

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

STRUGGLES OF THE MEDIA AND TRANSPORT WORKERS

CAROLE COOPER

THE PUTCO STRIKES: A QUESTION OF
CONTROL

MEDIA STUDY GROUP

MWASA – TRYING TO SET THE DEADLINES

ALAN FINE

ALLIED: ROUND TWO

DAVID LINCOLN

SUGAR MILL LABOUR

Vol. 6 No. 6
March 1981

1980 Strike Series: 2

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EDITORIAL COMMENT – Vol 6 No. 6

This, the second in our 1980 strike series, examines three important strikes which took place in Johannesburg last year.* Two of the disputes, involving the vast majority of workers at the Johannesburg-based PUTCO depots and at the Allied Publishing Company depots, arose directly out of grievances concerning the extent of managerial control over workers.

In both the Allied and PUTCO cases we can locate the immediate confrontation at the point at which middle management and workers interact. It is at this level that the Company actively implements its power to control workers. The grievances that result are therefore rooted in the concrete daily experiences of the body of workers. Often middle management is perceived to be exercising its authority in an unfair and random manner. Arbitrary dismissals and the ill treatment of workers have evoked angry responses, and it is this mood of discontent that permeates the whole workforce, simmering to a point where antagonisms become explosive.

In some instances grievances of this kind are brought to the surface in the course of struggles around other issues. This was the case with the PUTCO strike where workers, resisting the erosion of their real wages, came up against the repressive action of middle management in the latter's attempts to crush the growing wage demand. Other disputes, like that at Allied have been ignited directly by the unacceptable imposition by management of both formal and informal disciplinary action. Resistance has, in such instances emerged out of an increasing level of awareness amongst workers, facilitated by their participation in trade union and shop floor-based organisation.

Both the majority of Allied and PUTCO workers were, moreover, sufficiently angered by the actions of middle management to have pursued the issue by demanding the removal of managers alleged to be behaving in an abusive manner. In both cases, worker resistance was marked by a high level of unity, demonstrated by the mass turnouts at meetings and the degree of discipline and planning related to worker action. The significance of this for the PUTCO and Allied strikes is that considerable numbers of workers, through organisation, were able to articulate their immediately felt grievance and take united action in support of their demands.

How did the state and employers respond to workers' action? Here the PUTCO strikes illustrate a response which is characteristic of the pattern of labour disputes in 1980: After the first strike of July 3rd, management attempted to bypass elected worker leaders and hustle the matter through the established bureaucratic structures which deal with the settlement of disputes. After deadlock in the Central Black Labour Board and the Regional Black Labour Committee, the dispute was finally referred to the Minister of Manpower Utilisation for submission to the Wage Board.

* Of course, the Mwasu solidarity strike was not confined to Johannesburg, although it had its roots there.

On the 19th December — five and a half months after the initial strike — new wage minima were gazetted. During this period, management refused on all but one occasion to deal with the drivers' Action Committee, and insisted that workers channel their grievances through the already discredited Liaison Committee.

Thus, PUTCO management and the state have treated the wage demand as *separate from* the totality of expressed grievances of workers. In so doing they have attempted to isolate those issues which are immediately resolvable from the more fundamental and deeply felt issues. The results are clearly illustrated in the PUTCO case. The real issues and grievances did not simply dissolve; workers were increasingly frustrated by the tardiness of the negotiating procedure and by the fact that negotiations took place beyond their reach. Because there has been a high degree of participation of workers in fighting for their demands management's strategy merely exacerbated the existing tensions which eventually culminated in a second strike in December. Workers were finally driven to stepping outside the official channels by opting for a more direct and immediate form of action.

Both the Allied and PUTCO strikes can be contrasted with the third strike dealt with in this edition: that of the media workers. The workers at the Cape Herald struck for higher pay and achieved their major objectives. Mwasa's national leadership however extended the strike to include a demand for strike pay for all strikers, including solidarity strikers. This was a tactic aimed at forging national unity amongst media workers as a means of winning recognition of Mwasa. However, because as the authors show, the tactic involved a demand which they regarded as *non-negotiable*, it was transformed into a principle.

And because the newspaper bosses were not prepared to concede this point, the whole strike remained deadlocked. Mwasa then attempted to force negotiation on the issue through the newspaper boycott/news blackout. The authors point to two problems which emerged around this tactic: firstly, the issues involved were not 'clearly defined and rooted in the daily realities of the communities'. This is reflected in Mwasa's mistaken assumption that there is a homogeneity of interests in the black community. Secondly, the boycott would have meant community organisations suspending their own struggles which were reliant on the media. For these reasons, confusion and indeed opposition emerged within the ranks of those who were called upon to support the journalists' struggles.

In addition, the authors argue, that a further reason for the failure of the strike was Mwasa's rejection of the support of their fellow journalists in the SASJ — the grouping which constituted its natural allies.

The three disputes covered in this Bulletin clearly show that the level of participation reached in the course of a strike, or in fact any other form of resistance, is not only a reflection of the importance of the particular issues to the bulk of the workforce involved, but is also a prerequisite for the achievement of concessions and short term victories, on the basis of which further organisational gains can be made.

The PUTCO Strikes: a question of control

Carole Cooper

“We have been told by the Liaison Committee that the management of PUTCO has offered a 15% increase in wages to come into effect from 1 July 1980.

We, the workers, do not know if you negotiated that for us or not. We know you did not consult us. We know, therefore, you do not know what our demands are for wages, or for improved conditions of service at the depots, or how management must show more respect for the dignity of the workers.”

This dissatisfaction sparked off one of the two strikes held by PUTCO bus drivers at the Putcoton depot in the last six months of 1980. Both strikes crippled transport to the black townships surrounding Johannesburg.

The first strike, held in July, concerned the pay issue mentioned above, as well as union recognition, with other demands such as the transfer of a Company official and the reinstatement of workers dismissed during the strike, emerging later. The second strike, in December, broke out over an alleged breach of promise by management to investigate the said official's transfer as agreed upon at the resolution of the July strike.

Although specific grievances were articulated during the respective strikes, an analysis of events and interviews with drivers reveal the existence of a complexity of grievances not clearly expressed at the time.

The main thread that runs through both strikes, linking the articulated and other grievances is worker dissatisfaction with the structures of control – both management imposed and those arising out of the statutes governing labour relations – to which PUTCO drivers are subject.

Increasing tension amongst drivers at the Putcoton depot related directly to management's refusal to use worker elected bodies in dealing with workers' grievances and their insistence instead that workers operate through the Liaison Committee. Friction was also generated by management's frequent refusal to

acknowledge that workers did in fact have grievances.

In accounting for the militancy amongst PUTCO workers, a further factor is pertinent; that is the nature of their work. Driving buses has built into it a greater independence and more responsibility than, for example, factory work. It seems true to say that this independence makes drivers less willing to subordinate themselves to controls which they believe to be unnecessary. PUTCO drivers are also subject to enormous pressures: they transport approximately 150 000 commuters from the townships to central Johannesburg each day and, especially at rush hour, operate according to tight schedules. Under these conditions impatience and frustration at the constant policing by inspectors and the actions of the disciplinary committee are never far from the surface.

Finally, the upsurge in worker resistance to the forms of control imposed on them relates directly to the growing climate of militancy amongst workers in South Africa around the question of trade union representation and expectations of improvements in their working conditions. In 1980 there was a rapid increase in strikes indicating a widespread impatience amongst workers with management's tardiness in responding to their grievances as well as a growing sense of their power as workers.

Chronology

The July Strike

In May, PUTCO's Liaison Committee was informed by management that workers would receive a 15% increase in wages as from July 1. At a meeting at the Diepkloof Hostel on May 28, more than 250 drivers from eight PUTCO depots as well as representatives of the Transport and Allied Workers' Union (TAWU) an affiliate of the Council of Unions of SA (CUSA) rejected the increase and instead demanded a R35 per week rise. Drivers pointed to the fact that basic commodities had risen by more than 15%. A Soweto councillor, Mr Makhanya, stated that the time had come for blacks to realise the power of their labour. Mr Manana, an organiser from TAWU and a dispatcher employed by PUTCO, reported that some members of the Liaison Committee had remained quiet at the meeting with management for fear of victimisation. So that a report-back could be made to each depot, an Action Committee of 22 drivers was elected.

After a number of meetings the Action Committee decided to draw up the following memorandum and addressed it to worker representatives on the Liaison Committee:

MEMORANDUM FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE
ESTABLISHED AT PUTCO DEPOTS IN THE TRANSVAAL

SUBMITTED BY

THE WORKERS EMPLOYED BY PUTCO

1. 15% OFFER REJECTED

We have been told by the liaison committee representatives that the management of Putco has offered a 15% increase in wages to come into effect from 1 July 1980.

We, the workers, do not know if you negotiated that for us or not.

We know you did not consult us. We know, therefore, you do not know what our demands are for wages, or for improved conditions of service at the depots, or how management must show more respect for the dignity of workers.

We reject the 15% wage increase.

We reject it because

- It is not enough
- It does not cover the increase in the cost of living
- It does not provide enough money for the cleaners to live.

2. OUR DEMANDS ARE A R35,00 PER WEEK INCREASE FOR ALL WORKERS.

There is no proper structure at Putco through which workers can

-2-

bargain as a collective force. Since 1973 Putco has fought the Union. The Union would have brought forward demands.

But we know there is a conviction amongst the people working at Putco that a R35,00 increase per week for all is to be asked. This is the amount brought up at the meeting held on 21 May 1980 in the veld. It is the amount confirmed at the meeting held on 28 May 1980 which was attended by representatives from 8 depots and which passed a motion.

All workers should get the same increase. We want Rands and cents and not percents! Only in this way will the people living in poverty be brought out of poverty. An increase in percentages (%) pushes the lower paid workers deeper into poverty.

3. THE POVERTY LEVEL

The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, a management organization has calculated that an average Black family of five people needs over R200,00 per month to live on the minimum level.

This means a cleaner at Putco should get over R200,00 per month or more than R50,00 per week. The Putco wages with a 15% increase is only R39,68 per week, but with a R35,99 increase is R69,50 per week.

The following table shows the difference between the rate offered by management and the rate demanded by workers:

-3-

PUTCO WAGE SCALES

Scale	Starting Rate as at July 1979	Rate demanded by workers (+R35,00)	Rate offered by Management (+15%)	Rand Difference
21	72.50	107.50	83.38	24.12
20	72.00	107.00	82.80	24.20
19	70.00	105.00	80.50	24.50
18	66.00	101.00	75.90	25.10
17	62.50	97.50	71.88	25.62
16	59.00	94.00	67.85	26.15
15	57.00	92.00	65.55	26.45
14	55.50	90.50	63.83	26.67
13	54.00	89.00	62.10	26.90
12	52.00	87.00	59.80	27.20
11	51.00	86.00	58.65	27.35
10	49.50	84.50	56.93	27.57
9	47.00	82.00	54.05	27.95
8	45.50	80.50	52.33	28.17
7	43.00	78.00	49.45	28.55
6	41.00	76.00	47.15	28.85
5	39.50	74.50	45.43	29.07
4	37.50	72.50	43.13	29.37
3	36.00	71.00	41.40	29.60
2	34.50	69.50	39.68	29.82
1	32.50	67.50	37.38	30.12

The liaison committee members must get the increase the workers want. We want a report back from each representative at each depot by 26 June 1980.

4. OTHER MATTERS

We have a number of problems at Putco. Our problems are that we have no letter of appointment, no conditions of service, inadequate work facilities, no security of employment, a constantly threatening attitude from the public, no adequate grievance procedure and no appeal from the Putco imposed disciplinary procedure.

We need to bring all these and other matters after the wage issue has been settled to the urgent attention of management also.

**PREPARED BY: Transport and Allied Workers' Union
47 Estromin House
Simmonds Street
JOHANNESBURG.**

DATE: 11 June 1980.

Over 200 copies of the memorandum were distributed on June 11 and over 70% of workers signed the petition which accompanied it. By June 26, however, no report back had been made by Liaison Committee members.

At this point management stated that they had heard of the memorandum, but as they had received no official approach there was no dispute. Mr C Bailey, a senior executive, wrote a letter to the Union asking for information as to its *bona fides*. The Action Committee sent a replying letter through TAWU to management on June 26 stating that workers rejected the Liaison Committee, and referred to the memorandum. The letter gave the names of the 22 members of the Action Committee and requested that a delegation comprising Union officials, representatives of the Action Committee and workers meet management on June 30.

The Action Committee stated in a press release that the purpose of the meeting would be to finalise wage negotiations and commence negotiations for a Union recognition agreement.

