb outside Chamber of Mine headquarters, while their opposite numbers retreated into the upper chambers for exclusive lunches.

More significant are rumours of union and political leaders in the democratic movement being invited out for week-end breaks at Anglo's country estates. Social contacts for social contracts? ♦

We love SA companies

Veteran President Kenneth Kaunda told South African exhibitors at a recent International Trade Fair in Zambia that "We want more of you to come and join us. We love your companies". (He also hailed President De Klerk as a leader of "courage and deep commitment to the cause of justice and fair play").

And if Kaunda's UNIP is rejected by Zambian voters in favour of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), South African companies will still be welcome, according to Zambian trade union leader Newstead Zimba, whose ZTUC has been one of the leading forces in the formation of the MMD.

Asked what he thought of the fact that such companies are threatening South African workers with re-locating their factories to Zambia "where workers won't give

us so much trouble", 'workers leader' Zimba replied that such companies would be welcome in Zambia under the forthcoming MMD government.

Stop Press: Kaunda has just called for the lifting of sanctions against South Africa! Further encouragement to South African companies! ♦

Paying for murder?

Over the page we print a famous photo taken at the launch of UWUSA. It shows a coffin with the names of Barayi, Naidoo and COSATU on it. A chilling symbol when one thinks of the carnage and death associated with UWUSA and Inkatha. Recently, the government kicked up a hell of a fuss when marchers at an ANC demonstration burnt an anti-government coffin. One wonders why the government turned a blind eye to UWUSA's coffin ... or is it because they paid for it? ♦

New PR, old IR

Rand Mines set up an impressive PR tour of its Blyvooruitsicht mine near Carletonville for the international trade union representatives attending the recent COSATU Congress. They were accompanied by high-ranking Rand Mines management, as well as the manager of the mine itself, but no representative of the NUM shop stewards on the mine.

Travelling to the rockface in the underground electric train, the visitors noticed a

mineworker lying dangerously on the roof of the train, in the narrow space below the ceiling of the tunnel.

Asked to explain, the mine spokespersons responded matter-of-factly that his job was to hold in place the arm joining the train to the high tension cable running along the tunnel roof. The visitors were left with the clear understanding that, to mine management in the 'new' South Africa, a black miner's life is still cheaper than the cost of a simple spring coil. ♦

Hats off to Cyril!

Red Eye extends congratulations to Cyril Ramaphosa on his election as general secretary of the ANC.

Of course, NUM will miss the leadership of Ramaphosa. But soon he may be in a position to oversee the nationalisation of the mining industry, and thus defeat the bosses by other means. Then there'd be no need for a union...or would there? ♦

Pity the environment!

After hearing of his fall from the Department of Defence to Water Affairs and Forestry, Gen Magnus Malan joked that "having beaten the Reds, I am now joining the Greens". With his track record with the human race, we pity the environment ...

A worker commented on Vlok's fall from power: "FW says he has complete confidence in Mr Vlok, he has

done nothing wrong, but, just in case, we'll send him to Correctional Services ..."

Red Eye hopes the war criminals of the regime stand trial in a democratic SA. Viva justice! ♦

Peace on the farms

At the recent Labour Law Conference, the man from SA Agricultural Union quite took Red Eye's breath away. The 1980s were a turbulent time, he observed, but unrest never spread to the farms. The reason? "Good personal relationships between farmers and their workers," he said ... ♦

The hi-tech unions

You all know NUMSA is at the forefront of debates about new technology, multi-skilling and training policy. Well, recently one of NUMSA's top negotiators confessed he didn't know the front from the back of a computer. Asked what programme he used, he looked as blank as a bombed out computer ...

Reminds Red Eye of NUM's photocopier! Reputedly the most advanced copier in the country, it is as big as a truck and costs R20 000 per month to rent. We hear Rank-Xerox brought an SA Perm manager to see NUM's machine, in an effort to persuade him to rent one for his company. "This is much too big for us!" exclaimed the man from Perm.

Red Eye hears that only one person in the NUM offices can operate the machine ... ♦

Labour Action



UWUSA launch - aggressive from the outset

Photo: Billy Paddock

UWUSA, INKATHA and Security Police cash

The revelation by Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok that police funded Inkatha's United Workers Union (UWUSA) to the tune of R1,5-million will not come as a surprise to genuine trade unionists.

The Congress of SA Trade Unions has long maintained that UWUSA is an extension of Inkatha which enjoys the active support of the police.

The formation of the union in 1986 followed threats by Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi to launch Inkatha in the labour field to counter "COSATU insults and denigration". Its first general secretary, Simon Conco, was a former chief whip in the kwaZulu Legislative Assembly. His successor was also a former KwaZulu MP.

Secret police documents leaked to *The Weekly Mail* show that UWUSA was a security police

project. They also reveal that, by October 1989, Vlok was so concerned about the enormous debts accumulated by the union, and the threat that this might expose this covert police project, that he ordered an investigation into its affairs.

The documents also show the direct links between UWUSA and Inkatha, and between Inkatha officials and the police. The Inkatha official in charge of UWUSA was KwaZulu's powerful Interior Minister, Steven Sithebe, who also instructed Inkatha Institute director Gavin Woods to conduct a one-man commission of inquiry into the Inkatha union.

The Weekly Mail is also in possession of a copy of the commission's report, which explodes Vlok's claims that every cent of taxpayers' money paid to UWUSA was properly accounted for. It reveals that half of UWUSA's regions were unable to produce monthly records of

income and expenditure, that no regions maintained proper cash books, and that legally required annually audited financial statements were not presented in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

In their reactions to the Inkatha funding scandal, both Vlok and President FW de Klerk have studiously dodged the charge that by pouring money into the Zulu organisation and its labour surrogate, the state had subsidised violence.

Despite Vlok's claim that police funded UWUSA to promote labour stability and combat violence and intimidation, all the evidence points to the Inkatha union's extensive involvement in violence on the shopfloor, most of it directed at COSATU and its affiliates.

Perhaps the most shocking instance was the cycle of killings at kwaZulu Transport in Maritzburg, which followed an UWUSA recruiting drive at the company and which led to the death of seven Transport and General Workers Union members and three UWUSA members over a three-year period. The conflict was an important trigger for the endless round of political murders in the Maritzburg area.

In a statement released at its national congress, COSATU said UWUSA's low-intensity campaign of intimidation had escalated over the past year into a reign of terror against COSATU members. It said

UWUSA vigilantes had used tactics of forcible recruitment, had attacked National Union of Metalworkers' members involved in the recent metal industries' strike ballot and had been implicated in random attacks on Reef trains. ♦

(Drew Forrest)

SARHWU forces management to recognition

On 25 July, more than 30 000 members of South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) held a protest march through Johannesburg voicing their dissatisfaction at Transnet's wage increase from R750 to R900 a month. This increase had been negotiated in the Transnet Labour Council, a forum from which SARHWU is excluded. It was implemented while Transnet was negotiating with SARHWU outside the Labour Council.

The management of Transnet met the protesting workers and announced that the Labour Council increase would not be implemented. SARHWU members would receive a salary increase in August following wage negotiations with the union. A meeting between union and management was scheduled for 31 July.

The well organised march was led by SARHWU regional chairman, Nelson Ndinise. They were closely

monitored by riot control police in armoured vehicles, and stopped at Transnet's head office where a list of demands was presented to Mr Bredenkamp who is the parastatal's spokesman.

Later in the day, SARHWU officials received a formal letter from Transnet, confirming recognition of the union nationally. Although SARHWU had previously only been recognised in Natal, Transnet had been forced to enter wage negotiations with the union. These negotiations started on 9 July.

SARHWU had tabled the following demands to Transnet:

- Minimum wage of R1500 a month and a 40% increase for all members.
- Equal pension benefits for all Transnet workers.
- Immediate implementation of pay parity at all levels.

According to Vanguard Mkhosana, an official of SARHWU, "During our discussions with Transnet we were not aware of any intransigence. What surprised us was that Transnet unilaterally implemented the wage increase agreed in the Labour Council with the Black Trade Union (BLATU), without even consulting us. We were in the middle of negotiations and had not reached deadlock."

The attempt by Transnet to bypass SARHWU angered militant members of this

union.

The management of Transnet has historically used BLATU to avoid recognising the militant SARHWU. BLATU was established by the parastatal company as a sweetheart staff association for its black workers. Since the late 1980's BLATU has been discredited with workers and hit by mass resignations as workers flocked to join SARHWU. BLATU has since affiliated to NACTU.

It is for this reason that SARHWU - with 40 000 membership the largest union in Transnet - rejects the Labour Council wage increase as an agreement with "minor unions".

Recognition of SARHWU

Workers action on the 25 July forced the management to recognise SARHWU nationally.

SARHWU official Mkhosana explained: "Our recognition was limited to Southern Natal, where we were recognised in 1990 after strike action. Then it was taken that recognition would be extended to other regions as we proved that we had majority membership. This did to a certain extent affect our work since the employer would always want us to have 40% +1 of the workers in a branch before we could represent workers in that branch. Such demands were never made to sweetheart unions like BLATU. Despite that, we

were able to mobilise and organise workers for their social needs even in unrecognised branches."

The formal national recognition will now enable union officials to service the workers. Previously it was extremely difficult for SARHWU officials to consolidate their union structures. Union leadership experienced harassment and collusion between South African Transport Services (SATS, now Transnet) management and security police.

National recognition should also mean that SARHWU can longer be barred from negotiating in the Labour Council.

Unfair dismissals inflame the Northern Transvaal

When SARHWU officials met Transnet on 31 July, topics on the agenda were: attempts to solve the strike by 6 000 workers in Pretoria and the Northern Transvaal, wage negotiation and re-instatement of more than 55 workers who have been unceremoniously dismissed.

Amongst the dismissed workers is Karel Niewoudt (26), a white worker and member of SARHWU.

Before the meeting SARHWU declared: "Our meeting with Transnet will focus on the dismissal of fifty-four workers in Ladybrand. We also demand the implementation of our recognition agreement in Northern Transvaal and the

withdrawal of disciplinary charges against all strikers in Naboomspruit. We demand the inclusion of farmworkers in the Labour Relations Act.

"Transnet must negotiate in good faith. We hope that we will reach a positive agreement. They are aware of our strength and determination".

Niewoudt has become a symbol of unity amongst the workers in this racially divided country. 'Ou Karel', as workers call him, was laid off by Transnet due to his medical condition. He has to take medication for epilepsy, but was able to do his work without problems unless he forgot to take his medication.

SARHWU members in Pietersburg demand that Transnet re-instate him in an appropriate position, taking into consideration his medical condition. Striking workers have made this one of their demands.

White workers changing

Niewoudt is proud of belonging to a union that gives him protection. His white union had done nothing for him since he was retrenched. "If it were not for the union I don't know what would have happened to my family. SARHWU officials have bought me bread and some potatoes."

Other white workers in the Northern Transvaal are also changing their attitudes towards independent black trade unions. The solidarity



SARHWU – making progress in attracting white workers into its ranks

Photo: Kentridge Mathabathe/New Nation

that Karel is receiving from his colleagues has demonstrated to white workers that it is the black independent trade union that genuinely cares and will defend all workers regardless

of colour.

By the time this *Bulletin* went to print, negotiations between SARHWU and Transnet were still in progress. ♦

(Snuki Zikalala)

Auto workers on strike nationally

On 22 July, 25 000 workers from seven vehicle manufacturers downed tools in support of wage demands and the demand for a moratorium on retrenchments. This has become the costliest strike experienced in the industry. More than R500 million in turnover has been lost.

On 7 June NUMSA's auto council, which is made up of all shopstewards from auto plants, decided to declare a dispute on the grounds that the employers had refused to meet NUMSA with an

inflation-based increase, and had refused to table any offer whatsoever as regards job security.

After a declaration of dispute, a meeting was held with the employers. The employers refused to move on the wages issue. Their offer was R1 an hour increase. On the job issue, the employers were adamant. NUMSA did however manage to strike an agreement with the employers on training. Employers were notified that NUMSA was still in dispute and members would be balloted for industrial action.

NUMSA national organiser, Gavin Hartford,



says: "Members of NUMSA voted by a strong majority to engage in industrial action. In a last ditch attempt to try and settle the dispute, we met the employers again. For the first time they indicated that they were ready to table something in respect of a moratorium on retrenchment. They refused to increase the wage offer from R1 an hour. So we decided to engage in industrial action."

The strike started on the 22 July, and has paralysed the entire industry. Talks aimed at resolving the dispute broke down on 31 July, when employers withdrew, accusing NUMSA of not ensuring a return to work as agreed.

The strike comes after a process of negotiations which began early this year. At the beginning of the year, 1 200 workers were retrenched at Nissan in Pretoria. According to Hartford, "NUMSA needs to ensure that jobs are secured for its members. One of the key demands has been for job security, specifically a moratorium on retrenchments."

After the strike had started NUMSA dropped its wage demand from a R1,50 across the board increase to R1,20.

While the National Association of Automobile

Manufacturers of SA (NAAMSA) is claiming workers broke their commitment to end the strike, the union claims some companies closed their doors to workers.

Toyota SA had closed its Prospecton plant to returning strikers in Durban.

Volkswagen management in Uitenhage had told workers that it would not be paying any increased offer made by the National Bargaining Forum (NBF). This reflects a division amongst the employers themselves.

Mercedes Benz SA (MBSA) is the only plant that is not on strike. This suggests that organisation is still weak after the decisive factory occupation and strike last year.

NAAMSA and NUMSA met again on 2 August in an attempt to resolve the strike.

Hartford comment that after 40 hours of mediation with the employers, the union is hopeful that a settlement will be reached. "We have something on the table from management which is a good offer. This will be taken to our members for discussion and approval. We have agreed to meet the employers on 14 August. If we cannot reach an agreement workers will continue with the strike.

"If we secure a moratorium on retrenchments, this will set a precedent for COSATU affiliates in other industries, and will put COSATU at an advantage when negotiating with SACCOLA on a

moratorium."

● NUMSA also represents 3 000 tyre industry workers who downed their tools on 22 July. Workers are demanding better pay and job security. According to Hartford, no negotiations are taking place. Workers are still on strike. ♦

(Snuki Zikalala)

Metal workers fight for job security

The annual wage negotiations in the metal industry have been concluded without any strike action. The metal industry's 350 000 workers who were in dispute with the Steel Engineering Industries Federation (SEIFSA) won an increase of up to 15% cent.

On 31 July, the National Union of Metal Workers (NUMSA), a COSATU affiliate, the Metal and Electrical Workers Union (MEWUSA) and the Steel, Engineering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (SEAWUSA), both NACTU affiliates, and unions affiliated to the white Confederation of Metal and Building Unions (CMBU), signed an agreement which will provide workers with an average increase of 13%.

The agreement came after four months of negotiations. Employers had declared a dispute after the unions had refused the employer's final offer. SEIFSA had offered increases ranging from 9 per cent (86c an hour) to 12,6 per cent (48c an hour) for

artisans and unskilled workers. The settlement will raise the minimum to R5,00 at the bottom level and R10,44 at the top. Artisans will receive hourly increases of R1,14 and labourers 63c respectively.

NUMSA spokesman Alistair Smith said that the signed agreement is not a major victory and at the same time not a defeat. "We have made a number of major points through the agreement. For the lower paid workers, the employers have had to accept that we are not going to settle below the inflation rate.

"We have also made a couple of advances on the question of job security. Employers have agreed that they will make every effort to avoid retrenchment and redundancies and to reduce their impact on employees. They will negotiate with us on retrenchment. Currently employers don't negotiate retrenchment in good faith, they simply notify us about decisions.

"The wording in the agreement now binds them to negotiate in good faith. That will have to be tested in practise."

During the dispute NUMSA held a strike ballot. In the union's view the ballot was not satisfactory. According to Smith many employers were denying facilities to shopstewards.

The union had to cover about 150 000 members as well as non-members. There are 10 000 companies in the

industry which employ 350 000 workers, and NUMSA had to cover all these people within a period of two weeks. Of those who were balloted, 90% were for the strike. But it was quite impossible for NUMSA to reach all its members, so a strike was ruled out.

The threat of mass retrenchment also made the union cautious. "At the moment we are at a disadvantage in terms of bargaining power," says Smith. "The employers are completely unscrupulous and are not negotiating retrenchment in good faith. We fear that by the end of this year we might lose more than 35 000 workers."

Although "we are not happy on the wage issue", Smith believes the gains in job security are important. "They have agreed to make relevant information available to us on how to restructure the industry. We also agreed on training programmes. Instead of retrenchment there will now be re-training, particularly on the question of technological advancement."

The general secretary of MEWUSA, Tommy Olifant says he is pleased with the results. "Workers were prepared to take strike action if SEIFSA did not reach a compromise with us. This would have resulted in financial losses for the employers. We are happy that we managed to reach an agreement in a peaceful manner." ♦

(*Snuki Zikalala*)



Chrome avoids responsibility

Recently 215 workers were retrenched from a factory near Durban, called Chrome Chemicals. Because the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) was worried about the health of its members, the union appointed a doctor to obtain access to the factory medical records of 126 of these workers.

These records show that nearly 40% of the workers have large holes in the bony plate between their nostrils (nasal septum perforation) caused by the chrome dust. These holes cause problems for many of the workers - including pain in the nose, sinusitis, "runny nose" and bleeding from the nose. Worse still is that many workers have died from lung cancer caused by the chrome dust in the workplace.

The factory knew all about these problems for many years and yet did nothing about it. Workers who got lung cancer were simply put on early retirement and would usually die within some months. None of them received compensation. Neither did

any of the workers who had holes in their noses receive compensation.

There has been some publicity on this issue in the press and on television. Furthermore, two CWIU representatives recently went to Germany to meet with Chrome Chemicals' parent company Bayer.

Negotiations are still under way between the union and the company. The union is asking that the company assists it in obtaining compensation for their members, in addition to providing money for a trust fund to cover future health care costs of the retrenched workers.

This has been a clear example of how a multi-national company has exploited their workers and knowingly caused severe damage to their health. It is clear that workers cannot rely on management to look after their health.

The unions should have rights of access to information on chemicals used in the work place and the right of access to the plant in order to monitor working conditions. If workers had the right to have their own elected and trained safety representatives, problems like this would never have occurred. ☆
(*Mark Colvin, UND Industrial Health Unit*)

COSATU



elections, voting, new blocs:

Congress



what does it all mean?

Labour Bulletin was there. KARL VON HOLDT analyses the changes taking place in COSATU.

The non-racial trade union movement, with COSATU at its centre, is now a more influential social force than it has ever been. It is a key player in drafting labour legislation and in restructuring the National Manpower Commission. It is beginning to negotiate on economic issues with the state and employers. It is the main pillar of organised support for the ANC, and as such will have a major impact on national negotiations and the transition to democracy.

COSATU is gearing up to influence the future order with its constitutional proposals and workers charter, and is preparing itself for a central role in

formulating an economic strategy for a democratic South Africa. If a new baby is being born in South Africa, COSATU is determined to be one of the parents.

But COSATU's role and influence will not be automatic. It will have to organise to assert itself and its policies. Great new organisational, political and economic challenges face the federation.

The theme for COSATU's Fourth National Congress, held in Johannesburg at the end of July, points to some of these challenges:

'Organise for democracy, economic reconstruction and socialism'. Many important resolutions were passed. Yet

strangely, there were no surprises among the decisions taken by the congress, and few profound or heated debates.

This is not necessarily a sign of weakness on COSATU's part. Rather, it points to the increasing organisational cohesion and sophistication of the federation. Many policy positions are debated or researched by specialist committees, in workshops and conferences, or in the Central Executive Committee (CEC) itself. Consensus positions are achieved in these forums. Thus many of the congress resolutions are simply endorsed with minor amendments.



Fourth National Congress: organisational cohesion, underlying unity, no surprises

Photo: Abdul Shariff

On the other hand, major issues which still require debate, analysis and research were referred by congress back to other forums. Thus the development of a framework for COSATU's economic policy was referred to a future economic conference; the question of COSATU's role in negotiations was referred to the CEC; and key constitutional amendments were referred to next congress, because affiliates had not discussed them adequately.

This left very few important issues to be debated through on the congress floor. The most significant debates took place on the 'many hats' issue, the question of affirmative action for women, and whether to establish a single union for

farmworkers. Even on these issues the speakers were often restating positions that have been developed in debates in other forums.

If these trends are not a weakness, they do raise serious questions about the role of the national congress in COSATU's internal life.

More voting

There is a new readiness in COSATU to resort to a vote when it is clear that consensus cannot be reached. Resolutions on a union for farmworkers and on the 'many hats' issue went to a vote, and voting was only just avoided on the resolutions on women workers. A resolution to give the COSATU CEC powers to intervene when there are divisions in an affiliate was

also defeated in a vote.

In previous congresses there was an extreme reluctance to vote, both because the culture of unity in struggle was so important, and also because political tensions were so deep in the federation. In the third congress (1989) all resolutions were adopted by consensus. The 1988 special congress managed by a hair's breadth to avoid being split down the middle by a vote on political strategy, but went to a vote on whether to call a three-day or two-day stayaway. The second congress (1987) avoided a vote on adopting the Freedom Charter because opponents were unable to forge a united position. Thorough caucusing in 1985 meant there was no need for

a vote at COSATU's founding congress.

The willingness to vote reflects a confidence among affiliates that differences on various issues will not threaten the fundamental unity of the federation. There is a large measure of consensus on the key political questions, and affiliates no longer see congress as an ideological battlefield.

Leadership elections

This is also the first COSATU congress where the election of national office-bearers has been contested.* This, too, is a sign of confidence and underlying unity.

Elijah Barayi - generally regarded as a popular but somewhat ineffectual leader - stood down as president, and Chris Dlamini (first vice-president) stood against John Gomomo (second vice-president) for this position. Gomomo was nominated by NUM, NUMSA, CWIU, SACCAWU and TGWU - unions which tend to have more nuanced or complex political views because they combine different political currents.

Dlamini was nominated by the more orthodox 'national democratic' unions: FAWU, CAWU, SARHWU, POTWA, NEHAWU and PPWAWU. Voting was by secret ballot, and Gomomo won narrowly (1175 to

1045), leaving Dlamini unopposed as first vice-president.

There seems to be no clear political significance to this contest. Dlamini - an incisive and witty chairperson - has effectively been the acting president of the federation for the past few years. He comes from the 'national democratic' background of FAWU, while Gomomo, a seasoned worker leader and shopsteward at Volkswagen, comes from the 'independent worker' tradition of NAAWU and NUMSA. But like so many of COSATU's leadership, they now share a common political perspective. Both are on the internal leadership core of the SA Communist Party.

Jay Naidoo was re-elected general secretary. The popular TGWU president Sam Shilowa (see Profile, p 90) was elected as assistant general secretary, replacing Sydney Mufamadi who goes to the ANC full-time. There were two nominees for second vice-president: Godfrey Olifant, a NUM shopsteward at De Beers and chairperson of COSATU's Northern Cape region, and Salie Manie, chairperson of SAMWU's Cape Town branch. However, only two union's nominated Manie, and his nomination was withdrawn without a vote. Ronald Mofokeng was re-elected treasurer unopposed.

Three of COSATU's six national office-bearers are active leaders of the SACP - Gomomo, Dlamini and Shilowa.

NUM/NUMSA alliance

Many of the resolutions were jointly sponsored by the two biggest affiliates, NUM and NUMSA. In fact, on all the issues that went to a vote, NUM and NUMSA voted together: against restrictions on wearing more than one hat, for a single farmworkers union, against CEC intervention in the affairs of affiliates. Both also supported the nomination of Gomomo (a NUMSA member) for president, and Olifant (a NUM member) for second vice-president.

The Big Two make a powerful bloc: over 1 000 delegates out of a total of 2 500. Their alliance arises out of several factors. Historically, NUMSA was the heavyweight union in the 'workerist' camp, while NUM was the heavyweight in the 'populist' camp. Political debates would see them slugging it out against each other.

Thus, when there was a growing consensus and recognition that unity was important in COSATU, it fell to these two unions to hammer out compromises. This was evident in the 1989 congress: NUM and NUMSA frequently debated against each other, but were

* There was a minor challenge to Makhulu Ledwaba's candidacy for second vice-president at the launching congress.

prepared to listen to each other and reach compromise.

In this years congress, however, the two cooperated even more closely with each other. The only debate which found them on opposing sides was that on advancing women's leadership. This cooperation is based on

- the historical responsibility they both shared in building unity
- an increasingly similar political perspective
- on their common experience as very big trade unions.

Thus they tend to have similar views on many of the organisational and bargaining issues facing COSATU as a rapidly growing giant federation.

While the co-operation between NUM and NUMSA has greatly strengthened and unified COSATU, it does hold some dangers. In particular, it may lead to frustration among the smaller unions as it is close to impossible for them to win a vote unless they can split the big two or win them both to their point of view.

Thus the smaller FAWU-PPWAWU- SACTWU bloc had virtually no prospect of winning their position (right or wrong) on farmworkers, once NUM and NUMSA had come out against it.

An increasing use of secret ballots may reduce this risk by eroding the tendency for union delegations to vote in blocs. Currently the practise is to vote by show of hands unless the majority



Delegates vote by show of hands: secret ballot in future?

Photo: William Motlala/COSATU

calls for a secret ballot. In fact, FAWU made a strong plea for the farmworker issue to be decided by secret ballot but failed to muster support.

The contest between Dlamini and Gomomo was decided by secret ballot, though. It provided an interesting foretaste of how this can erode bloc-voting. The unions which nominated Gomomo had 1401 delegates present, yet he received only 1175 votes. The unions supporting Dlamini had 542 delegates present.

The unions which did not nominate either candidate had 526 delegates present. There were 18 spoilt papers and 222 abstentions.

Thus a significant number of delegates in the unions nominating Gomomo must have broken union ranks by either abstaining or voting for Dlamini. There may well be a push for an increased use of secret balloting in future congresses, especially from the smaller unions.

Congresses and democracy

The willingness to take resolutions to a vote and the contestation of elections are signs, not of tension and division, but of increased democracy and unity in COSATU. The relative lack of heated and complex debate also reflects the organisational cohesion and sophistication of the federation. These trends seem to have given the office-bearers a new confidence.

The chairing of previous congresses was characterised by careful neutrality, so that points of order or procedure were endlessly debated by the house. This year both Gomomo and Dlamini chaired firmly, not hesitating to rule on procedure, to guide debate or call on the secretariat for clarification.

There may, however, be new dangers lurking in the current situation. Between 1985 and 1989 the national

Affiliate membership figures

UNION	1990	1991
CAWU	21 000	30 123
CWIU	35 151	45 147
FAWU	77 507	129 480
NEHAWU	14 295	18 110
NUMSA	188 013	273 241
NUM	212 000	269 622
POTWA	16 842	21 467
PPWAWU	31 215	42 962
SADWU	14 525	16 462
SAMWU	23 638	60 304
SACCAWU (CCAWUSA)	72 883	96 628
SACTWU (ACTWUSA/GAWU)	177 908	185 740
SARHWU	16 400	36 243
TGWU	23 182	33 324
TOTAL	924 559	1 258 853

congresses used to be the forum where affiliates met to thrash out – or do battle over – the key issues of the day. For example, political policy and alliances in 1987; political strategy and tactics in 1988; consolidating unity and preparing for national political negotiations in 1989. Debates were passionate and complex, and the outcomes were not always predictable.

Whether the final resolutions were contested or were based on compromise and consensus, they set the political and organisational direction of COSATU. Thus delegates to congress were participants in major debates and decisions shaping the federation.

This is less true now. As argued above, issues are worked through and debated in a range of forums outside the national congress. In some ways the congress simply endorses decisions

that are already formulated elsewhere. If debates have not been resolved and involve complex analysis, it is unlikely that they will be thrashed out on the congress floor. Rather, they tend to be referred to specialist committees, the CEC, or future conferences. One of the ironies of the congress this year is that, while the theme identified the key issues, the congress was unable to discuss two of them - economic reconstruction and socialism!

Yet congress is the highest decision-making body in COSATU, and the largest assembly of worker leaders. If the tendency for decisions to be made in other forums increases, it could undermine the democratic power of the congress.

This problem is simply one aspect of the central challenge facing COSATU: how to retain and deepen workers control and

democracy as the organisation becomes ever bigger and deals with an ever-wider range of more and more complex issues.

The answer to this problem is probably not to try and reverse the trend by saddling congress with every policy decision, but rather to use each congress to assess organisational progress since the previous congress, and to focus only on the major organisational and political challenges which will face the union movement in the future.

It seems that the federation is already moving in this direction. Constitutional amendments approved by congress explicitly empower the CEC to give broad policy direction to COSATU, and provide for national congresses to be held every three years rather than every two years. This implies that congresses will be used to set broad organisational and political direction, rather than decide a range of policy issues. ♦

Organisational issues

The secretariat report to congress notes that COSATU has made great gains in membership, particularly in the public sector. But it also points out that many regions and affiliates are weak. The weakest sectors are the public sector, and

organisation of farmworkers, domestic workers and the unemployed. NEHAWU is regarded as particularly weak.

The congress decided to strengthen the public sector by working towards the formation of one public sector union. The CEC was mandated to "develop, together with the affected unions, a programmatic approach towards consolidating and expanding organisation in this sector" and also to lead public sector campaigns. This programme should also involve organisation outside COSATU, such as SADTU and POPCRU.

The congress also put pressure on SARHWU and TGWU to speed up their merger process by setting a deadline of the end of this year.

The debate over farmworker organisation was a controversial one, and was eventually resolved through a vote. The three unions which organise farmworkers, FAWU, PPWAWU (forests) and SACTWU (cotton farms), argued that COSATU should support and assist them, rather than trying to establish a single separate union for all farmworkers.

Organisationally, they argued, the entry point of unions is through industrial processing. Once a union has an organisational base in the processing plants, it has some leverage to organise the workers on the farms which supply the factories. They added that it would be difficult to find the personnel

Economic policy

Discussion of resolutions dealing with economic and industrial restructuring, and raising questions about economic bargaining, a social contract, and socialism, was referred to an economic conference to be convened by COSATU. This reflected the prevailing view that there was insufficient time to discuss these issues fully, and that worker leadership are not fully involved in the formulation of policy. The economic conference will be expected to formulate an overall economic policy framework for COSATU.

The congress did, however, adopt a powerful resolution on immediate economic negotiations in the 'Jobs for all - No retrenchments' campaign (see p. 22) ❖

and resources to launch a new, separate farmworkers union.

