

South African LABOUR

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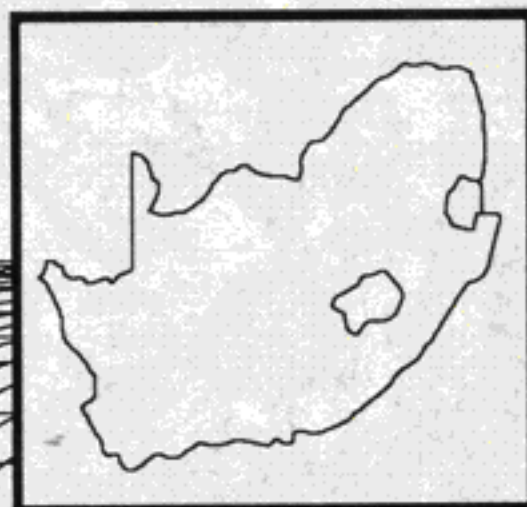
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SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN
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CAWU
Nicaragua
Problems of dual leadership

From resistance to reconstruction: *the role of trade unions in the new South Africa*



South African Labour Bulletin

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Front cover: Workers march against the LRA

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

Back cover: Mass protest action in Durban on Feb 1, the day parliament opened

Photo: Rafs Mayet/Afrapix

South African
**LABOUR
 BULLETIN**

Volume 15 Number 6 March 1991

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

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articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.

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

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

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

will be referred back to the author.

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

5 *Reviews, reports and documents* are intended:

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

6 Contributions should be written in clear, understandable language.

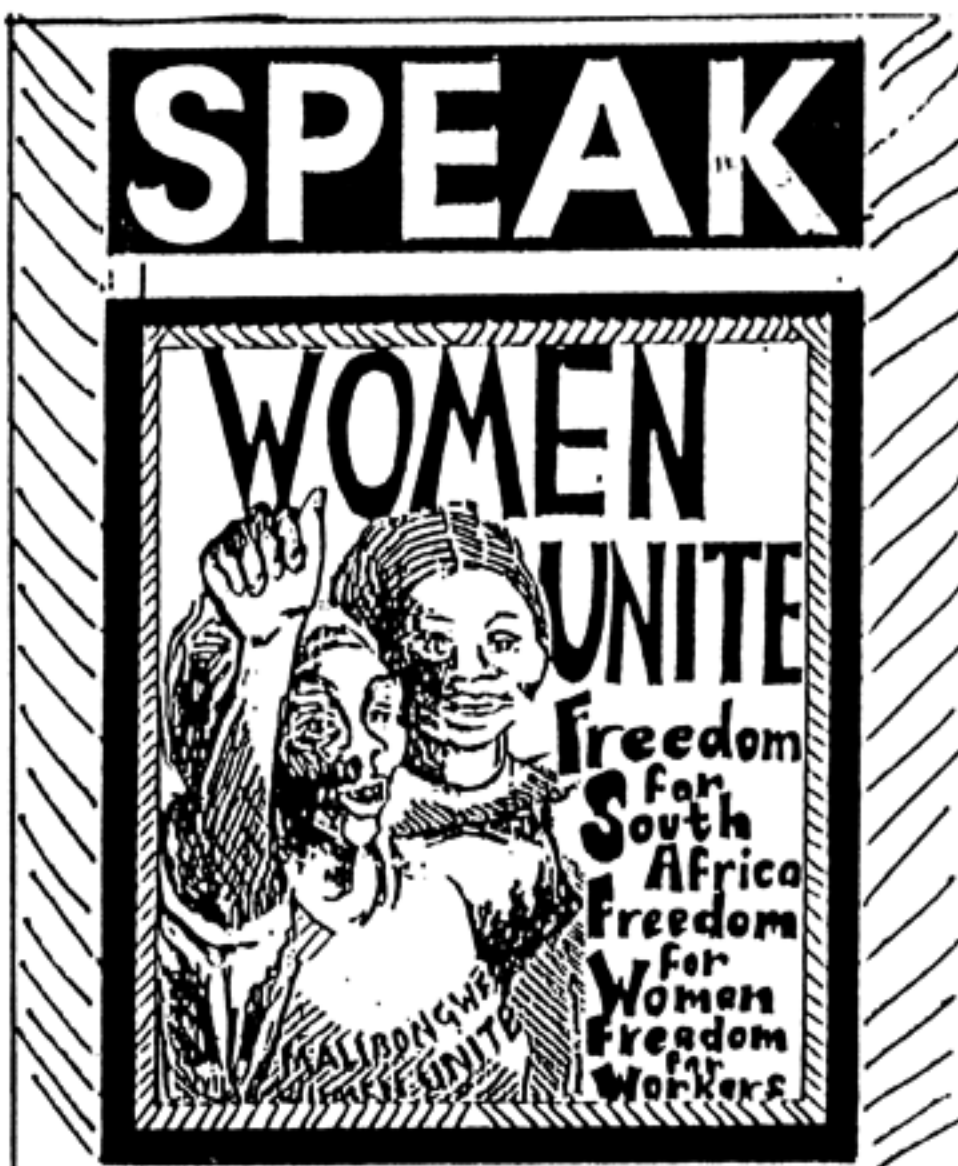
7 Contributions to the *Bulletin* must be typed and, where applicable, include proper footnoting and references.