PUTCO, however, refused to meet the workers' delegation. Instead, on June 30, it called in members of the Liaison Committee. At this meeting management stated that it would not consider the wage demand and denied reports that the workers were unhappy with the increase. Workers were angered by management's rejection of their Committee, and a general meeting was held on July 2 at the Diepkloof hostel to discuss events. It was attended by more than 400 drivers from the West and East Rand. The workers decided that one man would collect his pay on Thursday (pay day) and if it contained a 15% instead of a R35 increase he would not accept it. They decided that they would go to the Putcotoni depot the next day (July 3) and ask to see Mr A Carleo, the Managing Director. The majority of workers favoured going on strike if Carleo refused to meet them. Despite workers' attempts to see management, Brigadier Visser, PUTCO's public relations officer, stated that the Company had had no formal approach from the workers for talks.

More than 600 drivers struck on July 3 when Carleo refused to meet them. Mr Vorster, a depot manager, addressed the drivers and stated that Mr Carleo was not prepared to meet them, but was prepared to talk to the Liaison Committee. This was rejected by the workers. A similar suggestion by the Department of Manpower Utilisation's black labour officer was hotly rejected. Finally, the Action Committee met with the officer, Mr Lindeman. It called for the reinstatement of an Action Committee member dismissed on the 3rd and the dismissal of Mr Vorster as workers were dissatisfied with his handling of industrial relations. The Committee suggested that Mr Bailey speak to the workers. In his address he conceded that the dismissed worker would be reinstated and Mr Vorster's case looked into. He appealed to workers to return to work. Workers rejected this and were then told to go home. By 6.30 pm all had left. Management stated that those workers who did not report to work the following day would be dismissed.

On the 4th the strike spread to Springs and 80 drivers who demanded wage

increases were paid off when they refused to resume work. Meanwhile Putcoton workers remained out. Mr Bailey met the Action Committee at 10 am. The drivers agreed to return to work after Mr Bailey had signed the following statement:

'It has been agreed that the Action Committee will be meeting with Mr Bailey on Monday morning (7th) at 10 am to listen to the grievances of staff, at Wynberg Training Centre. It is also agreed that all drivers will be paid for Thursday and Friday. No one will be discharged or victimised and anyone who has been imprisoned will be released.'

It was understood that the drivers had accepted the 15% wage increase "under protest".

Mr Wilson Manana, organiser of TAWU and member of the Action Committee, stated that one of the reasons for accepting the settlement was the suffering the strike was causing the black community. It was estimated that when the strike broke out more than 150 000 commuters were affected and 30% of PUTCO's fleet grounded. The Railways laid on 17 extra trains which carried an estimated 39 000 commuters. Seven of these travelled to Soweto. There were reports of police baton charging crowds of commuters who congregated at PUTCO bus stops, and sections of Jeppe, Bree, Fraser and West Streets were closed. Security police were also present. It was furthermore reported that taxi drivers, taking advantage of stranded commuters, charged exorbitant fares.

On the evening of the 5th, the Action Committee met and prepared a 9-point document which they were to present at the meeting. Points raised were:

- that PUTCO recognises the Transport and Allied Workers' Union as the negotiating body of PUTCO workers;
- a grievance and disciplinary procedure should be agreed upon and signed by both parties;
- shop stewards be recognised;
- shop stewards and Union members be given time off during working hours without loss of pay to attend and hold meetings;
- trade union notice boards be set up at all depots;
- the Company give assurances that no workers will be victimised for Union and other activities;
- before the end of August an agreement covering working conditions, job security and accident insurance coverage be entered into between the Union's negotiating team and PUTCO.

Other items were: the transfer of the depot superintendent, Mr Vorster; wage increases; and the reinstatement of all PUTCO employees. The talks on the 7th and 8th between the Action Committee and management ended in deadlock on the pay issue. PUTCO agreed, however, to recognise a trade union provided that it was furnished with the necessary particulars. It also agreed to reinstate all workers who had been dismissed during the strike, and to investigate the position of Mr Vorster. At this stage the Action Committee agreed to hand over the union recog-

nitition issue to TAWU.

As PUTCO and the workers failed to settle the pay issue, a formal dispute was declared. In terms of the law, the passenger transport sector is an "essential" industry and it is illegal for workers employed in such industry to strike. In terms of section 10 of the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act, if a dispute breaks out it has to be referred to the Department of Manpower Utilisation's labour officer. If he fails to settle the issue, it goes to the Regional Committees, and lastly to the Wage Board. After investigations, the Board makes a recommendation to the Minister who declares it binding in terms of the Act.

The workers' anger was again aroused when it became apparent that attempts were being made to bypass the Action Committee in the negotiations. The Committee was excluded from talks on July 22 between the Liaison Committee and the Regional Black Labour Committees. Liaison Committee members refused to continue the meeting until Action Committee members were present. As a result the Action Committee was instructed to attend the talks on the 23rd.

Other action had been taken against this Committee – management had refused to allow it to hold a report-back meeting on Company premises on the 13th. As a result, the meeting was held in the Diepkloof hostel on the 16th. Members of the Action Committee, Mr Obed Mofokeng and Lucky Mamobolo, were interrogated by security police on the 17th July and another member, Mr Aubrey Hlatshwayo was questioned on the 18th July. There were reports that a rival union, the TUCSA affiliated 'parallel', African Transport and Allied Workers' Union was being asked to try to recruit members at PUTCO. During the second week in July, an organiser from ATAWU who appeared at the Baragwanath depot to organise workers stated he had been sent there by one of PUTCO's directors.

Workers soon started to chafe at the slowness of the negotiations, and on the 15th August a secret meeting of about 200 drivers decided to strike on August 18. This action was averted when members of the Action Committee appealed to workers to abandon the idea as it would jeopardise negotiations between the Union and management over union recognition. On the 18th, hundreds of drivers signed a petition demanding the removal of two officials, Mr Voster and a Mr Burns whom they said were causing unhappiness amongst the drivers because of their attitudes. The drivers claimed that the officials were rude and often 'booked' them when they were only five minutes late for work. Management denied that they had received any such petition.

After a meeting between the Central Black Labour Board and the Action Committee ended in deadlock on August 20, the dispute was referred to the Minister of Manpower Utilisation in order that the matter be submitted to the Wage Board. At the request of the Action Committee, the chairman of the Central Black Labour Board, Dr G Louw, addressed workers in Orlando on August 21 since workers were becoming increasingly frustrated at the delay in resolving the issue. He told drivers that they should not think that nothing was being done to redress their grievances

and resolve the dispute. Workers complained that the demands for R35 a week seemed to have been shelved and that their demands for the removal of two PUTCO officials (Mr Burns and Mr Vorster), who were allegedly harassing workers, had not been met. A plea by Mr Manana for them to remain calm again averted a further strike.

Building up to the second strike

Feelings again ran high when management fired and transferred a number of drivers. TAWU shop stewards met on September 17th to discuss the issue. Mr Hall defended the dismissals saying that they had been caused by breaches in discipline and 'not by discrimination against people for union or other activities.' He acknowledged that there was dissatisfaction amongst the workers, but that there was nothing he could do about the Government's dispute settling machinery.

The Action Committee was asked to give written evidence to the Wage Board by October 17th. Mr Michael Mcethe and Mr Wilson Manana, both members of the Committee, were nominated to give oral evidence.

The drivers, in their written evidence to the Wage Board, had asked for a R25 a week increase. However, at the Wage Board hearing, they stuck to their old demand for a R35 a week increase, backdated to July. In their memorandum, the Union and Committee repeated their rejection of a wage increase measured in percentage terms arguing that this would mean that the lowest paid workers would lose out, 'and they are living on starvation wages'.

They stated that the increase would bring drivers' wages into line with those paid by the Johannesburg City Council's Transport Department. The memo also argued that PUTCO could afford the increase. The Company's bookkeeping methods were 'conservative' which meant that 'instead of showing a profit, large amounts are costed out at unnecessarily high figures'.

The Government subsidised PUTCO and if the Company could not afford the increase it should step in. The memo argued that it was not for PUTCO workers to have to subsidise the transport costs of passengers. Management told the Board that any increase would be passed on to passengers in the form of higher fares.

In the meantime negotiations between management and TAWU on union recognition were proceeding.

After negotiations between PUTCO and the Union in early September, PUTCO agreed to allow officials of the Union access to its depots for Union work provided that: the meetings did not interfere with the efficient running of the Company; only a few workers were addressed at one time; and the divisional manager was informed about the meetings.

A further meeting on the 9th September held between the Company representatives and a delegation from TAWU yielded good progress. A sub-committee was to draft the agreement. Mr Wilson Manana stated that TAWU had insisted

that the Company's grievance and disciplinary procedures be completely changed before the agreement came into force. TAWU opposed the *indaba system* at the Company, whereby complaints and disciplinary procedures were handled by a body composed of management and Liaison Committee members.

TAWU demanded that the *indaba system* be completely scrapped at depots where the Union was recognised and that disciplinary and grievance procedures should be routed through the Union only. In this they differed from the Transport and General Workers' Union (a FOSATU affiliate) which, towards the end of 1980, gained recognition from PUTCO to represent workers in the Springs depot. The TGWU agreement allows the disciplinary system to remain in existence, but gives shop stewards the right to bypass the *indaba* and go directly to management should a grievance arise.

In the meanwhile, anger over the actions of Mr Vorster and the disciplinary system was simmering. On December 17 an Action Acommittee member was to appear before the *indaba*. The worker, a Mr Obed Mofokeng had allegedly issued 'dummy' tickets to passengers. This together with the fact that the Company had failed to investigate worker demands for Mr Vorster's transferral added to workers' dissatisfaction.

During the morning the drivers discussed the issue in the canteen. Before midday two separate delegations were sent to see Mr Hall, but both were turned back by Mr Vorster who told them that Hall was in a meeting. They were instructed to channel their grievances through the Liaison Committee. By this time about 200 drivers who had completed their morning shifts were in the canteen. Feelings were running high.

At about 1 pm, Hall sent an Action Committee member, Mr Michale Mcethe, to see the drivers to find out what was going on. The drivers informed him that they wanted Mr Vorster 'to go'. They no longer wanted Vorster to deal with the drivers. Mr Mcethe then reported back to Mr Hall and returned to the drivers at about 1.30 pm, informing them that management wanted to see a delegation of their representatives. Workers immediately elected a delegation of eight who went to see Hall at about 2 pm. The delegation informed Hall of the drivers' demand that this depot manager should be transferred. Hall made it clear that he would not remove Vorster and stated that he wanted a document from each driver giving reasons why they wanted him dismissed. He also refused to accede to a request that Vorster be sent home for the day so that the situation could be defused. He allegedly stated that the real reason for workers' dissatisfaction related to Obed Mofokeng's case and that the drivers were using Mr Vorster as an excuse. The drivers denied this and assured him that the matter related to the issue of Mr Vorster and management's failure to carry out its promise given to workers in July that the matter would be investigated. Hall also said that he had heard from his informers that there was going to be a strike, although the delegation had at no time mentioned this. All shifts were still operating at that time.

At about 2.30 pm the delegation returned to the yard below Mr Hall's office and informed the gathered workers, who now numbered about 300, of what Mr Hall had said. Angry workers called on the delegation to return to Mr Hall and again demand Vorster's transferral/dismissal. This the delegation did only to meet with a further refusal. The delegation then requested Mr Hall to inform the assembled drivers of his decision. Hall appeared on the balcony with Mr Michael Mcethe and the delegation. Mcethe told them that the matter of Mr Vorster would be discussed by management and the Action Committee of TAWU on Friday December 19. Workers rejected this as well as a further suggestion by Hall that the meeting be held on Thursday. Workers wanted immediate action. Hall then attempted to pacify the workers by telling them that their pay increases would be gazetted on Friday. Workers said they were not concerned about money, but about Mr Vorster.

At this stage inspectors instructed all drivers to bring their buses into the depot after which the gates were locked. Rain then disturbed the meeting and it was agreed that the workers should meet management the following day at 10am.

Workers arriving the next day found that the gates were still locked and manned by senior black staff and about 20 police. On attempting to enter the gate, workers were instructed to sign re-employment forms. Two black employees then attempted to distribute forms to the crowd. In order to do this they had to cross the street to the drivers who pelted them with cold drink cans, forcing them to retreat.