From an economic point of view, they argued, the farms are increasingly integrated into industrial processing. The employers on the farms and in the factories view their operations as one sector, and try to formulate overall economic policy for it.

COSATU should approach economic restructuring in the same way, and this would be facilitated by organising workers on cotton farms in one union with textile and clothing workers, or workers on food farms in the same union as workers in the factories which process food.

But these arguments were opposed by NUM, NUMSA, SACCAWU and CWIU. They argued that COSATU is based on the principle of one industry, one union, that farming forms one industry, and should be organised as such. Many unionists feel

FAWU, PPWAWU and SACTWU are motivated more by sectional interests than by the interests of farmworkers as a whole. Eventually this went to the vote, and a single union for all farmworkers was endorsed by a majority of about 400.

Campaigns

The secretariat report noted that campaign coordinating structures have been developed and campaigns are more successful than before, but pointed to a number of weaknesses. Affiliates do not prioritise campaigns, nor do they put sufficient resources into campaigns or report back adequately to their membership. The report also argues that there have been too many unconnected campaigns and separate actions.

The congress resolved to streamline campaigns by "having

- one campaign at a time
- one set of demands to one

negotiating forum,
involving both state and
employers

- strong links with affiliate
issues and struggles
- realistic timetables and
deadlines
- a programmatic approach."

Worker control

The same resolution also
aims to enhance worker
control by "ensuring that

- workers are well-informed
about campaigns
- all campaign committees
consist of a majority of
workers, elected and
accountable to structures
- there is one
worker-dominated
campaign coordinating
structure
- all COSATU
subcommittees be directly
accountable to
constitutional structures."

This resolution echoes a
concern in the secretariat
report that the complex
political and economic issues
COSATU is increasingly
engaging with, and the
accelerating pace of
negotiations in different
forums, are undermining
worker control. "An in-depth
understanding of the nature
of the economic crisis,
industrial restructuring, etc,
is generally limited to a
small layer of officials and
worker leaders. We need to
develop a programmatic
approach to developing
worker leadership and
generating new cadres for the
union movement."

The congress resolved to
strengthen staff development



*Birth of giant: COSATU launch, 1985. Six years later
maturity brings new challenges for worker control*

Photo: Paul Weinberg/Southlight

and training and shopsteward
education in order to try and
address these problems.

More power to COSATU

There were several
organisational proposals that
were placed before congress
with the aim of strengthening
COSATU as a federation.
Currently COSATU is
constituted wholly by its
affiliates: it has no
autonomous structures of its
own.

COSATU locals, for
example, are not represented
in any of the higher
structures of the federation at
regional or national level.
Likewise, regional structures
have no representation at
national level. Both the CEC
and the national congress are
constituted exclusively by
delegations from the
affiliated industrial unions.

Not all national trade
union federations are
structured like this. In both
the CGIL in Italy and CUT
in Brazil, the local federation

structures have strong
representation in regional
federation structures, while
the regions are also
represented in national
structures. In CGIL, for
example, half of all delegates
at regional congresses come
from the local structures of
CGIL, while half of the
delegates at national
structures represent the
regional congresses. These
delegates represent the
federation rather than its
affiliates. This gives
federation structures real
constitutional power in
decision-making. It can be
argued that this strengthens
the ability of the federation
to unify the working class by
breaking down sectoral
chauvinism.

Two resolutions before
congress suggested that
COSATU might consider
developing along these lines.
One proposed that two
delegates from each region
should attend the CEC, either
with speaking or speaking

and voting rights. Another proposed that all office-bearers of COSATU locals should attend regional congresses, and that the chairperson and secretary of each local should attend regional executive committee meetings. These proposals would considerably enhance the power and authority of federation structures and office-bearers.

Unfortunately they were not debated, as they had not been adequately discussed in affiliates. Nor were proposals to specify more clearly the role, duties and powers of these structures. Another resolution proposing to expand the national office-bearers with the addition of a second assistant general secretary and a third vice-president was also not debated. Instead, the CEC was mandated to evaluate all the structures and functions of the federation, and submit any changes it felt necessary to the next congress.

Although these resolutions were not discussed, they indicate the direction of future constitutional debate. There will probably be resistance to strengthening the structures of the federation, as many affiliates are jealous of their autonomy. This was clear in the opposition to a resolution, motivated by PPWAWU, to give the CEC power to intervene in affiliates which are internally divided. It was rejected by virtually all affiliates. ♦



Women workers

The debate around how best to enhance the role of women workers was infinitely more advanced than at the last COSATU congress. The debate centred on the question of separate women's structures. Most unions argued for separate women's forums.

Some argued that women's forums should have representation on constitutional structures. CWIU argued there should be proportional representation of men and women in all structures, and that at least one national office-bearer should be a woman. No other union supported the latter proposal.

The unions with the highest proportion of women members (SACTWU and SADWU) and the lowest proportion (NUM) argued against separate structures. SACTWU reported that they had had great success with a programme of affirmative action within ordinary union structures, and quoted figures to prove it. They argued that everyone needs to take responsibility for affirmative action, and that there is no proof that separate structures are effective.

When it was clear that no agreement would be reached, the chair adjourned the debate to the following day. On the next day it was reported that union

caucusing had produced consensus on the need to employ a full-time women's coordinator, but unions remained intransigent on the issue of separate structures.

However, as the issue was about to go to the vote, SACCAWU proposed a compromise in which the status quo of separate structures (local and regional forums and a women's subcommittee of the national education committee) be maintained rather than expanded, and at the same time COSATU should call regular meetings of affiliates to discuss gender issues, as SACTWU wanted.

All unions agreed to the compromise. This was important. The resolution endorsing separate structures would probably have won in a vote, but at the cost of opposition from SACTWU which is the key women workers union.

The most important point is that COSATU will now have a full-time gender coordinator, whose task will be to monitor, assist and strengthen affirmative action in the federation and all affiliates. This should provide a significant boost to the participation and leadership of women workers. ♦



Political resolutions

As expected, the 'many hats' debate was the most contentious political issue.

CWIU, seconded by SACTWU, proposed that national office-bearers and members of Exco (in effect general secretaries and presidents of all affiliates) should not be allowed to become national leaders of other organisations. CWIU argued that wearing more than one hat would compromise the independence of the unions, over-extend leadership, and make it difficult to unify the trade union movement.

SAMWU stated that "we have fought very hard to unban our organisations, and we cannot leave them to be weak." If unions adopt a position that "forces comrades to resign from one or other organisation, we will play right into the hands of the counter-revolutionaries." Nonetheless, SAMWU felt that national office-bearers should not wear more than one hat, and that affiliates should continue debating the issue.

NUM opposed these views, arguing only that an office-bearer could not hold more than one full-time job, and that those who hold office in other organisations should prioritise union work. NUMSA seconded NUM, but added that COSATU office-bearers should represent COSATU's views when on federation business. FAWU supported the NUM-NUMSA resolution, voicing its suspicion that those who raised 'two hats' as an issue had "their own agenda".

With all parties standing firm on their positions, the chair was forced to take the

Inkathagate and mass action

The congress was outraged by the Inkathagate scandal, in which secret government funding for Inkatha and UWUSA was exposed a few days previously. A statement was drafted giving expression to this outrage. It called for the full disclosure of all secret funding and covert operations, the resignation of the government and installation of an interim government, for employers to stop deducting PAYE tax from wages, for employer bodies to make public any collusion between employers and the "forces of violence", and for employers and the international community to pressurise the regime to disclose the truth. COSATU also demanded that the regime pay reparations to the victims of violence.

The declaration threatened a mass campaign against paying of all taxes, including VAT, and promised to consult its allies and convene a patriotic front meeting to map out a programme of mass action to force the government to resign.

Calls for a general strike, stayaways, and a boycott of taxes were received with militant enthusiasm by delegates. Inkathagate may yet be the spark that re-ignites mass action by the resistance movement in South Africa. ♦

issue to a vote. The outcome was 1500 for the NUM-NUMSA resolution, 617 for CWIU-SACTWU, and 126 abstentions. The outcome was predictable, but a SACTWU official commented: "We have proven that our concern is not just the concern of a few intellectuals, but of a large bloc of delegates representing a quarter of COSATU's members. It will be back on the agenda at the next congress."

Tripartite alliance and negotiations

The outcome of the 'many hats' debate does not mean unionists are abandoning their independence. The congress "reaffirmed the organisational independence

of COSATU", and reserved "the right to be politically active and to oppose any decision that detrimentally affects us, both now and in a future non-racial democratic South Africa". The congress resolved to strengthen the ANC and SACP and build the tripartite alliance, but endorsed an assertive role for COSATU: there would be constructive self-criticism by alliance partners, full information about alliance meetings, and no alliance partner could unilaterally change decisions agreed upon by the alliance.

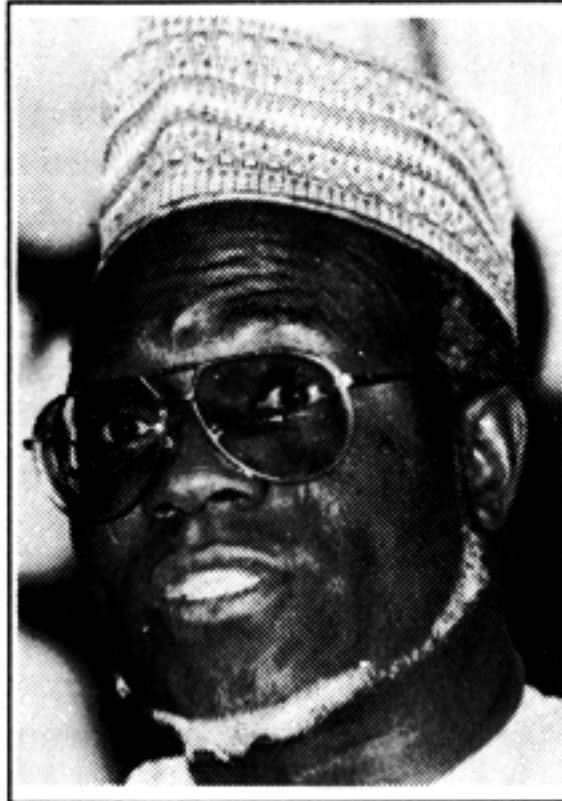
The negotiation resolution reiterates COSATU support for a constituent assembly and interim government, and supports participation in an

all-party conference by all national parties and organisations. The congress resolved not to decide on whether COSATU should participate directly in negotiations, but empowered the CEC "to review the negotiations process and our participation in it on an ongoing basis. ❖

International affiliation



The key decision on international issues was the decision to affiliate to the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and "empower the CEC to develop a programme to make an effective contribution to this organisation". The congress resolved to "pay attention to strengthening the union movement throughout the



OATUU's Hassan Sunmonu at COSATU

Photo: Abdul Shariff

sub-continent", to continue participating in the Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council (SATUCC), and to work with it for the "adoption and popularisation of a Southern African Workers Charter incorporating demands for basic social, economic and union rights for workers in

the region".

Reflecting a positive assessment of recent meeting with unions of the Pacific Rim and Brazil, the congress also resolved to strengthen links with unions of the Pacific Rim, the Indian subcontinent, South America and Australasia, which are seen as "crucial to our economic future".

On North-South links, congress resolved to "normalise" relations with ICFTU, WFTU and WCL, while rejecting affiliation to any of them. The resolution argued that relations with national union centres in the industrialised countries should be retained, but COSATU should "reduce our emphasis on receiving material aid from these centres and move towards a more general solidarity and sharing of expertise and resources." ☆



Resolutions



The Tripartite Alliance

1 We reaffirm our commitment to the tripartite alliance with the ANC and SACP. This alliance is the engine of our struggle for fundamental transformation.

2 Building the Alliance

2.1 We remain committed to building the alliance at local, regional and national levels.

2.2 We commit ourselves to educate and encourage our members to join the ANC and SACP.

2.3 The alliance at a national level should look at the question of demarcation at lower levels to ensure the smooth functioning of the alliance at these levels.

3 We reaffirm the organisational independence of COSATU and our policy not to affiliate to any political party. We retain the right to be politically active and will act against any decision that detrimentally affects our members, both now and in a future non-racial democratic South Africa.

4 We see the alliance being based on:

- democratic principles of mandates and report-backs
 - consensus decisions
 - full disclosure of information
 - the full independence of each organisation
 - effective co-ordinating structures at all levels
 - a unifying, mass-based programme of action
 - joint planning and organisation of agreed alliance campaigns
 - prior consultation on major policy issues and mass actions
 - constructive self criticism of the alliance partners within the broad framework of our programme.
- 5 No party to the alliance can unilaterally change any decisions agreed upon at an alliance level. We see the alliance as involving equal partners.
- 6 We will prioritise within the alliance:
- joint mass campaigns which complement and

strengthen the negotiations process

- a long-term strategy to deal with the problem of violence
- the promotion of policies and decisions which reflect working class interests

7 Patriotic Front

7.1 We support the establishment of a broad Patriotic Front whose primary focus is to unite organisations of the oppressed and all those who support the call for a Constituent Assembly.

7.3 The tasks of the PF should be a united mass campaign and programme of action for:

- peace,
- unity,
- a constituent assembly based on one person one vote on a common voters role.

7.4 A preparatory committee should be established as a matter of urgency and liaise with present formations in preparation for the building of the PF at local, regional and national levels.

7.2 All participating organisations should have a culture of political tolerance.

7.5 COSATU should be part of the Patriotic Front.

Jobs for All , No Retrenchments Campaign, and Saccola/State Negotiations.

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 To achieve the short term programme described above we need to embark on a process of negotiations with employers and the state.

1.1.2 Our objective should be to combine a programme of negotiation and action to pressurise the employers and the state to take steps to end retrenchments, create jobs and put into motion a programme that will ensure that the economy grows to the benefit of the majority of the people.

2 Principles to underlie the campaign.

2.1 We should have short and medium term demands. If we are able to win some demands fairly quickly, it will build morale, mobilise our members and commit affiliates to the process.

2.2 This means we will need to prioritise certain demands so that we can show some results fairly quickly. This does not mean that we should not pursue the other demands: however, those demands will take much longer to negotiate to completion.

2.3 This should be COSATU's major campaign for the next 18 mnths and affiliates must prioritise it. Other initiatives and campaigns must be linked to this so that we have one set of demands.

2.4 The campaign needs to be accompanied by intensive education and mobilisation of our members so that we can take effective mass action if the negotiations deadlock.

2.5 We need to keep our allies, fraternal organisations and other forces in the patriotic front

informed about the campaign and consult with them wherever necessary. A joint forum for this purpose needs to be established with the alliance.

2.6 We need to strive to involve other trade union federations and independent trade unions in the negotiations process, in support of our demands.

3 Demands

COSATU should fight for a moratorium on all retrenchments

3.1 Priority demands

(I) Job creation and an end to job loss.

SACCOLA and the State must agree to negotiate:
a) major job creation programmes (e.g. affordable housing, affordable electrification etc.) Job creation schemes need to be negotiated centrally as much as possible.

b) SACCOLA and the State must guarantee:

- No job loss
- Union rights in all companies so that workers can be fully involved in the discussion of these issues;
- Negotiation of:
 - changes to the organisation of production and skills;
 - use of profit;
 - investment decisions;
 - decisions about what to produce;
 - research and development;
 - introduction of new technology and new production techniques.

(II) An end to privatisation, commercialisation and investment of state money without negotiation with the labour movement.

(III) Workers should be retained not retrenched. There should be a nationally integrated education and training framework.

(IV) No VAT on basic foodstuffs, medicines and trade union subscriptions

(V) SACCOLA should agree to fund a feasibility study on the reconversion of hostels.

(VI) Government to stick to its commitment to restructure the NMC and negotiate with the labour movement on all legislation which affects workers.

3.2 Other demands

(I) An end to racial discrimination in social pensions, and reduction in normal retirement age to 55 years for men and women.

(II) Wage gaps should be reduced.

(III) A 40 hour week.

(IV) Affordable and accessible national health care system.

(V) Efficient, affordable and safe public transport.

(VI) A living UIF for unemployed workers.

(VI) There should be centralised bargaining. ♦

Worker rights & trade union unity in South Africa



Photo: William Motlala/COSATU

*CUNNINGHAM NGCUKANA**, general secretary of the National Congress of Trade Unions (NACTU) speaks at the COSATU Congress

I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to COSATU for extending an invitation to NACTU, and I believe that this gesture augers very well for future co-operation and more importantly, trade union unity in our country.

You are holding your Congress at a critical time in the history of our struggle and our country. It is no longer an issue whether apartheid will go or not but what will replace the existing order.

The concern of the trade

union movement is the rights of workers now and in the future. The trade union movement, with COSATU an important component of the movement, has played an important role as a locomotive of the struggle for National Liberation.

Workers have been killed, maimed and imprisoned as part of this struggle and therefore they do not expect to be used as ladders to political power but want to share in the gains made out

of the National Liberation struggle.

I would therefore share with you important workers rights that we believe in NACTU are essential to carry the struggle beyond apartheid. We believe that the end of apartheid will not mean the end of exploitation and other economic woes workers face until a socialist order is established where the working class will be in control of its destiny.

* Ngcukana (above left) clasps hands with COSATU's Jay Naidoo as the Congress sings after his speech

Rights of workers

The following rights are a pre-requisite and should be enshrined in the constitution and given legislative effect. I wish to emphasize the question of legislative effect as many people believe that having rights enshrined in the constitution is enough.

Many repressive states have these rights enshrined in their constitutions, but do not have mechanisms whereby people can exercise these rights. They end up as a decoration of the constitution, and we should avoid having a beautiful flower when we can not even smell its scent. The following rights are the basic worker rights that the trade union movement should fight for now, and after National Liberation has been attained, to pave the way for the attainment of a socialist order.

■ 1. Political and Civil Rights

Every person, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex, should have the right to vote and be voted for into the political institution of the land. A corollary of this is that every person should have the right to form and belong to a political party of his or her own choice.

This right, as every right, has to have a limit in that it should be underlined by non-racialism, as racists should have no place in the future society. Without political and civil rights, the working class has limitations in influencing the political direction of the country and in forming political parties

that would serve its class interests.

■ 2. Freedom of expression

This is another basic right that we should fight for. Free flow of ideas and information is essential for any democratic society. The suppression of this right affects the ideological development of the working class, as has been the case when the Nationalist Party banned almost all Marxist-Leninist literature and bombarded us with capitalist propaganda. However, as we all know, they failed - as workers and our people know that what the oppressors are against is good for them.

■ 3. The right to strike and picket

■ 4. The right to form and belong to trade unions of our own choice without interference by the state and employers.

This right gives the workers absolute power to control their own organisations and to decide on what direction their organisations should take. It is an internationally recognised right by the ILO. Financing of trade unions by the South African Police to be against sanctions and socialism is a violation of this right.

■ 5. The right to education and training

The denial of training to workers is a deliberate capitalist ploy to ensure cheap labour and huge profits and to undermine the collective power of the working class.

This makes workers to be easily replaced. Skills are an important component of our collective power to strike back in the struggle to improve our standard of living.

■ 6. The right to a healthy and safe working place

Workers are not machines but human beings. Their lifespan depends on the environment within which they work and the working conditions. This right must be protected to ensure that workers are not maimed in pursuit of profits or leave their children as orphans.

Workers' organisation and unity

I have mentioned the most important rights. The list is not exhaustive. To ensure these rights, our weapon is organisation and unity. We should not expect to be given rights on a platter, even by liberation movements who we are fighting side by side with us to day to win our freedom. Our alliance with them can be temporary and limited to the attainment of National Liberation and they can turn against workers.

Namibian workers know better. After National Liberation each social class has its own social aims and it is inevitable that we will clash with some of the social classes we have aligned with to overthrow white domination. Our defence is our organisation, unity and struggle as workers.

I should also stress, that

we need also to produce a leadership with commitment to the working class, vision and imagination that should be able to interpret situations for the workers at each and every turn so that they can give direction to our movement. I am confident that this Congress will do this.

Relation between liberation movements and trade unions

The fundamental question is how to have these rights implemented. This raises the question of the relation between liberation movements and trade unions.

NACTU believes that, as we are in the same trenches with liberation movements, we should be able to influence them to be biased towards the workers. This brings in the 'two hats' debate which is a subject of discussion the world over. I believe that, irrespective of the position we have taken, the matter will not be settled for a long time. People must accept that time will resolve the matter, but we must continue debating in a comradely spirit.

The central issue, however, is not two hats, but how to ensure that our demands are included in the political programmes of our liberation movements without tampering with our independence.

We need to encourage our membership to be involved in progressive political organisation and use the Patriotic Front to put forth this demand.

The Summit on Workers

Rights which was mooted by COSATU and NACTU must involve all progressive liberation movements so that they can take cognisance of our demands.

Lastly, having had international solidarity in fighting for these rights we must remember that solidarity is a two-way process.

We must assist trade unions in Southern Africa to achieve these rights, and put forth to the Liberation Movements that trade with countries that trample on trade union rights will not be possible. With our collective strength, I am confident that this can be achieved. We owe our brothers in our trade union movement a lot for the assistance they have given us to gain our strength that must reverberate throughout the continent.

South African trade union unity

Comrade Chairperson, NACTU believes in one federation in one country and in the unity of the working class, and that it is an indictment on us, both COSATU and NACTU, for not having achieved that. However it is one thing to believe in something and another to move from where we are to attain unity.

The political situation that has made the divisions is changing, and we believe that we should be able to move towards eventual unity, as the division of the working class is a luxury we cannot afford. We believe that to attain trade

unity, we should transcend parochial political positions and unite workers on the basis of working principles and interests.

This we can achieve if we all believe in non-affiliation to political organisation and create a federation that can accommodate individual political affiliation of workers but united by common working class interests.

The co-operation that exists between COSATU and NACTU has to be strengthened, and interaction amongst our affiliates encouraged. As part of a contribution to this process as NACTU, we have a programme of uniting affiliates operating in one industrial sector and we hope to achieve this by the end of March. A divided trade union movement can be manipulated to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

If we reach a new society with the working class divided, we run the risk of losing the gains we have made. We need also to look beyond COSATU and NACTU to unions that are outside the two federations to draw them into the process of unity.

The outstanding Summit on Trade Union Unity must be convened without delay to discuss this question and set the requisite structures into place to work towards this goal. We have an appointment with history as the working class but we cannot meet it without unity.

Conclusion

As an important component of the trade union and the liberation movement, all eyes are at your Congress. The issues that you will be dealing with are not of

interest only to workers but to the rest of the national and the international trade union movement. We are confident that you will handle your deliberations with the sensitivity and responsibility

that is required. ☆

**AMANDLA
VIVA COSATU
VIVA NACTU
VIVA THE SPIRIT OF
WORKING CLASS UNITY**

Standing ovation

This was the first COSATU congress to be addressed by NACTU. When Cunningham Ngcukana, general secretary of NACTU, rose to speak the chair called for a song. The response of delegates was lukewarm. But by the end of his speech the mood had changed completely. Delegates rose in an enthusiastic standing ovation, and then burst into the old song: *Kudala sisebenzel' amabuno, Basebenze mas' hlangane* ("For a long time we have been working for the boers, Workers let us unite"). They were responding to Ngcukana's powerful support for the idea of unity. COSATU

office-bearers embraced the NACTU leader, and then clasped hands as they sang together. In some ways this was the most dramatic and unexpected moment of the congress.

The resolution on union unity reflects some of this enthusiasm (see below). It states that "COSATU is committed to accommodating a wider range of political differences within the federation, provided our principles are not compromised", and proposes calling another Workers Summit with NACTU. While it would be foolish to underestimate the obstacles to unity between COSATU and NACTU, Ngcukana's speech is likely to give unity efforts a strong boost. ♦

COSATU Congress Resolution

5 Trade Union Unity

5.1 We reaffirm our commitment to the principles of "one country, one federation" and "one industry, one union". We have not made sufficient progress in realising these goals and NACTU unions, as well as a range of unaffiliated unions and staff associations remain outside our ranks.

5.2 We welcome the increased presence of coloured and indian workers within our ranks, and the small but growing numbers of white workers who have joined COSATU affiliates. A democratic socialist future cannot be constructed with an ethnically divided working class. We oppose attempts to form racially based unions – they are a desperate attempt to withstand the tide of history and are doomed to failure.

5.3 We are still largely a blue-collar federation. We need to develop strategies that can accommodate the increasing numbers of white-collar or professional workers such as teachers, nurses, technicians, bank employees, computer operators etc, who want to join COSATU.

5.4 COSATU and its affiliates should:

- conduct research into all independent and unaffiliated unions – including white, indian and coloured unions – with the aim of

realising the objective of one federation in one country;

- promote working class consciousness to enable our members to organise more effectively across the colour line;
- intensify its organising efforts by engaging all workers in joint practical struggles;
- launch sectoral campaigns aimed at benefitting workers of all races.

5.5 Our approach to union unity

5.5.1 COSATU is committed to accommodating a wider range of political differences within COSATU, provided our principles are not compromised.

5.5.2 A union wanting to affiliate to COSATU should come through the existing affiliate in their sector, and be granted observer status in COSATU.

5.5.3 COSATU should play a facilitating role where mergers happen within the Federation, and it should be centrally involved where another federation wants to merge with COSATU.

5.5.4 We need to call another Workers Summit with NACTU and other unaffiliated unions to address the question of union unity.

5.6 Unity between SARHWU and TGWU

We call on SARHWU and TGWU to merge before the end of 1991. This process should be monitored by the CEC. The CEC should also look into the question of workers not in the transport sector. ♦



The ANC Conference:

gearing to struggle for power

All eyes were on the ANC national conference in July: decisions taken there would have a far-reaching impact on our country's future.

Organisational and strategic weaknesses, negotiations, mass action, the tripartite alliance, and affirmative action for women were among the issues debated. Most important, a new leadership was elected. MOSS NGOASHENG was there.*

The ANC held its first national conference since 1960 inside the country in July. The five day conference had a number of aims:

- to mould the different strands of the organisation into a fighting organ capable of dislodging the apartheid regime from power;
- to review the organisation's performance since its unbanning;
- to chart an overall strategic perspective needed for the struggles ahead;
- to elect a new leadership capable of leading the South African masses to

power;

- and to debate and adopt policies in a whole range of areas from economic policy, and constitutional principles to health and social welfare policies.

The conference, held in Durban, brought together over 2 000 delegates from fourteen regions and external regions, including a strong contingent from the ANC's armed wing, MK. The mood was set by outgoing President OR Tambo in his presidential address: "We welcome you, conscious of the fact that you have come here propelled by a burning

desire to make this conference the last one we ever shall have to hold under minority rule."

Can this desire be translated into reality? History will tell. But a lot will depend on how the ANC leads and channels the energies of the masses in the months ahead.

The conference was not only significant to ANC members and supporters - it would have to come up with a clear policy and programme of action for defeating the NP regime *politically*. The importance was recognised by local and

* Moss Ngoasheng works in the ANC's Department of Economic Policy, is a member of the SACP, and a member of the editorial board of the SA Labour Bulletin.

foreign journalists who roamed around the conference hall everyday, reporting to the world on all important decisions. The number of foreign dignitaries, from Cuba to China, the USSR to the USA, from the OAU to the UN, also underlined its significance. In the words of OR Tambo: "Given our people's and the world's impatience with oppression, decisions emanating from this conference must infuse South Africa and our entire region with consequences of historical magnitude."

Struggle for power

Debates and resolutions adopted at the conference were marked by a strong commitment to continue the struggle against apartheid. While there was recognition that negotiations constitute a victory, delegates argued that the NP regime has no intention of negotiating itself out of power. As one delegate observed: "No ruling class has ever negotiated itself out of power. Power is always taken and in order to take power, to transfer power to the people, we need to intensify the struggle against the regime."

Nelson Mandela made the same point in his opening address: "We must engage in successful defensive battles against the counter-revolution at the same time as we conduct successful offensive battles to defeat the apartheid system. This is a

struggle we must fight on all fronts simultaneously." This was echoed in the resolution on negotiations: "To achieve the strategic objective of our struggle, it is vital that we continue to combine all forms of the struggle, drawing the widest spectrum of the people."

Delegates unanimously agreed that the ANC should remain a national liberation movement until democracy is achieved. They reaffirmed the strategic perspective of 'four pillars of struggle' - mass action, the underground, armed struggle and international isolation. The resolution on strategy and tactics recognised that negotiations and mass actions constitute the key weapons of struggle at this point in time, but argued that it would be premature to completely abandon armed struggle.

Negotiation and struggle

Delegates resolved that "the speedy realisation of the democratic settlement requires that negotiations which constitute an additional terrain of struggle should be linked to a continuing mass struggle and international pressure." Conference acknowledged that a negotiated settlement is possible, but argued that agreements reached through negotiations should represent victories won on the ground and not dilute those victories. Consequently, in keeping with a position adopted in the December 1990

consultative conference, delegates resolved that "negotiations shall not be secret". They reaffirmed the position that all the people should be involved in negotiations.

But, unlike the December conference, this time there was an important qualification: the NEC was invested "with the discretionary powers, within the policies of the ANC" during talks about talks. For its part, through Nelson Mandela's opening address, the NEC pointed out that the ANC must enter into negotiations with a clear vision of what it wants to achieve, a clear view of the procedures that the organisation's negotiators must follow to ensure that they are "properly mandated and that they report back" to the members. This perspective of profound democratic practice stands in sharp contrast to Mandela's closing address at the December conference, which tended to water down the principles of democratic accountability.

The perspective of an all-party conference, interim government and an elected constituent assembly were reaffirmed as the best way of proceeding towards a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa. Delegates gave the new NEC a mandate to proceed speedily to the formation of a Patriotic Front of all anti-apartheid forces.

Delegates agreed with

Nelson Mandela's opening address that "the winning of the objective of a constituent assembly will not be achieved solely through the negotiations process. It will require the generation of mass support for this demand."

The role of the tripartite alliance in the negotiations also came under scrutiny. Delegates expressed concern at the ineffective functioning of the alliance. Conference directed the incoming NEC to "take immediate steps to ensure the creation of appropriate and effective mechanisms for the involvement of the allies of the ANC in the process (of talks about talks) to negotiations."

The need to strengthen the alliance and to ensure its effective functioning as a fighting alliance was reflected in most of the debates. There was overwhelming recognition by delegates of the urgent need to form alliance structures at the grass-roots level of branches, as well as at regional and national levels. For example, the resolution on sanctions recommended that a meeting/conference be convened as soon as possible to map out a strategy on arresting the erosion of sanctions and to give a lead in this terrain.