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

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

For more details, please contact the editor.

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Editorial Notes

LRA victory!

In February parliament passed an amendment to the Labour Relations Act which embodies the agreement reached between COSATU, NACTU and SACCOLA last year. This marks the triumphant end of a two year struggle by the labour movement to resist the anti-union clauses enacted in the 1988 amendment to the LRA.

Indeed, some commentators have called the 1991 amendment the first piece of post-apartheid legislation in SA!

But this is going too far. The 1991 amendment more or less restores the situation to what it was before the 1988 amendment. The challenge facing the labour movement now is to formulate proposals for a totally new LRA, and negotiate this with the employers.

From resistance to reconstruction

Of course, the LRA amendment can be called 'post-apartheid' in one sense: it was the product of negotiation between unions, employers and, finally, the state. This process points to a new role for trade unions as we move towards a democratic South Africa.

Trade unions have played a central role in *resistance*, both to the state and to management. Now, while still playing a resistance role, they are beginning to develop a new role in *reconstruction* and development.

This has led to a debate on the future relations between the trade union movement, the state and the employers. We publish two articles (the report on NUMSA thinking by Karl von Holdt, and the paper by SACTWU general secretary John Copelyn) which air this debate.

This discussion is, of course,

linked to the 'two hats' debate. Copelyn expresses strong views on this, as does former SACTU journalist Snuki Zikalala. The COSATU discussion paper reprinted here also raises a broad range of questions to be debated in the federation prior to its congress in July.

Detention condemned

Labour Bulletin would like to express its anger and condemnation at the detention of Snuki Zikalala. A SACTU/ANC exile, Snuki entered South Africa to attend several job interviews, including one at *Labour Bulletin*. He has been detained for over a month, as the formalities surrounding his indemnity from prosecution have not been sorted out. His plight highlights that of thousands of exiles. We call for their immediate indemnification.

Robyn Rafel

Readers may have heard of the tragic death of labour journalist Robyn Rafel in a Johannesburg hospital in February. She was 37 years old at the time.

Robyn was one of that small and diminishing band of journalists who took labour seriously. She started her writing career in commercial magazines such as the *Financial Mail* and *Finance Week*, but came to realise over time that these publications were not prepared to cover labour in any depth. She resigned from a comfortable career in mainstream journalism in order to write for labour-orientated publications, including the *Labour Bulletin* and the *South African Review*. At the time of her death she was working at *Work in Progress*.

Robyn was one of those journalists who really cared about the labour movement. We mourn her death. ☆

Letters to the Bulletin

German union-basher

Dear editor

Please publish this letter for the public to know about the union-bashing tactics of the German multinational, Autoflug SA.

The company is situated in Chamdor near Krugersdorp, and employs about 400 workers. In 1989 workers from this company were unionised by the NUMSA West Rand local. Two-hundred-and-six workers joined. When the union introduction letter reached the company the management started to victimise workers and create division between black workers and so-called coloured workers. Hence some coloured workers resigned because NUMSA was a 'kaffir union'.

In March last year NUMSA members embarked on industrial action against the unfairness of company practices in terms of the company code of conduct, and because they refused to recognise NUMSA or enter wage negotiations. Management called in the SA Police, who harassed and arrested 97 workers who spent a cold night in jail. The workers were acquitted.

The company continues to refuse to allow access for union officials, to negotiate wages, to allow shopsteward elections for 1991, or to give workers back-pay for money lost while in jail. A dispute on these issues has been declared against the company, and referred to the Industrial Court.

The company produces car seat belts, brake cables, door handles and dome and reflection lamps. It supplies all the auto manufacturers in SA. We have a list of 22 companies which supply Autovlug, including BASF,



Hoechst, Plascon, Haggie Rand and Sandvik.

We are trying to organise a campaign against the company.