No driver accepted these forms which stated that the workers had been dismissed and could reapply for work whereupon their cases would be considered. A police officer then informed the crowd that they must sign the document or disperse within 10 minutes. Workers left in a tense mood because the 10 am. meeting had not been held as arranged. On December 19th drivers congregated at the DOCC Hall near Putcoton and a decision was taken to elect another delegation of five to go to management. Nothing had been heard from management about the meeting which had been arranged for the previous day. When the delegation saw Hall, he asked them why they had not returned to work on Thursday. The drivers told him that he must have known that the gates were locked. He then said that they had been fired on Wednesday and had to sign the re-engagement form if they wanted to work. He said that some drivers would never be re-employed and referred to a list which the delegation was not allowed to see. He informed one of the representatives that he was on the list. Delegates reported back to the drivers and on their instructions returned to Hall to ask him to release the list. He refused.

On the 19th new minima for workers in the Passenger Transport Service were published in the Government Gazette as a result of the Wage Board investigation. The wage scales came into effect immediately. Learner bus drivers' wages increased from R39,50 to R50, queue marshallers from R37,50 to R43 and a driver's wage from R75 to R90. (See Appendix 2 for all categories.) PUTCO hinted strongly at possible fare increases as a result of the new minima.

By the 22nd, 380 of the 780 workers on strike had returned to work. That the majority had not returned was due to the fact that the strike was not over the pay increases, but over the issue of Mr Vorster.

On December 22nd a meeting took place between management, worker representatives and Mr Loet Douwes-Dekker, a lecturer Industrial Relations at Wits who is an adviser to TAWU. Two statements were signed. One stated that:

- 'ex-employees' could apply for work without the loss of their accumulated service benefits;
- those employees not re-engaged had the right to have their cases reviewed by the Indaba committee before Monday December 29. A TAWU representative would be present.
- should the *indaba* dismiss any person, he had the right to appeal to the divisional manager, and have a further appeal to the area executive whose decision would be final.

The second statement confirmed that recognition would be granted to the Union as soon as it could substantiate majority membership. At that stage the mutually agreed upon disciplinary and grievance procedures would come into operation.

Copies were made and give to a worker representative who read the statements at midday on December 22nd to workers at the DOCC Hall.

The executive of TAWU nominated Mr Loet Douwes Dekker and Mr P Camay, general secretary of the Council of Unions of SA to represent them at the *indaba*. However, on their arrival at the PUTCO offices on the 29th, they were informed by Hall that PUTCO had received a legal opinion that TAWU observers meant persons who were members of TAWU. As Messrs Douwes Dekker and Camay were not members, he could not allow them to attend the *indaba*. When challenged, he stated that he had received instructions from Mr Carleo to enforce the legal interpretation. Mr Douwes Dekker spoke to Carleo on the telephone and was informed that, as the *indaba* was a domestic matter, no outsiders could attend.

The workers felt insecure and unhappy about participating in the *indaba* proceedings without the two men since their decision to take part had been based on the fact that they would be present. However, the workers decided to attend as they considered it was the best way of ensuring the resumption of their work.

At the *indaba* on December 29th, 46 appeals were heard of which 19 were granted and 27 dismissed. After proceedings to the higher review, 15 workers were refused re-employment. Of these, six were members of the Action Committee; all were members of the Union and four were of a group of seven arrested by the police during the strike and held for 3–4 days.

A decision was taken to argue their cases in the Industrial Court. The 15 intended making an application for an order declaring their dismissals to be null and void; that they were entitled to their wages; and declaring certain of PUTCO's actions unfair labour practises in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act. These

included PUTCO's failure to investigate Vorster's transfer, to hold a meeting at 10 am. on December 18th with worker representatives; the applicants' dismissals; suspension from work; the non-payment of their wages; illegal deductions from their wages, from December 17th 1980; the manner in which the *indaba* procedure was conducted; PUTCO's attempt to force the applicants to sign an application for re-employment on December 18th; and their victimisation of six applicants in terms of the Industrial Conciliation and Wages Act.

At the time of writing a decision had been taken not to go ahead with the court case as a result of a recent ruling in the Industrial Court. The ruling closed the way for applicants seeking urgent redress to be able to appeal first to the Industrial Court. As a result cases would initially have to go to the Industrial Council or Conciliation Board. The result of this is that the PUTCO drivers' case will now be considered by the Conciliation Board.

Commentary

What is revealed through an analysis of the PUTCO strikes is that the major source of ongoing conflict at the Company lies in the nature of control exercised over the drivers and their dissatisfaction with this control.

Control takes two forms : firstly, the application of state machinery; that is in laws governing the holding of strikes, the resolution of conflict and negotiating procedures for black workers; and secondly PUTCO's own internal disciplinary procedure. Both these systems proved in their own way to be unacceptable to PUTCO drivers. Management's intransigence in the face of worker frustration resulting from this control led to workers expressing their dissatisfaction in probably the only way remaining open to them – through striking. The linking factor in both these systems of control is the Liaison Committee which, at PUTCO, serves a dual function: that of a negotiating body as provided for in terms of the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act; and of a court of law within PUTCO's own disciplinary framework.

The failure of Liaison Committees as negotiating bodies is now widely accepted. PUTCO management's failing was to believe that its Liaison Committee could adequately fulfil that function. It is also obvious that its importance within the disciplinary structure meant that management was loath to change the system. This is borne out by PUTCO's determination over the years to maintain this system in the face of constant worker demands for a trade union, or failing this for management to deal with the workers' own elected Action Committee.

Worker Representation:

PUTCO's reluctance to accord any recognition to worker representatives may be traced back to the 1972 strike (See Appendix 1). This strike led to the formation of the Transport and Allied Workers' Union in 1973. When told in 1972 that

such a Union would be formed, PUTCO management responded by saying that a union was not required and that management could look after the needs of the workers. In order to undermine this initiative, management announced that it would introduce in-Company committees as an alternative to the Union. The Company established advisory committees in each depot as well as a co-ordinating committee. The Action Committee — the workers' own elected body — refused to be intimidated and continued with plans to establish a Union.

From the outset, worker confidence in the Liaison Committee as a negotiating body was low and it became increasingly apparent over the years that it was merely an arm of management. According to the constitution, the election of Liaison Committee representatives are supposed to take place once a year. Workers hold, however, that this procedure is often not followed, and in 1980, they claim, management nominated members to the Committee. Worker disillusionment with the Committee is especially revealed in their memorandum submitted before the July strike last year. In the memorandum, workers criticise the Committee for having accepted the 15% increase without having consulted them.

Throughout the course of the July strike, management attempted to undermine worker initiatives. One tactic used to achieve this was their insistence that workers channel their grievances through the Liaison Committee and their refusal to deal with the workers' own representatives. Management's decision to meet the Liaison Committee rather than the Action Committee before the first strike had the effect of exacerbating tensions to a point where a strike was inevitable. It is significant that workers returned to work when management, as a result of continued worker resistance to accepting the Liaison Committee as a negotiating body, agreed finally to meet the Action Committee. As may be seen from events during the second strike, however, this did not indicate a permanent acceptance by management of the Action Committee, an acceptance which could have led to a restructuring of relations between workers and management. Instead, when successive delegations approached PUTCO in order to discuss their grievances, they were instructed to channel them through the Liaison Committee. Workers argue that management's successive refusals to meet their delegates during the morning of December 3rd allowed worker dissatisfaction to escalate to such a degree that nothing short of radical and swift action by management to meet their demands could have avoided the confrontation which occurred.

There is little doubt, however, that the first strike jolted management into an awareness that unless they worked towards union recognition it would become increasingly difficult to contain worker dissatisfaction. Their decision after the first strike to recognise a union in principle must be seen in this context as well as that of the increasing willingness amongst South African employers and the state to move towards an acceptance of the legitimacy of black trade unions.

Negotiations between TAWU and management however, proved to be too

protracted to override workers' frustration over other issues – for example on the length of time taken for the wage dispute to be resolved, management's failure to examine the case of Mr Vorster's transfer and other issues. The main stumbling block to union recognition was management's refusal to agree to a change in the Company's disciplinary and grievance procedure before signing the agreement. The Union, however, felt that this was an essential prerequisite to signing the agreement as the system was one of the main sources of dissatisfaction amongst the workers. Worker disillusionment with progress on union recognition was clearly expressed by their decision not to go through the Union when the second confrontation with management occurred. Drivers stated that management "was using" TAWU and that "everything was going too slowly". "We felt we should do everything ourselves."

PUTCO, however, has used the holding of the second strike to question the Union's ability to lead the workers.

Such a question demonstrates a singular lack of understanding on management's part of the depth of worker frustration with their working conditions. It also flies in the face of the successful attempts made by the Union to avert strike action by workers on at least two other occasions in the months between the two strikes. It further raises the question of management's own sincerity in wishing to recognise TAWU.

Dissatisfaction with the Formal Dispute Procedures

Worker discontent was not only directed at the Liaison Committee system, but also at the formal dispute procedure provided for in terms of the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act. Six months elapsed between the time when a formal dispute over the wage issue was declared and when the new minima were published in the Government Gazette.

To workers, anxious to gain increases which meet the rising cost of living, such a delay seems unnecessary and arouses suspicions, as occurred in this case, that the stalling was deliberate. In more general terms this kind of delay engenders in workers a disregard for statutory procedures which govern their work situations. Workers also complained that the increases, small as they were, were hardly worth the wait. Complaints were made that some workers' salaries remained unchanged as they were already receiving wages above the increased minima.

The 'Indaba' System

One of the main sources of dissatisfaction at PUTCO lies in the Company's disciplinary or *indaba* system. In terms of this system stringent controls govern drivers in the execution of their duties.

PUTCO's policing of drivers is carried out by inspectors, two being allotted to

each driver. According to set procedure, if an inspector feels that a driver has infringed the rules, he submits a report on the incident to the supervisor. The supervisor makes out a report form in triplicate, the driver signs the form and is given a copy. The form is then attached to the driver's personal file which is passed to the depot superintendent. He decides whether the case should be dealt with by the *indaba* committee or not. If the case does not go to the *indaba* the superintendent may drop the case or have a talk with the worker.

If the case goes before the *indaba*, an instruction slip is made out informing the worker that he must attend, and he signs to this effect. Alternatively, the worker signs next to his name on a list to show that he has been summoned to attend. The chairman of the *indaba* is either the depot superintendent or the divisional manager. The case is read out to the worker and if he disagrees with it, he may call witnesses. The worker is entitled to cross examine any witness. At the end of the case the chairman asks the *indaba* whether or not the members have any comments. He then announces his finding which is filed in the worker's personal file. The worker may appeal against the finding of the chairman first to the divisional manager and then the area executive.

Workers complain that this system is far from just. They allege, for example, that inspectors are generally management's 'informers' who will report them unnecessarily or misconstrue events. They feel that this treatment is meted out to drivers whom management dislikes. Workers also question the fairness of the *indaba* committee which meets at 9.30 every Tuesday to hear cases against workers. The committee comprises members of the Liaison Committee, generally two or three workers and is chaired by management. Workers see members of the Liaison Committee as management 'stooges' and allege that they are not given fair hearings.

Workers state that at the *indaba* their records going back five or six years may be checked and all infringements taken into account in the chairman's decision. They point out that their good conduct is overlooked. One driver mentioned, for example, that he had pointed out to management that he had risked his life for PUTCO by driving buses into Soweto during the '76 uprising, to which management answered that PUTCO was not looking for favours.

Claims of the lack of justice at the *indaba* committee meeting were made in particular by the 15 drivers currently appealing against their dismissal. They allege, *inter alia*, that decisions on their cases were taken before they were admitted to the room; and that they were not given a chance to call witnesses as is set out in the document on disciplinary procedure.

One of the specific grievances running through both strikes centred on workers' dissatisfaction with Mr Vorster, depot manager and chairman of the *indaba* committee at PUTCOTON. Workers felt that his response to grievances was unsympathetic and uncompromising. They allege that he often prejudged issues at the *indaba* thus ruling out the possibility of the worker concerned having a fair hearing.

It was management's breach in the undertaking given to workers as part of the agreement following the July strike that they would examine Mr Vorster's case which became the focus of the second strike. There is little doubt that workers' discontent with Mr Vorster was linked in broader terms to their general discontent with the entire disciplinary system at the Company.

General Grievances

Although specific grievances were mentioned during both strikes, it is evident that PUTCO drivers are also dissatisfied with general working conditions at PUTCO. They feel that although their jobs are highly pressured due to tight schedules, management makes no allowances for mistakes. Some complaints centre on time. They cite, for example, that they are given 10 minutes after signing on for a shift to get their tickets set up and the bus on the road. Failure to do this may lead to a 'booking'. To avoid this they come in earlier and prepare for the shift in their own time.