The conference also observed that the obstacles to full-scale negotiations still remain. Violence was identified as an added obstacle to negotiations. A multi-pronged strategy to the violence was outlined:



Nelson Mandela: "We must engage in defensive battle and offensive battle ..."

Photo: Southlight

first, to continue seeking a peaceful resolution to the violence;
secondly, to support the peace initiative of the church and business leaders;
thirdly, to embark on a publicity campaign locally and internationally to expose the true nature of the violence;
 and **finally and most importantly**, to "establish structures on a branch level, regional and national level within the tripartite alliance and other democratic formations to coordinate strategies in responding to the violence".

The new NEC was mandated to give deadlines to appropriate structures by which time they should complete forming defence units. MK's new role as defender of peace and the people's rights, was seen to be central to this process.

Organisational weaknesses

The reports of the secretary general and the organising committee were hard hitting and realistic in assessing the ANC's organisational weaknesses. The most serious was that the ANC lacks a systematic and strategic approach on how to maintain deep and wide connections with the masses.

This was more evident from the campaigns of the past year. The reports argued that, in determining the forms of mass action, the ANC does not sufficiently consider the changed situation and the new dynamics. "We are re-active and not pro-active," says the secretary-general's report. Criticism is also levelled at the organisation for not consulting adequately, and in time, with its allies and other anti-apartheid organisations

The Women's Question

One of the most significant events during the conference was the six hour debate on the issue of women's representation within the structures of the ANC. A clause in the draft constitution presented to conference proposed that women should constitute 30% of all the leadership structures. This was the subject of intense debate. On the one hand, there was strong opposition to this proposal - almost exclusively by men! All sorts of arguments were advanced. Few were overtly sexist, being cloaked in the usual reasonable terms.

The most popular argument against this proposal was that ANC leaders are not elected on the basis of gender, but on the basis of their achievement and track record within the organisation. This view might appear to be reasonable, but women delegates responded that it ignores certain social and structural constraints within the present society which inhibit women's participation. Women's 'achievement' and 'track record' is greatly affected by all these constraints. The 30% proposal, they argued, was therefore an important process by which the ANC could seek to address the question of women's participation. It would be a concrete illustration of the ANC's commitment to the principle of affirmative action and struggle against gender oppression.

After an intense six hour debate the issue was put to a vote. The majority of delegates (*who happen to be men!*) voted against the 30% proposal. The women delegates did not want to let the matter rest, indicating that they did not accept the vote. This position was however withdrawn "in the interest of unity", according to the statement read on behalf of the women delegates by the Women's League.

Some delegates argued that, even if the 30% proposal was not passed, the debate on the issue marked an important development in the history of the organisation. History would certainly have been made if the 30% proposal had been accepted. It would have put the ANC in a league of its own in the history of liberation movements. The sad truth is, however, that many such debates have taken place before, without fundamentally changing the position of women in organisations, let alone in society. ❖

on mass campaigns.

Conference recognised that the organisation is still relatively weak in the rural areas, as well as in Indian, coloured and white areas.

Delegates urged that a systematic programme be developed to recruit these communities into the ANC. Delegates observed that the ability of the ANC to lead all

sectors of the South African population will be a product of struggle and will be determined by its ability to take up issues affecting communities. "Passive recruitment will not ensure the organisation's growth," argued one delegate in the commission on building the ANC.

Delegates identified important aspects of a strategy for building the organisation:

- Door-to-door campaigns and involvement in peoples daily struggles;
- improving communication between leadership structures and basic organs such as branches and regions;
- improving the efficiency of all the structures;
- recognising and encouraging the creative capacity of the masses;
- paying special attention to rural areas;
- regular visits to regions and branches by the national leaders.

All these look very impressive and could go a long way in building the ANC. The test however, will be in the actual implementation. Bright ideas on their own do not build an organisation. Only hard work and time-consuming grassroots organising can do so.

No programme of action
In the past months the ANC has been criticised for lacking a comprehensive programme of action to

engage the regime in an all round offensive for the transfer of power to the people. While most of the resolutions adopted at conference reflect a fighting mood and have concrete ideas on how to continue the struggle, the fact that conference was unable to come up with a programme of action was its greatest weakness.

Conference gave the new NEC a mandate to develop such a programme as soon as possible. It will be essential that the NEC takes this up sooner rather than later. It will also be crucial for the NEC to involve other members of the tripartite alliance. This will ensure the harnessing of the collective strength of the entire alliance and will begin to overcome the problems of ineffectual functioning of the alliance identified by the conference. Unless a programme of action is drawn up, all the brilliant ideas around building organisation will come to nothing.

A policy conference

Conference did not deliberate on a number of draft policy documents prepared by the organisation's various departments. However, conference adopted the documents prepared by departments such as economic policy, constitutional and legal affairs, land commission, education, health, local government and science and

ANC and COSATU: a common strategic perspective

Over the past months COSATU trade unionists have been critical of the ANC leadership. Underlying this, however, is a broadly similar political perspective. On many issues the recent COSATU congress adopted positions similar to those adopted at the ANC conference. Both organisations:

- characterised negotiations as a terrain of struggle which should be linked to mass struggle and international pressure;
- resolved that negotiations should not be secret;
- resolved to tighten the tripartite alliance, improve consultation, and involve allies in the process of talks-about-talks;
- expressed the need to develop a programme of action;
- identified organisational and strategic weaknesses in the ANC, and the need to develop a programme of action;
- decided to push for an all-party congress, interim government and constituent assembly as the route to a democratic constitution;
- support the formation of a patriotic front;
- endorsed the current peace initiatives;
- called for a conference on sanctions;
- rejected proportional representation of women in their structures!

These positions, (except for the last one!) should serve as a basis for strengthening the tripartite alliance. ♦

(Karl von Holdt)

technology as guidelines for policy discussions in the organisations' structures. The conference charged the incoming NEC with convening a policy conference of mandated delegates within six months.

It is hoped that the conference will arrive at firm conclusions about what the organisation would do in various spheres if the ANC becomes the governing party in South Africa.

The new NEC

The newly elected NEC brings together the various

strands of the democratic movement. It blends together those from prison, the mass democratic movement and those from exile. Hopefully the newly elected leadership will overcome the inertia and criticisms of the past year. The challenge they face is to weave all these strands into an effective, accountable and collective leadership capable of taking the movement and South Africans into a future democratic society.

The key question still has to be answered: *will this be the last conference held under apartheid?* ☆

Fossils from the past:

resurrecting and restructuring the National Manpower Commission

Trade unions, employers and the state are currently negotiating the establishment of a new National Manpower Commission (NMC) with radically different composition and powers. In an important policy paper, COSATU* negotiator GEOFF SCHREINER puts forward the federation's perspective on the NMC.

In considering the restructuring of the NMC, it seems to me there are three key issues which need to be addressed. These are:

- (i) How do we make sense of the 'social contract' debate?
- (ii) How do we restructure the NMC to facilitate effective national negotiations?
- (iii) Does COSATU have the capacity for effective engagement in a restructured NMC?

This paper discusses these issues in making a case for COSATU (and NACTU) to participate in a disciplined way in a properly restructured NMC.

1. The 'Social Contract' debate

Recently the *Labour Bulletin* tried to assess the state of the debate on a 'social contract'. It published the views of John Copelyn, general secretary of SACTWU, and counterposed these to NUMSA's 'reconstruction accord' or 'liberation pact'.

At the risk of some oversimplification, the Copelyn/SACTWU position argues for a social contract between employers and trade unions, one leg of which would depend on the

acceptance of industry bargaining arrangements. Copelyn borrows from the example of the LRA campaign, suggesting that aspects of this contract, once concluded, might be presented to the state for ratification and implementation. It is concluded that, by excluding the state from negotiations in the first instance, trade unions will be able to maintain their independence.

NUMSA, on the other hand, we are told, wants to negotiate a 'social contract' with the future government-in-waiting. Pointing out that the employer camp is paralysed by narrow self-interest and short-sightedness, NUMSA argues for a social contract between COSATU, the ANC and other popular organisations, which would later, after elections, be foisted on the captains of industry.

The central difference underlying these two positions, it appears, is the view of the future relationship between the state and the trade union movement. Copelyn fears that COSATU's commitment to independence would be undermined if there were too close a relationship between unions and governing

Earlier drafts of this paper were presented at a meeting of Economic Trends Research Group in June this year, and at the Labour Law Conference in July.

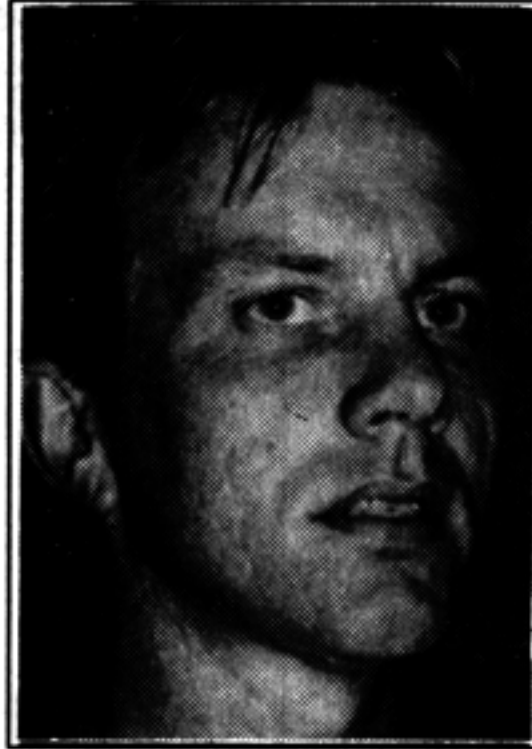
party. He suspects that the state will be all too eager to seize control of the institutions of civil society.

NUMSA on the other hand, it is stated, envisages a sympathetic and powerful state which, together with a determined trade union movement, would be able to thrust upon employers what they otherwise would not accept. This, however, is only a partial view of NUMSA's position. NUMSA does not advocate ignoring the employer camp in favour of the liberation pact'. On the contrary, NUMSA has led the COSATU initiative to set up national negotiations with SACCOLA on a range of macro-economic issues, and NUMSA has also fully backed COSATU's initiatives to restructure the NMC.

NUMSA came to the idea of a 'liberation pact' from two angles. Firstly, it was felt that the current alliance structures were not working, and that the alliance programme had to be given some *real* content - for example, an alliance perspective on the future of the economy. Secondly, because of the employees' resistance to restructuring, the union felt that all possible means of bringing pressure to bear on them should be explored. It was argued that a liberation pact could help. But this does not mean that such a pact, by itself, would break their resistance, or that a future government would have the power, or even the will for that matter, to push the employers into line.

Copelyn's position is generally seen within COSATU as being on the right of the spectrum. On the other hand, the far left (for want of a better address), has vacillated between calling for a more central role for the state (see M Jansen, 'Weaknesses of the anti-LRA campaign', *SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 14 No5) to full endorsement for a minimal role for the state - as advocated by Copelyn.

What Copelyn, the far left, the *Labour Bulletin* and others have focused on is the question of who we negotiate with. However,



Geoff Schreiner

Photo: W.Mottala/COSATU

they misunderstand the real issues at stake. The focus should not be who we negotiate with, but rather the questions of

- (i) how we approach negotiations, and
- (ii) what negotiations are about.

These issues need to be explored a little.

1.1 Process of negotiation

At plant level, no one debates whether we should negotiate with management - it is taken

for granted that, once we are representative, we will approach management for recognition. Even in the communities where the transition from the politics of opposition to the politics of reconstruction has been a much slower one, there is now agreement that organisations will have to negotiate with the holders of power - in this context the state.

So, why the concern about national negotiations? This is not to dismiss the concern about remaining independent - but what does 'independence' mean? 'Independence' should, from the trade union perspective at least, be equated with having the will, capacity and - ideally - the right to back up independent bargaining positions by mass action!

This has got nothing to do with *who* one negotiates with. It is the *process* of negotiations which is important. In COSATU's LRA Campaign - the only sustained mass campaign initiative the federation has ever run - some important principles of process were endorsed:

- Open negotiations - all meetings with SACCOLA and the state were open and widely publicised. Unions were invited and encouraged to send their own representatives to meetings.
- Report back/mandate - representatives were required to report-back to affiliates through the federation structures after all meetings. Principled mandates were sought from the grass roots of our organisations and, on more technical issues, from

affiliate and federation executives committees.

□ Right to mass action - throughout the LRA Campaign, Cosatu maintained and exercised its right to mass action (that is, for as long as the September 1988 amendments were on the statute books and/or used by employers).

It is these kind of principles – and it is not necessarily suggested that the above are exhaustive – which will safeguard the federation's independence. In this case, COSATU did not ask for the right to take mass action to support its demands. It simply confirmed its intention to exercise this right at any stage, and built its capacity for this purpose by regular information flows through mandates and report backs.

A very similar kind of thinking underpinned the five conditions that COSATU set down for its interim participation in the NMC. COSATU decided to participate in order to ensure that the LRA (and other legislation) was extended to farm and domestic workers, and of course to negotiate the restructuring of the NMC. The conditions set down by COSATU were that :

(i) The Minister should appoint whoever COSATU elects to the NMC.

(ii) COSATU will have the right of recall over any of its representatives.

(iii) COSATU will not be bound to any decision of the NMC with which it disagrees.

(iv) Representatives will report back and seek mandates from the federation's structures on all important issues, regardless of any existing NMC secrecy provisions

(v) All COSATU positions should be recorded in full in any report submitted to the Department of Manpower, the Minister and general public.

As will be outlined later, these process principles are very much at the heart of COSATU's current proposals to restructure the NMC into a negotiating forum for independent, mandated parties.

These proposals clearly spell an end to the concept of the NMC as a talk shop, where so-called experts debate future industrial relations and scenarios in which they have no

direct involvement or, at best, represent small sectional interests.

So much for *how* we negotiate. But what issues do we negotiate *about*? There is no magic recipe.

1.2 Content of agreements: strategic perspective

For some it has become fashionable to argue that the 'social contract' equals wage restraint and no strike clauses. Therefore social contracts are bad. Therefore the trade union movement should have nothing to do with them. This is like leading a paraffin-soaked paper tiger to a very hot place. The argument is manipulative and misleading. The equivalent of wage restraint and very explicit no strike agreements are sometimes accepted by unions at plant and company level. Why not the same howls of horror? Because all unionists acknowledge that, under certain circumstances, taking into account the balance of forces, such accords, contracts, pacts, agreements - call them what you like - might be necessary for tactical reasons.

And such agreements need not be seen only in negative or defensive terms, as concessions borne out of weakness. One could well postulate a situation (and provide a practical example or two) where - in exchange for price-fixing and improvements to the social wage (directly affecting the more marginalised sections of the working class) - the trade union movement agrees to restraints on wage increases and further agrees, for the period of the contract, not to take strike action on the issues contained in that contract.

Whether such an agreement works depends essentially on whether trade union members fully understood and endorsed the contract in the first place. This is a point about process again, related to democratic practice. Equally important, of course, would be the question of whether the parties to the contract actually abide by their undertakings. If the trade unions agree to a wage restraint concession, in exchange for price controls and social wage benefits, then one cannot expect that the trade unions will stick to their side of the bargain if the state and employers renege on theirs.

In the short term, there are no magic recipes regarding what should or should not form the basis of any agreement, be it with a single employer, employers generally, and/or the state. But it is critical that decisions regarding what and what not to accept should be informed by a strategic perspective which embodies our aims and objectives as a federation. In short - a perspective which culminates in socialism. Any agreement with any party should be measured in terms of its value in taking the working class towards this objective, whether this is in organisational or political terms or both.

In summary, I have argued that:

(i) Trade unions which have the strength and capacity should engage both employers and the state at national level and other levels as well.

(ii) Independence (as defined) from the state and employers is critical, but this is ensured not by abstentionism but by principled engagement which ensures democratic practices and worker control.

(iii) It does not matter what is negotiated and agreed upon by the parties, provided the agreement has the full support of the relevant constituencies and it is guided by a clear strategic perspective.

iv) Social contracts, agreements, accords etc have no immutable laws about them - they are simply a product of what the parties put into them. There are good social contracts and bad ones, ones that work and ones that don't, ones that advance the interests of the ruling class and ones that assist in building workers' power and organisation. We would be politically irresponsible to miss out on the latter.

2 National negotiations through a restructured NMC?

Assuming that a case has been made for national level negotiations, what forum are we going to use? COSATU had three options. It could have fought for a new institutional forum recognised by the state. It could have opted for a looser, ad hoc forum for negotiation. Or it could choose to resurrect and restructure the NMC.

In fact, the federation has attempted to keep

open all these possibilities. COSATU agreed to proposals by the state and employers in October 1990 to participate in the NMC, provided it was restructured to become a very different institution. At the same time, COSATU signalled that it would continue with other non-institutionalised negotiations - at least until it was satisfied that the new NMC was established along the lines proposed by the federation. Even having reached that stage, COSATU made no commitment to abolishing any other forums which might have been established by that time.

We therefore have a situation where COSATU is conditionally participating in the current NMC in order to transform that body into an effective negotiating forum, while simultaneously the federation is in the process of setting up a series of meetings with national employer organisations and various state departments, in order to begin negotiations around a range of macro-level issues.

If the former process flops because the Minister is unwilling to accept the basic propositions put forward by COSATU (and endorsed by NACTU), then the federation can leave the NMC, and begin a campaign of mass action to force acceptance. At the same time, COSATU can continue engagement, where necessary, through non-institutionalised options.

In the short term, therefore, our thinking is to keep a few irons in the fire and to continually assess if and when to opt for a single, institutionalised forum for the negotiation of all labour market issues.

How should we then approach the question of restructuring the NMC? In broad terms, one perspective must be to develop a structure which we can use to help build the power of the working class to achieve our medium and longer term objectives. What can we learn from our struggles and experiences about appropriate organisational forms for this purpose? In the context of the LRA campaign, the following emerged:

- simple, single focus initiatives have the greatest prospect of success
- effective negotiations have to be linked with mass action

□ COSATU's own shortcomings are a problem in national campaign initiatives.

I want to touch on the first two of these points in a little more detail. The last is picked up in the final section of this paper.

2.1 Single focus initiatives

One reason for such success as was achieved in the LRA campaign in retaining mass participation and commitment was the fact that negotiations took place in a single forum. All mobilisation and organisation was built around this forum. Also our basic demand was simple: 'Scrap the LRA amendments'. It was an immediate, realistic demand and we pursued it to the bitter end.

The second phase of the LRA campaign has been much weaker. Why? Partly because the campaign has become so fragmented. It aims to extend the LRA to the unprotected - farm and domestic workers, public sector workers, workers in the bantustans. At the same time it aims to win new rights in the LRA: the full right to strike, organisational rights, a proper industrial court system etc. Added to this, there are separate negotiations (with their own timetables) for each class of unprotected worker and for each bantustan. It is not difficult, then, to understand why our leadership - let alone the rank and file - get completely lost in this campaign.

The conclusion we can draw from this is that a single-focus forum, with clear demands, is essential for effective organisation on our part. We simply do not currently have the capacity to spread our limited resources across a broad spectrum of different forums.

If the NMC is to become the forum in which we negotiate all macro-level issues, we would have to ensure, in the short term at least, that the scope of the NMC's responsibilities are widely defined to include all matters related to the labour market which the trade unions may want to negotiate from time to time. In fact, the current definition of the NMC's functions in the LRA: "to make such investigations as it may consider necessary into, and submit recommendations to the Minister concerning all labour matters, including labour policy," - is

already sufficiently widely couched, and therefore does not really require amendment at this stage.

Going one step further, however, COSATU would have to look, in the longer term, at the possibility of drawing in existing advisory, policy-making and executive forums under its ambit - such as the National Training Board, and the UIF Board. In the short term, structured links between these forums and the NMC will be critical.

One last point on the merits of a simple forum: it would facilitate building unity across sectors of the economy. For, as long as public sector workers have their own negotiation mechanisms, it will be very difficult to gain support from the more powerful sectors. Although farmworkers are weakly organised, it could become more feasible via single focus national negotiations to get metal, mining and other organised sector workers to take action in support of rights for those on farms. This could mark an important political development for the trade union movement in our country, to help us avoid the chauvinist, sectionalist responses of other once-progressive and militant federations evident in other parts of the world.

2.2 Effective negotiation and mass action

COSATU has to ensure that it retains its independence. This means the will, capacity and right to support its demands, where necessary, by mass action, in its engagement with capital and the state at national level (and in fact other levels as well).

Welding mass action and negotiations into a coherent strategy at national level is a massively difficult project. The current negotiations between the ANC and the government demonstrate this. The ANC leadership, which is heading the negotiations, continually under-emphasises (and even demobilises) the mass action component. Other sections of the ANC - the youth for example - continually push militant action without any clear conception of the limits and possibilities of the negotiations component.

Mass action linked to negotiation does not

mean simply that there is negotiation at the same time as there is mass action. This is what has happened in the ANC/COSATU Constituent Assembly Campaign. There was negotiation, and there was mass action, but the two were not linked together. In order to get beyond mass action which is simply about protest, we need to ensure that our action links directly into the negotiation process and is part of a clear sustained campaign programme. If deadlock is reached, then mass action must follow. Our constituency must be clearly appraised of what precisely has caused the deadlock and why they are being called upon to debate, themselves, the issue of taking action. Participation in mass action should not be based simply on an instruction from on high and loyalty to a particular organisation.

There is not much point in trying to get employer and/or state endorsement for the exercise of the right to mass action. It just wouldn't be forthcoming. Far more sensible for the federation, would simply be to initiate mass action whenever it was deemed appropriate, and the issue and its consequences could be squabbled about at the time of the strike, stayaway, boycott or whatever was taking place.

In this context, COSATU's focus would be on ensuring that participation in the NMC did not restrict or compromise its right to exercise such action. Here we need to draw a distinction between participating in the institution, and entering into a contract via the mechanism of the institution. COSATU should never allow itself to accept limitations on the right to mass action *as a precondition* for participating in the institution. This is quite different from the case where, *as part of* a social contract negotiated *through* the institution, the trade union movement could conceivably agree to restrict strikes (on certain issues, for a certain period of time) provided the trade-offs were sufficiently attractive.

In short, what has been argued above is that if the NMC is to become an effective negotiating forum and, importantly, if COSATU is to gain from such a forum then:

(i) the NMC must have a widely defined brief which allows it to become *the* central negotiating forum for macro-economic issues; and

(ii) we should ensure in practice, that we will remain an independent actor in the terms defined.

What of the questions as to who should participate in such a forum, and what powers it should have?

2.3 Who participates?

At present NMC representatives do not really represent anyone at all. With one or two exceptions, they are not appointed by constituencies.

COSATU's proposals on representation are as follows:

- the NMC ought to remain a fairly small body of 20-30 persons
- employers and trade unions ought to have equal representation and be the majority parties
- provision should be made for representation by the state in its full capacity
- all employer and trade union representatives should be elected from clearly defined constituencies
- NMC procedures should encourage representation through the major groupings in each camp
- employer and trade union representation ought to be roughly proportional, according to membership and national presence
- the state as employer, such as the Commission for Administration, should form part of, and negotiate alongside, other employer interests
- the Department of Manpower should be represented, although not necessarily with voting rights.

Comment on some aspects of these proposals is appropriate.

Representation by the Department of Manpower: The wolf in sheep's clothing during the LRA campaign turned out to be the Department of Manpower (DOM). DOM was the prime mover - both in designing the 1988

amendments and ensuring that they got into the statute books, and there were just too many "misunderstandings" with the DOM during the process of getting rid of these amendments, to avoid the conclusion that there was more than a little secondary resistance taking place within the hallowed portals of Laboria House.

The major LRA players obviously questioned the right of DOM to tell both employers and employees what should and shouldn't pertain legislatively, when these parties had already agreed on what rules they were willing to accept (at least on an interim basis). This was of course at the stage when COSATU, NACTU and SACCOLA had signed their 'Accord' and were now trying to get the state to give effect to that agreement.

Unflustered by its run-ins with the Accord partners, the DOM has continued with its interventionist approach, both in relation to the exercise of consolidating the LRA and to the extension of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act to farmworkers.

This intervention eventually resulted in a unanimous NMC decision calling for a restructuring of the relationship of the DOM and the NMC.

Against this background, COSATU's proposal that the DOM would have to be part of a restructured NMC and would have to express and debate its views in this forum, has received unanimous support. It will help remedy the situation where the NMC made recommendations, based on substantial negotiations and research, only to have them shot down by the DOM who were not part of that process.

The state as employer: There is wide agreement that the state should be represented as employer in the negotiations. The question of where exactly they belong is, however, under debate. COSATU has argued that they must form part of the employer representation. SACCOLA has opposed this on the basis that their interests as private employers are *fundamentally* different to those of the state as employer because of the latter's special relationship with the state and their capacity to operate outside of 'normal

profit/loss principles'.

COSATU has rejected this view because it would lead to weighted employer representation in the NMC. Moreover, SACCOLA's contentions are based on spurious grounds. Being part of the employer constituency cannot be dependent on a complex identity of interests. Rather, it is their particular role in the labour process that defines the *broad* interaction of interests between private and public employer, irrespective of what differences they may have. If the 'private sector' trade union parties were to adopt a similar approach, public sector employees would have to be defined outside their constituency - an obvious nonsense. Furthermore, what measures would decide that the divergent interests of COSATU and SACOL for example are any lesser or greater than those of SACCOLA and the state employers? Whether these parties should or should not caucus together is another issue altogether.

The role of the state in the NMC: If the state was representative and democratic this would be a far less vexing question, and COSATU would probably have little problem with substantial representation (and voting rights) for the state as representative of broad public interest. That the current state has to be represented in some form and has to be an effective negotiating party is clear, but how much sway it should hold in any voting process, and how its representation relates to that of the DOM, are matters still under discussion in COSATU and in the NMC itself.

Which parties actually get to the negotiating table: As indicated, COSATU has proposed a fixed size to the NMC, and representation based on membership strength and broad spread within the national economy. Furthermore, COSATU has argued that representation must be through national federations of trade unions and employers associations. This means:

- individual trade unions and employers will not be represented
- national groups with a presence in only one or two sectors of the economy will also not be represented

- the total number of seats for each constituency will be divided amongst federations in rough proportion to their membership strength
- 'experts' and 'academics' agreed to by the parties might have a small, limited number of seats, but would have no voting rights as such.

2.4 What new powers for the NMC?

Presently the NMC is merely an advisory body. The Minister is entirely at liberty to choose which recommendations of the NMC to endorse and which to reject.

This is completely unacceptable. The point has already been made that, if the major players reach agreement on rules which they are prepared to abide by, then they cannot have the executive arm of the state, in this instance the DOM, redrafting those rules. But this applies equally to the Minister.

Accordingly, the federation has proposed that:

- No draft legislation related to labour should be put before parliament unless it has been through the NMC.
- Where there is consensus on proposed legislation within the NMC then a) the NMC should be entitled to draft such legislation, and b) it should be placed before parliament in that same form. The Minister would be entitled to adopt whatever approach he chose in relation to such proposed legislation.

The intention behind these proposals is clearly to prevent NMC recommendations (agreements) ending up in the Minister's bottom drawer. But the proposals do accept that parliament (a democratic one) should have the ultimate right to pronounce on proposals from the NMC. Parliament would have to weigh up the possible consequences if it rejected or even amended proposals from the NMC.

Two important issues remain to be clarified. Firstly, the question has been raised many times as to why proportional representation and voting are important in the context of a body which is essentially about negotiation. The short answer is that there

has to be some method of determining what constitutes "consensus" within the NMC, sufficient to warrant referral of an agreement to the Minister/parliament. The majority of the current NMC have proposed 75% of participating parties as a consensus parameter, while COSATU has proposed 66% of each of the trade union and employer parties respectively.

Whichever proposal is eventually adopted, the important point is that the definition of consensus has to be determined by votes, and voting strength ought, in turn, to be related to membership strength. Importantly, however, dissenting parties would *not* be bound to support "consensus" positions.

The second issue is to highlight that this proposal introduces a third mechanism for getting draft legislation before parliament. Currently this is done either through cabinet or through MP's individual bills. Now, it could also be done by a forum in which organisations of civil society (those mass-based organisations which are neither political parties nor part of the state) would be major stake holders.

The broad thrust of this approach would, undoubtedly, be to strengthen the organisations of civil society in relation to the state and thereby enable them to play a more effective watchdog role.

A further variation on this would be to open up the NMC itself to representation by a broader range of actors than employers, trade unions and the state. It makes sense, for example, that women's organisations should be invited to make representations on labour market issues. This kind of approach, which currently pertains in Canada for example, could well have the effect of moderating trade union chauvinism and helping to ensure better representation for the more marginalised groups in society.