- Local shopstewards managed to establish contact with some German workers. This has to be discussed by the West Rand local and regionally before it becomes a national issue.
- The Autovlug shopstewards are discussing ways of organising blacking action at the above companies, and of gaining international support.

The company's telephone no is 011-7601067/8/9, and speak to Mr A Vos or Mr C du Plessis. The address of the mother company in Germany is Betriebsrat der Firma Autovlug, In der Tarpen 71 - 99, 2000 Norderstedt

Abissai Nkoe,
Organiser,
NUMSA West Rand Local

Response to WOSA

The editor

In their article in *Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 3, Adam Habib and Mercia Andrews of WOSA confuse the issue of democracy and socialism.

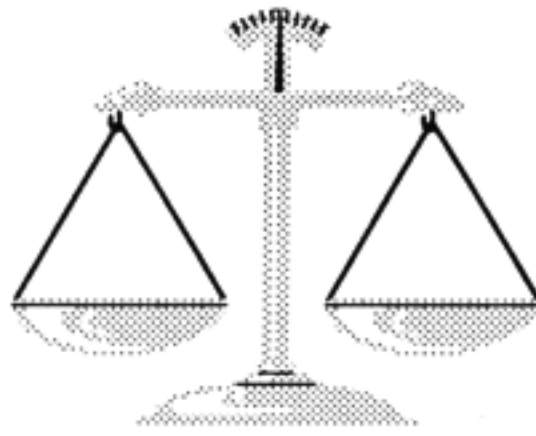
The inequality caused by the apartheid state has to be solved by

a democratic state. It has to engender racial harmony. The democratic state has to build a nation free from oppression. It has to uproot fears of both blacks and whites. The apartheid regime representing the capitalist class has instilled fears and entrenched tribalism and racism. It becomes highly impossible to build socialism under these conditions.

It is therefore important for us to build a democratic state to reconstruct our economy. In the national democratic struggle we are not fighting for a bourgeois democracy, we are fighting for a people's democracy. In a people's democracy we find the working class having both political and economic power which it exercises with other classes which suffered under colonialism of a special type. The conscious participation of the working class will necessitate taking over the means of production and moving forward to socialism.

Socialism demands that a society has to develop a democratic culture. To me socialism remains an answer to our problems. We need to make sure that the working class leads our struggle now and in a post-apartheid society. This will lead us to a democratic socialism. It is not socialism that has entered in crisis, but the parties that are in crisis.

Peter Ramarou
Tembisa
East Rand



Justice and the law

Dear Sir

Recent judgments by the Industrial Court have dispossessed thousands of workers from their right of recourse to justice and fairness on the shopfloor. I refer to **Monage v Donn Products (Pty) Ltd** (unreported) and **Building Construction & Allied Workers Union & Others v Alg Verbou (Pty) Ltd** ((1990) 11 ILJ 4 p 844).

These judgments effectively prevent labour consultants from acting in terms of the Labour Relations Act on behalf of workers who have no other form of representation or protection against abuses such as unfair dismissal, which is very often disguised as retrenchment.

To enable you to appreciate the nature of this gross injustice I must explain that there are very few labour consultants who are prepared to take on these cases exclusively, because most unrepresented workers work for *mahala*, for *boroko*. They are unable to afford lawyers or to pay labour consultants upfront. They are not protected by the unions.

Our clients are, therefore,

not charged but the costs are recovered following settlement. If there is no settlement, the client is not charged at all.

Here are two case histories:

Ms Florence Magale of Tembisa came to our office on 7 December 1990. She was a saleslady at a clothing shop in Germiston until she was dismissed on 30 November 1990. She was earning R500 per month. A client was caught stealing trousers. Because she was the last person of the sales personnel to have spoken to the client, she was accused of having assisted the thief. Her employer refused to listen to her denials. There was no hearing, no enquiry, no warnings. She was summarily dismissed, without notice pay. Ms Magale cannot afford to pay a lawyer R300 upfront to take the case. Because she was unfairly dismissed, we can assist her in getting her job back or at least get her an ex gratia amount, but we are not allowed to do so. Ms Magale will never see justice being done.

Mr. Thomas Simelane of Katlehong, a former shop steward of a transport union, was dismissed on 3 September 1990. He is alleging victimisation because of his union activities dating back to 2 February 1990. He earned R108 per week.

He has been unemployed for three months now. He came to our office on 7 December 1990 after the union failed to resolve the matter with Mr. Simelane's former employers because "management failed to respond to the union". However, he heard about us a few days after the 90-day time-limit had lapsed. We are prepared to apply for condonation. We are not allowed. We may not even declare a dispute or send out a letter of deadlock. Mr. Simelane will never see justice being done.