Drivers complain that they are forced to do overtime as PUTCO is short of drivers. They may not choose when to work this overtime, with the result that a driver whose first shift starts at 3 am and day ends at 1 pm may find himself doing a compulsory overtime shift in the evening and arriving home at 10 or 11 pm at night only to start the following day at 3 am.

Drivers are also embittered at having to reimburse the Company when money is stolen. They furthermore allege that when they are responsible for an accident management forces them to sign a stop order so that amounts may be deducted from their pay to meet the costs on court proceedings.

Other complaints relate to the safety on the job. Attacks by 'tsotsis' are frequent and drivers state that they are forced to complete shifts even if their buses are stoned as occurs frequently in the rough areas of Soweto such as Zola. They are also angered by what they perceive to be management's indifference to both their safety and that of their passengers. Complaints about defective brakes and faulty doors are often ignored, they allege. They find themselves in a catch-22 situation: if they complain about a defective bus, they are accused of not wanting to work; if they work and have an accident they are blamed for not having informed management of the defective bus. Either way they may have to appear before an *indaba*.

Workers are also dissatisfied with the Company's system of promotion. They claim that management generally promotes compliant workers ('dummies') and not 'clear' (i.e. perceptive) workers who may be less open to co-optation. They state, as well, that while serving the required three month probationary period, workers are paid at their old pay rates. Sometimes 18 months go by and a promoted worker is still receiving his old pay. Grievances regarding anomalies in pay scales between drivers are also widespread.

What angers workers most about the situation is that their complaints on these

issues are ignored, or they are earmarked as troublemakers or instigators and required to appear before the *indaba*.

Conclusion

The PUTCO strikes clearly show that worker dissatisfaction with the *indaba* system at the Company has reached such a pitch that unless management shows a willingness to change the system entirely, continued labour unrest is likely to be prevalent.

Furthermore, PUTCO workers have shown that they will no longer work through the Liaison Committee and that they are determined that the union of their choice should be recognised by management. Indications of PUTCO's paternalistic attitude to the question of worker representation were given when management stated after the July strike that they (i.e. management) would decide which unions would be allowed to represent the workers. There were also management attempts to foist the Tucsa union on the workers. It has been widely shown that bodies (unions or otherwise) chosen by management to represent workers rarely gain their confidence and, therefore, rarely fulfill in any sense a true negotiating function.

The PUTCO strikes also amply illustrate the need for a greater willingness on management's part to deal with worker grievances promptly. Intransigence such as that shown by PUTCO management in both strikes can only lead to greater frustration and impatience on the part of workers. The PUTCO drivers feel strongly that if management had dealt more speedily with their grievances on December 17th then that particular strike need never have taken place.

Appendix 1

The 1972 Strike

On the 4th June 1972, over 300 bus drivers employed by the Public Utility Transport Company were arrested during a sit-in strike in Johannesburg in protest against a wage offer of 3%. The following day 40 drivers presented themselves at John Vorster Square and asked to be locked up with the others as a demonstration of solidarity. All the drivers were released after three days, since their services were essential for the daily transport of 120 000 black workers. They were charged in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act for breaking a contract of employment which would deprive the public of transport. More than R7 000 was collected by the Action Committee for legal representation.

The government withdrew the charges and PUTCO granted increases. Starting wages for drivers were increased by 28% to R35 per week and drivers with seven years experience were granted increases of 42% – R44 per week. With the assistance of the Urban Training Project, the Action Committee set out to form a union. In February 1973 the Transport and Allied Workers Union was established.

(From L. Douwes-Dekker – 'The PUTCO-TAWU Case Study')

Appendix 2

STAATSKOERANT, 19 DESEMBER 1980

No. 7335 17

No. R. 2629 19 December 1980
**BLACK LABOUR RELATIONS REGULATION
 ACT, 1953**

**ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION TRADE,
 WITWATERSRAND AND PRETORIA.—ORDER**

I, Stephanus Petrus Botha, Minister of Manpower
 Utilisation—

(a) hereby, in terms of section 11 (6) of the Black
 Labour Relations Regulation Act, 1953, determine
 that the provisions of the Order made by me in
 terms of section 11 (4) of that Act in respect of the
 Road Passenger Transportation Trade, and which
 appears in the Schedule hereto, shall be binding with
 effect from the date of publication of this notice
 upon all employers and employees who are affected
 thereby; and

(b) hereby, in terms of section 14 (1) declare that
 the provisions of the said Order shall, with effect
 from the date of publication of this notice *mutatis
 mutandis* apply in respect of persons, who are
 employees as defined in the Industrial Conciliation
 Act, 1956.

S. P. BOTHERA, Minister of Manpower Utilisation.

SCHEDULE

1. AREA AND SCOPE OF THE ORDER

This Order shall apply to all the employers and all their
 employees in the Magisterial Districts of Boksburg, Ger-
 miston, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Roodepoort, Springs and
 Wonderboom and in the Municipal Area of Sandton to whom
 Wage Determination 373, Road Passenger Transportation
 Trade, Certain Areas, is applicable.

2. REMUNERATION

The minimum wage which an employer shall pay to each
 member of the undermentioned classes of his employees shall
 be as set out hereunder:

(a) Employees other than casual employees:

	<i>In all the areas</i>
	<i>Per week</i>
	R
Artisan.....	125,00
Assistant foreman.....	125,00
Assistant storeman.....	48,00
Bus driver.....	78,00

	<i>In all the Areas</i>
	<i>Per week</i>
	R
Bus driver-conductor.....	90,00
Chargehand.....	43,00
Chauffeur.....	60,00
Checker/regulator.....	54,00
Clerk—	
during the first year of experience.....	48,23
during the second year of experience.....	53,08
during the third year of experience.....	62,30
during the fourth year of experience.....	66,92
thereafter.....	76,16
Conductor.....	46,00
Despatcher.....	76,00
Driver of a motor vehicle.....	72,00
Duty-bus driver.....	78,00
Foreman.....	130,00
General worker, male—	
18 years of age or over.....	39,00
under 18 years of age.....	29,20
General worker, female.....	31,20
Grade A employee.....	46,00
Handyman.....	58,00
Inspector.....	95,00
Inspector's assistant.....	52,00
Learner bus driver.....	50,00
Part-time bus driver.....	64,00
Pre-seller.....	46,00
Queue marshaller.....	43,00
Recorder—	
during the first year of experience.....	48,00
during the second year of experience.....	52,00
thereafter.....	56,00
Repair-shop assistant—	
during the first year of experience.....	52,00
thereafter.....	58,00
Senior inspector.....	115,00
Shunting driver.....	62,00
Ticket examiner.....	44,00
Watchman.....	45,00
Employee not specifically mentioned elsewhere....	45,00

(b) *Casual employees.*—A casual employee shall be paid in
 respect of every day or part of a day of employment not less
 than one-fifth of the weekly wage prescribed for an employee
 in the same area and of the same sex who performs the same
 class of work as the casual employee is required to do:
 Provided that—

(i) where the employer requires a casual employee to
 perform the work of a class of employee for whom wages
 on a rising scale are prescribed, the expression "weekly
 wage" shall mean the weekly wage prescribed for a quali-
 fied employee of that class;

(ii) where the employer requires a casual employee to
 work for a period of not more than four consecutive hours
 on any day, his wage may be reduced by not more than
 50 per cent.

Bibliography

The following sources were used:

1. Newspaper accounts (Rand Daily Mail, Star, Post)
2. Interviews with management and drivers.
3. Evidence to the Industrial Court : In the matter between Lucky Mamaholo and Fourteen Others (applicants) and PUTCO (respondent). Case No. NH 12/3/4.
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MWASA - trying to set the deadlines

Media Study Group

The defeat of the recent national strike by members of the Media Workers' Association of South Africa (Mwasa) has valuable lessons for all labour-based organisations in this country.

Although it has been argued that Mwasa was the actual victor in the two-month struggle, at best it achieved no more than a moral victory: the Union is in a far weaker position than at the start of the strike, its leading activists (in the Transvaal and Natal) have been banned, and the country's two biggest black newspapers have been refused re-registration. In this article we have attempted to do no more than examine the problems arising from Mwasa's tactical and ideological positions during the strike.

We have distinguished between the strike by *Cape Herald* Mwasa members and workers, and the resultant national strike by Mwasa members. We have done this because the tactics adopted were markedly different, although the two strikes were seen by many as one and the same.

On the eve of the *Herald* strike on October 24, 1980, Mwasa, journalists and media workers generally were in a far stronger position in relation to their bosses than they had been for years.

- Two months previously, media workers at *Post* had won substantial pay improvements for journalists and non-journalists alike, after a week-long strike. Management was moving, however reluctantly, towards formal recognition of Mwasa on the Union's terms. This victory and the decision to transform from the black-journalists-only Wasa into the industry-wide Mwasa had sparked substantial support and interest from journalists and non-journalists in the media industry.

In addition, the Union felt confident enough of its strength to plan a conference in June (this year) of all unions organising black employees in the media industry, with a view to forming an umbrella union.

- The non-racial Southern African Society of Journalists had recently won substantial salary improvements for journalists in an arbitration that also enforced, for the first time, mandatory, across-the-board increases. The SASJ also successfully eliminated, through the arbitration, formal racial discrimination in job gradings for journalists. Since the arbitration, membership of the SASJ had increased and, for the first time, white journalists began to recognise their bargaining power.

- In April, 1980, Allied Publishing, the distribution wing of Argus and SA Associated Newspapers, granted formal recognition to the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) in response to threats of strike action by Allied workers (drivers and newspaper sellers). At the same time, it granted wage increases of between 30 and 60 percent to all workers.

With these successes as a background, representatives of workers at the *Cape Herald* set out demands for increased pay, on a scale similar to that achieved in August at *Post*, for journalists and non-journalists, and improved working conditions – an end to unpaid overtime etc. When these conditions were not met by the October 24 deadline, the Herald employees went out on strike in support of their demands, adding a third: that strikers should be paid for the duration of their strike. Within a week, the Herald strikers had been joined in a solidarity strike by Mwasas members throughout the country, while Argus managing director Hal Miller said he would not discuss the demands until the strikers were back at work.

Community support in the Western Cape seemed assured for the Herald strikers. The Western Cape Traders' Association asked its members not to stock the Herald or advertise in it. Within two weeks, Herald management – and the management of the Argus Company, which owns the Herald – agreed to meet the strikers. After lengthy negotiations, management agreed to meet the strikers' demands on pay (and in some cases to improve on the strikers' pay demands). They refused however to meet the demand for pay during the strike. But with their major demands more than satisfied, the Herald journalists and workers were willing to return to work.

In the meantime, Mwasas' national leadership, dominated by Johannesburg-based journalists, had added their own strike demands in addition to the demand that the Herald strike be resolved to the Cape strikers' satisfaction; Mwasas called for payment of *all* strikers, including the solidarity strikers, and a national recognition agreement between Mwasas and the employers. This placed the Herald strikers in an extremely difficult position. If they went back after winning a major labour victory, they would be accused – as they were – of strike-breaking in *their own* strike.

Despite this, the Herald strikers returned to work, recognising that to continue striking after their victory would have fragmented their unity (non-journalist strikers were keen to return once they had won their pay demands).

As Herald strikers wrote in *Grassroots* (December, 1980) after their return: "The Herald . . . learnt that to prolong a strike after winning the major pay victory, posed certain problems. To go for total victory was unrealistic, the continuing of the strike led to unity breaking down."

In the Eastern Cape, in line with the original Mwasas solidarity decision to strike until the Herald strikers' demands were met to their own satisfaction, Mwasas strikers returned to work a week later. In doing so they achieved their own minor victory: they had set a demand – the resolution of the Herald strike – and with

the achievement of that demand they returned to work on their own terms.

The rest of the Union, however, continued its strike, but now in persuance of its own demands.

These demands, for national recognition of Mwasas and pay while on strike for all strikers, including the sympathy strikers, remained the central issues throughout the remaining six weeks of the strike (although the entire episode was further complicated by the firing or suspension of all striking journalists, a move which forced the Herald and Eastern Cape branches out on strike again; this time in sympathy with the sympathy strikers).

These demands and, more particularly, the methods adopted by Mwasas in its attempt to enforce them, demonstrate clearly why the strike failed (and the incorrectness of Mwasas's ideology and the shortcomings of its tactics).

There were clear indications before the strike that managements of the various newspapers were prepared to negotiate with Mwasas. During the wage negotiations between the SASJ and managements before the SASJ's arbitration victory, managements had agreed to Mwasas taking half the journalists' seats in the joint journalists-management conciliation board.