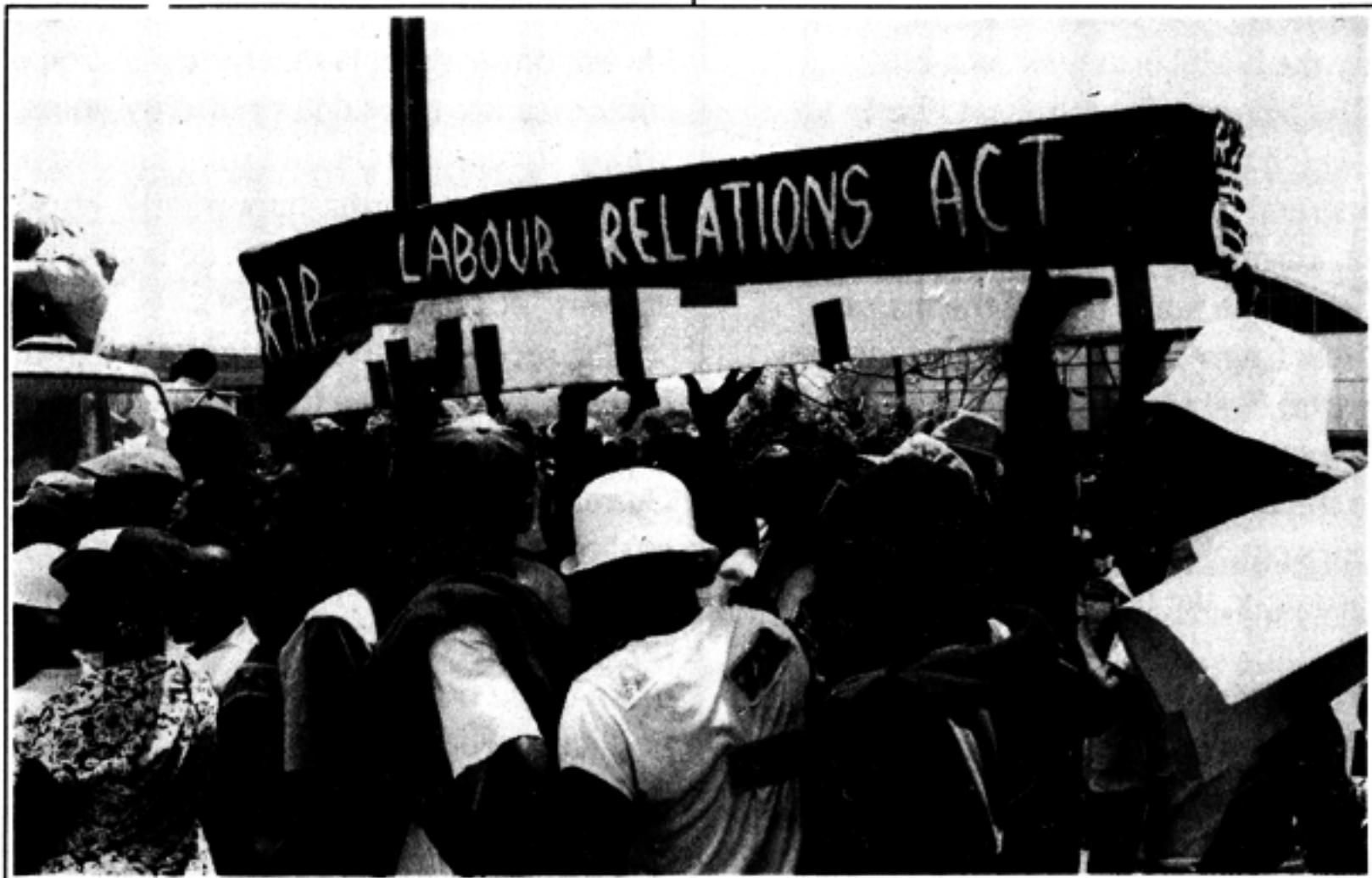
3 Does COSATU have the capacity for effective engagement in a restructured NMC?

Once again, the LRA campaign is instructive. While we eventually made substantial gains in this campaign, COSATU's capacity to

DEBATING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

handle the process was sorely stretched at times. The federation's infrastructure, the state of development of its affiliates, and the general shortage of skills and resources, made principled engagement difficult at times, to say the least. As the pace of events speeded up in the last months of the campaign, and as the procedures, schedules and agendas

- they are drawn from affiliates)?
- How is it going to absorb and disseminate the mass of information which will arise from a new NMC?
 - How will it facilitate clear mandates from affiliates to NMC representatives involved in negotiations?
 - How will representatives be backed-up



The anti-LRA campaign: learning from successes and mistakes

Photo: Morice Smithers/Labour Bulletin

became more complex, our information flow bogged down. Many workers lost touch with actual developments.

In fact, all important decisions were made within the constitutional structures of the federation, but delegates were less well prepared and had less real control over the actual process. These are important considerations which must guide our future thinking and approaches to national campaigns and negotiations.

Although COSATU has decided to engage with the NMC and restructure it, some serious voices within the federation quite rightly raise the problem of COSATU's own capacity to engage. They point out that COSATU has not seriously thought out:

- Who will actually represent the federation on a new NMC and whether they will actually have time to do so (especially if

with research and resources in their negotiations?)

Many of these issues have not been settled, even in regard to COSATU's interim participation on the NMC. So the problem is a very real one, and it is the kind of situation which could lead the entire NMC initiative into disaster.

To avoid this problem, COSATU will have to ensure that, over the next few months, it engages in a comprehensive programme to develop its capacity and its ability to participate in national negotiations. In this way, the federation would be able to take advantage of current political openings to work towards the empowerment of the working class. ☆

Mining wage Settlement: *another step sideways?*

by HOWARD GABRIELS*

In 1987 an old miner stood up in the national strike committee discussing whether the union should call off the strike or not. He used an analogy that was very pertinent at the time. He said: "For five years the miners were chipping away at this huge rock, the Chamber of Mines. The union did an extremely good job and the rock is about to fall. The only problem is that if this rock falls now it will fall on us." He then eloquently advised the strike committee to take a step sideways, so that the rock would not fall on the miners.

When the 1987 strike was publicly called off, NUM assistant general-secretary Marcel Golding said "it was a tactical manoeuvre sideways."

The strike by 340 000 mineworkers produced many unsung heroes whose stories will be told in time. The cost of that 21 day strike was high. About 50 000 miners dismissed, 11 dead and several hundred injured. At the same time, it was 21 days that shook the very foundation of the mining industry.

The NUM will never be the same after that strike. It has made much progress to regain its membership and to develop its organisation on the mines. However, the question must be asked in

1991, now that the wage settlement is concluded: is this another step sideways?

The crisis in the gold mines

The gold mining companies are in one of their worst-ever crises. The gold price dropped significantly and the *Financial Mail's* Mining Survey warns: "There could be much worse to come if the gold price remains where it is and has been for the last three years, at around R31 000/kg."

Already, this year some of the smaller mines have been liquidated. About 100 000 workers over the last three years have been retrenched and more retrenchments are expected.

For example Harmony mine reduced its workforce over the past three years from about 35 000 to approximately 16 000, according to Martin Nicol of NUM.

The Mining Survey says: "An unpleasant fact of life is that 40% of SA's gold is produced at a loss, at a price of R30 000/kg, and unprofitable mines employ about 190 000 workers out of a total of about 400 000."

1991 was indeed an eventful year for NUM. From marches against retrenchments to a mining summit with the bosses and the government. At the summit NUM warned: "We are facing nothing less than a national catastrophe," and that "200 000 jobs in

Howard Gabriels was NUM education officer during the 1987 strike. He has organised for GWU, NUM and SACTWU over a period of ten years, and is a member of the editorial board of SA Labour Bulletin.



The 1987 strike rocked the mining industry; now economic crisis requires new strategies from the unions

Photo: Eric Miller/Southern

mining and R12 billion in foreign exchange could be lost by 1995 if current policies persist."

The NUM press statement says that "the innovative agreement ... takes full account of the poor economic climate that confronts the gold industry. The NUM suspended its pursuit of its national wage policy for 1991."

Nicol explained this wage policy in October 1989 (*SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 14 No4)

"The policy says, in part:

1. The mining industry must take progress towards a living wage for all mineworkers by 1991.

2. The union must negotiate a national minimum wage for all mineworkers.

3. All workers must receive

a good increase even if they are already paid above the minimum in their grade.

4. The gaps between grades must be narrowed.

5. Underground workers must be paid more than surface workers in each grade.

6. Wage demands must be set in money terms and not in percentages."

What is the 1991 wage settlement?

Wages

It is a complicated settlement. The different mining houses "did not table consistent offers." It is also a very low wage increase. "It provides for an average increase in basic pay of about 6%.

But this is between 1,8%

and 9,3%. [see table 1 and 2 for the new wage rates].

Gold Price Bonus

The NUM Press statement explains:

"Anglo, JCI, Genmin and Rand Mines have agreed to pay a gold price bonus to workers on certain mines if the gold price is higher than expected."

"This bonus will not be paid at 'sick' mines where less than 5c in every rand of gold sold is profit (after deducting capital expenditure)."

The fact that GFSA and Anglovaal are not part of this bonus scheme is significant, as some of the most profitable mines, such as Driefontein and Kloof, are in GFSA. They did, however,

give marginally better rand increases.

No bonuses will be paid if the gold price is lower than R33 750/kg on average over a period of 3 months. The bonus will be paid as a percentage of the basic wage up to a maximum of 7%. This trigger price will be adjusted upwards by 2% at the end of each quarter. This agreement is very much a trial scheme and will be valid for one year only.

The rationale for the 2% adjustment is not clear. Either the NUM and the Chamber of Mines know that we can expect a sudden rise in the gold price or it is a way to prevent the workers from being able to substantially supplement their low wages with a high bonus.

The Harmony deal

Although Harmony gold mine falls under the Chamber agreement, it agreed to a different deal which is contained in an appendix to the main agreement. Harmony is in real trouble, having slashed employment by over a half over a three year period, and declaring no dividends this year.

The Harmony deal includes a profit sharing scheme. Each worker will receive a R25,00 per month increase in basic pay.

If the mine makes a profit, 15% of the profits will be set aside for the workers, up to a maximum amount of R4 million. The first R1 million set aside for workers will be

Table 1: The new wage rates

Non-staff on Gold Mines

Grade	AAC		Genmin		GFSA	
	Surf	U/G	Surf	U/G	Surf	U/G
1	507	572	470	534	413	-
2	565	646	513	598	512	-
3	643	731	598	694	628	-
4	732	837	685	785	761	836
5	828	962	797	931	914	1005
6	972	1106	934	1087	-	-
7	1138	1266	1125	1274	1090	1199
8	1318	1469	1380	1532	1293	1423

Table 2: The new wage rates

Staff on Goldmines

Grade	AAC		Anglovaal		Genmin		RandMines		GFSA	
	Surf	U/G	Surf	U/G	Surf	U/G	Surf	U/G	Surf	U/G
1	-	-	519	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	617	-	618	689	-	-	-	-
3	670	734	752	-	696	785	665	665	628	-
4	772	850	888	-	785	879	768	768	761	-
5	882	978	1046	1152	1344	1344	868	868	914	-
6	-	-	1229	1352	1405	1405	1025	1025	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	1521	1521	1175	1175	1090	-
8	-	-	-	-	1542	1542	1470	1470	-	-

shared between all the workers equally (if the mine's profit is R1 million after capital expenditure, this will mean a bonus of about R60 per worker)."

If more than R1 million profit is made, the rest will be shared according to the basic wage of workers, ie workers who earn more will get a greater portion of the profits.

The mine has agreed to full disclosure of information on a monthly basis. In addition a voluntary shift will be introduced every month for underground workers. Those who work this shift will get a monthly bonus of 5% of basic pay.

The Ergo deal

The Ergo deal was concluded early in June 1991. This deal was negotiated separately by NUM, as Ergo is not covered by the Chamber negotiations. The agreement provides for a 5% wage increase across the board. In addition workers could benefit from a performance bonus and a profit sharing scheme.

The performance bonus appears to be a very complicated formula. Nicol says it takes into account grade, tonnage, revenue and costs. Apparently this bonus has been in existence for some time, but it is the first time that NUM accepted it as part of the wage agreement.

Should workers achieve performances equal to 100% of the targets, they could earn another 5,5% of their basic wage as a bonus. Nicol himself is concerned that there are "too many variables" and says "we will have to see what happens".

The profit sharing scheme only benefits the workers when the company makes more than the R2 million profit in its first six months.

Social and trade union rights

The settlement brings important victories for NUM in securing basic trade union rights on the mines. In the past, the actions of management, and especially the mine security, left much to be desired. It is to be hoped that this agreement changes that. Management has undertaken that they, and their security personnel, will "act with utmost impartiality and due regards for the rights contained in the agreement."

The mines have now agreed to a very simple verification procedure and to the increase in subs decided at the NUM congress of 1% of earnings. In other words, for every R100, members will pay one rand. The increase in subs will stabilise the union financially and members can expect an improvement in its servicing. We could also see a sharp rise in NUM's paid-up membership. Historically, there has been a big discrepancy between paid-up and signed-up members.

Table 3: Gold Price Table 3rd Quarter 1991

Trigger price: R33 750/kg (R1050 per ounce)

Gold Price	Bonus Level	2% adjustment
1050	0%	1071
1059	0,5%	1080
1073	1,5%	1094
1100	3,25%	1122
1125	4,8%	1148
1150	6,5%	1173
1160	7,0%	1183

Source: NUM Press statement 31 July 1991

The Chamber has also agreed to a host of principles that would facilitate the growth of a more mature relationship on the mines. These include basic rights such as freedom of association and movement, health and safety, protection against unfair dismissals, peaceful picketing during lawful strikes, and disclosure of "relevant" information.

A set of guidelines was agreed upon to promote participation of hostel dwellers in the decision-making process. Conditions for visiting wives will be improved, where possible.

Union officials will have reasonable access to the mines. Shaft stewards will get four days paid study leave for union training. The content of the training will be fully under union control.

Medical doctors can no longer recommend repatriation of workers on medical grounds.

Both parties agree to further talks in the summit steering committee on retraining retrenched workers. Discussions will

continue on a government inquiry into health and safety. Also a national policy on aids will be negotiated.

Nicol says that "the agreement gives us new ammunition to struggle."

"The agreement on social and trade union rights, coupled with the stop order verification procedures and the increase in subscriptions will make NUM a much more powerful weapon of its members" says NUM statement.

Critique

The NUM agreement poses a set of complex questions now facing the labour movement. Some of these are:

1. Should extremely low wage offers be supplemented by bonuses? Until now COSATU's policy on the living wage was that the basic wage of the workers should ensure a decent living standard. Workers should not have to rely on bonuses, over-time pay, etc, to earn a decent wage. It appears that the NUM agreement deviates

from this policy.

This gold price bonus was negotiated for an industry in crisis. The crisis throws up very complex questions about how the trade union should respond. Should the union push for higher wages and watch mines close down and workers lose jobs? Or should it hold back wage demands in order to save jobs? Faced with such problems a union may well be unable to adhere to its policies.

The gold price bonus is an interesting variation of the many bonuses in operation. Unlike attendance, production or profit bonuses, the gold price bonus depends on market factors outside the control of management or workers. Only time will tell what the real impact will be on wages and negotiations in future.

2. What about productivity bonuses?

The unions will need to develop a careful policy as we will see more and more labour productivity and production-linked bonuses appear on the negotiating table. After the Ergo deal newspaper editorials congratulated NUM on its "new approach". In its negotiations with NUM, De Beers immediately tabled a demand for a similar productivity deal, and we will see the same thing in manufacturing.

My view is that these bonuses should be separated from wages at industry bargaining, as they undermine the struggle for a living wage. In fact NUM

says that it "is opposed to productivity bargaining as this has to be done at enterprise level and thus undermines centralised bargaining and the setting of national minimum standards."

For these reasons it is unlikely that the Ergo deal is the start of a new trend. However, unions will be prepared to discuss productivity separately from wage negotiations.

3. Profit sharing schemes.

In 1988, when Anglo introduced an employee share ownership scheme, Ramaphosa said "it stinks". Many unionists agreed with him. Some of the reasons were that there was no consultation and that the scheme did not increase workers real participation or power.

Workers do have a real interest in the well-being of their companies, but the profit-sharing scheme negotiated by NUM holds some of the most serious questions for the labour movement. New Nation commented that: "Arguments being advanced for profit sharing agreements point out that they are justified in the context of the 'goldmine difficulties' which are resulting in massive retrenchments.

This, however, does not seem to be the case with Ergo, which in March 1991, recorded an annual profit of R60 million. Shareholders also earned millions in dividends."

The irony of these unusual agreements is that when the

mines were making profits and paid huge dividends the workers were excluded from sharing in those profits. Now that it is unlikely that mines will make a profit workers are asked to accept low wages and share in the profits or losses.

Conclusion

Nicol says that "the mineworkers are not satisfied – the wage offer is too low. They feel that the mining industry is taking advantage of the present (economic) situation and their inability to strike. There are mines that can pay a better wage. The union has argued that the healthy mines should be separated from the sick mines, but the industry refused to accept this."

Wage negotiations are a reflection of the power of the different parties at the table and on the ground. The NUM will have to use the new space it gained from the social and trade union rights to build its power in the shafts.

Mineworkers should not spend too much time watching the TV's in the hostels to check on how the gold price is performing. They should rather use the time to organise and build their power in the shafts and the hostels.

Business Day said in an editorial that the Ergo agreement is a "qualitative leap forward." The old man in the 1987 strike committee may say that this years negotiations are another step sideways or even a temporary step backwards. ☆

Productivity: the case of SAPPI's Ngodwana Paper Mill



This article is based on research conducted by LAEL BETHLEHEM at Ngodwana Paper Mill in 1990.[#]

[#]Lael Bethlehem is a Masters student in Industrial Sociology at Wits, and a regular contributor to the Labour Bulletin. She expresses thanks to Avril Joffe and Eddie Webster for their assistance with the project, and to PPWAWU and SAPPI Ltd for making the study possible.

Driving out of Waterval Boven, in the North Eastern Transvaal, towards Nelspruit at night, you pass a thousand shining lights - a giant paper factory, the Ngodwana Mill. While the lights shine, men and women work. Pulp and paper production in sophisticated process plants makes no allowance for the night, or Christmas, or June 16th, or anything else for that matter - including, sometimes, the market ... And on a clear day, from ten kilometres away, you will be suddenly confronted by the plumes of smoke and steam and the spirals of fumes - this is your first glimpse of Ngodwana. It is a Titanic structure, and its sight and smell fill the atmosphere. As you get closer it takes on the form of a giant, science fiction stage set: all pipes and towers and cylinders, a massive image of smoke and steel.*

Ngodwana, owned by the South African Pulp and Paper Industry (SAPPI), was first built as a small pulp mill, employing a mechanical process, in 1963. In 1981, SAPPI began to convert it into a major production unit. This required the injection of some R1.6 billion, making it the largest single private sector investment in the country's history. The mill became operational in 1985, and raised SAPPI's capacity to 800 000 tons of chemical pulp and over 900 000 tons of paper per annum.

* This paragraph is based on two passages of Nicholas and Beyson's *Living with Capitalism*, 1977, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London

The mill produces three basic products:

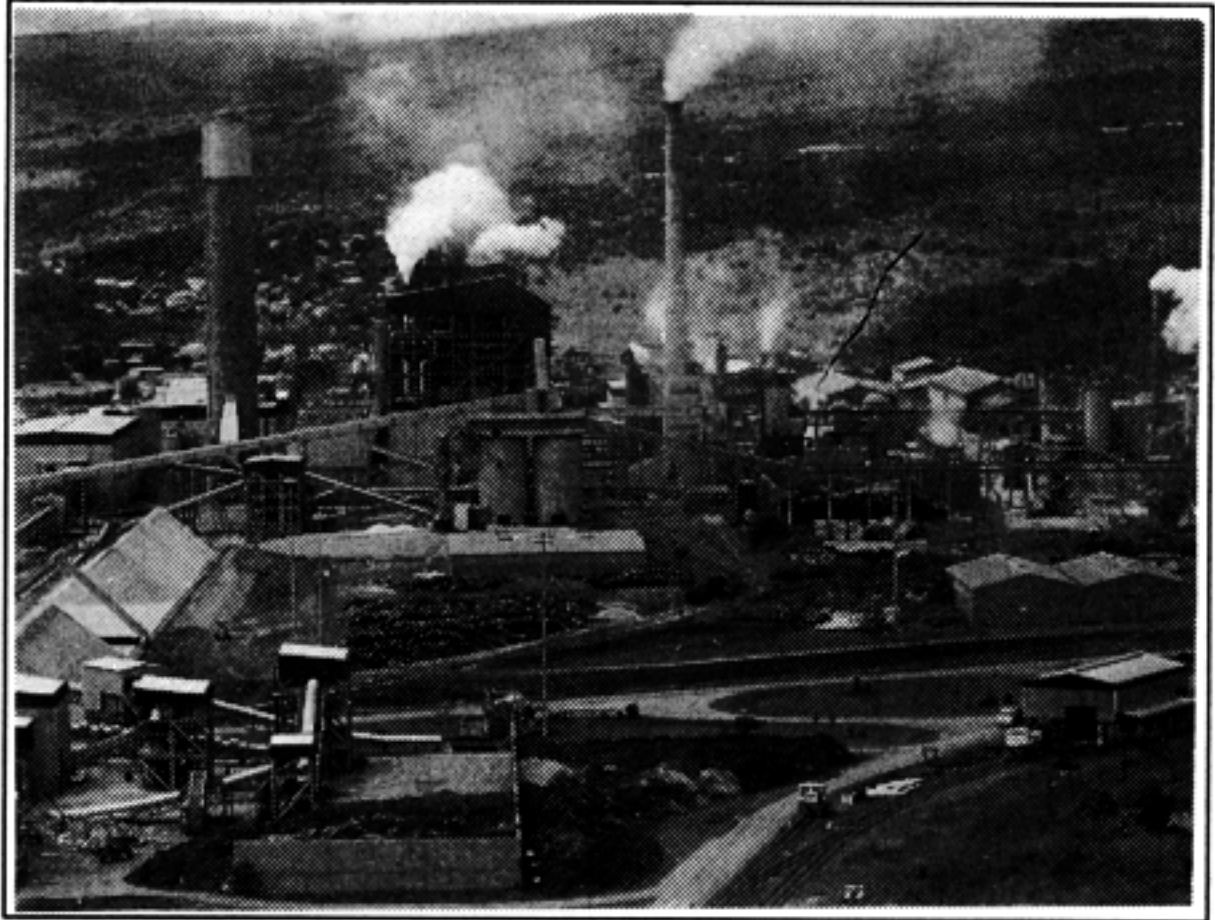
- * Bleached and unbleached pulp for use in the mill itself, in other SAPPI mills such as Enstra, and for the local and export market. Ngodwana has the capacity to produce 600 tons of bleached and 450 tons of unbleached pulp per day.
- * Kraft Liner Board – a thick brown paper used for packaging. The Kraft machines can produce 500 tons of liner board daily.
- * Newsprint for the local and export newspaper industry. It is produced at a rate of 1 050 metres per minute, or 63 kilometres per hour.

This level of production requires a massive amount of timber as raw material. Seven thousand tons of wood are processed every day, delivered in 500 truckloads daily.

Ngodwana Mill employs 1 633 people, many of whom are members of COSATU's Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PPWAWU). This figure excludes those workers who are employed by the various sub-contractors at the plant.

Management's problems at Ngodwana have included low productivity, conflict, difficulty in maintaining the quality of the product, problems with creating a variety of products according to the demands of the market, and a shortage of skilled workers. Workers' problems at the Mill have included compound-style housing, racism, authoritarian bosses and relatively low wages.

Workers sought a solution



Ngodwana

Photo: SAPPI

to their problems by going on a strike in early 1990. The strike was determined and militant, and lasted for nine weeks. But eventually workers were forced to return to work, without having won any of their demands.

The strike added to management's problems, but it also taught them new approaches. Some of these suggest that their strategies are beginning to shift from simply controlling and repressing workers, to trying to build some kind of a co-operation with workers. This presented new possibilities but also new problems for PPWAWU at Ngodwana.

Problems at Ngodwana

Like most South African factories, Ngodwana Mill faces problems in the production process. One problem is that productivity is very low, compared to that of paper mills in other countries. Last year SAPPI conducted a

study which showed that productivity is up to three times higher in comparable paper mills in countries like Canada and Japan. One reason for this is the relatively high incidence in South Africa of industrial action in the form of strikes, stayaways and go-slows. Another reason, however, is that the production process itself, and the way in which workers' abilities are used, is inefficient.

One of the senior managers of a large paper company recently said: "In a bad year (1987), only 0.4 % of the total number of work days were lost to strikes. Are the reasons for our notoriously low productivity to be found in that 0,4% – or in the 99,6% of days spent at work? ...Some of the answers to national productivity, labour relations and political stability need to be sought in the 99,6% of workdays when employees are present at work, in body

if not always in spirit.”*

There *are* other production problems at the mill. One of these is the quality and variability of the product. The mill was extremely expensive to build, and costs an enormous amount to maintain. It was designed to produce massive volumes of pulp and paper. The mill is only really profitable when it is producing to full capacity. This is easiest to achieve when it is not necessary to interrupt the process in order to make changes to the type or quality of product which is being produced. Changing the type or quality of the product means interrupting the process in order to make adjustments to the machinery and this is a long and costly process.

In order to avoid this, it is often necessary to make compromise. One of these is the mills’ ability to vary the type of paper and pulp which is being produced. For example, the mill needs to produce various kind of pulp, which differ in their cleanness and brightness. The cleanest and brightest pulp contains more chemicals and bleach and goes through a longer labour process. It is therefore more expensive to produce. For example, export grade pulp (which requires the maximum cleaning and bleaching) is more expensive to produce than the pulp

needed to make newsprint, which requires the least cleaning and the least brightness. But, because it is so difficult for the mill to vary its product, and because it is so difficult to produce according to plan, Ngodwana simply *tries to produce export grade pulp all the time*, knowing that most of the time it will fail, and the lower quality pulp which is produced will simply have to be used for lower grades, even though they fetch very different prices!

Another problem which is related to the mill’s all-consuming need to produce at maximum volume, is that the quality of the final product is not always good enough. At present, the mill is producing approximately 30% more defective material than management believes it should.

Beyond the obvious: the roots of production problems

The roots of the low productivity and other production problems at Ngodwana are to be found in the way in which the production is organised and by the social context of producing paper in South Africa.

1. One aspect of this is the level and flexibility of workers’ skills. Because ‘racial fordism’ [see box on p 53] produces on the basis of a mass of unskilled, easily expendable cheap black

labour, most South African workers are poorly educated or illiterate. This is also true of Ngodwana. But because Ngodwana’s production process uses sophisticated technology and a complex process, this lack of skills has become a severe problem. Workers who are not formally trained in mechanics and physics are not in a position to solve mechanical problems which crop up in the course of production, to adjust easily to new processes, or to identify and address problems.

This has an impact on the efficiency of the mill. One of the Ngodwana managers complained: “In other countries you’ve got university graduates doing jobs which illiterate workers do here. It’s so difficult to operate efficiently - it gives us a lot of hassles....”

Workers’ skills also tend to be very inflexible. A worker will usually be given a job on a particular grade, with a very specific job description. This doesn’t allow for the uncertainties of producing paper in a high-tech factory, or for changes in what is expected of workers as the technology changes, or as the product changes.

2. A second problem is that workers’ tacit knowledge, is not utilised by management to the full. 95% of workers surveyed at the mill felt that

* Dr Brian Lucas, *Mondi Paper* ‘The social dynamics of Labour Relations : their management and government in a new South Africa October 1990

they would be in a position to improve production, because they are the ones who know the machinery, and see the problems as they arise. Managers however are not used to taking advice from workers, and in effect discourage workers from contributing meaningfully to production. A worker at the mill said that it would not be easy to suggest changes to production, even when the changes would serve management's interests: "My foreman would find it hard to accept that some of my intelligence is improving production."

The issue of workers' tacit knowledge of production was vividly highlighted during the 1990 strike. In the liner board section of the mill, a part of a particular workers' job was to check the machine temperature on an indicator, and to adjust it when necessary, using a valve. Prior to the strike, management was unaware that the indicator was located on the bottom floor of the factory, and the valve was on the second floor, some four flights of stairs up. For six years, the worker had been checking the temperature, climbing the stairs and adjusting the valve, climbing down to see if his adjustment had had the required effect, climbing back up to readjust the valve and so on, until the correct temperature was reached. The worker was involved in a frustrating, time consuming and unproductive exercise. Both management and workers



Working for SAPPI

Photo: Lael Bethlehem

should have benefited from a simple change, but under the conflictual conditions of the mill, there was no mechanism for even this simple communication.

3. This relates to a third source of Ngondwana's ongoing problems: conflict. The mill, like most South African workplaces, is racially divided, economically polarised and politically tense. This general South African trend is perhaps more intense in an area such as the Eastern Transvaal. The mill is situated in the heart of this area, close to the town of Nelspruit. The Nelspruit Town Council is controlled by the extreme right wing Conservative Party, and many of the white line managers and artisans are highly conservative in their outlook. One of the managers admitted that "because the workers belong to a union, most of the whites think there's a conspiracy going on. And when workers speak in black

languages, some whites think they are talking about them."

Although no formal segregation of the mill's facilities is enforced, segregation in fact occurs. In the power provision section for example, workers reported that they used different toilets from the whites. Although there were no "Whites Only" signs, workers felt there was a clear taboo on their use of the whites toilets.

The sense of racial tension and general conflict is felt strongly by union members and shop stewards. One of the shop stewards commented: "You will find that we black workers are badly treated. We have discrimination, and some jobs seem to be reserved for whites. There are no African foremen, they are all Boers ... and if you are partaking in PPWAWU, you will not get promoted."

SAPPI officially opposes racism. "SAPPI believes in promoting people with ability and is not afraid to put black

people in senior positions," says the 1989 annual report. But racial tension and conflict, though discouraged by senior management, is part of the structure of life at the mill. It is entrenched in job hierarchies, wage differentials, hostel life, assumptions about the role and abilities of workers, and deeply seated attitudes.

Management responses

The existence of poor worker education, racial conflict, hostel-style housing, lack of communication, and assumptions that workers are unable to make a conceptual contribution to production, are a direct result of a 'racial fordist' conception of the workplace. All are a result of state policies, managerial strategies and racial attitudes consciously created by apartheid. But in the high-tech world of Ngodwana Mill, these conditions are no longer contributing to economic growth. They are now the roots of serious production problems.

Ngodwana management are aware of these dynamics, and they have begun to adopt a wider range of strategies and tactics.

Repressive strategies

Soon after the 1990 strike, management retrenched 280 workers. "During the course of the strike," explained a manager, "we had to keep the mill running with much

less personnel. And what we discovered, is that we could manage with much fewer workers. We came to the conclusion that the mill was overstaffed."

The retrenchments had a major impact on life at Ngodwana. 280 workers lost their jobs, and those who were left found that management was using two methods to make up for the smaller number of workers. The first was that workers' jobs were intensified, and they found themselves working much harder than before. The second was sub-contracting. Suddenly, work which was previously done by PPWAWU-organised SAPPI workers, was being sub-contracted to other companies. One of the jobs contracted out was security. The new security workers were not unionised, were housed separately from the other workers, and earned over R200 less than the previous SAPPI workers.

As well as this additional sub-contracting, existing contract firms were used in new and surprising ways. One example of this is that workers with the garden maintenance contractor were brought to work in the mill. They were used for manual tasks such as moving rolls of paper, and removing waste production. The workers who had performed these tasks before (and who had been retrenched) had been earning in the region of R900 per month, as well as various benefits. The sub-contracted

workers who had been brought in from the garden work were earning R400 per month. They had no union, and enjoyed no benefits such as pensions or medical aid.