In addition, Post management had agreed to discuss the negotiation process with Mwasas after the August Post strike.

The Herald strikers' victory finally demonstrated that management would negotiate with the Union.

Although on the face of it, national recognition was the most important of the sympathy strikers' demands, it was in fact practically a non-issue.

It was against the remaining demand, that of pay while on strike, that management fought hardest. Mwasas argued that management stubbornness had forced its members out on strike, therefore the managements, not the strikers should pay for the lost time.

There is no question that Mwasas was right: management intransigence over the Herald journalists' and workers' pay had forced employees out on strike to achieve their demands. But the same holds true for all strikes — workers down tools because it is the only way they can force their bosses to take heed of their grievances. Strikes are won or lost with the resolution of those grievances. *Acknowledgement* by the bosses — in the form of pay for lost time — that they were wrong to have created the grievances may be emotionally soothing, but has little to do with victory in the strike. *Yet Mwasas stayed out for six weeks on the basis of one non-negotiable demand; that newspaper managements do just that.* And having made this a non-negotiable demand, Mwasas turned a substantial victory into a resounding defeat in which its members had to return to their desks, with their "non-negotiable" unmet.

Mwasas used the "non-negotiable" paid-strike issue as a test of its strength in the newspapers, and of the community support it could generate against the newspapers. To have won, as Mwasas leadership in the Transvaal clearly believed inevit-

able – waverers among its members were again and again assured that “victory is certain” – would have dramatically strengthened Mwasas bargaining power in the achievement of its main aim: increased control of the media. But it massively overplayed its hand: its 200-odd members were able to hurt newspaper profits only at *Post*. Extra editions continued to appear, often with the support of trade unions and community organisations which Mwasas had considered as allies. And because of the contradictions inherent in supporting a boycott of the very medium many organisations relied on to popularise and generate support for their struggles, Mwasas newspaper boycott/news blackout call in the black communities met at best with reluctant support, and at worst with active opposition (see below).

With its black consciousness, racial interpretation of the struggle in South Africa, Mwasas saw itself as an integral part of a heterogeneous black community with the same aspirations and interests. As the logical mouthpiece of this community, it saw its struggle as one for greater participation in editorial decision-making processes and for affirmative action in black journalistic employment. It also sought to promote greater participation by this community – “the people” – in the struggle for one of South Africa’s ideological apparatuses, the press.

Because it saw itself as struggling *on behalf* of the community, Mwasas expected immediate and automatic support from this community after it made the call for a newspaper boycott/news blackout. The failure of these calls to generate the expected support – which would have seriously damaged the press, reliant as it is on high readership figures for advertising sales – came from Mwasas failure to recognise that community boycotts need to have clearly-defined, achievable aims, and need to be rooted in the daily realities of the communities.

As a result, Mwasas was faced with the problem of attempting to popularise what was essentially a struggle over a *moral principle*, strike pay.

In addition, Mwasas call for a boycott placed trade unions and community organisations in the dilemma of having to act against their own interests to support the boycott. To go against Mwasas call would be to open themselves up to being labelled strike-breakers – as they were. But to back the boycott would mean cutting off their access to the media, on which many relied to popularise and generate support for their own struggles.

To have supported the boycott would have meant, to some extent, suspending their own struggles until Mwasas had won its battle. And such a sacrifice on behalf of a financially more privileged group would have been a bitter pill for many. The result was that during the strike, when organisations did make public statements in support of Mwasas – and many did not – they, for the most part, significantly failed to mention their attitude to the boycott. Examples of this were Cosas and the SA Allied Workers’ Union.

SAAWU, in addition, publically criticised Mwasas racial exclusivity, as did the Natal Indian Congress – which, along with the SA Council of Sport, publically opposed a media boycott or news blackout.

Besides being generally detrimental to community and working-class struggles, Mwasas call for a blackout was self-destructive. Without the organisational framework or community base to publicise its call, and because Mwasas itself was boycotting the media – with the exception of the foreign press, *The Voice* and Buphutatswana's Channel 702 – the Union was in the contradictory position of being able to spread its call only with the widespread publicity the "boycotted" media could have given it.

One exception to this was in the areas surrounding Pietersburg, where Azapo (Mwasas only unconditional supporter) has a strong, well-organised community base and was able, without the media to popularise the boycott/blackout call.

The result was that, although *Post* was closed, its opposition publications, particularly the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Soweto News* picked up circulation. *Post* was also adversely affected financially through its loss in advertising. But with SAAN (owners of the *RDM* and *Soweto News*) and *Argus* having extensive joint holdings and a virtual monopoly of the English-language press, the closure of *Post* therefore had little effect.

Earlier examples of the potential success of similar boycott strategies are the boycotts generated by strikes in the Cape meat industry and at Fattis and Monis in Cape Town. These two groups of workers and their unions were able successfully to challenge their employers' oppressive and exploitative labour practices with the help of extensive community support. But this was only possible with the establishment of broadly-based support groups in the major centres, which (rather than assume, as Mwasas did, that spontaneous support would come from a supposedly heterogeneous black community of common interest) worked energetically to popularise the boycott calls and to mobilise community support around them.

Mwasas BC philosophy also led it to actively reject the support of its most logical allies – other journalists of whatever race. In the initial stages of the national strike, SASJ chapels (local union branches) throughout the country expressed strong support for the strikers, many of them agreeing to refuse to participate in the production of extra editions. Some organised financial backing for the strikers.

But, particularly in the Transvaal, with the active rejection by Mwasas of any "white" solidarity or assistance, much of this solidarity collapsed, and progressive journalists in the SASJ lost much of the ground they have gained in the Union over the past two years.

The SASJ has always been ambivalent towards Mwasas and its predecessors, Wasas and the banned Union of Black Journalists, all of which adopted a militant BC philosophy. But with a change of leadership in 1979, progressive white journalists were able to establish a cordial working relationship with black journalists.

Despite strong conservative opposition, within the Union, the SASJ managed to gain sufficient support for its pro-Mwasas position to enable it to offer half its seats in the 1979 conciliation board (see above) to Mwasas, despite the fact that

the SASJ represent 700 journalists, compared to Mwasa's 200 (at that time).

With Mwasa's extremely hostile response to SASJ solidarity during the strike, the initiative was lost to conservatives in the organisation. Despite this, 15 white journalists in Johannesburg actually took part in a one-day solidarity strike and – like their black fellow-strikers – were suspended.

In summary then, Mwasa lost its strike for these reasons:

- It attempted to develop a short-term pay strike (at the Herald) into a national campaign in support of *long-term* demands.
- It failed to recognise that these long-term demands were unachievable *at this stage*, but declared that its members would not return to work until these demands were met.
- By viewing an industrial dispute in purely racial terms, it actively excluded potential allies.
- It failed to recognise the contradictions inherent in attempting to mobilise community support around its particular demands, with the result that its boycott/blackout call met with little support.

In addition, Mwasa erred in its failure to recognise that expanding the Herald strike into a national strike over broader issues would attract the wrath not only of management, but also of the state.

The Union did not recognise that in attempting to stop the production and sale of newspapers, they were not merely trying to stop the sale and production of a commodity, but of a commodity which served the dual purpose of generating profit and of perpetuating the dominant ideology in South Africa.

Newspapers in capitalist society which aim at commercial success – through advertising revenue, as is the case with all South African newspapers – must support the economic status quo, or risk self-destruction. Any attempt to subvert this support would clearly attract the attention of a state apparatus traditionally highly sensitive about the role of the media.

Although *Post's* survival was possibly in doubt anyway, it is not without significance that the actions of the state and the Argus bosses, intentionally or otherwise, had the joint effect – through bannings, dismissals and the relocation of staff at *Post*, now *Sowetan*, – of severely weakening the Union and of ensuring a far tamer newspaper.

Allied Publishing - Round Two

Alan Fine

The strike of the Allied Publishing workers in the Transvaal which took place from 21–24 November, received wide publicity and generated much discussion. Due to various misunderstandings and to certain misleading statements from a number of quarters during and after the strike, certain misconceptions arose with regard to the strike. This memorandum is an attempt to clarify the events which took place leading up to, during and following the strike.

After Allied workers had organised themselves into the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) during mid 1978, a lengthy struggle to gain recognition of the Union by the Company ensued. On a number of occasions the struggle brought Allied Workers to the verge of strike action. Eventually on the 10th April, 1980 an agreement was reached which led to substantial wage increases for Allied Workers plus recognition of the Union and the introduction of a shop steward system (See SALB Vol. 5 No.8 and WIP 12 of 1980)

The discontent amongst the Allied Workers built up after the Company's Johannesburg Area Manager began to treat workers in an abusive and belligerent manner. Matters came to a head 10 days before the strike, when this Area Manager dismissed three workers in a manner which their colleagues considered to be unfair. In addition, he allegedly assaulted one of those workers while in the process of dismissing him. The shop stewards at the Branch where these dismissals occurred met to discuss what action they should take. They eventually decided that the matter should be discussed with the other shop stewards at a meeting on the 19th November which management had called to discuss driver training. The response of the Depot shop stewards was not to condone possible misdemeanours by Union members, but to object to instant dismissals being carried out without their knowledge. They had attempted to discuss the matter with the Area Manager, but he had chased them away. Furthermore, the CCAWUSA General Secretary, Ms Emma Mashinini, had contacted the Area Manager's superiors, he, however, had supported the action taken.

When the Depot shop stewards met with other Allied Worker leaders to discuss the issue, the entire group decided that they should boycott management's meeting and instead proceed to the Union offices to hold their own meeting. Here the shop stewards decided that given management's uncooperative attitude they should go on strike as from the following Friday. Their main demands were:—

1. The reinstatement of the three dismissed workers.

2. The removal by promotion, demotion, transfer or anything else of the Area Manager to a position where he would no longer have any contact with or any authority over Allied Publishing's black workers.
3. The renegotiation of the grievance procedure which had recently been signed by the Parties. It was felt that this was necessary because the Company had not acted within the spirit of the agreement and it was clear that a number of new safeguards for the workers would have to be written in.

In addition, members of the Media Worker's Association of S.A. (MWASA) who were on strike had been holding their own meeting at the premises of "Post" newspaper and got word of what was happening. They sent some representatives to the Allied shop stewards meeting and asked for permission to address the workers. This was granted, and thereafter the shop stewards agreed to add to their list of demands that they were in sympathy with the MWASA strikers and that their grievances should be settled speedily. During the previous weeks, some Allied Publishing workers, especially those who worked in the black townships, had, in fact, come under pressure from some members of their community who felt it was not right that newspapers were being sold while the journalists were on strike.

During the course of the shop stewards meeting a phone call was received from Management saying that the three dismissed workers would be reinstated, but suspended from duty with full pay. However, at this stage this was felt to be an unsatisfactory solution especially given the alleged assaults by the Area Manager.

The following day was spent by shop stewards informing their colleagues of the decision which had been taken.

On the morning of Thursday 20th, after receiving a letter explaining the workers' demands, the Managing Director of Allied Publishing, telephoned Ms Mashinini and invited her to meet with him that day, to discuss the problem of the Area Manager. When she consulted with the shop stewards about this offer they said that she should not go since it was the prerogative of Management to remove the Area Manager, and this could be done without any discussion with Union officials.

Early on the Friday morning the strike began. It involved approximately 1700—1800 workers. As far as can be ascertained, the only workers who did not join the strike were three at the Pretoria depot and a few at the Edenvale depot. Such was the degree of organisation.

On the morning of Friday 21st, approximately 80 shop stewards met with the workers employed at the main Allied depot in Booyens, where the Company's Head Office is situated. Also present were a number of Union Officials and Executive Committee Members. Several rounds of talks between the shop stewards and officials and management did not lead to the resolution of the dispute. Management agreed to one demand only; the renegotiation of the grievance procedure. Apart from that, they agreed only to reinvestigate the dismissals and to look into the question of the Area Manager's conduct, with the possibility of participation

by Worker Representatives. Management also stated that they had no standing in the MWASA dispute (despite the fact that some Directors of Argus and S.A.A.N. are also Directors of Allied Publishing).

Then the results of the talks were reported back to the several hundred workers gathered at the depot, they were unanimous that the strike should continue. The shop stewards met again at the Union Offices on Saturday 22nd and decided that their demands should stand and that the strike should continue at least until Monday when Management would be asked to reconsider their uncompromising stand.

In the meantime management had been employing highly-paid scab labour to ensure the distribution of the newspapers. These included the clerical staff of some of the newspapers. In addition, armed white men were seen driving and being transported in Allied Publishing vehicles. Despite these efforts, the circulation of newspapers suffered severely during the four days of the strike. Another group of people that management tried to employ as scab labour were students at the University of the Witwatersrand. To their credit, however, members of the Students Representative Council refused to allow Allied to advertise for labour on the University premises.

On Monday morning the 24th, the Workers, shop stewards and Union officials again met at the Booyens depot. On arrival, the workers were handed letters from management saying that they would be dismissed if they did not return to work the following day. Upon hearing this, a small group of representatives went to management to hold talks. Mr Mitchell refused to talk to them. Apparently the matter had been taken out of his hands and was now in the hands of the Board of Directors. Communication was then conducted through the Transvaal Provincial Manager directly with the Chairman of the Company Mr H.W. Miller who is also a Director of Argus. Mr Miller refused to consider the unconditional reinstatement of the three workers and the immediate removal of the Area Manager. Assurances were made though, that upon the ending of the strike the promised investigations *would* take place with the participation of the shop stewards and Union officials.

This was reported back to the workers gathered at the depot. The meeting now included large numbers of Allied workers from other areas. After discussion they decided that given these developments i.e. threat of dismissal plus Mr Miller's undertaking, they would return to work the following day.

After the Strike

Since the strike the relationship between the Union and the Company has been very strained, and not all undertakings made during the strike have been adhered to. The workers main grievance has been resolved, although not in the way that was originally planned. While evidence against the Area Manager was still being collected by the Union for the investigation, workers reported that they had heard

rumours of his likely departure from the Company in the near future. This was confirmed in a letter to the Union from Allied management on the 9th December which stated that the Area Manager “. . . had accepted an appointment in Durban. He leaves our employ on December 15th”.

There was much jubilation amongst the workers upon hearing that the rumour had been confirmed and any small doubts about the wisdom of the strike which may have existed were now totally dispelled.

However, the other aspect of the settlement has not yet been satisfactorily resolved. The following are extracts from a sworn statement made by one of the dismissed workers, Mr Norman Matshikiri, which explain the way in which management has conducted some of its affairs since the strike:—

“On the 25th November, the day the Allied workers returned to work after the strike, I also went back and reported to my complex manager. He told me that he did not want me to work for him. I then went to Head Office and met Mr Sithole, the Personnel Officer. Mr Sithole asked me to make a statement, but I refused to do so because I wanted the Union to be present. Mr Webster, the Assistant Provincial Manager then walked in to Mr Sithole’s office. Mr Sithole told him who I was and that I had refused to make a statement without the Union’s presence. Mr Webster invited me to his office and asked me why I was refusing to make a statement. I again explained that I wanted a Union official to be present while I was making a statement, because my case had already been reported to the Union.

Mr Webster then asked me to sign a piece of paper which he had written during our discussion, but I refused to do this. Mr Webster then said he was telephoning Mr Nemaakande the Venda Consul in charge of contract workers to ask him to talk to me. I refused to talk to Mr Nemaakande and again said I would only do these things if a Union official was present. Mr Webster then said he was phoning Ms Mashinini. He said to Ms Mashinini over the phone that I was refusing to give a statement. He told me that Ms Mashinini said I should give a statement. I still refused, and he then said that she had said I should be brought to her. I agreed to this. But Mr Webster then seemed reluctant to take me. I then said that I was hungry and without any money and that I was going to the Union and that Mr Webster could find me there later.

He then gave me R5,00 and said I should not worry about my job or money. I would have all that if I gave a short statement, and he also repeated that Ms Mashinini had said that I *should* give a short statement. Because he assured me that Ms Mashinini had said this I did give a short statement. The statement dealt with Mr Ndluli’s accusation that I had carried unauthorised passengers in my vehicle.”

The above should be read together with the following sworn statement made

by Ms. Mashinini:—

“I deny having received a telephone call from Mr Webster, Assistant Provincial Manager of Allied Publishing Limited on the 25th November, 1980, dealing with the case of Mr Norman Matshikiri. I did not receive such a telephone call and therefore could not have asked Mr Webster to tell Mr Matshikiri to give a statement.”

Continuing with Mr Matshikiri's sworn statement:—

“However, I did not *sign* this statement because I still wanted a Union official present. On that day and the next two days, the 26th and the 27th November, I was kept in Mr Webster's and Mr Wilson's offices and they also accompanied me from one office to another and also around the complex. I also almost always sleep at the Booyens checkpoint and did so those nights.

They were trying to be friendly to me. They kept on asking me, in a friendly way, about the Union and about my case. They wrote down my answers and many times asked me to sign what they had written. I did not sign any of these papers.

The hearing for my case was held on Friday 28th November. The previous day at about 3.30p.m. I had been told to attend and to bring shop stewards with me. I said I would not invite any unless the Union was also invited. I had not had an opportunity to go to the Union because ever since the previous Tuesday I had not been let out of the sight of Mr Wilson or Mr Webster during office hours. They had even accompanied me to the toilet. Mr Wilson then said that management would invite the shop stewards and the Union. I agreed to that because I would be satisfied if the Union was present.

On Friday 28th November the hearing was due to start at 9.30a.m. At 7.30a.m. I went to the checkpoint gate and waited for the Union officials and shop stewards to arrive. I saw a group of people from Albert Street, including Mr Ndluli, Mr. Moketsi, Mr Lenosi and Mr Lukoto, arrive. I also saw some Head Office management arrive. I remained outside, although it was past 9.30 a.m., because I was still awaiting the Union officials and other shop stewards. At about 9.45 a.m. Mr Webster came to me and said “the people have arrived” and that I should go to the offices with him.

I wanted to be certain that the people I wanted were present so I went into Mr Sithole's office and asked him. Mr Sithole said he didn't know because he had not been upstairs yet. Then Mr Webster walked in and told me to come upstairs with him.

I went with him upstairs and into the boardroom. I did not see the Union officials and shop stewards. As they were telling me about the procedure for the hearing through an interpreter I asked where were the shop stewards and Union

officials. Mr Wilson said that he had not invited them as he had promised. He asked me why I needed them because Mr Moketsi and Mr Lukoto were present. When I heard this I stood up to walk out, but Mr Wilson stopped me at the door and made me sit down again. I was then forced, against my will, to take part in the hearing. What surprised me is that during the hearing the accusation about me carrying unauthorised passengers in my vehicle was hardly discussed. Instead they discussed other matters, such as shortages, and also theft of which I had never heard before. Before this meeting in the boardroom I had never heard about any accusation that I am supposed to have stolen from a cafe. When I asked for proof of this, Mr Lenosi said he did not have any in writing. Mr Wilson also asked Mr Lenosi the same question. Mr Lenosi replied that he had given a verbal warning to me about the alleged theft. I denied ever having received any such warning. I was very angry because they had raised matters which I had not expected, and felt that the hearing was not being held in a fair way. The two shop stewards refused to comment when asked whether they were satisfied with the conduct of the hearing and with the decision to dismiss me.”

At the hearing management decided that Mr Matshikiri was in fact, guilty of an offence and he was dismissed.

As far as the other two dismissed workers are concerned, the one did not report at all to the hearing called for him, and was dismissed. It appears that he no longer wishes to be employed by the Company. The other worker attended the hearing and thereafter was also dismissed. The Union intends to follow-up these cases at a meeting with management to be held during February. The Union was not invited to attend these latter two hearings.

Conclusion:

While the striking workers' demands were not fully met, this strike can nevertheless be seen as significant. Firstly, the Area Manager whom the workers had come to dislike is no longer employed by the Company. In fact, rumour has it that he had tendered his resignation while the strike was in progress, but was persuaded by management to withdraw it at that stage, as they did not wish to give the workers the impression that their strike had scored them a victory.

Secondly as the Union said in a Press statement after the strike:—

“The strike has shown management that the days when Black workers can be assaulted, abused and fired without reacting are long gone. The strike has shown that an assault on one worker is regarded as an assault on all. The strike also demonstrated the loyalty of the workers to the Union and to each other.”

That this reflects the views of the workers is further proven by the fact that in the week following the strike approximately 50 Allied employees who were not yet members of the Union signed up.

The degree of organisation and discipline which existed amongst the strikers was one of the most impressive features of the strike. As has been mentioned, fewer than 10 of the approximately 1 700 employees refused to join the strike, and, contrary to claims by management, only one worker returned to work before the strike was officially ended.

Another interesting development is that in contrast to management's recent curt and hostile attitudes to the Union, they have tried to treat the workers in an unusually kind manner. 1980 Christmas bonuses were double those of 1979 (which more than made up for wage losses during the strike) and in addition workers were treated to lavish picnics and Christmas parties.

Workers are quite aware, though, that these actions by the Company are not disconnected with their recent strike and strong organisation within the Union.

South African Sugar Mill Labour during the 1970's

David Lincoln

During the last decade the material conditions for labour in South Africa's sugar mills have undergone significant changes. The concessions afforded to workers in South African mills have formed a part of the efforts of the milling companies to rationalize in the face of deteriorating conditions for the accumulation of capital in sugar production. Notable features of this rationalization process were the centralization of ownership and production; technological developments and appropriate worker training; and programmes of investment diversification and expansion of output. By examining these aspects of the rationalisation process it is possible to build up a picture of the context in which organized labour has operated.

Changing Conditions for Labour

It is pertinent to introduce this brief outline of changing conditions for labour by remarking that the work-force in sugar mills constitutes a diversified grouping of workers. The majority, who are Africans and migrant, are mainly employed as unskilled labourers. Indian and white workers, on the other hand, are generally engaged as semi-skilled or skilled workers. Whereas Africans are usually accommodated and fed as seasonal contract workers in compounds for single men or, in some cases, in married workers' quarters, and have their economic fortunes determined in large measure by their actual or supposed recourse to the Reserve economies, the Indian and white workers are permanently resident with their families in company houses in the vicinity of the sugar mill. Certain of these structural features are being eroded, but now only a small proportion of sugar mill workers are free workers, proletarianized in the pure sense of the term. This has practical implications which go beyond the realm of abstract conceptualization. The cleavages among these workers on "ethnic" and material grounds, fostered by the state, have prevented the growth of a pervasive and cohesive consciousness among workers. Therefore, despite their common class position, workers have responded as a dismembered group to the differential policies applied by capital to the various component elements of the work-force.

Wage rates for sugar mill workers are ostensibly determined on the basis of skill

rather than "ethnicity", and until 1979 Rates 1 to 12 were stipulated by the Industrial Council for the Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Industry for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, while Rates 13 to 16 applied to skilled workers. During the period under review, wages were first increased in April 1972,² with further revisions following the worker strikes in Natal in 1973. Although the strikes did not directly affect the sugar mills, under a new Industrial Council agreement made immediately after the strikes, it was proposed that unskilled and semi-skilled workers would get a 50% increase in minimum wages over three years from 1 May 1973.³ This agreement was reached between the Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employers' Association and a number of workers' representatives, namely the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the South African Electrical Workers' Association, the Sugar Industry Employee's Association (all three being white unions, the last one having a membership of 32 refinery workers), the Natal Sugar Industry Employees' Union (an Indian and "coloured" union),⁴ and Department of Labour "representation" for African workers. The characteristic suppression of African labour organizations by the state, and statutory exclusion of Africans from Industrial Councils was only eased, and marginally so, in 1976.