'Co-operative' strategies

At the same time, Ngodwana management recognised that productivity could not be raised without a reduction in industrial action, and some increase in worker satisfaction, and without an improvement of communication and skills. As a result, they adopted strategies designed to meet certain key worker demands, and designed to increase skills and communication.

Soon after the strike, management decided to meet a long standing worker demand for family housing rather than hostel-style single sex housing at the company compound. The scheme proposed that the company would assist workers in buying houses in an adjacent township. Workers would then commute to work. The union believed that the company was trying to increase stability by meeting one of workers' key demands, but was also trying to prevent the intensive organisation of workers in the hostel, which had been an important factor in the strike.

A second development in the mill is the provision of literacy training to workers. Management have hired a literacy company which offers a programme called JOLT – Job Oriented Literacy

Training. The course offers to provide literacy skills as well as "cultural enlightenment." Management hopes that the programme will increase basic skills among workers and enable them to run future training courses. The "cultural enlightenment" of workers could be seen as an attempt to make an ideological impact on workers' thinking.

Another skills-related development is the

'Repairman Project.' The project aims to skill some workers in routine machine maintenance. This will upgrade the skills of a section of workers to allow them to repair machines and solve some mechanical problems. This would allow the formally trained artisans to engage in problem solving, and to anticipate and address production difficulties. The workers who are trained as repairmen are not given any formal

certification, but their skills are upgraded and extended.

Perhaps the most interesting of these innovations is the 'Green Areas' project. The Green Areas idea originated with the Nissan Company in Japan. The idea behind the concept is to increase communication between workers and management, and to enable management to draw on workers' perceptions and working knowledge. This is done through a meeting which

The South African paper industry

South Africa has a large and relatively prosperous paper industry. It relies on local forests for the production of wood, the basic raw material of paper products. Some factories in this sector produce pulp (which is a crude form of paper consisting of "pulped" wood with the addition of chemicals and bleaches), as well as various forms of paper. Pulp is often sold and exported in its raw form. It is then converted into paper products of various kinds. So the paper industry produces not only paper, but also pulp, and wood.

The industry has grown enormously in the last decade. It is performing exceptionally well in the current economic climate. The 1980s have seen a substantial increase in the amount of capital invested in the industry. Unlike most industrial sectors, large amounts of money were invested in new factories over the past decade. Much of the new production was directed at overseas markets. Employment figures in the industry have also risen sharply: in the SAPPI group for example, the number of employees almost doubled between 1980 and 1990.

Along with increases in output has come a dramatic rise in the profit levels of the major companies in the industry. SAPPI's net income rose from R46,3 million in 1980

to R605 million in 1990. This represents a compound annual growth of 37% per year.

These sharp increases in investment, output, assets and employment are in sharp contrast to the performance of the South African economy as a whole, and the manufacturing sector in particular, in the 1980s.

The paper industry is now a key industry in the South African economy. The industry comprises 15.9% of South Africa's manufacturing Gross Domestic Product, and exports more of its annual product than any other manufacturing sector.

The Association of Pulp, Paper and Board Manufacturers estimates that the industry will grow at a rate of 5.5% per year over the next ten years. This would mean the investment of over R7 billion, and the creation of some 40 000 new jobs.

The growth in the industry in the past ten years has been facilitated partly by the building of factories which use sophisticated technology, and which cater primarily for the needs of the international market. But the introduction of this technology into the repressive, conflictual, unskilled climate of the South African workplace, has resulted in its own problems. One of these has been that productivity (the output of product per worker) and efficiency have been very low. This has concerned paper managers more and more in the past few years. ♦

lasts for 20 minutes, and is designed to take place in a relaxed and open atmosphere. A special area is designated on the factory floor for this purpose, and is painted green.

The meetings are also designed to introduce a move away from strict authority towards a more participatory management style. The Green Areas concept is one which acknowledges the workers' knowledge and *de facto* control of the process. It has the potential to allow management to tap in to workers' perceptions, and to address the extreme communication problems exposed during the strike.

However, at Ngodwana Mill the Green Areas do not achieve their potential. Rather they operate as top-down management briefing sessions, and intensify management power and leverage.

In an interview conducted with a shift superintendent and oreman in the paper mill, it was evident that the views of line management differ significantly from those of the senior managers. The foreman said that he thought that the Green Areas are "a good idea...I tell them what's our target, and what we've achieved and lost. Then I tell them what they have to do next."

Asked if workers raise problems and suggestions at the meetings, he replied, "Well, at first they thought it was a bitching session where they could just raise any problem other than what's

happening in the section. But I soon put them right." He seemed unaware that the Green Areas meetings were also designed to facilitate workers' suggestions to improve production.

These indications of the Green Areas as top-down briefing sessions were strongly confirmed by the shop stewards. They said: "Well, they are trying to prepare for the new South Africa by giving us some- thing, but I can say that for us its useless. We tell them our problems, like that we want upgrading of skills, but they don't attend to them. Management treats it as a platform to preach to the workers. They tell us whether or not we have been working hard enough, and how hard we must work."

The effects of these changes

Ngodwana management attempted to introduce piecemeal reforms in a mill which retains all the major traditional structures of apartheid style production. It is unlikely that productivity will improve until the skills problem is addressed systematically, and in consultation with workers. It is also unlikely to improve until workers share and use their tacit knowledge of production. And that is unlikely to occur until racist practises and hierarchies have been removed, workers are paid a living wage, and their inputs structured into a re-organised process of production.

In the meantime, what the

changes have meant is increasing stress for workers in the form of the intensification of work, and increasing polarisation in the form of a growing divide between different sections of workers. There has always been a divide between the 'core' workers in the mill itself, and their fellow union members in the nearby SAPPI Forests. Workers in the mill earn between R900 and R1600 per month, and workers in the forests earn between R200 and R800. This core/periphery divide has been intensified by the changes at the mill, as a gap opens up between core workers and sub-contracted employees.

What do these changes mean?

It is clear that Ngodwana management is feeling the effects of the ongoing crisis in the mill. The traditional methods of controlling and deskilling workers are no longer effective. It is also clear that management is looking for new strategies. They have not succeeded in designing a thorough restructuring programme, which would take workplace relations onto a new path. But the attempt to find such a path has clearly begun.

South African managers still use repressive forms of workplace organisation, but they seem to be prepared to adapt their strategies, where necessary, to serve their interests in the future. In a factory like the Ngodwana

Mill, the sophisticated technology, and the high level of worker organisation suggest that co-operative strategies (or probably a mixture of co-operative and repressive strategies) will be followed by management.

Responding to new managerial strategies is clearly a challenge for the union. But in the current climate and the future, trade unions may wish to go beyond responding to management. The importance of the paper industry in our economy, and the flux in paper mills themselves, could mean that workers, and PPWAWU in particular, may wish to become involved in restructuring the industry, and the workplace. In considering such an involvement, the union and its members would have to consider a number of issues:

- Under what conditions, if any, would workers agree to help increase productivity?
- How could workers influence what happens to any additional profits made through increased productivity?
- Could workers' strategic position, and/or workplace conditions improve through participation in co-operative programmes such as the Green Areas concept?
- How could the divide between 'core' mill workers, and 'peripheralised' forest and contract workers be avoided?
- How could the structure

of the paper industry as a whole be transformed within new economic development strategies in a post-apartheid society? There is little doubt that the current crisis in

manufacturing, and the emerging managerial and union responses, will raise these important questions for workers in industries like the paper and pulp sector. ☆

'Racial fordism'

Fordism is a concept that has been used to describe the system of mass production and mass consumption that developed in the advanced capitalist economies in the 20th century. The word derives from the Ford motorcar factories which pioneered this system of mass production in the early years of the century. The 'fordist' system mass produces endless quantities of identical products. It is based on deskilling workers, repetitive tasks, assembly line production, and authoritarian management.

Since the 1970s a new system of capitalist production has been emerging in many companies and countries, which many thinkers call 'post-fordism'. Post-fordism is based on new technology which allows much more flexibility in production and a varied range of better-quality products. It is based on multi-skilling, flexible production, and some kinds of 'participative management'. 'Post-fordism' tries to use the knowledge and ideas of workers to improve production. This is the reverse of fordism, which tries to deny the worker any role in thinking about or improving production (see Dave Kaplan, "New technology..." in *SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 8).

Some writers have characterised the system of capitalist production which developed in SA under apartheid as 'racial fordism'. They argue that 'racial fordism' has many similar features to 'fordism', but has been distorted by apartheid. For example, the system of mass production has been stunted by the fact that black workers are paid so little they cannot afford to buy the products. In the workplace, management is racist and even more authoritarian than in 'fordism'.

Under the system of 'racial fordism' capitalism was very profitable and expanded rapidly in SA. But 'racial fordism' has now entered a crisis of low productivity and militant worker resistance, as well as general economic crisis. Some companies in SA are beginning to try to implement some 'post-fordist' management techniques to combat these problems. The case study of Sappi's Ngodwana mill shows that the racism, paternalism and authoritarianism in SA workplaces tends to sabotage such attempts. ♦



The unveiling of the Madibarnobile: a phenomenal production time cut of 700%

Photo: T J Lemon/Southlight

Worker Motivation and Productivity

In April 1990 workers at the Mercedes Benz factory in East London completed the production of the "Madibamobile" - a car built for Nelson Mandela at the request of the NUMSA workers at the plant. The car was built during through voluntary work after normal working hours. It was completed without the help of "non-workers" (ie engineers, technicians, managers), in the equivalent of four days of labour time. It usually takes twenty eight days to construct this model. Production time was thus cut by seven hundred percent.

This experience has enormous implications for South African factories. Imagine if productivity rose by 700% in all factories every day because workers felt motivated to work! Imagine if it were no longer necessary to hire line managers because workers managed themselves and their workplace effectively!

The Madibamobile experience, and other experiences internationally suggest that workers could in fact be managements' best friends. And managers internationally and increasingly in South Africa are beginning to realise that if they can build a co-operative and trusting relationship with their workers, they may in fact be the beneficiaries. It may sound like a far cry for South African management, famous for union busting, strike breaking, low wages, racism and lock-outs to suddenly embark on a program to build an alliance with their workforce and its union...!

And what would be the response of militant union members if the management decided to abolish restrictive wage grades and job descriptions, raise wages, give workers greater autonomy and less supervision, and have meetings with them to consult them as to how production should be improved...?

These issues have arisen for some workers in Australia, Italy and America. And they are beginning to confront workers in Nelspruit... Johannesburg... Durban... ❖

COSATU's first-ever wage policy workshop



In March 1991, nine COSATU affiliates attended the first-ever wage policy workshop organised by the Living Wage Committee (LWC). CAROLE COOPER* reports, and analysis the implications of their findings.

The wage policy workshop arose out of the heated debate surrounding the concept of a national minimum wage (NMW) at the September 1990 COSATU campaigns conference (see *SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 8). That conference decided that COSATU unions needed to study the whole area of wages in more detail before a decision on the NMW could be reached.

A number of problems concerning wages were identified at the workshop, presented by the Labour Research Service (LRS).

Wage differences between workers with different skills

The wage gap between skilled (often white) workers and unskilled (only black)

workers has been a union concern for generations.

The LRS said that while the question of reducing the wage gap between workers with different skills was high on unions' agendas, success in achieving this had been less significant than appeared at first glance. While the gap between minimum rates for artisans and labourers seemed to have narrowed significantly in many industries, in terms of actual wages paid the narrowing of the gap was not as great. In 1975 the minimum wage for labourers in the steel industry was 24% of that for artisans, and in 1990 it was 44%. However, in actual terms there was less of a reduction: 22% of artisans' wages in 1975 and 34% in 1990. This, the LRS said, was the result of wage drift. Because

artisans were in short supply, employers tended to pay them well above the minimum.

One of the ways in which unions have attempted to close the wage gap is by negotiating rand across-the-board (ATB) increases, rather than percentage ATB increases. In practice, however, this does not lead to a decrease in the gap, but merely holds it constant. Most unions have now moved to negotiating a combination of rand and percentage increases. In interviews, only SACCAWU and POTWA said they negotiated rand ATB increases only. Rand ATB increases tend to favour lower-paid workers and often mean that more skilled workers' increases are below inflation. Dissatisfaction by

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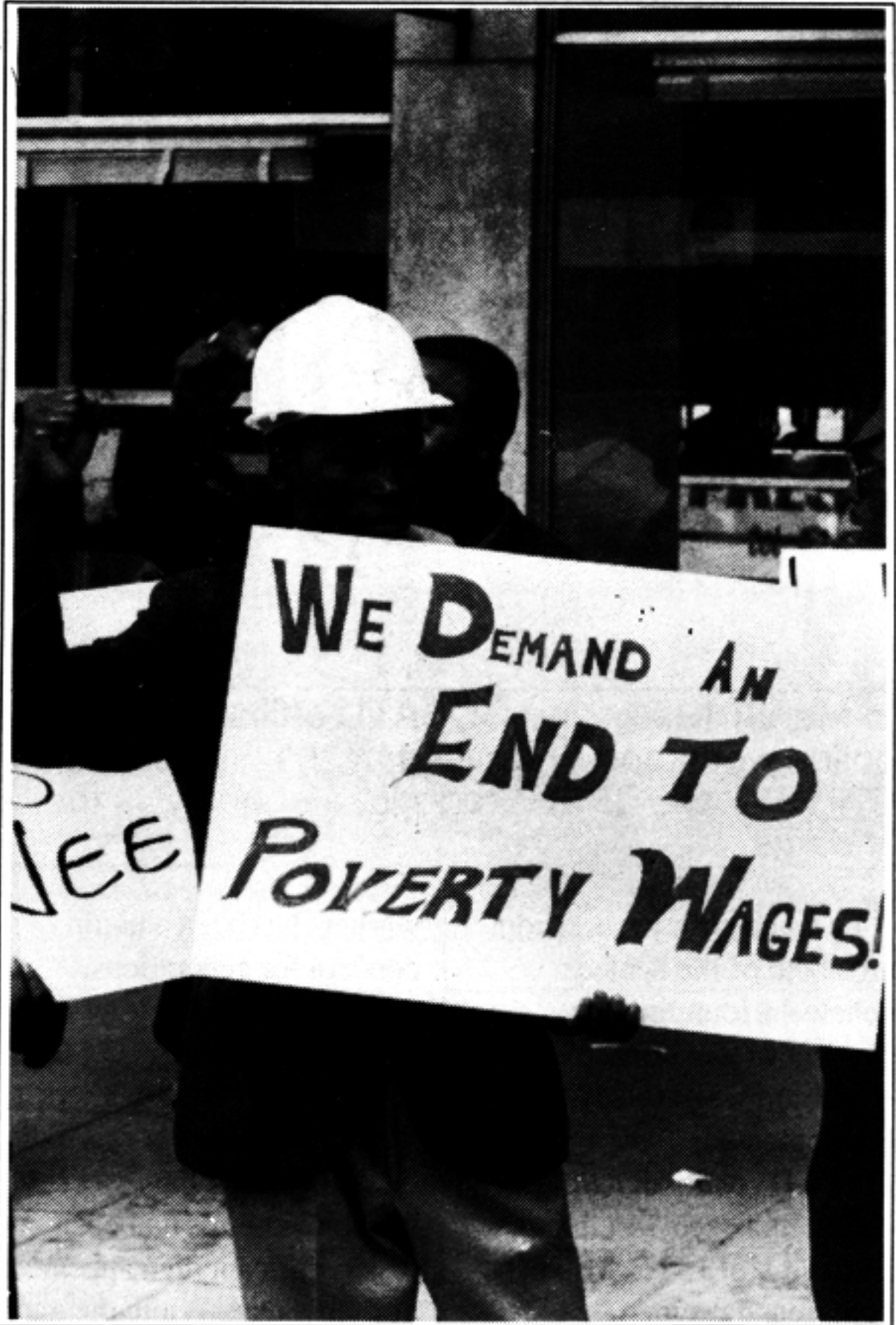
COSATU WORKSHOP

skilled workers with this situation is one reason for the move away from the historic rand ATB increase to a combination of rands and percentages, workers getting whichever is the greater. NUMSA reported that because it has organised increasing numbers of skilled workers, for the first time this year it introduced percentage increases as well. Employers generally prefer percentage increases. In the clothing and textile sectors for instance, employers in the larger bargaining units insist on percentages as a means of keeping the grading system intact.

The LRS, however, queried why unions wanted to close the gap between unskilled and skilled workers – the problem, it suggested, was really one of how to improve the wages of lower-paid workers. Given the poor performance of the economy, it believed that employers would be extremely resistant to wage increases for less-skilled workers.

It argued that unions should rather look to increasing skills as a way of improving wages. Linked to this is the rationalisation of the grading system, so that there is a standard and fair measure of workers' skills.

Some unions, such as NUMSA, have already started looking at the grading system. The metal union argues that there should be a reduction in grades to six as a way of minimising gaps between workers in the same



Wages are always a burning issue for workers

Photo: The Star

industry doing the same jobs. While reducing grades doesn't automatically lead to a reduction in the wage gap, it does simplify the setting of wage levels for different skills.

The LRS said, however, that while grading should be rationalised, the process was not without pitfalls: while too many grades lead to confusion, too few grades could make it hard for workers to move upwards. The gaps are big and it

becomes expensive for employers to promote from one grade to the next.

Wage differences between companies

The workshop found that a common problem was that different companies set different wages for workers in the same jobs. One argument given by employers is that they cannot raise wages because their competitors in other companies pay lower wages.

The extent to which there is a wide discrepancy between wages is shown in the paper and printing industry, where labourers in the forestry sector are paid a minimum of R25 a week, compared with a minimum of R250 per week for labourers in furniture and printing.

Large wage discrepancies tend to be more of a problem in those industries where there is highly decentralised bargaining, such as in sectors organised by the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Differences between the same companies in different regions

The workshop reported that there were often large differences in the wages paid by the same company in different regions, one reason for this being the government's decentralisation policy.

Despite union attempts to address it, the problem remains. For instance, the LRS pointed out that Nampak paid a labourer R827 per month in Rosslyn, while the company's labourers in Port Elizabeth got R662 a month - a 20% difference.

In Sappi the range in labourers' wages was from R5,06 an hour at Cape Kraft, to R3,47 an hour at Novoboard (Durban). Most unions said that eliminating such discrepancies was high on their agendas. NUMSA's Tony Ruiters reports that

Maximum, average and minimum wages

	(Rand per month)		
	Maximum	Average	Minimum
NUMSA			
auto	1323	1049	740
tyre/rubber	1152	910	585
engineering	1090	916	591
SACTWU			
textile	995	672	216
clothing/leather	897	550	193
SACCAWU			
wholesale/retail	1117	762	520
hotel/catering	810	670	380
CAWU			
	1035	727	399
PPWAWU			
printing/packaging	1296	894	433
wood/furniture	1001	795	347
T&G			
	1110	638	369
NUM			
	1100	558	310
SAMWU			
	970	449	184

bosses in the Border and PE area want exemption from the metal industry Industrial Council agreements so that they are not required to pay the same wages as in Johannesburg.

According to the South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, for which regional differentials have been a major problem, there is no real logic behind employers' arguments in support of such differentials as they are all providing goods for the same market.

Wage differences between industries

The fourth problem identified by the workshop was the vast differences in wages between industries. The table above, taken from information supplied by the LRS, shows the discrepancy in maximum, minimum and average wages in selected industries.

The LRS commented that a worker's wage is often a matter of luck depending on the sector he or she happens to be employed in, and that there is little relationship between the content of the job and the wage in different sectors.

Reports from unions show that little attention is being paid at present to the problem of wage differences between industries. Unions have their own internal problems and thus inter-industry collaboration, on issues such as the equalisation of wages, has not received much attention.

Race and gender discrimination

The LRS said that while race discrimination was diminishing as a factor in wage setting, the same could not be said for gender. The unions interviewed all put equal wages for women high

on their agendas, and reported substantial progress on this issue. The LRS pointed out, however, that black women in particular were clustered in the lower grades and got below average wages. It said, in fact, that the male/female wage gap was widening.

Payability

The workshop report concluded that some companies and industries simply could not afford to pay more: "Either the price of what they sell is under pressure or there is intense competition, often from overseas. Ordinary collective bargaining has failed to solve problems of this kind. So wage gaps increase depending on the economic position of companies and industries, leading to divisions among the working class," it said.

Conclusions from the discussion of the workshop

The wage policy workshop came to certain conclusions:

1. No progress could be made in the development of a wage policy until there was better information on wages. Some unions had no central record of their members' wages or records of the wage agreements which they had signed.

2. Unions should develop a clear wage policy. This would guide negotiators and ensure that the whole union was "pulling in the same direction". Interviews with

unions showed that only one union, NUM, had drawn up a coherent wage policy which had been formally adopted by the union, while one or two others had started to do so.

3. The success of a wage policy depended on an improvement in the levels of unionisation. Only 17% of South Africa's workers were unionised, it found.

4. More attention should be given to the issue of unemployment. A reserve army of unemployed has the effect of undermining union efforts to gain higher wages for unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

5. Unemployment is largely a function of poor economic growth, an issue which cannot be dealt with by unions alone. In order to address the problem unions would have to intervene in the political arena, so as to "influence national economic policy", increase the social wage, and create statutory protection for low-paid and unemployed workers.

Implications

The workshop believed that the five policy conclusions had a number of implications for union strategies:

● Centralised bargaining

The workshop saw this as essential to any effective wage bargaining. Interviews with unions showed strong support for centralised bargaining, most having targeted it as a key area of future action. There is at present a vast discrepancy in

the extent of centralised bargaining among unions. In some industries, such as metal and mining, and clothing and textiles, centralised bargaining is well advanced.

In others, such as commerce and catering, chemicals and transport, bargaining is more decentralised and fragmented, taking place mainly at a mixture of plant, company and regional levels.

Highly fragmented bargaining means that unions have little chance of enforcing a consistent wage policy and little hope of addressing effectively the wage policy problems identified at the workshop.

The workshop also said that centralised bargaining was 'practically impossible' when there was a wide range of different grading systems in use. One grading system was needed for each industry and eventually a grading system that stretched across industries.

While the workshop stressed the importance of centralised bargaining, it pointed out that it would mean a reduction in shop steward autonomy. It also raised the question of whether it would be possible to redefine the role of shop stewards to create greater uniformity in collective bargaining – and therefore greater effectiveness – without sacrificing democratic traditions.

The view of some of the

unions interviewed was that centralised bargaining did not necessarily undermine democracy within a union, but that this depended on unions' structures and how issues were taken up through these structures. The undermining of democracy could be prevented if workers' involvement was ensured.

● Wage levels

The report suggested that a completely different approach to wage demands was needed. Instead of concerning themselves with the *size* of a wage increase, unions should focus on the desired wage *level* in each given industry and campaign for this in each bargaining unit. Each bargaining unit would demand different increases, but the same target wage. This would unify wages in the industry over time.

● Skills training

The report stressed the need for workers to have access to proper skills training so that they could earn higher wages.

● Living wage and national minimum wage

Neither the living wage nor the national minimum wage (NMW) issue was discussed directly at the workshop. However, the conclusions and implications in the report have a direct bearing on both these issues. By focusing on wage policy the workshop emphasised the need for the setting of target wage levels. The rationalisation of grades and

the upgrading of skills are all aspects of the struggle for a living wage.

The issue of the NMW was directly addressed in one of the "tactical" conclusions mentioned in the report. While collective bargaining had a critical role to play in the solving of wage-related problems raised at the workshop, it was not enough.

Pointing to the fact that the union movement would not be able to organise all workers in the near future, and thus bargain on their behalf, the report stated that 'legal measures' would be necessary to 'protect the weak'. A NMW and a reformed wage board, it suggested, were two ways of doing this.

Alongside the living wage (gained through collective bargaining) and the NMW (introduced through legislation), the report argued for an improved social wage, which it saw as perhaps being the "quickest, most cost-effective way of raising living standards". (The social wage it defined as including health facilities, recreation facilities, township infrastructure, cheap transport, free education, etc.)

Conclusion

Proponents of a wage policy for COSATU believe that only if unions have an idea of how their separate bargaining exercises relate to each other and to the economy as a whole, will they be able to start

addressing the question of wage disparities in a meaningful way. Without a wage policy, wage disparities and low pay will become entrenched. They also point out that because the development of a wage policy depends on solidarity within the union movement and the development of a working class consciousness, it can be a powerful organising and educational tool.

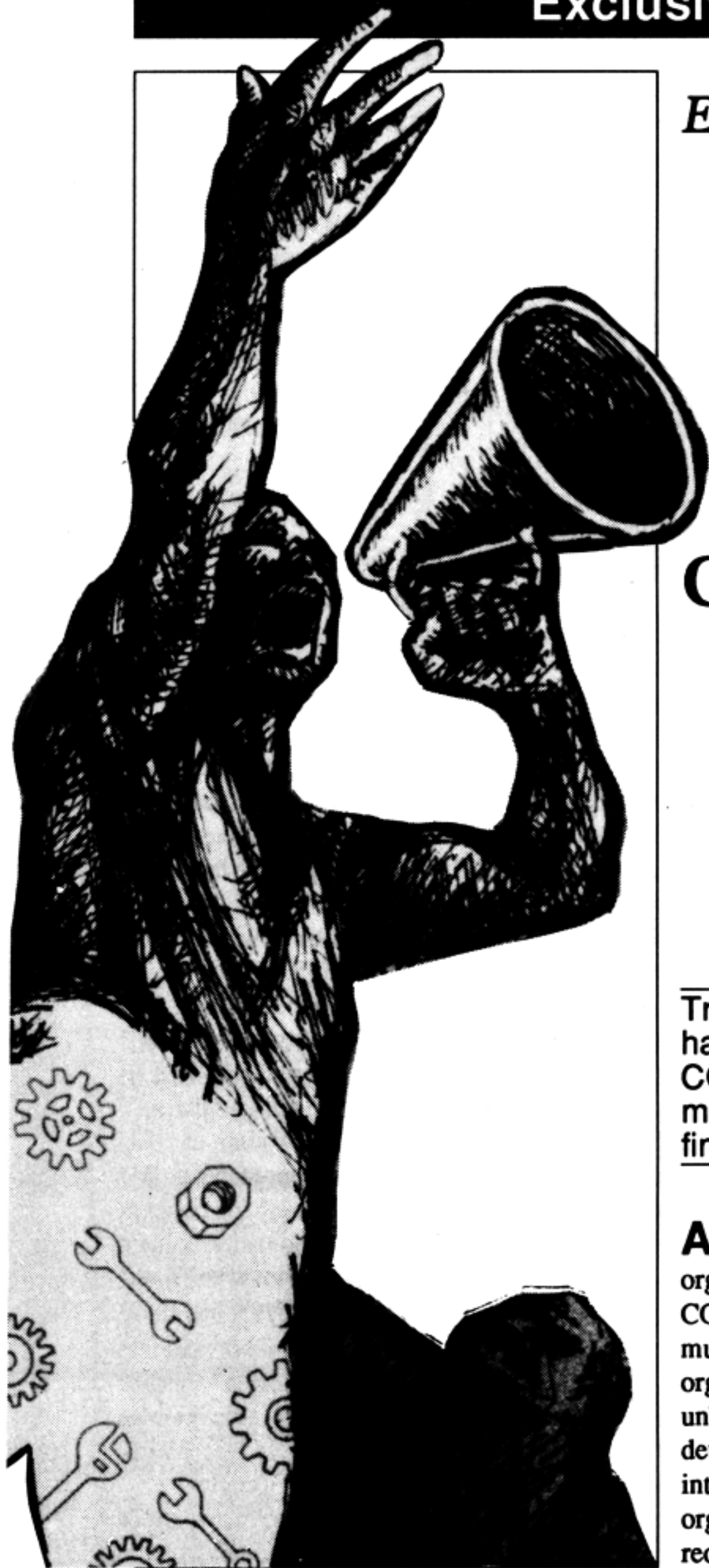
The extent of support within COSATU for the development of a federation-based wage policy is unclear: for instance, the session on wage policy was initially dropped from the agenda of COSATU's economic policy conference held in May and put back on only at the last minute. However, despite the lack of a formal wage policy within COSATU, interviews with COSATU affiliates show that even though there may be some wage issues (such as the NMW) over which there is little agreement, on others unions often have similar priorities and approaches. ☆

References:

The following unions were interviewed for this article:

CWIU
FAWU
NUM
NUMSA
PPWAWU
POTWA
SACCAWU
SACTWU
SARHWU
TGWU.

Exclusive to Labour Bulletin!



Extract from
Striking Back
by Jeremy Baskin

COSATU: challenges of the 1990s

Trade unionist JEREMY BASKIN* has written the first history of COSATU, which was published this month. *Labour Bulletin* reprints the final chapter.

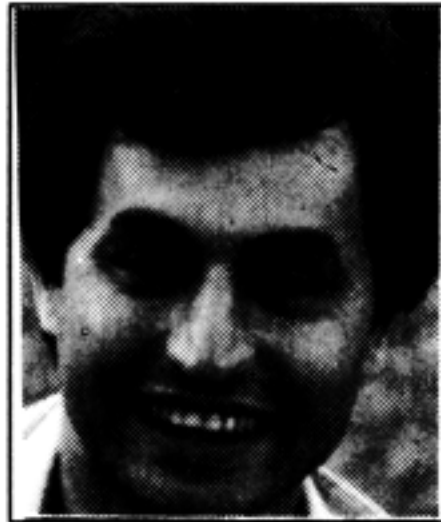
A range of new challenges - political, organisational and structural - have emerged as COSATU enters the 1990s. The federation must redefine its political role now that organisations such as the ANC have been unbanned. Organisationally it needs to determine how best to inject more vibrancy into its worker-controlled structures, how to organise the unorganised, and how to reorganise the disorganised.

* *Jeremy Baskin, Striking Back, (Ravan, 1991). Baskin has been involved in the union movement since the early 1970s, became general secretary of PPWAWU in the 1980s, and is currently national co-ordinator of COSATU*

The union movement must ensure that its structures are adequate to the demands of the time. Many of these challenges involve rethinking the democratic process. Is democratic centralism appropriate for a mass organisation in the current phase? Can 'delegate democracy' be balanced with elements of 'direct democracy'? Is it desirable to entrench affirmative action constitutionally? There is still the enormous task of organising the unorganised. Most COSATU affiliates have not yet organised half the potential membership in their sector. SACTWU, which represents 80% of workers in the clothing, textile and leather sector, is the glaring exception. In some sectors, such as construction, organisation has barely scratched the surface.