Beset by extensive cane fires (mainly unintentional, but caused recurrently as acts of worker sabotage) and drought during the 1974/75 season, sugar producers were further rocked by confrontations with labour late in 1974. In mid-October that year about 800 black workers at the Felixton mill struck after management had curtailed their private beer brewing. Armed police and riot vehicles stood by until the strike had been broken and work was resumed.⁵ Less than a fortnight after the Felixton strike, over 600 black workers struck at the Empangeni mill. Police broke this strike within two days. Tear gas and dogs were used to disperse congregated strikers who were routed from their compound.⁶ A few weeks later, on 14 November 1974, over 500 workers struck for higher wages at the Darnall mill. White women and school students in the village of Darnall were sent to the white staff's recreation hall guarded by police. The strike was broken and production resumed after an ultimatum by management that workers should return to work or face dismissal.⁷ Two days later, about 200 workers struck for higher wages at the Melville mill. Again, clashes with armed police broke the strike after strikers who refused to return to work were threatened with immediate dismissal.⁸

Adverse conditions for capital in sugar production were exacerbated when gold mining companies increased black miners' wages on 1 December 1974. This increase was critical for sugar producers because the mining companies were expanding their recruiting in source areas for sugar industry labour.⁹ The immediate response was to raise field workers' wages.¹⁰ In May 1975 the minimum wage for unskilled mill workers was raised to R59,80 a month, while artisans received a minimum wage of R225,90 a month with shift allowance, plus holiday bonuses not paid to less skilled workers.¹¹

In April 1976 worker representation on the Industrial Council took on a new

form. Under provisions made by the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act as amended in 1973, the liaison and works committees which already existed in the refinery and sugar mills nominated six non-voting black delegates to the Industrial Council.¹² If they have no voice through Department of Labour representatives, black workers had little more power on the Industrial Council following this display of apparent magnanimity by the state. An analyst of collective bargaining procedure sanctioned by sugar industry managers at the time of this pragmatic statutory change, has remarked appositely that these new African delegates were not legitimized worker representatives, and that workers remained subject to a coercive structure of authority in the formulation of Industrial Council "agreements".¹³ The newly constituted Council approved further wage increases for all workers which would be effective from 1 October 1976. Minimum wages were raised to R76,74 a month, with workers paid on Rates 1 to 12 scheduled to receive a further 10% on 1 April and 5% on 1 October in each of the next two years. For the first time these unskilled and semi-skilled workers were to receive an annual December bonus. Initially this bonus would be 2,5% of the basic annual wage, and 5% from December 1977. In addition, these workers were to have their annual two-week leave increased to three weeks after completing five, as opposed to ten years service. A common 7,5% shift allowance for all workers was to be introduced on 1 April 1977, and workers paid on Rates 13 to 16 were to receive an increased call-out allowance.¹⁴

In September 1979 the Industrial Council arrived at another agreement concerning wages and service conditions which would be operative until 31 March 1981. The Council now had as party to its decisions the "mixed" South African Boilermakers, Iron and Steel Workers, Shipbuilders, and Welders Society. The entry of this newcomer, with white, "coloured", and Indian members, still did nothing to establish direct and representative participation by African workers on the Council. This latest agreement was based on a revision of the system of grading wage rates. Henceforth, wages would be determined according to occupational Grades A1 to A3, requiring the least skills; B1 to B5 Grades for occupations requiring certain skills; and C1 to C3 Grades for qualified skilled artisans. The minimum monthly wage was stipulated as R110,63, to be increased to R121,59 from 1 April 1980. A 7½% shift allowance was now payable to workers at all grades. This apparent advance towards "de-racialization" was offset by disproportionate bonus and leave conditions applicable to the various strata of workers. The annual bonus for workers on Grades A1 to B5 was set at 5%, and for skilled workers on Grades C1 to C3 at 10% of annual salary. Annual leave conditions were also reviewed, but with more advantages for skilled workers.¹⁵

Aside from the limited impact which the 1973 strikes made on wages, owners and managers reacted pragmatically to further developments within the sugar milling industry. Their reaction (superficially a progressive trend amongst the milling companies) was accompanied by a growing awareness of the necessity for

maintaining cordial relations with emergent worker organizations. This sensitivity was demonstrated when the Industrial Relations Manager of the Huletts Group observed that

. . . . the unionsation of Blacks is inevitable — it is just a question of what form it will take. As unions are soon to become a permanent part of industrial life, let us accept them with good grace and learn to live in harmony with them.¹⁶

Centralization of Ownership and Production

After the initial proliferation of sugar mills in Natal during the late 1800's, rationalization and technological modernization specific to capitalist development in the colony led to the culling of smaller and more obsolete mills. Fewer centralized mills then operated with greater productive capacities. More factories were erected after 1905 when Sir J L Hulett submitted the successful tender for the construction of sugar mills in Zululand. While new sugar cane growing areas have been exploited and a few new factories built since the turn of the century, the trend has been towards centralization and elimination of peripheral mills. Centralization of production has generally been preceded by the centralization of control and ownership in the hands of a few companies which have absorbed the smaller milling companies.

The complex development of contemporary structures of ownership may be briefly traced from 1950, when the Reynolds, Crooke, Saunders, Smith, Hulett, and other families exercised control over sugar milling. These family groups descended from the most prominent owners in the nascent industry, and in 1950 they owned, either individually or jointly, most of the eighteen mills then operating in Natal's narrow coastal belt north and south of Durban. In 1952 Reynolds Bros' Esparanza mill on the Natal south coast was relocated to Pongola, eastern Transvaal, where it began production in 1954. In 1962 the Hulett family lost direct control over their empire, without any alteration to existing milling operations. The Gledhow-Chaka's Kraal Sugar Co closed its Chaka's Kraal mill in 1961 and was reconstituted as the Gledhow Sugar Co in 1964. During 1964 Illovo Sugar estates, which already had one mill, bought both the Doornkop mill (the major shareholder until then had been General Mining and Finance) and the Noodsberg Sugar Co, which built a mill at Jaagbaan in the Natal midlands. In 1966 another mill opened in the midlands at Dalton, under the ownership and control of the Union Co-op Bark and Sugar Co, and the Malelane mill in the Transvaal lowveld came into production. The Malelane mill is owned by the Transvaalse Suikerkorporasie in which Volkskas has a 60% stake and General Mining the balance. The Noodsberg, Dalton, and Malelane mills, as well as the reconstructed Pongola mill were established in new sugar cane growing regions. Thus by 1970 the number of mills had increased to twenty, three more than in 1950.

In 1970 Tate and Lyle, the British-based multi-national sugar company, acquired

a 49,25% share of Illovo Sugar Estates. Through a merger in 1975 with Reynolds Bros (which owned Umzimkulu Sugar Co, by then, and which had bought the Gledhow Sugar Co, and Crookes Bros sugar mills), C G Smith came to control seven mills. One of these, at Doornkop, was simultaneously sold to Hulett's which closed it down, as it was interested only in the milling rights involved. C G Smith's Renishaw mill was also closed in 1976 and in 1977 this company bought the controlling share in Illovo formerly held by Tate and Lyle.¹⁷ In 1978 the Melville mill (originally owned by Stafford Mayer who relinquished control to S A Board Mills, in turn acquired by Anglo American Industrial Corp. in 1974) was bought jointly by Tongaat and C G Smith and closed, with cane diverted to two of their other mills. There are now seventeen mills in operation. While C G Smith owns six mills directly; Hulett's five mills and its Rossburgh refinery; and Tongaat one mill each, C G Smith and Tongaat jointly control Hulett's.¹⁸

Although on the face of it, the Smith-Tongaat consortium would appear to have ultimate control over the bulk of sugar milling in South Africa, negotiations begun late in 1979 have culminated with the acquisition by Barlow Rand Limited of 84% of voting rights in C G Smith.¹⁹ While C G Smith and Tongaat have equitable control over Hulett's, C G Smith derives 2/3 of Hulett's income and 1/3 goes to Tongaat. Because Anglo American has a one-fifth interest in Tongaat, making it the largest single shareholder, the struggle for ownership of the sugar companies is, in the final analysis, between Barlows and Anglo American. The influence of pioneer families however has not been completely eliminated, but is a diminishing force, subordinated to two of southern Africa's primary industrial powers.

Centralization of production has a bearing on labour which should be self-evident: the closure of mills means a cut-back in labour requirements of the companies concerned. A few data serve to illustrate some of the effects of closures on labour during the 1970's. When the Doornkop mill was closed at the end of January 1975, about 350 workers were affected. Although some workers were transferred, others were given severance and compensatory pay and allowed to remain in company houses for three months, until the end of the normal milling season.²⁰ Before the closure of the Renishaw mill at the end of the 1975/76 season, all white workers were offered alternative employment. Of the 95 Indian workers at the mill, 25 had fewer than four years of service and 10 were due to retire, and the company sought only to find alternative employment for the others. Those who did not want to be transferred and those for whom jobs were not found were paid, and allowed to remain in company houses, for three months. Before their dismissal about 200 African migrant workers were paid a gratuity for each season they had worked at the Renishaw mill.²¹ Finally, when the Melville mill stopped production about 125 workers were directly affected (28 white and about 100 African and Indian workers).²²

Technology and Training

The modernization of South Africa's sugar technology has been rapid in the ambit of global sugar production. Whatever the repressive conditions in South African mills, from the outset labour has been exchanged for wages. As a result, local sugar production achieved competitive status on the international market without indulging in slavery *per se*. The virtually synonymous association of slavery with sugar production in the early sugar producing regions – Cuba and the West Indies, Mauritius, Madeira, southern colonies in America, etc – is remarkable, and the observation by the Cuban historian Moreno Fraginals emphasizes the character of the relationship: In the mid-eighteenth century, he writes,

The production process posed few problems from a technical standpoint. Hardly any machinery existed in the mills In fact, the only real problem was labor. The number of slaves decided the volume of production The growth of sugar manufacturing was determined by the ability to employ labor on a grand scale. In other words, *sugar development depended on the slave trade*.²³

This dependence of sugar manufacture on slavery had as its corollary the impediment which slavery imposed on technological development. So long as slavery persisted, argues Moreno Fraginals, so long was mechanization retarded. With the elimination of this constraint through the abolition of slavery and consequent proletarianization of labour in sugar, Cuba and other sugar producers were poised to mechanize in the wake of the metropolitan industrial revolution.

Sugar milling in Natal, however, developed without having to transform its labour from slaves to rural proletariat. This advantage was enhanced by the relatively late entry of Natal into sugar production which permitted local millers to draw from the already considerable technological experience accumulated by millers elsewhere. Of course, this advantage should not seem to imply that the local industry possessed modern manufacturing techniques from its inception: on the contrary, local sugar mills evolved in a similar way to those abroad; with hand- or animal-powered crushers pre-dating mechanical milling and processing. What is of significance is that this technological evolution was rapid, with the capital/labour ratio in sugar milling rising (given the added impetus of adequate local capital) over a relatively short period.

Modernisation, however, is dependent on more than the availability of sufficient capital; its success hinges on the capacity of the industry to attract and train technologists.

Scientific competence in the South African milling industry derives from an indigenous source as well as from strong links with other sugar producing countries. Locally trained engineers and chemists are perhaps numerically predominant in the South African mills, but the steady stream of Mauritian technologists and, to a lesser extent, Dutch technologists from Indonesia, has always brought with it a wealth of expertise. In a few instances, capitalists such as Sir J L Hulett personally recruited sugar technologists from Mauritius to establish and manage mills in

South Africa. More recently specialised training has been re-instituted by the Sugar Milling Research Institute to prepare South African technologists.

As a revival of a pre-war programme, since 1964 white males have been accepted by the Sugar Milling Research Institute as trainee sugar technologists who receive a diploma after a three-year course. The inability to attract sufficient whites forced a revision of the scheme so as to offer courses also to Indian students. Thus, from 1978 white students have enrolled for a three-year diploma course and Indian students for a two-year certificate course, and they could presumably be offered different positions in mills on the basis of this differential training. The South African Sugar Millers' Association has also contributed R150 000 to Anglo American Corporation's Umlazi Training Centre which will train African sugar technologists, *inter alia*. The first course at this institution will commence in 1981 with ten African students.²⁴

Technological transformations are being replicated in the training of mill workers, and as the traditional boundaries in South African industry become blurred there will be a growing preponderance of skilled black workers in sugar mills. Initially organized as a training school for white artisans, the South African Sugar Industry Industrial Training Centre at Mount Edgecombe has begun taking on Indian and African students training for a variety of trades. In mid-1979 the Centre had on its books 79 white, 120 Indian, 17 'coloured', and 52 African trainees, most of them preparing to enter the sugar industry as skilled or semi-skilled artisans (31 of the 268 students came from companies not engaged in sugar production).²⁵

Diversification and Expansion

In contrast to many other sugar producing regions, the sugar is manufactured in South Africa under conditions of national economic diversity. Thus, the South African sugar industry has been spared the social and political pressures for diversification as experienced in the West Indies, for example. Here Jamaican academics in 1968 confronted the government and sugar companies over the stranglehold which Tate and Lyle had on their monocultural economy. At the time Tate and Lyle marketed the entire sugar crop of Jamaica and Trinidad, while sugar exports were carried by two shipping lines, one of them a subsidiary of Tate and Lyle's. The company virtually controlled sugar refining in Britain, so that it was able to sell refined sugar in this country at over 50% more than the price paid to the West Indies for unrefined sugar.²⁶ Clearly diversification implies more than attempting to reduce dependence on a single crop. It can also relate to a struggle against monopolistic corporate control over an economy; implying a struggle against the state, which acts as a functionary of multinational corporations in this respect.