There are also sectors which are essentially unorganised, notably agriculture, where millions are employed. Finally, there is the task of consolidating organisation in previously-isolated areas of the country, particularly the homelands, and securing basic legal rights for these workers. One of the key organisational challenges of the 1990s concerns white collar workers and workers previously considered beyond unionisation.

Thousands in this category have flocked to join COSATU affiliates, but often find their needs are not catered for by unions whose structures, traditions and



Jeremy Baskin

style have developed around the organisation of blue collar and semi-skilled workers. The result has been relatively ineffectual unionisation among office workers, bank employees and computer operators.

These jobs are no longer the preserve of white workers, and their importance is increasing with changes in the production process and the introduction of new technologies. Workers performing professional tasks - nurses, teachers, academics, technicians and others - have also demanded unionisation. Many have strong professional pride and commitment to their work - they are in a 'career' rather than a 'job'. Yet they feel they are also workers with rights to decent working conditions. The established union movement, for that is what COSATU has become, has been slow to respond. It is no solution to insist, as COSATU has sometimes

done, that they join the existing industrial union for their sector. Civil servants and other state employees have also shown interest in unionisation. This sector employs increasing numbers of black people, although at present most work for separate ethnic administrations.

Organising these workers is a challenge with major political implications for a future South Africa. In the law-enforcement sector, prison warders, policemen and even black soldiers have demanded union rights. COSATU needs to develop a meaningful strategy to cope with these demands.

Mergers - phase two

Phase two of the union merger process has barely started. There is enormous potential for a broad range of established unions and staff associations to be brought into the mainstream of trade unionism. A number of these, led by conservative leaders, have affiliated to NACTU in an attempt to avoid incorporation by a COSATU affiliate.

However, many workers - particularly coloured, Indian and white workers - are still isolated and remain within their existing unions out of habit. Others are held there by the threat of losing benefits should they resign. Still others feel unable to identify with COSATU's tradition of militancy and political involvement.

It is essential that

COSATU projects itself as a home for these workers - not an easy task in practice. Many white workers openly praise COSATU affiliates and are jealous of their ability to win meaningful wage increases and ensure job security. However they are, generally speaking, deeply hostile to COSATU's political outlook.

As a result, COSATU's white worker membership can be numbered in the hundreds rather than the thousands. It is no accident that right-wingers have launched whites-only unions which base their appeal on promises to be 'the white COSATU'. Whether the federation can find a formula to appeal to larger numbers of coloured, Indian, and even white workers, without sacrificing the essence of its political outlook and organisational approach, remains an open question.

Unity with NACTU unions is another aspect of the ongoing merger challenge. Much of the tension between COSATU and NACTU is political, arising from differences between the Congress/ANC tradition and those in the Africanist or BC camps. With the unbanning of political organisations, the pressures on unions to substitute for these bodies should lessen. There is no reason why, in a freer political environment, differences should not be accommodated within one democratic union federation.



The alternative is to pursue the unattractive model of certain European countries with a number of federations - socialist, communist and christian - each indirectly linked to the major political parties.

Strengthening democracy

COSATU has retained its essentially democratic nature, but in many respects internal union democracy is weaker today than ever before. There are signs that rank-and-file membership no longer participate effectively in determining macro-policy in their own unions or COSATU.

The growing movement towards centralised bargaining structures increases the risk of leadership isolation from ordinary membership. The protracted 1990 strike at Mercedes Benz - directed at NUMSA's leadership as much as at the company itself, exemplifies this. The weakening of democratic processes was one consequence of the state of emergency. Unions and youth organisations sometimes took shortcuts. There were cases where stayaway action, for example, was achieved more by stopping transport or blockading roads than actively winning support.

The growing number and

complexity of issues dealt with by the unions has also weakened democratic participation. It is one matter to involve membership in a demand for recognition and higher wages, but far more difficult to maintain mass participation when negotiating the intricacies of a provident fund. The latter requires shopfloor leadership which understands the details of negotiations, can report back the salient points to the workforce, and develop a mandate over critical issues.

COSATU has often been unable to do this with its major campaigns. Mobilisation of mass support in the anti-LRA campaign has been one of the few exceptions. SACTWU's mass participation in the workers' charter campaign is another.

Increasing the mass base of COSATU campaigns is essential for the re-invigoration of union democracy. The post-February situation created the space for unions to concentrate again on democratic participation, as much as on the issues themselves. Part of the challenge involves ensuring that union structures are adequate to the tasks of representing, educating and informing membership, and meeting their needs. COSATU's campaign conferences are an attempt to do this.

Strengthening democracy also demands examination of the poor participation of women in COSATU and its affiliates. The issue at stake

is not simply increasing the number of women in leadership but also ensuring that a post-apartheid society is non-sexist as well as non-racial. For the union movement this means exploring affirmative action more seriously, for example by including constitutional provisions requiring that at least one-third of all executive committee positions are held by women.

Union and COSATU structures

The union movement has three major weaknesses in its internal organisational functioning - it lacks professionalism, has inadequate or non-existent training programmes, and its constitutional structures are not the most suitable to meeting the challenge of the 1990s. Naturally there are differences within and between affiliates. COSATU and a number of affiliates have recently started addressing these weaknesses. But to a greater or lesser extent, they apply to all affiliates and to the federation.

The lack of professionalism reveals itself in many ways. It is unusual to find a union head office where all recognition or wage agreements signed can be found easily. It is rare to find a union general secretary who can authoritatively say whether Everyman Sithole is a union member, how many shop stewards the union has, or



what proportion of its members have been granted 16 June as a paid holiday. The problem repeats itself at regional and branch levels. Information systems are inadequate or non-existent. Efficiency is rarely practised, nor is it valued.

At local level, organisers and officials are generally forced to rely on their own resources and inventiveness. Those unions which have tried to address these problems have often resorted to bureaucratic solutions, further disempowering both local officials and the general membership.

The almost total absence of staff training is also a major weakness unions must confront. Almost all union officials - organisers, educators and administrators - receive no training or induction before starting work. Many are unable to use a calculator effectively, yet are expected to negotiate complex wage agreements. On-the-job training is the most a union employee can expect and even this is likely to be little more than advice from an experienced organiser.

This sometimes releases great qualities of inventiveness and initiative. More often than not, it leads to poor administrative and organising methods and weak negotiating skills. Finally, existing

constitutional structures need a fundamental rethink. Progressive South African unionism is based on British unionism, albeit a more democratic version. The South African model rests heavily on structures in every plant, worker majorities on every union committee, NECs composed of delegates from branches or regions, a strong general secretary. With the exception of the last feature, which is a more recent development, the outlines of this model were developed when the union movement revived in the 1970s. The system of majoritarian hegemony, whereby the majority position is binding on the entire union, needs careful re-examination. It has frequently been justified in much the same way as the Leninist concept of democratic centralism - that positions are debated thoroughly but decisions reached are binding on and must be propagated by all.

Some variant of this system binds all democratic organisations. Debates cannot continue endlessly and majority decision-making must be respected. In COSATU's earlier years, with extreme repression and when the federation often had to substitute for political organisations, majoritarian hegemony was necessary to ensure a high level of discipline and unity within the organisation. However the strong version of majoritarian hegemony is

inappropriate in the current phase. The problem is revealed most obviously in the prevailing system of layered democracy and bloc voting. South African unionism is based on layered, rather than direct, democracy. Workers typically elect shop stewards by general ballot at the workplace. Some of these shop stewards then sit on local or branch committees and elect branch leadership and decide branch policies. Branches in turn send delegates to the region... and so on up to national level.

In theory the system is highly democratic. In practice it is only effective if, as COSATU insists, delegates go to higher meetings with a mandate and report back to their constituency after every meeting. Experience reveals that this process is inconsistent and inadequate. While shop stewards generally have a direct relationship with the membership, leaders at higher levels do not. The danger, of course, is that national leaders may end up representing only the regional leaders that elected them and not the membership as a whole. Equally, they may represent the views of union activists rather than the general membership. To deepen the democratic process, the tried and tested system of layered democracy must be supplemented with direct consultation of the



membership on key issues. In some countries major policy decisions or the election of national leadership is done by direct balloting of union membership.

A related corollary of majoritarian hegemony is bloc voting. This emerges most strongly at COSATU's regional and national congresses. National congresses are exciting, vibrant events and delegates arrive bringing the outlook and mandates of the workers who sent them. They invariably meet beforehand as delegates from a particular region of that affiliate and attempt to develop a uniform position. At the congress itself they caucus with other delegates from their union and develop a common union position. This is presented to congress as, for example, the NUMSA position. The result is bloc voting, in practice, if not in theory.

This inability to accommodate democratic pluralism can have negative effects, as seen in the debate at COSATU's second congress on adoption of the Freedom Charter. NUMSA's Eastern Cape delegates were unable to vote in favour of the political position expressed by NUM despite having a mandate to do so from their members in the region. With bloc voting,

pluralism assumes a bureaucratic form and emerges as conflict between monolithic unions rather than differing views of worker delegates. Concentric circles of majoritarian hegemony, even if they reach down to every factory and local, will eventually result in no democracy at all.

The existing system is not undemocratic. Indeed, these structures have largely proved themselves in practice: resilient in the face of attack, and with the multiplicity of layers resistant to state disruption. They have also given ordinary workers real power to decide on bread-and-butter issues affecting them in their plants. But the system has not always empowered workers in regard to the larger social and political issues COSATU has taken up.

COSATU is generally accepted to be greater than the sum of its parts, although this is not reflected in the federation's structures. These are composed entirely of delegates from the various affiliates. Although COSATU locals, and local leadership, may be crucial in promoting the federation, they have no formal representation in the higher structures, national or regional. Delegations at COSATU's biannual national congress are made up entirely of delegates from affiliates. None come from COSATU's own local or regional structures. This discourages working-class

consciousness in favour of a more sectional affiliate consciousness.

There is a real possibility that COSATU will soon be the major player in drafting a new industrial relations structure, and there is every reason to explore other models of unionism. The British model is one of the weaker systems internationally. Its unions are declining in numbers and influence, and its membership is often extremely conservative. Its public image is of a defensive, reactive and narrowly sectional union movement. Developing union structures which deepen democracy, give direct power to ordinary members, and maintain organisational vibrancy is one of the key challenges COSATU faces.

Workers and officials

A key area requiring reassessment is the relationship between 'workers' and 'officials'. A central tenet within COSATU and its affiliates is that workers control the organisation and officials are simply full-time functionaries. Unlike most union movements internationally, all elected leadership positions are held by union members who continue to retain their ordinary jobs. The intention is to maintain ongoing links between leadership and ordinary union members.

The only exception to this system is the position of union secretary which is generally held by a full-time



official. As we have seen, acknowledgment that this position is a powerful one developed during the COSATU era - and has also coincided with the almost total disappearance of women from the position of union secretary. In practice, however, worker leaders have found great difficulty combining a full day's work with the demanding tasks of union leadership. Some have managed to negotiate time off from their workplaces, while others have the status of full-time shop stewards, essentially free to come and go as they please. This solution gives a union president, for example, an opportunity to tackle union duties while retaining links with the shopfloor. However, it is not a solution for most union members, tending to restrict leadership positions to those working in large, well-organised plants where they are able to negotiate extensive time off.

The problem becomes worse as the tasks of leadership become more demanding and complex. Major union issues cannot be adequately tackled and grasped on a part-time basis. As a result, it is usually union officials who wield real power, with elected worker leaders and executive committees acting as a check on the abuse of that power.

The union general secretary is more likely to be better known, and called upon to resolve a crisis within the union, than the president. Since the principle of worker leadership was originally intended to ensure hands-on leadership by workers, the system clearly no longer works effectively. While the principle is retained, officials wield more power than ever before, and effective worker leaders no longer spend much time at work. The challenge to COSATU involves retaining 'worker leadership', making it more meaningful, yet avoiding its pitfalls where, for example, a worker is elected union president and then effectively retains that position for life. The solution to the worker/official dilemma may require changes to the country's labour law to facilitate time-off and job security for elected worker leaders, enabling them to return to the factory on expiry of their term of office.

The political challenge

The political context has changed greatly, both internationally and locally. International attitudes towards the apartheid regime are softening, and the global balance of power has shifted with the collapse of communist Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War.

These changes have major implications for any socialist vision, and the possibilities for its realisation, which

COSATU may have. They also highlight the dangers of sacrificing union independence whereby unions become mere 'transmission belts' through which party interests are conveyed to workers.

Here, the country's future hangs in the balance with numerous forces battling to determine and influence the shape of a new South Africa. Since 2 February 1990, the ANC and De Klerk have stood at centre stage. De Klerk and his government are preparing to share, and perhaps even transfer, political power, while keeping white social and economic privilege secure. Enormous opportunities for organisation have opened up for the ANC, PAC and others. Racism, despite scrapped apartheid legislation, remains at the core of the system. Opposition forces, including COSATU, still face the task of transforming the country into one where the needs and aspirations of the majority of working people are respected.

COSATU's political role has been called into question since the unbanning of the ANC and SACP. Why, some have asked, should COSATU remain politically active? This view fails to understand the relationship between the trade union movement and politics. COSATU did not become politically active simply because the ANC was banned. Its outlook came from an understanding, which



pre-dated the federation's formation, that the union movement could not achieve its union goals without fundamental social and political changes. The unions found politics on the factory floor. How could they call for improved training and job advancement opportunities without challenging racism, job reservation and unequal education? How could they challenge the LRA without confronting the undemocratic process by which it had been drafted and passed into law? How could they call for a living wage without challenging the profits of major companies and the distribution of wealth within South African society? These questions remain valid despite the ANC's unbanning and the as yet unrealised prospects of democracy.

Organised industry and commerce has never avoided political involvement. Indeed, the racial structures of South African society are in large measure a product and expression of employer interests. Mine-owners and industrialists have had privileged access to governments of the day. Their political involvement has hence been less public, less oppositional and less confrontational than that of the union movement, but no less real.

A democratic system does not restrict politics to political parties. It is a peculiarly South African concept, propagated over the years by the National Party, that politics is something which belongs in parliament. Politics affects the entire social fabric. The union movement, like all major social institutions, has political interests. Economic policies affect its membership. So too do the structures and constitution of society. The right to freedom of speech or assembly; whether international trade barriers are restrictive or open; whether a new constitution is drafted by a constituent assembly or behind closed doors; the structure of the industrial relations system; whether the health-care system is centred on public or private medicine: these are all political issues which impact on the union movement, its members, and the working class more generally.

The post-February political situation is not, therefore, an argument against COSATU's continuing political involvement. However, it does mean the nature of the federation's political role must be reconsidered.

Many joined or became active in COSATU because it offered one of the few means for legal political expression. ANC and SACP underground activists were specifically assigned to the task of building a strong trade

union movement. In the repressive climate, COSATU became an outlet for the political hopes of far more than its membership. It acted as a political centre. Youths and students looked to it for guidance; churches asked it for political direction; ambassadors, foreign visitors and political journalists canvassed its opinions - and not because of any particular interest in or support for trade unionism.

To a large extent COSATU spoke for the entire democratic movement. It was seen as the voice of the ANC in a situation where the ANC could not openly speak.

The key difference in the post-apartheid period is that COSATU no longer has to engage in political substitutionism. It no longer has to attempt to speak for the entire democratic movement. The ANC, SACP, PAC and others can now openly speak for themselves. COSATU's direct role is not on the political terrain of parliament, elections and lawmaking, although its policies will continue to have major effects on these. For the federation this will probably mean a shift in emphasis from 'Politics' to 'politics', with its political role in the 1990s one of process and direction. It is likely to act as a watchdog on the political dimensions of the state's social and economic policies. In the short term this will cause a crisis within COSATU, for



its leadership is accustomed to a high-profile political role.

While it is COSATU's right and duty to call for a constituent assembly as the most democratic means of drafting a new constitution, its role is not to stand for election to that assembly. In the interim, however, COSATU is still likely to play a direct political role - partly because of its mobilising ability and partly because the present period is one in which the foundations are being laid for the country's social and political system for decades to come.

A key element of COSATU's political activities will undoubtedly be to ensure that the voice of organised labour is heard when the policies of a post-apartheid South Africa are drafted. COSATU has already begun, and will undoubtedly continue, to draft policies on issues such as housing, medical care, social security, and training. It is also considering economic policy in some detail - particularly the relationship between the state and the private sector, between market and non-market forces, and the role of the union movement in restructuring the economy.

The post-February situation not only challenges COSATU on the question of political substitutionism. It

compels the federation to consider its attitude to the structures of society in a non-racial democratic South Africa. It will no longer be sufficient for the trade unions to be a force of opposition and resistance. They will have to be a force for reconstruction and change.

A new industrial relations system

A major task facing the federation is the active reshaping of the country's industrial relations system. Many sectors still have no agreed national bargaining forums. There is no forum for organised industry and organised labour as a whole to negotiate issues of national importance such as public holidays, economic restructuring, basic employment conditions and a national provident fund. These gaps are destructive and perpetuate conflict. However, talks with Saccola over the LRA problem may have provided a foundation for such a national forum, and a restructured NMC may also offer possibilities.

A major part of any new system will involve drafting an entirely new labour law. Apart from the need to extend union rights to all workers, a new law must include dispute resolution and arbitration procedures which are both faster and more fair than at present. It must also establish basic bargaining structures and reinforce principles such as worker control of the union



Worker meeting: built as a resistance movement, COSATU faces complex new challenges

Photo: FAWU

movement.

The present industrial relations system grudgingly acknowledges the union movement. A new system must accept unions as a necessary social institution. This demands that both employers and unions accept a new set of 'rules', including an end to the culture of violence which has become a hallmark of industrial relations since the 1986 state of emergency, and the establishment of basic rights and powers in the workplace.

In presenting its perspectives on post-apartheid South Africa the union movement needs to be aware of the dangers of sectionalism. As the voice of organised labour, unions have an inherent tendency to be sectional. Already unions face allegations of representing only a labour

aristocracy - privileged workers employed by the larger corporations, or urban, rather than rural, workers. Two aspects of sectionalism require particular vigilance, namely disputes involving members of the public and a tendency to represent the views of relatively better-off workers.

In the health sector strikes of 1990 a potential conflict of interest emerged between workers and the broader public. On the one hand health workers were striking for the right to join unions and earn a decent wage. On the other hand members of the public were concerned about their health and the virtual collapse of medical services for the duration of the strike. In situations like this the union movement will have to spend more time and energy justifying its actions

to general public, black and white. This in turn implies greater responsibility, more openness, improved publicity, and a conscious attempt to win public support during industrial action. This principally affects unions in the service sector, where workers deal directly the general public, although it may also be relevant during protracted disputes in the manufacturing sector.

South Africa's economy already contains a dangerous dualism, with large, technologically sophisticated enterprises operating alongside sweatshops and informal sector production. It is easier for the union movement to organise, mobilise and represent workers employed by major corporations. However, unless COSATU can show that it is interested as much

in employment creation as a living wage, as much in public health-care as medical aid schemes for its members, its influence will decline in society. The views the federation propagates at the political and economic level must be successfully presented as the interests of the vast majority of people.

The union movement is used to being labelled a disruptive force, and blamed for inflation, unemployment and a variety of other ills. Union leaders are accustomed to being called 'communists', 'terrorists' and 'agitators'. In the past, unions have dismissed these charges, secure in the belief that they represented the interests of the great majority of the population.

The unions can expect to be accused of disruption even in the post-apartheid era. The charges will be packaged differently: there will be less talk of 'communists' and more of 'sabotaging national reconstruction'. The unions will have to take these allegations seriously, especially since they will come from a popularly-elected government. COSATU is attempting to face this challenge by developing a comprehensive programme for union involvement in social and economic reconstruction.

Pluralism

Combatting dogmatism and intolerance within its own ranks is another difficult task



facing COSATU. In part this problem has arisen because of political substitutionism, where COSATU was seen, and saw itself, as a flag-bearer of the banned ANC. Most unions attempted to adhere to a clearly defined line, maintaining political clarity and coherence during a period of harsh state attack. But when there were no clear majorities to determine that line, as in the case of the CCAWUSA split or during COSATU's second congress, the results were deeply divisive. Unions acting as bearers of one political position is unsustainable in the current period. They are essentially mass organisations which accept all workers as members, regardless of political affiliation.

All key political organisations now accept, at least in theory, the need for political pluralism in a post-apartheid South Africa. This involves the right of a variety of political parties to exist, contest elections, and compete for support for their political perspectives within all major social institutions - including the trade union movement. When this becomes a reality it will be hard to justify linking the fortunes of the trade union movement too closely with one political line - as happened not only in the Soviet Union but with many

of the social-democratic parties of Western Europe.

Two alternatives can accommodate this situation. The first envisages separate federations linked to different political parties or movements. These could co-operate on industrial issues as required. In practice the situation would not be vastly different to continuing with COSATU, NACTU and UWUSA, allied to the ANC, PAC and Inkatha respectively.

The other option is to have one federation for all workers, and one union in each sector. This would require a high level of tolerance for differing political views expressed within its ranks, with majority and minority factions competing for support from the membership as a whole.

COSATU's founding slogan of 'One Country, One Federation' impels it towards the second option, although this has implications for the existing tripartite alliance between COSATU, the ANC and SACP. How the process unfolds will depend on the policies of a post-apartheid government and on the union movement's decisions about its political role in a democratic society.

In its brief five years, COSATU has shown itself capable of reaching great heights. How the federation resolves the challenges outlined above will have long-term implications for the future of the union movement and the country as a whole. ☆

ICFTU Conference for African trade unionists:

*international solidarity or
paternalism?*

Drawing together more than 100 experienced African and European trade unionists, the recent ICFTU conference in Gaborone Botswana provided valuable insights into the priority issues of democracy and development facing African trade unionists. DOT KEET, who was at the conference, reports and analyses some significant trends evident in this conference.

A fundamental economic crisis and human tragedy of appalling proportions is wracking Africa. Popular uprisings against economic austerity and oppressive rule have been surging up in country after country across the continent for more than a year.

It was in this context that the ICFTU's recent conference on 'Democracy, Development and the Defence of Human and Trade Union Rights in Africa' took place. The ICFTU representatives, and other visitors, were meeting with scores of African trade union leaders, many of whose organisations have played an active, and sometimes leading role in the historic anti-colonial struggles, as well as in the current democratic uprisings on the continent. It is these African trade unions that must play a central role in the ongoing struggles for the transformation and liberation of the continent.

The conference provided a important opportunity for all concerned to contribute to.

the discussion and active promotion of appropriate strategies to respond to the crisis. The African trade unionists could deepen their exchanges on political and economic strategies within their own countries and for the continent. The ICFTU and other visitors were well placed to draw from the experience the guidelines for their own ongoing solidarity work in support of their African counterparts.

In a substantial document prepared in advance of the conference, the ICFTU laid out its views on trade union and human rights, and democracy and development in Africa. It also proposed actions that trade unions should take in Africa and abroad for the defence and promotion of these rights.

The ICFTU perspectives were presented to the conference through ICFTU African officials and affiliates [see box, p.75] and formed the framework for the Gaborone discussions on Africa's problems and their solutions.

Democracy and basic rights in Africa

The first session started with a strong report by the ICFTU's African Regional Organisation (AFRO) secretary, Kandeh Yilla of Sierra Leone, on failures in Africa in democracy and development, human and trade union rights. Declaring that "in Africa we have had none of these", he criticised African leaders who "have denied us democracy [and] have not been capable of providing the economic development they promised". He went on to list the abuses heaped on their subjects by repressive African leaders, including the banning of elections, arbitrary imprisonment and even torture of opponents, attacks on the institutions and personnel of the judiciary, media and trade unions; and personal financial corruption.

Yilla commended those African trade unions which have played a courageous role in pushing a number of African dictators and one-party dictatorships towards multiparty democracy although, he said, further guarantees are still needed for genuine free democratic elections. He also criticised those African trade unions which have been "unprepared or unwilling" to challenge the "old undemocratic order" in Africa.

Multiparty politics...and more

In the following presentations, representatives of African trade unions gave full support to the need for political democracy and human rights in Africa. However, delegates from Niger, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Lesotho and the regional trade union

federation of the North African Mahgreb (USTMA) picked up on Yilla's over-emphasis on multiparty elections per se. *

A delegate from the Botswana BFTU pointed out that in his country 'multipartyism' has not been enough to guarantee human and trade union rights. General secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Morgan Tsvangirai, went further, arguing that multipartyism "is essential but not the panacea". Democracy also requires a free press (and owned by whom?), genuinely democratic political parties and accountable government, and democratic - and political - trade unions. Furthermore, "democracy is not the end but the process towards the end ...the reduction of poverty," without which democracy will fail, he said.

The Botswana delegate stressed that democracy has three other aspects, besides the political. These are : social rights (such as the right to education), economic rights (wealth equally distributed) and industrial rights (workers' rights to

Trade union participants at the conference

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) conference was held in Gaborone Botswana, 9-11 July 1991. Some 62 African trade unionists were present from 33 national trade union federations and three regional trade union organisations [see box, p 75] as well as the continental Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU).

Also present were representatives from eleven trade union federations affiliated to the ICFTU, from Europe the USA and Japan, as well as the European continental trade union organisation the ETUC. The ICFTU delegation included representatives from its eight International Trade Secretariats (ITS's) for different industrial sectors, and six representatives from the ICFTU's 'AFRO' structures responsible for different regions/areas of ICFTU work in Africa. v

* The ICFTU's fuller position in its background document, p 29-30, did, however, note that "elections alone are not a sufficient condition for improvement", and that a fuller human rights infrastructure is essential.

participate in policy decisions).

Joram Pajoba, general secretary of NUPAWU of Uganda, pointed out that "most political, economic, social and cultural arrangements in Africa are not democratic". In Africa, he said, "democracy should be concerned with establishing resources and services for the common good of the nation and the people" but, he asked, "how can there be [such] when political, social and economic relations between Africa and the North are not democratic...?"

Democracy and development

This broader interpretation of democracy was picked up by other African - and some of the European - delegates in later observations on the relationship of democracy and development. ICFTU general secretary Jean Claude Vanderveken had summarised the ICFTU's position, in his opening speech to the conference, when he concluded that "the facts are that democracy promotes development and lack of democracy stops development."

This somewhat simple formulation was later contradicted by the CFDT delegate from France, Denis Jacquot. He pointed out that development *has* taken place without democracy - under conditions of extreme repression, in fact, as in various of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NIC's) of South-East Asia! The question is, he said, what *sort* of development are we talking about? Conversely, Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe pointed out that political democracy allows for individual and collective initiatives and creativity but does not in itself necessarily lead to development.

Other African delegates picked up the ICFTU's simplistic 'democracy : development' equation in other ways. OATUU general secretary Hassan Sunmonu argued that there is a dynamic **interdependence** of democracy and development, in which "there can be no development without democracy; neither can there be democracy without development."

Pajoba of Uganda expressed this more concretely when he noted that "people cannot

be involved in decision making unless they are organised and informed about the organisational and developmental tasks in society." The 60% illiteracy rates in Africa - a direct reflection of individual poverty and national underdevelopment - enable both internal African leaders and international forces to manipulate the people and, he asked, "how can there be development in Africa in an atmosphere of manipulations?" In short : *democracy requires development as much as - and at the same time as - development requires democracy.*

African and Eurocentric approaches

Such interventions show a more subtle understanding of the problems of democracy and development than the ICFTU's approach suggests. Many African organisations are involved in profound and developed discussions on true democratic *participation*, popular *empowerment*, and leadership *accountability*. For example, hundreds of trade union, civic and other non-governmental organisations gathered for this purpose in Arusha, Tanzania, in February 1990. The proposals in the Arusha Declaration, on how to develop more than formal democracy, go further than the ICFTU's overly institutional/constitutional - and Eurocentric - approach.

A legal and constitutional framework for democracy is essential, but it is not enough to secure more than formal political 'equality', and abstract rights. In many democratic countries it is actually elected parliaments, and even the courts, that are undermining trade union and civic rights. The continuing necessity for trade union and political struggles against this danger was clearly underlined when the British TUC's Tony Shaw reported on such recent events in his country. The Rengo trade union representative from highly developed and 'democratic' Japan added his own critical report on the legal restrictions on trade union and other rights in his country.

Limitations and abuses of trade union and human rights elsewhere in the world were noted by other European representatives - such as the Danish Labour Organisation and

the French CFDT - as well as African delegates. OATUU's general secretary observed that "examples abound" around the world where formal democracy has been turned into government "on behalf of the people". He also noted that struggles for the rights of workers continue in Latin America. And "in industrialised countries, neo-liberal politicians are rolling back the gains workers have won through their trade unions, either through the amendment of industrial relations acts, or through industrial restructuring by the Transnational Corporations".

The representative from the Nigerian Labour Congress, Armstrong Ogbonna, struggling in one of the most corruption-ridden and dictator-bound countries in Africa, stated bluntly that "Dictatorship and corruption don't exist only in Africa!"

Negative picture of Africa

Such reactions by African trade unionists could be expected in response to the catalogue of failure and overwhelmingly negative picture of Africa painted by the ICFTU. However, it is not defensiveness or apologetics to point out that the slide of most of independent Africa into repressive rule and pervasive governmental corruption has been part of a process. It has not always been so everywhere, and it has not applied and does not apply equally to all African states. The ICFTU's Kandeh Yilla's sweeping generalisations prompted a response from Zimbabwe's Tsvangirai that a case by case study is necessary as "even in our own region not all are the same".

The failure by the ICFTU at their Gaborone conference to record and commend any of the positive in Africa's post-colonial history ignores earlier efforts and some real achievements. For example, in many African countries, economic growth and the extension of health and education services after independence resulted in improving infant mortality rates and literacy rates (some better than those of the black population in 'developed' South Africa). Presenting only a gloomy panorama of political oppression,

abuse, and failure - as if it is endemic in Africa - reflects, and plays to, dangerous stereotypes about Africa and Africans. This is evident in the way the South African *Business Day* picked up on the ICFTU's image of African failure and fed it to their fearful and prejudiced readers.



African delegates at the conference

Photo: Maurice Pitso/Botswana

Understanding the causes

An a-historical approach to the current economic, social and political crises in Africa is unjust and does not assist to an understanding of the causes - in order to find the appropriate solutions. The ICFTU argues that Africa's problems are caused by the adoption of one-party and other forms of dictatorship, accompanied by the suppression of political, civic and trade unions rights. This is correct as far as it goes, but this kind of explanation ignores the fact that dictatorships and oppression are invariably **symptoms** as well as causes of crises. There are also more complex underlying political, economic and social causes.

In so far as the ICFTU's analysis for this important conference on democracy in Africa goes beyond the evident political factors and manifestations of the crisis in Africa, it is to blame other factors in Africa, such as "natural catastrophe" and "protracted civil war" (Is this how the ICFTU sees the devastating wars of destabilisation promoted against Mozambique and Angola by South Africa and the US?). The ICFTU also refers to African governments' "squandering of precious resources, including development assistance from the industrialised countries, on

establishing a luxurious way of life for a privileged few". But there is only one brief introductory reference, in the ICFTU's Gaborone documentation, to the responsibility of the "industrialised countries of East and West" in giving economic and military aid to such regimes.

Huge responsibility of the West

This inadequate reference to the huge responsibility of western governments and multinational corporations (MNC's), in colluding with, and even promoting, massive corruption and authoritarian rule in Africa, was picked up by Mcebisi Msizi of South Africa's COSATU. He remarked that "there has been no mention at this conference of the role of MNC's in promoting these detestable governments and in denying the rights of workers to be unionised". He also criticised "Western European and North American governments which have promoted, and in some cases still promote, these detestable and corrupt governments - as in Zaire to this very day."

This response was clearly in reaction to the ICFTU's conspicuous failure in this conference to make these external forces and influences an integral and central part of their analysis of the problems of democracy in Africa. For such is what they have been on the ground : in colluding with and actively promoting the development of the new privileged political and economic elites who have so much to answer for in the current crises in so many African states.

One or two European trade union representatives at Gaborone did note the West's contribution to political deterioration in Africa. Angelo Gennari of the Italian CISL pointed to the responsibility of Western donors "whose development projects and methods [in Africa] helped to disenfranchise the masses". Tony Shaw of the British TUC reminded the delegates that the role of western multinational and transnational corporations "must not escape our vigilance, while we're focussing on governments". The European representative of the IFBWW recalled that, during the 1970's and even the

1980's, human and trade unions rights in Africa "had been ignored or only talked about".

This theme of the West's guilt by commission *and* omission was raised by various African delegates. A woman trade unionist from the Tunisian UGTT pointed out that "the developed countries are very keen on democratic and trade union rights, but they supported regimes which were the enemies of trade union freedom and democracy". Elias Mbonini of the Botswana BFTU observed, in his concluding contribution, that "for a long time the international community had closed its eyes on a number of violations of human and trade union rights in Africa".

For itself, the ICFTU proclaims a proud record in exposing abuses of trade union rights in Africa. And, indeed, it seems to have played a very helpful (hitherto clandestine) financial role in the development of independent South African trade unions, and a high-profile political role in opposing apartheid.

Much praise and many thanks for the role of the ICFTU were expressed, during the Gaborone conference, by its affiliates and non-affiliated African trade unions alike. But it would have been helpful and correct for the ICFTU to have included at least some reference to its *own* failings or mistakes (for there have been those), and also the failings and culpabilities of other international agents and agencies - including their own governments - in the crisis in Africa.

Trade union rights in action

Neither of these aspects is an integral part of the ICFTU's documentation on abuses of trade union rights in Africa. A resume of the ICFTU's analysis in this respect was presented at the start of the second session of the Gaborone conference by the President of the ICFTU's African Regional Organisation, Kheredine Bouslah of Tunisia.

He presented a comprehensive report on the "great hypocrisy" of African governments in the field of trade union rights. African governments pay lip service to the UN

(United Nations) Declaration of Human Rights and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) African Charter for Popular Participation in Development, both of which enshrine trade union rights. Only 38 of Africa's 54 governments have signed the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Convention 98 on the Right to Collective Bargaining, and only 29 have ratified ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association for trade unions. [See this *Labour Bulletin's* Legal Notes on ILO, p.83-85 – editor]

Furthermore, Bouslah went on, within their own countries, both in legal provisions and in their own, often repressive, practice, the record of African governments must be criticised. The following abuses are common: restrictions on the right of trade unions to organise in certain sectors; the subordination of collective bargaining to considerations of "national interest" or, conversely, imposition by government; and the right to strike being directly forbidden or hedged around with impossibly restrictive regulations.

Trade union freedom of association has been interfered with by the formal subordination of trade unions to the single ruling party, the imposition of single national trade union centres, and the prohibition or interference in their right to international affiliation. In this last respect, OATUU's own Article 8, requiring that no OATUU member shall be affiliated to any other international trade union organisation was also noted.

Call to join the ICFTU

This was followed by what the chairman called an "impassioned" speech by the ICFTU's assistant general secretary, Enzo Friso, calling on African trade unions to opt for freedom of association and join the ICFTU. He declared that the Cold War had been a confrontation between pluralist democracy - including free trade unionism - on the one hand, and dictatorship on the other. How could Africa be 'non-aligned' in this divide, he asked. The decision of African states to be non-aligned was often simply a facade behind which to hide their own dictatorships. In parallel, they opposed

African trade union participants at ICFTU conference

Benin	UNSTB
Botswana	BFTU (*)
Burkina Fasso	ONSL (*)
Cameroon	OSTC
Côte d'Ivoire	UGTCI
Egypt	ETUF
Gabon	COSYGA
Gambia	GWU (*)
Ghana	GTUC
Guinea-Bissau	UNTG
Kenya	COTU
Lesotho	LCFTU (*)
	LFTU (*)
Malawi	TUCM (*)
Mali	UNTM
Mauritius	MLC (*)
Morocco	UMT (*)
Namibia	NUNW
Niger	USTN
Nigeria	NLC
Rwanda	CESTRAR
Saõ Tomé/Príncipe	ONSTP
Senegal	CNTS
Sierra Leone	SLLC (*)
South Africa	COSATU
	NACTU
Swaziland	SFTU (*)
Tanzania	JUWATA
Togo	CNTT
Tunisia	UGTT (*)
Uganda	NOTU (*)
Zambia	ZCTU
Zimbabwe	ZCTU

(*) ICFTU affiliates

African trade unions joining the ICFTU "because it represented authentic free independent trade unionism". However, he said, the ICFTU continued cooperating with and assisting African trade unions despite their limitations and despite violations of democracy.

But, "recent events and developments in Africa", Friso continued, "are forcing us to make a choice in the ICFTU and in African trade unions." The choice of the ICFTU, he

said, is that "we will in future work only and exclusively with trade unions committed to democracy". Furthermore, he stressed more than once, "it would be difficult in future to cooperate with organisations who discriminate against affiliates of the ICFTU ... [and] ... confine them to some sort of ghetto ... as if international affiliation were some sort of plague". This last was a reference to OATUU restrictions on voting rights and leadership positions for trade unions affiliated to other international organisations.

Mr Friso called on African trade unions to join the ICFTU which, he said, is "your only opportunity to put your case on the international stage". He proudly declared that "no-one has fought like us" and "if everyone demands their autonomy we would not be here today". He reminded them that "all the organisations here have benefited" from ICFTU assistance in the past, regardless, but that, henceforth, this is going to change, and "these are not empty words!"

Challenges to OATUU

Hassan Sunmonu's measured response was to remind the ICFTU of past mistakes of "trade union imperialism". As for OATUU's Article 8, he said, "no condition is permanent" and it is already under review by a special task force which is due to report in September this year. However, he went on to stress that the unity of all of Africa's national trade union federations in OATUU is essential, and that Africa's own continental organisation will "reinforce and complement other trade union groupings. That is the true meaning of trade union internationalism". As for the ICFTU's threat not to cooperate with OATUU, Sunmonu responded that "we will continue to cooperate with ICFTU and other trade unions all over the world for the rights of workers, democracy, peace, and social and economic justice"

Various opinions were expressed on the rescinding of OATUU's restrictive Article 8. Zimbabwe's Tsvangirai had earlier proposed that it should be revised if the majority within OATUU agree. Botswana's Mbonini, whose BFTU is already an ICFTU affiliate,



Hassan Sunmonu, OATUU's general-secretary

Photo: Abdul Shariff

welcomed Sunmonu's position, as did Newstead Zimba of Zambia's TUC, which is intending to join the ICFTU. Mahjoub Benseddik of Morocco's UMT, an ICFTU affiliate and not a member of OATUU, called for African trade unions to "be free of the grip of OATUU." He made a strong criticism of OATUU, saying that, although it was not itself guilty of abuses of human rights, it is "historically accountable". OATUU, he said, is too close to the OAU organisation of African governments, many of which "are still trying to place trade unions under administrative controls."

African trade unions and governments

In the same vein, African national trade unions came under criticism for their past - and current - involvement with their own governments. Daouda Rabiou of Niger provided a partial political explanation when he recalled the important role of many African trade unions in their countries' anti-colonial struggles. Many trade union leaders became national political leaders after independence. As such, they then "required trade unions to play a role in national aims... [rather than] taking up the cause of workers." They failed to understand that "consolidation of national independence and development was not synonymous with the end of trade

unionism." In this way, trade unions were made the "accomplices" (or, in the 'Marxist' version, "transmission belts") of ruling parties.

Looking at more recent times, and a different aspect of the problem, the ICFTU's Kandeh Yilla criticised "some unions which have been extremely unprepared and unwilling to take up the challenge of fighting for the basic democratic rights of their members [preferring] the material benefits from a cosy relationship with government to the hard work of real trade union activities." Such unions face the prospect of rejection by workers once choices are opened up to them, even though many such compromised - and often mere puppet - unions are hastily declaring their independence from the ruling parties now that many of these undemocratic governments are under threat in the democratic struggles unfolding in Africa.

Such opportunistic manouvers, as well as the courageous and principled role of many African trade unions, in the recent waves of protest and democratic uprisings across the continent, are given detailed attention in the ICFTU's background document. It then goes on to give the African trade unions detailed advice on how to now defend human rights and trade union freedoms, and informs them what the ICFTU is doing, and proposes to do, in and for the continent henceforth.

The way forward

The ICFTU's proposals on the way forward, entitled Working Together for Democracy, Development and Rights in Africa, were presented to the third session of the conference by the BFTU, the ICFTU's co-host of the conference. BFTU's Mbonini touched briefly on some of the manifestations of the economic crisis in Africa, dealt with in the 1989 Nairobi Conference on The African Development Challenge, and reiterated the ICFTU position that Africa needs democracy for development.

Within trade unions, Mbonini urged concrete steps to be taken for : the establishment of full internal union democracy, including an equal and active role

for women and ethnic minorities; effective education and training and research programmes, and sound financial management to achieve union self-reliance and autonomy.

On the national stage, Mbonini recommended : an active role by African trade unions in struggles for multiparty democracy and in setting up Human Rights Liaison Units; pressurising their governments to ratify the ILO conventions, and to reduce military spending in favour of social investments; and unions participating fully in discussions of national policy including those undertaken with the IMF and World Bank, and the EEC on the Lome Convention.

African regional trade union organisations present at Gaborone

Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa	OTUWA
United Trade Unions of the Arab Mahgreb	USTMA
Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council	SATUCC

At the regional/ continental level, the ICFTU presenter recommended : the drawing up of Social Charters, as the Southern Africa Trade Unions Coordinating Council (SATUCC) and the Maghreb trade unions (USTMA) are already doing; extending this practice to the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and ensuring that the OAU sets up its intended Commission on Human and People's Rights, and amends its Charter to include specific reference to trade union rights.

On the international plain, reports on violations of trade union rights should be lodged with the ILO, especially its Committee on Freedom of Association; and human rights violations with the UN Human Rights Committee. They should also be reported to the ICFTU which, with its affiliates and

ITS's, will increase their media and other campaigns on behalf of trade union and human rights in Africa. And, finally, "in order to coordinate, at the international level, the wide range of actions to support human rights, the role of the newly created ICFTU/AFRO 'Committee for the Defence of Human and Trade Union Rights in Africa' will be extremely important"

Organisational and strategic needs

The responses to this programme of action, from African participants, raised other significant organisational and strategic needs on the continent.

OATUU general secretary Sunmonu stressed that African trade unions need international cooperation, especially financial help, to build their own training programmes, and their own organisational capacities and independence. African trade unions also need to develop their national, regional and continental unity. At the same time, African trade unions need to back the African Economic Community proposed by the OAU to unite Africa itself. These aims should be supported by the Gaberone conference and by international trade union solidarity, he urged.

This need for the independence and unity of African trade unions - and of Africa itself - was also expressed by representatives of some of the most experienced, biggest and most powerful independent trade union federations on the continent. Kwasi Adu-Amankwah of Ghana stressed that trade unions must campaign for democratic and trade union rights - and for African unity - in alliance with student and other mass organisations. Zimbabwean Tsvangirai similarly urged alliances with other grass roots mass organisations, and trade union cooperation in Southern Africa.

Msizi of South Africa's COSATU also recommended regional trade union cooperation. He reported on his organisation's alliance with NACTU, the other major South African trade union federation, in the campaign for a Workers' Charter, and on the alliance between COSATU and the ANC and other mass organisations in the struggle for



NACTU and COSATU delegates from South Africa

Photo: Maurice Pitso/Botswana

democracy in South Africa.

Nigeria's Ogbonna took the subject further in urging the need for trade unions to move the struggle "from resistance and protest on the political periphery onto the terrain of central political power." To this end, he reported, the 40 year old Nigerian Labour Congress, "the largest on the continent", had tried to form its own Labour Party, but had been thwarted by the current Nigerian military regime. The political question persists, he said, and his message to "our friends not to disarm us by telling us not to be political" reflected a recurrent theme at the Gaberone conference.

Economic impediments to democracy

The continuing failure of the ICFTU's proposals for democracy and development in Africa to take on board the incapacitating effects of deep economic problems in securing real democracy, also received the attention of various of the African spokespersons in this, as in earlier, sessions.

In his opening address to the conference, OATUU's Hassan Sunmonu outlined the most pressing economic problems and burdens being imposed on Africa. Thirty four African states have been "forced or blackmailed" by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) into adopting structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which have been "unmitigated disasters and failures". The economies of these countries, he reported, have not been positively transformed, nor are they

self-sustaining. Rather, they have been made more dependent, debt-ridden and capital-exporting; aggravating mass unemployment and squeezing the living standard of the population into mass poverty. How can there be real democracy in such a situation? Therefore he said, OATUU as the voice of African trade unionists totally rejects, and calls upon the Gaborone conference to reject IMF SAPs, in favour of Africa's own 'African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation' (known as AAF-SAP).

Delegates from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Gambia and Uganda made cogent comments on the IMF's damaging SAPs being forced onto Africa. Benseddick of Morocco's UMT declared that "the people of Africa were neither the architects nor the beneficiaries" of these programmes. They were designed as "weapons for the liberalisation and deregulation" of African economies, and have had the effect of reducing incomes, employment, and educational and health programmes.

Benseddick argued - like the ICFTU - that the IMF's SAPs must be given an acceptable "social dimension" through "democratic consultation." This echoes the earlier calls by UN agencies, for structural adjustment to be given a "human face", to which Hassan Sumonu's telling response was that "putting a human face on a monkey doesn't change it from being a monkey!"

Accommodations to the IMF

The ICFTU position is very similar to that of the ILO representative at the conference and, indeed, as he reported, to that of the IMF's Director General Camdessus. They argue that, despite the social costs, structural adjustment is necessary, but that "the success of SAPs depends upon the quality of social dialogue and the industrial relations system." The ILO spokesman stressed that his organisation has long advocated this view.

The ICFTU's document for the conference makes a fuller and rather more critical analysis of the impact of IMF SAPs in Africa. But it questions details of their "design" and implementation rather than their purposes.

The fundamental aim of the IMF's SAPs have been to use indebtedness to compel Third World countries to adopt monetarist policies, promote private enterprise, and open up to international 'free trade.' They reinforce African countries' traditional role as exporters of primary raw materials 'in order to earn foreign exchange' to pay off their foreign debts. The ICFTU criticises inadequate consultation in the IMF SAPs rather than what they are designed to achieve.

In fact, the ICFTU's most significant proposals on SAPs are that trade unions should be incorporated "as a responsible partner" to provide the "social dimension" to make SAPs more palatable. Trade unions should be drawn into programmes of "poverty alleviation" to ameliorate the worst effects of SAPs on "the most vulnerable groups in society". This is an accommodation to the IMF SAPs rather than the rejection of their aims which African trade unionists called for. And this continued to be the position promoted by the ICFTU in the final declaration of the Gaborone conference.

Final declaration

Presented at the last session of the conference, "The Gaborone Declaration on Basic Rights" follows very closely the ICFTU's proposals prepared in advance of the conference. These contain some very useful ideas. They underwent some amendments in the working group set up by the ICFTU - particularly on actions needed to combat discrimination against women*. The declaration was presented to the assembled delegates as "including the gist of all the discussions in this forum for the last two days", and they were urged to endorse it forthwith by acclamation.

* Full credit is due to the ICFTU for organising a women unionists workshop before the conference and ensuring that each of their affiliates included a woman in its delegation.

Conspicuous omissions

The declaration had not, however, incorporated some of the important contributions made by delegates during the conference. It sustained many of the conspicuous omissions in the ICFTU's presentations at the conference. This was quickly pointed out by COSATU's Msizi. He insisted on the inclusion of the criticisms that had been made of western multinational corporations and foreign governments in the denial of democracy in Africa, with a demand for an immediate end to such self-serving practices.

Similarly, Hassan Sunmonu called for the declaration to endorse coordinated trade union actions to pressurise African governments to work towards closer economic cooperation and integration on the continent, and the speedy implementation of the treaty to set up an African Economic Community. He also noted that the final declaration had ignored OATUU's call to all trade unionists to support Africa's adoption of the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAF-SAP).

Both these amendments were supported by the conference participants, but other contributions – from African and European delegates – during the conference did not find their way into the declaration. For example, debt cancellation and the revision of the unfair terms of north-south trade had been noted, as were the dangers to Africa of the impending new GATT 'free trade' conditionalities.

One of the most telling contributions on Africa's subordinate position in the international economic order came from Italy's CISL representative. He condemned "failed western development strategies in Africa based on export-led growth" in which the benefits of wealth accumulation were supposed to 'trickle down' to the masses, whereas he said, "only poverty has trickled down in Africa!" He pointed out that "Africans produce what they do not consume, and consume what they do not produce," and that they import goods at costs much higher than the value/income from their exports. In fact, Africans have been working harder, exporting more and earning constantly less

over the past decade.

ICFTU spokespersons responded that these and other matters had been dealt with in the 1989 Nairobi Declaration and that it is "now necessary to go beyond economic policy" in the Gaborone Declaration. This suggests, once again, that the ICFTU does not fully appreciate that solutions to these profound economic problems have to be an **integral** part of any plans to secure democracy in Africa. Furthermore, in the two years since Nairobi, these external and economic factors have become more not less significant.

'Recolonisation' of Africa

Much fear is being expressed about the economic marginalisation of Africa. Capital investors are indeed turning away from Africa, and there is a danger that Western government aid will be poured into Eastern Europe to Africa's loss. There is, however, a simultaneous proliferation of foreign government interventions into the government of African countries. There are also more and more international - especially UN, but also even non-governmental (NGO) - agencies supplanting African governments in many of their social and economic functions. This is in addition to the imposition of economic policy on African governments by international financial institutions. So marked is this congruence of external agencies, moving into and 'taking over' in Africa, that it is being dubbed a "recolonisation" of the continent! The Gaborone conference actually supplied more evidence of this extremely serious development, as well as a new and disturbing dimension.

In their contributions to the discussion on The Way Forward, various European participants expressed support for their governments taking an even more interventionist role in Africa. The French CFDT's Jacquot, the Danish LO's Aakjaer Kjeld, and Michel Miller, speaking for the European TUC, all supported forms of "social audit" or "human rights conditionalities" to be attached to European development aid to African countries. This might be highly laudable were all such governments

disinterested aid givers, and exemplary upholders of trade union and human rights*. But these governments already impose their own conditions upon African recipients of their aid. These include : their own priorities in terms of development projects they are willing to support; various 'strings' in the form of equipment and other purchases from the donor country; and - most seriously of all - the acceptance of IMF-structural adjustment as a pre-condition for development aid.

European trade union proposals to pressurise their governments to support human rights in Africa are undoubtedly well-intentioned, but they may be providing their governments with more arguments for using desperately-needed aid as a weapon ...and making the victims of oppressive governments double victims by withholding aid from them. Rather than reinforcing the interventions of their governments in Africa, trade unions in the developed countries should be arguing for development aid to be appropriately directed and immediately *increased*. And the prime, urgent responsibility of trade unions in the developed countries is to campaign vigorously against the international economic order that made -and keeps - Africans dependent upon such aid.

ICFTU's "paternalism"

But possibly the most disturbing feature of all to emerge from the Gaborone conference was what African delegates - some ICFTU affiliates as well as non-affiliates - in the conference corridors, were dubbing the ICFTU's "neocolonial paternalism".

It is quite evident - and Italy's CISL delegate stated as much - that the ICFTU sees 1991 in Africa "what 1989 was to Eastern Europe". The ICFTU sees this as an opportunity to promote itself as well as its own democratic agenda for Africa. This made COSATU's Msizi protest on the conference floor about "people jumping on the bandwagon" of Africa's struggles!

It seems as if the ICFTU came to Gaborone

already convinced as to what Africa needs, and had its programme of action drawn up in advance of the conference. Similarly, it had already set up its own trade union and human rights structures and programmes in and for Africa. This may have been well-intentioned, but it represents a tendency towards **substitution** for, rather than support to Africa's own organisations, programmes and efforts. This prompted the Nigerian delegate to declare that "no-one else can win our rights for us." From statements outside the conference hall, as well as implicit in statements on the conference floor, African delegates were left with the troubled impression that the ICFTU is trying to supplant "our own continental organisation".

This is not how international trade union solidarity should be, and many of the European trade unionists present were distinctly uncomfortable with the ICFTU's "tactical blunders" and "insensitivity", even for those who declared, also off the record, that OATUU "is a problem." Others, such as the French CFDT and British TUC emphasised on the conference floor that trade union solidarity is a process of mutual support; with the latter declaring that British trade unions have a lot to learn from their South African counterparts.

The Swedish, Norwegian and Danish Labour Organisations all seemed to be distancing themselves from the ICFTU's approach by stressing that African trade unions must be **empowered** to solve their own problems.

The conference contributions showed that - while the ICFTU brought some very useful proposals distilled from the best of trade union experiences in the developed countries - in many ways their proposals are superficial. Genuinely engaged African trade unionists understand much more deeply the conditions and problems they are struggling with.

The ICFTU's perception of the way that trade unions should be consulted for their opinions, and incorporated into the planning

* It is rather ironical, for example, for the British government to demand proof of "good governance" from African governments as a condition for material aid!

of governmental and IMF programmes was also questioned. The ICFTU's AFRO President stated that such participation by trade unions is essential in order to prevent discontent being "bottled up" and then "exploding in the type of social unrest which governments most want to avoid." In this view, participation is not democratic empowerment but a safety valve for popular discontent. A number of African trade unionists questioned this role for themselves, saying that workers need to be mobilised - not pacified and demobilised - in order to change the status quo.

The ICFTU is deeply aware of the need for strong international trade union unity to respond to combined governmental and TNC strategies in today's integrated world economy. Possibly their determination to draw African trade unions into their ambit derives from a missionary zeal to forge one united world trade union organisation. But Africa has had a long experience with missionaries. The ICFTU's crusade to give a lead to African trade unions prompted the passionate response from COSATU's Msizi that "You must move with us. Please, we ask you not to undermine us, not to think that we are children! Respect us. Know that we are concerned that there be democracy in Africa, in the African context, the African way. Be with us, do not desert us, do not sabotage us! ... We will have to do the spade work. We need your support."

The "spade work" for African trade unions

The Gaborone conference confirmed that there are serious challenges in Africa, and within their own organisations, facing African trade unionists.

The first is to make their trade unions genuinely democratic organisations in which they themselves are accountable to worker control. It was quite evident at Gaborone that many African 'workers leaders' are prone to imitating the bureaucratic, globe-trotting style of their governmental mentors, and are far removed from the workers they are supposed

to be representing.

Many African trade unions - including some present in Gaborone - still need to wrest themselves from all forms of collusion with, as well as controls by, their governments. They need to develop truly independent national trade union federations that form active alliances with other democratic mass organisations. Their main tasks will be to jointly shape appropriate development strategies to convince - or change - their governments ... as well as international agencies.

National trade union federations joining together in regional structures have to consciously guard against the danger of creating mere paper trade union cooperation. This means more than drawing up Social Charters - important as these are. It means entering into practical joint efforts to defend and advance workers' interests in their regions. This is the true test - and basis - for forging wider worker unity and strength in Africa.

Furthermore, to become a continental force, African trade unions will have to make the serious effort - and raise the resources - to make OATUU more than just a useful platform for the periodic exchange of views and issuing of joint declarations. OATUU has to be more than a lobbying instrument and more than just the formal 'voice of African trade unions' at international gatherings. It has to be an independent force to put workers' content into the 'alternative framework' for recovery and transformation in Africa - to which OAU governments have given their (largely rhetorical) support.

Finally, whether African trade unions affiliate or do not affiliate to the ICFTU, or other international trade union organisations, they have to campaign for the international adoption of programmes crucial to the progress and very survival of Africa and other Third World countries. An important aspect is to create the South-South solidarity that the Tanzanian delegate at Gaborone called for. This will reinforce the South in taking their case into the international workers' movement for the North-South workers' solidarity and the mutual support that all trade unions should be committed to. ☆

International labour standards

PAUL BENJAMIN of the CENTRE FOR APPLIED LEGAL STUDIES (CALs) looks at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and its role in setting international labour law standards

You often hear people saying that a law such as the Labour Relations Act is not up to international standards. What does this mean? Generally it refers to the standards adopted by the International Labour Organisation. In this legal note we look at how the International Labour Organisation (ILO) sets standards and give some examples of them.

The International Labour Organisation

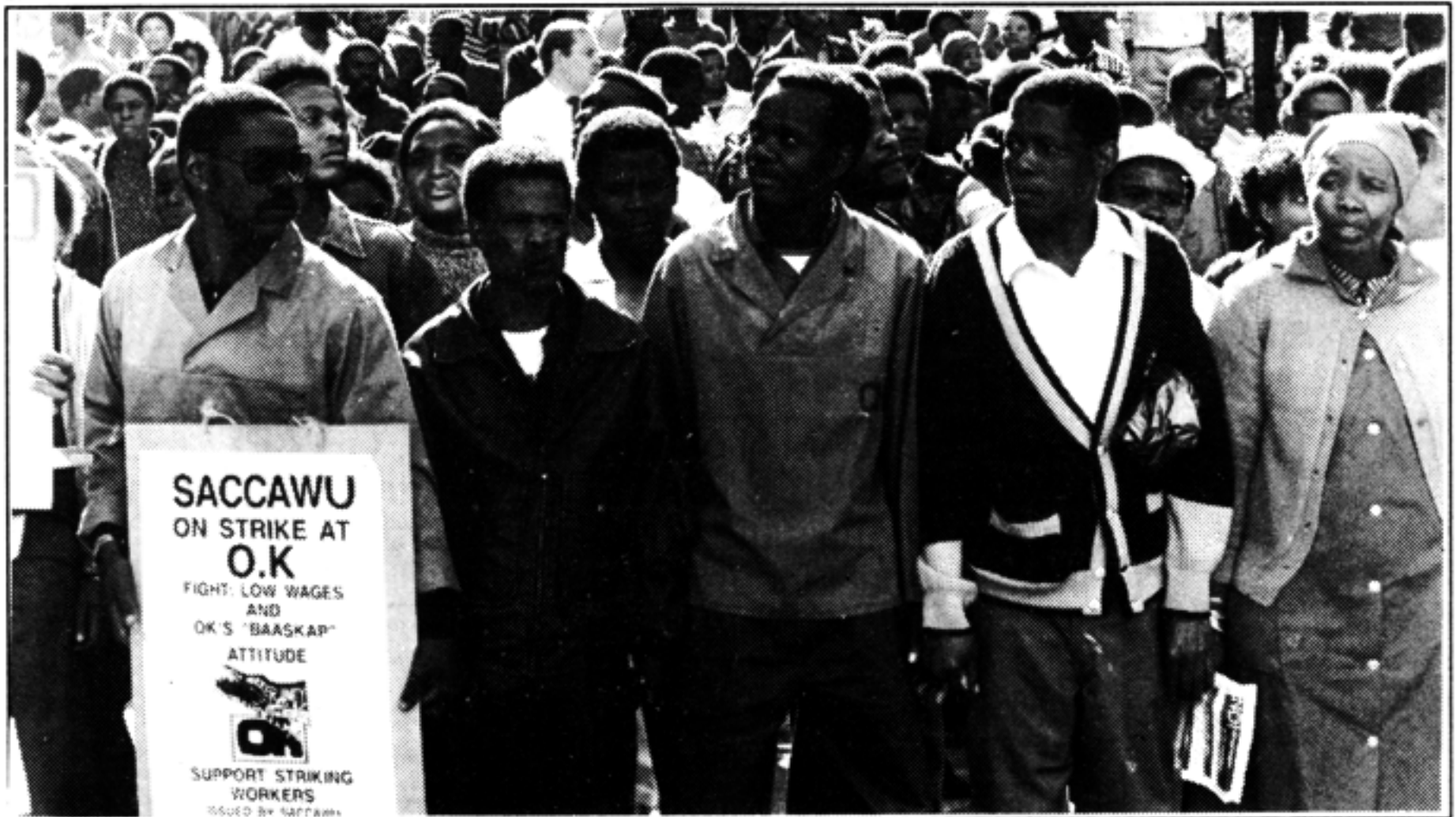
The ILO was formed in 1919, after the end of the First World War, with the hope of achieving universal peace. It was formed because of the belief that social justice is crucial to lasting peace and that the international regulation of labour matters would serve to improve the conditions of workers.

The General Assembly of the ILO, the International Labour Conference, meets annually in Geneva. It is attended by delegations representing the governments, workers and employers of all countries belonging to the ILO. Most countries in the world are members of the ILO. South Africa is not. It withdrew in 1964

rather than face expulsion because of apartheid policies.

Every year the International Labour Conference adopts a number of conventions and recommendations. These documents are the major source of international labour law. Both embody standards. Conventions are designed to be ratified, like international treaties, by the member countries. Once a country has ratified a convention, it must ensure that its laws comply with the Convention. There is a system of international supervision to ensure that countries that ratify conventions meet their obligations. The recommendations of the International Labour Conference, on the other hand, do not create binding legal obligations but are intended to provide guidelines for national policies and action.