South African sugar milling companies have been engaged in the production of commodities other than sugar for a number of decades now. The various areas in which the three largest companies have acquired controlling interests are too numerous to list here, but what is evident is this pattern of diversification is that capital derived in sugar production is being spread over a wider surface without in any way diminishing interest in sugar milling. In the South African instance then, sugar production does not create structures of dependency as portrayed above

and diversification emanates not from the lobbying of dependants of the industry but from the specific requirements of capital in sugar.

The 1973 Natal strikes have already been referred to. The first industrial plant affected was Coronation (brick and tile manufacturer), where 1 500 struck for higher wages. Although their demands were not met, with management arguing that wages were constrained by price control, workers were enticed back to work with minor increases.²⁷ That Coronation is a subsidiary of the Tongaat Group is of some significance. What can be inferred is that although sugar millers as a group have boasted of good and ever improving conditions of employment for their workers, they do not have a consistent disposition towards labour; production costs, including wages and other costs of labour power appear to be minimized differentially in each field of investment.

Diversification of investment interests in activities other than sugar production has not reflected attempts by the sugar companies to extricate themselves from their original commitment to sugar. Although there has been dissent for some years now over the state's control of the domestic sugar price, ideas of vast expansion of sugar production have been entertained by producers. While quotas and aid are being granted to KwaZulu farmers for small-scale sugar cane cultivation (which will stimulate cane growing without jeopardising the status of owners of existing plantations), more extensive expansion is envisaged in the eastern Transvaal and KwaZulu. Talk of new mills has recurred during the 1970's and C G Smith recently announced its intention of expanding its three south coast mills²⁸ and the Noodsberg mill.²⁹

Discussion

The 1970's have been critical years for capital in sugar. Compelled as it is to satisfy the domestic market before selling sugar on the world market the industry has its income limited by local price control, and it is also forced to absorb 20% of its increased annual production costs out of revenue. With the local market accounting for over half of sugar sales, and at a price well below the cost of production, the industry's own price stabilization fund was depleted in 1979, and an initial loan of R25 million³⁰ was raised to maintain the fund. Moreover, sales of sugar abroad, which generate most of the industry's income, are affected by international contracts, increased subsidies to European sugar beet producers, and the development of corn sweeteners and synthetic sugar substitutes.

Under the exigencies of the period (which include bio-climatic constraints, fires, and an array of issues not directly dealt with here), sugar companies have been forced, *inter alia*, to accelerate the rate of change in the composition of capital in sugar, so that constant capital acquires increasing importance *vis-à-vis* labour power in the production process. Increased costs of labour power and attendant tensions have hastened the rate of this change, and numerous statements

have been voiced which testify to the attitude of producers in this respect.

In his 1972 annual address, the chairman of the South African Sugar Millers' Association argued that

With a changing socio-economic pattern, a greater sophistication is becoming evident among most Africans, and with it, increasing demands for higher wages. As a result, the African is becoming more reluctant to engage himself as a cane cutter We must take positive and active steps now to establish mechanized harvesting in South Africa, as soon as possible, and certainly within the next ten years.³¹

Similarly, the president of the South African Sugar Technologists' Association stated that

. . . the main task we face is that for political and social reasons people might not be willing to cut cane in the long term.

We can be complacent when in the relatively short history of our industry we have seen this happen in the case of the Indian and the Zulu?³²

In his 1976 address the chairman of the South African Sugar Association mentioned that limits imposed on returns to sugar companies have meant that

. . . greater freedom to improve conditions of employment have been denied to us.³³

The following year he reiterated that continued price fixing would have a bearing on wages and that the earliest victims were always the lowest paid workers.^{34*}

The practical and ideological underpinnings of sugar manufacturers' strategies in the face of a growing crisis are intimated in these selected statements. The implications for labour require clarification.

Indications are that the unionization of African sugar mill workers is imminent. Be that as it may, these workers have demonstrated a rising consciousness and a capacity and readiness to confront management outside the framework of bureaucratized and officially sanctioned organizations. Such "spontaneous" mobilization, exclusive of white and, in most cases, Indian workers, may well be harnessed by unionization; a development which could expand the vision of workers beyond the mill to areas of concern at the level of the industry as a whole, or beyond.

So long as closures, for example are dealt with on a mill- instead of an industry-basis the elimination of a mill deprives those affected of any opportunity to defend their interests from a materially significant position. Unionism would offer a basis for pre-emptive planning regarding such eventualities. That the problem persists

* (If the mechanization of harvesting has not always advanced in correspondence to developments in the mills, the cause is not technological laggardliness, but, as the chairman of the South African Cane Growers' Association has indicated,³⁵ the high rate of unemployment since the mid-1970's which has ensured exceedingly cheap cost of labour for field work.)

in reflected in an attempt made in 1978 by C G Smith to buy Union Co-op Bark and Sugar Co's mill at Dalton,³⁶ and a bid made by Huletts in 1979 for Umfolozi Co-operative Sugar Planters' mill.³⁷ Success in the first venture would have enabled C G Smith to close the Dalton mill and transfer cane supplies to its own Noodsberg mill. Union Co-op refused the offer for various reasons, including the detrimental social upheaval it envisaged would follow the closure of their mill.³⁸ Umfolozi Co-op also turned down the offer for their mill,³⁹ and whether a take-over by Huletts would have led to the closure of the mill is questionable. Nevertheless, the threat still hangs over other peripheral mills at Glendale (a Lonrho investment) and Entumeni (under Premier Milling).

The increasing sophistication of skills held by sugar mill workers together with technological developments have rewarded capital well. Between 1952 and 1977 the number of personnel in all areas of sugar production per 1 000 tons of cane produced has fallen from 15 to 6.⁴⁰ In the mills specifically, the 1968/69 crushing capacity of all the mills of 3 100 tons/hour was increased to almost 4 000 tons/hour in the 1976/77 season, despite the closure of two smaller mills⁴¹ Equal opportunities on the factory floor which stem from current training facilities may of course lower the sugar company's labour costs, if black artisans do not acquire all the benefits now accorded to white artisans (such as superior housing).

Finally, it is evident that investment diversification by the sugar companies represents expedient measures in capital accumulation (measures which sometimes fail, as in the cases of C G Smith's venture into paper production, or Huletts' chipboard enterprise, for example) and policies towards labour rest on the principles of minimizing production costs and maximizing dividends to parent companies and other shareholders. Sugar mill workers are thereby drawn into a larger arena of concerns which are implicitly shared with workers outside the sugar industry, although the bond is not manifested in practice. With the entry of Barlows and Anglo American into the uppermost tiers in the structures of sugar company ownership, workers are distanced even further from the superordinate organs of control. Wherever they are in the hierarchy of companies, they have common cause with workers in the numerous constituent companies (Barlows now employ some 60 000 workers in Natal⁴²). However, a universal characteristic of sugar mill workers is that they are removed from the urban interface between industrial capital and labour, and the consolidation of a working class consciousness among them is impeded. In the South African case, even solidarity between mill and field workers is hampered because most of the latter workers in the sugar industry are migrants recruited annually on 180-day contracts, so that mill workers are distinctly isolated.

Concessions to sugar mill workers during the 1970's in the form of wage increases and improved conditions of service have not been insignificant, and management has responded humanistically to many of the material needs of workers. But the domestic sugar price was also raised in 1978 (and by association the prices

of other commodities), and it is this and the issues discussed above which tend to undermine the significance of the concessions for labour.

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Review

M. M. Molepo

Ilanga Le So Phonela Abasebenzi

This is a personal and a rather subjective view of this worker's play. I think that many people will read different messages from the play.

The play is produced by Junction Avenue Theatre Company, a non-racial group which started to operate in 1976. The Company is staffed by Witwatersrand University ex-students and other people working at the University. Since its commencement the Company has produced about nine original plays and one film.

An interesting feature of the play is the background of three of the performers, namely Samuel Gwazilitshe, Alpheus Nhleko and Mizkayifani Makhoba. They are all workers who have personal experiences of the issues they put forward in the play. Samuel Gwazilitshe is a migrant worker from the Transkei and is employed in a factory in Benoni. Mzikayifani is also a migrant worker. He worked in a metal factory in Benoni: he lost his job because of a dispute with the management, and joined the mines. Alpheus Nhleko also worked in a factory in Benoni, lost his job and was unemployed at the time he performed in the play. To these men, performing in this play was more than manifesting acting skills, it was a question of bringing their daily-life experiences to the stage. They are faced with what it means to be a black migrant worker.

The introductory song by the actors carries the overall message of the play, i.e. don't give up, the struggle continues and they hope to overcome. This sums up the struggle which is faced by workers in their relations with management. The introductory monologue by Samuel is moving, and reflects the working conditions faced by workers in industry. He complains that management want to turn them into machines. He complains about the fast pace at which they work. He gives a vivid picture of conditions in the hostels where they live and sleep. Regardless of these unbearable conditions in the hostels, workers are still expected to report on time and perform their exacting and exhaustive daily jobs.

This discussion of life in hostels leads to a debate amongst the actors as to whether it is better to stay in the 'kitchens', i.e. white suburbs. Although this means staying illegally with a woman domestic servant, in their opinion it is better than residing legally, but miserably, in hostels. Staying in the suburbs (servants quarters) compensates to some extent for a lack of home environment in the hostels which is faced by migrant workers. However, it also means that many workers run extra marital affairs some of which ruin their family relations and marriages. Although one may see this as a form of protest by workers against the unbearable and inhabitable conditions in the hostels, their life in the suburbs has disadvantages as pointed out above.

The introduction of a trade union to one of their fellow workers (Samuel) who did not know of a trade union, reflects the workers' awareness of the need for a labour movement. The labour movement would serve as a powerbase for their bargaining with management. At this stage the workers showed some resistance as manifested in their relations with the 'boss boy' (Siphiwe Khumalo) who, although he is a worker, is associated with management. He is seen as a messenger carrying the instructions of management.

There is a lack of clear communication between management and the workers. The line of communication which is available is a very long one, which is always via the 'boss boy'. The poor line of communication reflects a need for workers' representation.

The accident which came upon one of the workers (Alpheus Nhleko) revealed the impersonal attitude of the Medical Officer (Ari Sitas) who treated the injured worker. The monologue which follows gives a vivid exposition of the hazardous conditions under which they work and the harsh attitudes of the management. This made the workers more militant in voicing their grievances and demands. Their request for the recognition of the trade union they joined was met by a patronising attitude of management. The same attitude is reflected by the representative of the labour department (government). This is a strategy adopted by both management and the government to circumvent the workers' demands for a trade union. The attempt by the government and management proved fruitless as reflected in the debate between the workers and the labour department representative (Alpheus) over a liaison committee. The management and labour department representative on the one hand argued that a liaison committee is the right representative body for the workers, while the workers insist on a union. This is an interesting part of the play as it brings to the surface the conflict between the management and government on the one hand and the workers on the other.

The typical allegation by management that the trade union is an outside influence is ridiculed by a humorous explanation by the workers that they are the plant's employees, the trade union represents them, and they want to discuss the problems which they experience in the plant, so there is no question of outside influence.

The incident which led to the sit-in strike shows the arbitrary decision-making power which is enjoyed by management in the absence of a trade union. The incident is coloured by the racial issue as it becomes apparent that the culprit (Mzi) would not communicate clearly with the manager who found him outside the plant's yard looking for the 'boss boy'. A lack of understanding of each other's language led to the arbitrary dismissal of the workers, which was followed by a sit-in strike by other workers who demanded an explanation of the incident and reasons for the dismissal of their fellow worker. The other workers were also fired, arrested and charged with illegal striking and faced long periods of unemployment.

Although the management has the advantage of drawing new employees from

the readily available pool of 'reserve army of labour', the fired workers showed determination against many odds they faced. In my opinion, the strike and the resultant arrest and charges define more clearly the conflicting interests of the workers on one side and management and government on the other.

The concluding monologues which addresses the other workers who come to look for work is appealing and shows the long struggle faced by trade unions in their need to organise workers as a class; which goes beyond organising them in relatively small units of employees.

This is an educative piece of theatre if seen against the background of the present struggle between the trade unions and management and the government. Although the play goes as far as the struggle for recognition of the workers' union, the present South African industrial climate is more complicated. The struggle is not simply one of recognition, it is further compounded by the question of trade union registration in terms of the recent government legislation. Recognition of a union by management and its registration with the labour department are closely related and influence each other. One often reads in the press that such and such a management refused to recognise such and such a union because it is not registered. Most of the unions are not willing to register because they believe that the respective legislation under which they should register does not serve their interests (as workers). They believe that the bargaining power-base for which they strive will be eroded and brought under more control. This shows the role which is played by the state in promoting the capitalist class.