To date, the ILO has passed 171 conventions and more or less the same number of recommendations. The conventions and recommendations cover subjects such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, the prohibition of force labour, equality of opportunity and



'... striking is a legitimate trade union activity ...' according to a ruling by the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organisation

Photo: Rodger Bosch/Southlight

treatment, occupational safety and health, social security and the employment of women, children and young persons. We will look at a few of these conventions.

Freedom of association

The best known and most important ILO conventions are those dealing with freedom of association and collective bargaining. Convention 87 of 1948 (Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organise Convention) establishes the right of workers and employers to form organisations for occupational purposes and guarantees their free functioning.

Convention 98 of 1949 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention) protects workers against anti-union

discrimination at work and provides that worker organisations shall enjoy adequate protection against interference by employers. These conventions reflect the view of the ILO that 'freedom of association is essential to sustained progress'.

The ILO has created special institutions to deal with complaints concerning freedom of association. The ILO will investigate these complaints and its Committee on Freedom of Association will decide whether the law is in compliance with the convention. In 1988, the British trade unions lodged a complaint against laws introduced by the Thatcher government to curb the ability of employees to strike. A committee of experts appointed by the ILO ruled that a number of aspects of the British laws were not up to

ILO standards on the freedom of association. Despite this the British government did not change the law but, in fact, made it worse. In 1988 COSATU referred a complaint to the ILO about the proposed amendments to the Labour Relations Act that took effect on 1 September 1988. Because South Africa is not a member of the ILO, the ILO could only investigate the complaint if the South African government consented. The government has refused to do so.

The ILO conventions do not deal expressly with strikes. However, the Committee on Freedom of Association has ruled that striking is a legitimate trade union activity and the dismissal of workers for participating in a strike is a serious violation of the

freedom of association. Recent decisions by the Labour Appeal Court have endorsed the right of employers to dismiss strikers even where strikes are legal. The ILO would undoubtedly regard this approach as a violation of the freedom of association.

The ILO and dismissal

One of the areas in which the ILO's standards have had the most impact on South African law is fair dismissal. In its early cases on unfair dismissal the industrial court made frequent reference to the Termination of Employment Convention no. 158 of 1982 which requires that dismissal must be both procedurally and substantively fair and states that there are only three valid grounds for dismissal: serious misconduct, incapacity of the employee and operational reasons (such as retrenchment). The COSATU - NACTU - SACCOLA agreement proposed that this provision should be incorporated into the definition of the unfair labour practice.

Are South Africa's laws up to international standards?

It is clear that many of South Africa's labour laws are not in compliance with international standards. For instance, the Night Work Convention 171 of 1990, requires countries to take measures to protect the health of employees engaged

in night work and assist them to meet their family and social responsibilities. For instance, employees doing night work should be able to obtain a free medical assessment and advice on how to reduce or avoid health problems associated with night work. There are no such provisions in South African law.

There are many ILO conventions on occupational safety. All state that employers must deal on matters of safety with elected worker representatives. Neither the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act nor the Mines and Works Act in South Africa require this and, in fact, do the exact opposite by requiring management to appoint safety representatives. These conventions also state that workers should not be penalised for refusing to do dangerous work; this type of provision is not found in the South African safety statutes.

The industrial court's attitude to dismissal for misconduct or retrenchment was initially more or less in line with ILO standards but recent trends, particularly on retrenchment, are well short of international standards.

Conclusion

South Africa is keen to re-enter the international community and to participate once more in organisations such as the International Labour Organisation. If South Africa does, the trade unions will have to ensure

that the country adopts all of the most important conventions and incorporate their standards into South African law.

In conclusion, it must be remembered that the ILO standards are not ideals. They are reached by compromise at the International Labour Conference by employers, governments and trade unions from all over the world. Many countries' legislation contains higher standards than those in ILO conventions.

Incorporating ILO standards into South African law will be a start. But it is not the end of the road. ☆

Topics covered by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in past issues

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- Vol 15 No 8**
- Participation on the NMC and other bodies

Economic Notes

Economic Notes is supplied by Labour Research Service (LRS), Cape Town

Directors get big pay rises

In 1990, company directors got increases of R560 per week (or 18,8%) - much higher than the wages most workers earn in a week. After these increases each director earned R3 540 per week on average.

These are the findings of the Labour Research Service's annual survey of directors' pay. The survey covers the 1 079 directors who control the Top 100 industrial companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Consol directors gave themselves the highest pay increase. Their weekly pay went up from R1 612 per week to R4 186 per week - an increase of 160%.

The 129 directors employed by the ten top-paying companies took home just under one million rand in pay each week in 1990 - enough to buy 11 Mercedes Benz cars every week!

Malbak - Gencor's industrial arm - paid directors the most. In 1990 each of Malbak's 10 directors earned R9 615 per week. This does not include their many perks and their membership of a share incentive scheme. Through this scheme each Malbak director got R2967 per week in dividends on average.

Some directors don't have to rely on a "share incentive scheme" to get dividends. Aaron Searll, for example, earned a massive R25 250 per week in dividends from his shares in Searldel - South Africa's largest clothing company.

Mining house directors' pay was also surveyed. These directors earn even more than

The Top Ten League

Malbak	R9 615
Trencor	R9 474
Barlow Rand	R8 814
Murray & Roberts	R8 028
Wooltru	R7 051
Searldel	R6 584
FSI	R6 361
Plate Glass	R6 308
Rembrandt	R6 282
Sentrachem	R5 522

industrial companies. The twelve directors of Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) gave themselves R6,9 million in 1990.

So each director got R11 058 per week, on average. This is seventy times larger than the weekly wage of R157 paid to a grade 4 underground mineworker at a JCI gold mine!

Directors in the steel sector awarded themselves a 54,8% increase on average. This was the highest average increase amongst the 14 sectors of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange surveyed. For example, the directors of Highveld Steel earned R3 760 per week in 1990. ♦

Profit and principles: ethical investments

Ethical investment is now big business in America and Britain. Twenty years ago few had even thought of the idea. In the United States social investment funds are worth a massive US\$900 million while in the United Kingdom some £200 million is invested in

ethical and environmental unit trusts alone.

Avoidance of South African investments has been important for most overseas ethical investment funds. There are many other criteria, however. Some funds adopt a positive approach, and seek to invest in companies which provide clear-cut benefits for society, such as pollution control or health care.

Others adopt a negative stance, and avoid holding shares in companies which are involved in armaments, tobacco, nuclear power, gambling, animal testing, alcohol and repressive regimes.

Eiris (the Ethical Investment Research Service) is based in the United Kingdom. It was set up in 1983 by a number of bodies including the Quakers and Oxfam. Eiris is one of a number of organisations which now advise trade unions and individual investors on the ethical and social aspects of investment.

Researchers at Eiris assess investments against ethical criteria. The ethical criteria are determined by the investors. Eiris then produces a list of acceptable investments which meet the ethical criteria.

Many ask the question: would an ethical investment policy mean losing money? Eiris says that it "depends on the criteria you adopt".

Their research has shown, however, that restricted investment opportunities does not make a great deal of difference to the performance of

the fund.

Through their members' retirement funds unions in South Africa could play a major role in investment decisions. Here the experience of organisations like Eiris would be of great value. ❖

Retirement industry booms

but fund managers are sitting on their assets

The retirement industry is sitting on a massive R25 billion cash pile. Instead of lying idle in cash deposits, this money could be used actively to support projects which create new jobs, develop skills, and invest in new machinery and factories. But it isn't!

During the 1980s, unions won large retirement benefits for their members. The money collected by the retirement funds (pensions and provident funds) and invested on behalf of the many union members, now plays a major role in the economy.

Over the past ten years, retirement funds have grown from R20,5 billion to their present R150 billion!

Two thirds of these investments are managed by the life assurers (like Sanlam and Old Mutual) and one third by privately administered pension funds. (This does not

include the assets of the state pension funds).

To get an idea of the size of these retirement funds, compare its R150 billion with the following:

- the total value of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange at end September 1990 was R388 billion.
- the government's 1991/1992 budget is R81,1 billion.
- the estimated stock of housing in South Africa is R75 billion.

The potential influence of trade unions

Trade unions, through the retirement savings of their members, could exert a powerful influence on the economy. But up to now investment decisions have been taken by the managers of the retirement funds.

Financial institutions earn large fees for the management of retirement funds.

Union trustees play an important role as watchdogs over their members' retirement funds. But in practise the trustees make very few investment decisions. The financial institutions make the investment decisions and often refuse to disclose the investments even to the trustees!

The investments could well be providing capital to anti-union companies and even to buy up privatised companies (such as Iscor).

Old Mutual, using the retirement funds it manages, has invested R480 million in Iscor, equal to 13% of the shares. Old Mutual is also the largest

shareholder of Barlow Rand with 39% of its shares.

As unions win greater retirement benefits for their members and as employment grows, retirement funds will get bigger. As a result these funds will play an even larger role in the economy.

Shouldn't the trade unions make sure that their vast funds are used for job creation and growth? ♦

Profile: Toyota

Productivity is the main item on the bosses' agenda at this years automobile negotiations. The bosses claim that the productivity of workers, measured by the numbers of cars produced per worker, has fallen between 1960 and 1990. We investigate productivity at Toyota.

The number of vehicles produced per worker has fallen at Toyota. So is the bosses analysis correct? No, in fact it is manipulative! The bosses' analysis ignores two important changes:

If the "product mix" was different in 1990 compared to 1960, then more labour would have been needed (say, for more luxury cars).

And far more of the car us now made in-house than in 1960. Then, components were brought in from outside.

A fairer measure of productivity would be profit per worker. This takes account of changes in the product



mix, increased complexity of the modern vehicle, and any other factors, not under the control of the worker, which would affect productivity.

The profit before interest and tax per worker, to be fair to Toyota, has been deflated by the Production Price Index to eliminate inflation. Productivity by this measure rose by 11,6% between 1988 and 1990, from R16 287 profit per worker, to R18 170 profit per worker (in 1985 rands).

What about the productivity of capital?

The employers frequently agitate themselves about worker productivity. They are generally silent about the productivity of capital, over which workers have no control. What are the facts at Toyota?

The graph below shows how the productivity of capital has fallen at Toyota.

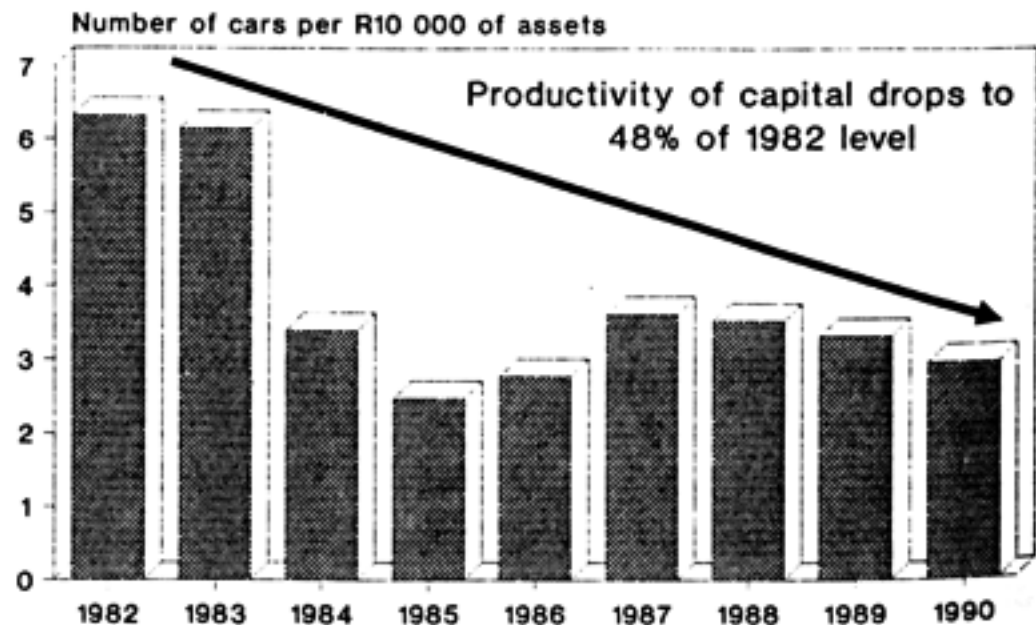
Productivity of capital is defined here as the number of cars produced per R10 000 of fixed assets. Fixed assets have been deflated by the Production Price Index to eliminate inflation. Fixed assets include machinery, buildings, tools and delivery vehicles, etc. In 1982, R10 000 of real fixed assets produced 6,3 cars. By 1990, R10 000 of real fixed assets could produce only 3,0 cars. This is only 48% of the 1982 figure.

Why can physical productivity appear to fall, while profit productivity rises?

The answer is that Toyota is not merely in the business of making cars - it is in the business of making profits. What has happened is this: the profit made on each rand of sales has increased. This is known as the profit margin.

The profit margin on each

PRODUCTIVITY OF CAPITAL DROPS Toyota is an example



Labour Research Service 04/91

vehicle sold has greatly increased, more than adequately compensating for the slight decrease in the number of vehicles made per worker. Since 1986:

- vehicles produced have increased by 23%
- sales have gone up by 193%
- profits have gone up by 654% ❖

Productivity of capital takes a nosedive

The productivity of South African capital is only 41% of levels in other major economies. And capital productivity is falling by 2.2% every year.

The latest expose from the Labour Research Service? No, these are the figures released by SACOB, the businessman's lobby (*Financial Mail*, 7 June 1991, page 39). SACOB, the SA Chamber of Business, says these figures reflect an "inefficient use of what is a scarce resource". Capital basically means factories and machinery - or money which could be used to buy factories and machinery.

SACOB has now confirmed what the Labour Research Service said in 1989 (see *Productivity: a trade unionists' guide* written by the Labour Research Service and LERC, and published by the IMF). South African capitalists wail about

Inflation

Consumer Price Index
(1985=100)

Annual rate of inflation
(% increase over 1 year)

Area

May 1991

May 90 - 91

Cape Town	229.3	15.3%
Port Elizabeth	234.1	16.3%
East London	224.1	14.3%
Durban	217.1	13.3%
Pietermaritzburg	224.9	15.2%
Witwatersrand	235.6	15.8%
Vaal Triangle	222.7	13.7%
Pretoria	239.7	14.6%
Klerksdorp	240.9	15.8%
Bloemfontein	199.3	10.6%
OFS Goldfields	230.7	16.4%
Kimberley	216.6	13.1%
South Africa	230.8	15.2%

Area

Apr 1991

Apr 90 - 91

Cape Town	231.8	15.6%
Port Elizabeth	235.2	16.0%
East London	226.3	14.6%
Durban	218.5	13.0%
Pietermaritzburg	226.0	15.0%
Witwatersrand	237.1	15.8%
Vaal Triangle	223.5	13.3%
Pretoria	241.0	14.5%
Klerksdorp	242.3	16.0%
Bloemfontein	200.7	10.8%
OFS Goldfields	233.2	16.8%
Kimberley	219.4	13.9%
South Africa	232.4	15.2%

Source: Central Statistical Service

workers' productivity, which is rising every year - while allowing the productivity of 'their' capital to fall every year. Labour is plentiful in South Africa. So the productivity of each individual worker is not very important. Production could be increased merely by employing more workers.

But capital is scarce. So its productivity is very important. Every piece of capital equipment should be

made to work very hard, all the time, to help workers produce more goods and services. Instead, South African factories were using only 82.7% of their capacity in November 1990.

One way of increasing capital productivity is to have night shifts. That way, production could be doubled using the same machinery. Now employed workers don't like night-shift - but perhaps unemployed workers do! ☆

Profile

From grassroots organiser to union president

Morice Smithers interviews SAM SHILOWA, who was speaking at the time as president of TGWU. Since then, he has been elected assistant general secretary of COSATU.

I was born on 30 February 1958 in what is now the Giyane area of Gazankulu. It was just a year before we were forcibly removed as part of the consolidation of the bantustans. My father was 68 at the time and a state pensioner.

It was very difficult to grow up in such conditions. My parents and my brother and sister were not working, so we often had to go hungry. We always relied on my aunt who was working as a domestic servant in Johannesburg, even though she was earning very little in those days. We were also able to get something from the land – though even if you had land, you had to have money to buy seeds and there were no tractors. You had to either hire someone with a span of oxen or otherwise it meant going to the fields and hoeing by hand.

I started going to school in 1967, a year later than I should have. My sister and my brother had to leave school so that my parents could at least afford my education. So for me to get a better education, two people had to sacrifice. I was able to communicate well at school. I was chair of the debating forum and I was a leader in the SCM.

I started to become aware of what was happening throughout the country after June 16, 1976, especially because many parents in the cities sent their kids to the rural areas where they thought they would get safer and better education. So there was a fusion of two types of the same generation with different perspectives. Soon we began to start debating how we

could improve conditions at school and to start challenging things like the question of corporal punishment. As a result I was expelled when in Standard 9.

Starting work

In 1979, I started to work at Nola Industries in Randfontein. I left in 1980 and moved to Anglo Alpha and it was there that I first got involved in unions. At first there was only a liaison committee on which I served. But the company didn't take the committee very seriously and so they didn't fulfil promises they made when there were disputes. So we started to look for a union. I came into contact with GAWU, while others started to organise for the Transport Workers Union which was very conservative. Like TGWU, they organised transport, security and cleaning. It leaned more towards management and had negotiated various closed shop agreements.

By 1984, a few of us were organised into GAWU and others into TWU. Then I got promoted to a senior position. I think it was partly with the aim of drawing me out of the liaison committee and to prevent me from organising workers into the union. But the new position gave me more scope, because I was involved in training and so I had access to all workers. So even though I was using company slides to teach disciplinary codes and so forth, I always made a point of emphasising the need for workers to be organised. By the time they came to realise that we were able to use our

positions in that way, GAWU was already fairly organised and asking for access.

While that was happening, COSATU was formed which caused uneasiness amongst many of the workers who became uncertain of the future of GAWU. They decided to join the transport union, which then gained majority. So even though some of us felt it would have been important to have stayed with GAWU, we felt that for the sake of worker unity, and to ensure that we could continue to challenge management, we should move to that union. Then once things had clarified, we would obviously move workers into GAWU or any relevant union which sprang up. I was one of the first shopstewards after recognition, but I once again lost my job, this time as a result of a wage dispute. The union didn't take up my case, though some individual workers did try and speak for me, but it was of no use.

From trainer to security guard

It was then very difficult to find work. But eventually I got a job at Pritchard Security - at first at R285 per month. I continued to organise in the new company. The first dispute I was involved in took place when a shopsteward was dismissed and we campaigned for eight months to get him reinstated - and succeeded. It was a major victory because it was the first time in that company that workers were prepared to take strike action. We were not properly organised and we had no agreement with the company, but at least we were able to tackle them on that.

I was elected vice chair of the Transvaal T&G branch in 1988 and the vice secretary of the Johannesburg local. I was therefore able to attend national meetings of T&G and get an overview of what was happening in the union as a whole. In 1990, I was nominated at NEC level to be 2nd vice-president. I held that position until the T&G congress this year.

Before the congress I was approached by a number of people to stand for the presidency of T&G, but I was reluctant because I felt I could play a better role either remaining as vice president or even going back to the branch. I felt that it is always better to be led because it is easier to make criticisms than when you are in the hot seat yourself. I also feel that it is important that we don't concentrate able leadership at national level, but we must ensure we also have grass-roots and middle layer leadership.

Unfortunately I did not have things my own way and I was elected into the presidency. I am

also currently the vice-chairperson of the COSATU Wits region.

Challenges facing the union

■ Registration of security workers

Part of the motivation for registering security workers is to regulate the industry. The union is not in principle opposed to this, but we are opposed to the manner in which it is being done. The whole question of police involvement in the industry is a particular problem for us.

But having realised that many people from other companies, especially those which are not unionised, had registered, we decided that as a tactic we would also register so that we can fight from inside as a united force rather than being divided.

Through the registration issue, security firms also want to block the formation of an industrial council for the industry. However, we are campaigning for an industrial council for workers in security and cleaning in order to have wages and other conditions of employment negotiated at national level.

The government has agreed to a Working Group to look at amendments to the present Security Officers Act in a way that would be acceptable to us. It has representatives from Manpower, the unions, employers and consumer groups representing clients who, it is said, also want the industry to be regulated.

■ The SARHWU - TGWU merger

Both SARHWU and TGWU have realised that we need a merger. But we must be able to carry it out in such a way that workers are able to defend it and that workers outside of transport also feel secure. It must be done in such a way that it does not just discard the cleaners and security workers who form an important part of T&G now.

The National Executives of the two unions have met, a facilitating committee for a merger has been formed and a number of subcommittees have been set up, so it is an ongoing process.

■ Organising difficulties

There have been problems in terms of the union being able to service the membership. We have unfortunately had organisers who have just not done their jobs properly. In one case, the issue of retrenchments came up during wage negotiations. This is a highly labour intensive industry and employers use the issue of unemployment

to move from in-house cleaning to contract cleaning. One strategy we believe should be utilised, is that when a company is going to move from in-house to contract, both the union and the workers must negotiate with the present employers to say that any company that comes in must take all those workers already there. This will help to save their jobs and because they are already organised, it is easy to force the new company to continue to recognise the union.

Another problem is that the cleaning industry operates using shiftwork and many union meetings take place at a time when workers are at work. In the transport sector, workers are on the road a lot of the time. The union has to look at ways of organising meetings either at the weekend or at times which will suit workers and help to draw them into our structures.

Another factor we find difficult to deal with is the small number of workers in each company or area. In some cases, cleaning or security workers don't even know which company is employing them. When they are dismissed, they don't even know where their company's head office is.

So these problems mean that either workers don't get serviced at all or even if they do, they don't see themselves as part of union, but rather that it is just some sort of insurance. That is a challenge facing us.

Having a security worker like myself as president of the union has helped to focus more attention on the needs of cleaners and security. This has given confidence to those working in these sectors.

■ Bus industry

The crisis in the bus industry is one which affects not only workers in the industry, but also the community which uses buses. We are involved in discussions with the entire management of the bus industry, that is SABOA, and with the state. But T&G alone would not be enough to save the situation. T&G is calling for nationalisation - we don't believe public transport can be left entirely in private hands. If it is in private hands, then there must be heavy subsidies.

We must tackle this issue now, rather than leave it to a new government to sort out. A key thing to remember is that people are staying far away from their places of employment as a result of the removals policies of apartheid. They are not looking for transport for pleasure, they want transport to get them to work on time.

This must be provided for.

■ Other issues:

There are a number of other issues facing the union:

- Many cleaners are women and so we have to ensure the development of women so that they are able to occupy leadership positions within the union and within society as a whole.
- How are we going stem retrenchments or alternatively how do we deal with the question of job creation.
- The union must do more to advance COSATU. If we agree that COSATU is built by its affiliates, it therefore means that each union will have to play its part in shaping the policies of COSATU.
- Also, our union has taken a resolution supporting the maintenance and strengthening of the tripartite alliance, so we have to put that into practice by encouraging workers to join the ANC and the party, and to involve themselves actively in these structures.

The Alliance

I am on the SACP Interim leadership group in the Transvaal, I am the president of T&G, I am the chief shopsteward at work, I am vice chair of the COSATU Wits region and I am the information officer of my ANC branch, so the multi-hats issue is an important one for me.

In terms of my involvement in the SACP and ANC, I see it as a contribution, not as Sam, but as part of the working class. While the ANC is a national liberation movement, it acknowledges that its major component is workers. So I think that at this stage it would be suicidal for us to distance ourselves from the ANC even in terms of taking up leadership.

As for the SACP, there is a challenge for those who believe in the principles and policies of the party. It was been underground since 1953, and during those years, many people were forced into exile, were sent to prison or died. Those of us who have had the chance of surviving any of this have to make our contribution.

In a resolution, our union has said that we have to strengthen the alliance of the ANC and the party because we are all fighting for national liberation and it is important for worker leaders to make themselves available for positions. But I cannot say I am not able to attend an important union meeting or COSATU meeting because there is an ANC meeting at the same time. So

we are saying it is not the principle of whether one should occupy different positions, it is the practise, and anyone who accepts a position must look into whether they will be able to fulfil their mandated duties properly.

People talk about the number of COSATU people who are in the ANC or are communists and worry about whether COSATU compromises on issues when the other alliance members push a different position. This doesn't happen. We do not retreat in the face of ANC or party positions.

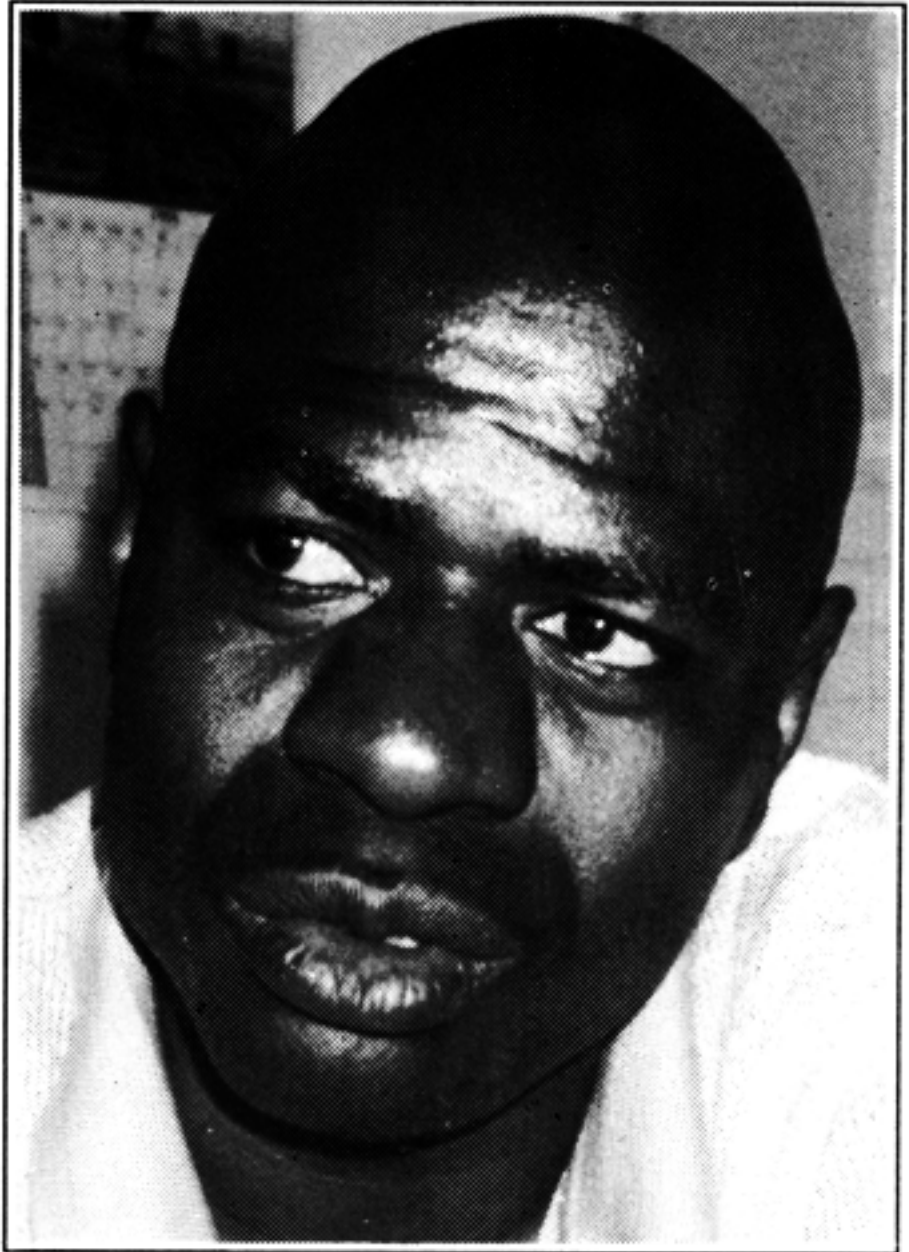
In the case of the ANC, we have been very critical, and they haven't said 'Hold on, you are ANC members as well in your branches, what are you doing about the situation.' or said we should not be critical. They recognise that we are representing a particular constituency. But this is a long debate which is just beginning.

Of course, there may well be a parting of ways of the alliance partners in the future depending on the outcome of national liberation. I think it may happen that the ANC and the party may not part ways - for example, in Cuba you had the nationalists and communists coming together and working jointly in the government. It will depend on the decisions of the membership. But as of now the common objective is to get rid of apartheid and to ensure that we have elections.

COSATU is not an affiliate of the ANC or the party. Therefore we are independent and we decide which direction we take. We are an organ of civil society like civics and others similar structures, and so we can align ourselves at any given time to a political party if we choose. But there is common agreement amongst those who are for and against the multi cap position that COSATU should remain independent.

My understanding of independence is that COSATU must work out its mandates based on the feeling of its members. So it doesn't matter if the general secretary of COSATU is a communist or a nationalist. What matters most is that that particular person must act according to the mandate of his or her particular constituency.

If we accept that premise, it goes without saying that COSATU will remain a pressure group whether the ANC is in power or not. One thing we must learn from Eastern Europe is that unions must not simply be a conveyor belt for political parties. The independence of unions is important so that they can properly serve the working class interests of their members.



The personal and the political

I do not wear the hat of a husband at this stage, but this is not because of all the other hats that I wear. I do have a kid that stays with my mum, so I am a father. I do have relationship, even though we only see each other once in many weeks. But I have my own doubts - I accept that one can't be a revolutionary and ignore other aspects of one's life, so one has to keep a balance on that. But I feel that one doesn't have to rush into marriage. It is important to nurse and nurture whatever relationship one has so that people understand one another and are able to tolerate one another. Each must understand that the other partner has a role to play in structures. One shouldn't have to choose either the union, the struggle or the wife. One should be able to have both.

Workers in our country must realise that there is no way that we can be apolitical. Our first responsibility is to build our own unions, but if we want a future SA where democracy is going to prevail, we cannot sit and wish for the ANC or SACP to be democratic - we must actually move into these structures and become active so that we are able, from the bottom, to influence the question of the type of leadership that we have and the type of policies being followed. Both these organisations have got as part of their constitutions the right to recall and we must exercise that right. ☆

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

**Organise for democracy, economic
reconstruction and socialism**



GOSATU

4th National Congress

Nasrec Johannesburg

24 - 27 July



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