Here I must point out, with due respect, that union organisers and officials often fail to resolve individual cases. The collective is important. However, the Labour Relations Act is very complicated and it is my experience that even lawyers who do not specialise in this field battle through it.

My questions now are:

- Are only wealthy individuals or union members allowed recourse to justice?
- What vested interests are responsible for this selective application of justice? The legal fraternity or big money? Or both?
- Is the law interested in justice for some labourers or for all?
- Is the law interested in justice for the poor at all?

C. Mauritz Moolman

Employers should provide TB screening for employees

Sir

I refer to your Labour Bulletin Vol 15 No 2 (page 58), in which there was an article by Dr London on TB in industry.

I read this article with great interest because SANTA (South African National Tuberculosis Association) Johannesburg Branch - of which I am Chair - offers a mobile Mass Miniature X-Ray Screening Service to industry at a nominal fee of R4,25 at present, rising to R5,00 next year (because of constantly rising costs.)

We believe that employers should provide this health service for their employees, and that employees and their representative organisations should insist on its being available.

SANTA's mission is to fight for total control of TB by whatever means is available and practical. Mass screening in industry is both of these and cost effective to boot.

Even at R5,00 a head if the X-ray service identifies only two new cases of TB at a stage where they are suitable for ambulatory treatment, employers will save money. Our case yield varies between 0,4 per thou-

sand to 27,2 per thousand.

It costs well over R3 000-00 to treat a TB patient in hospital (1987 costs). Treatment lasts for six months, during which time the patient loses pay (and perhaps his job) the employer loses the worker's skills and perhaps needs to employ and train a new worker which costs more than R5 per head.

Not only is this service cost-effective but it also offers some confidence in the health status of all staff. This is especially important in these times of high unemployment. Nobody can afford to place his job at risk for

any reason and certainly not for an avoidable one.

The figures Dr London quotes for TB in industry in the Cape Town and Paarl areas are horrifying and serve to highlight the need for a mass screening service.

If the State cannot provide it, then employers must be asked to do so.

We, in SANTA, have a wish and a sneaking hope that this can be built into conditions of service, thus entrenching it. We offer our support to anyone who can achieve this.

Yours faithfully

May Zeiss - Chair
SANTA Johannesburg branch
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Red Eye

A trade union for ANC staff?

It seems the ANC has much to learn about labour relations.

For some time ANC head office staff have been complaining about unsatisfactory working conditions, long hours, arbitrary management and an inconsistent salary structure. In early February, ANC security workers staged a 'small stoppage'. Staff then held a meeting to discuss a range of problems, and elected an ad hoc committee to meet with management. Rumour has it that management's first response was: "The only thing I can call you is a strike committee!"

There are whispers in the corridors of power that the head office staff may form a staff association. RED EYE wonders whether it would consider affiliating to COSATU. That would introduce a new twist into the tripartite alliance, wouldn't it?

Mind you, employees of COSATU and its affiliates also have plenty of complaints about management, conditions and wages. Maybe they should get together with their ANC colleagues? RED EYE has visions of Jay Naidoo and Alfred Nzo calling up renegade leftist-turned-labour-consultant Duncan Innes for advice on how to deal with restless staff... the mind boggles!

Actually there was a strike which paralysed union offices some years ago. Administration staff in the FOSATU-affiliated auto union NAAWU downed tools when they received no response to their request for a salary increase. National co-ordination

and unity was achieved through their control of the telex machines. After two days the union leadership buckled! ♦

When security equals public relations...

While on the subject of ANC security staff, RED EYE understands the organisation's security department is called PRO, or Public Relations Office. Isn't this a dangerous confusion between the apparatus of hegemony and the apparatus of coercion? RED EYE can imagine the army in a new South Africa being renamed the Department of International Relations. Or warmonger Bush calling his obscene intervention in the Gulf a "public relations exercise"... ♦

Negotiations

A trade unionist heard that the ANC's education department is putting out a booklet on negotiations. "Are they going to give it to the ANC NEC to read?" she asked hopefully. ♦

White farmers out, black workers in...

A few weeks ago the administrative capital of SA, Pretoria, was brought to a standstill as white farmers demonstrated with trucks and tractors against the government's agricultural policies. Guess who was inside the government's Union Building at the

same time, negotiating a new collective bargaining dispensation in the the public service? None other than COSATU affiliate NEHA-WU, the independent Health Workers Union, and unions representing white workers in the public service. The farmers waited outside Union Building in vain, seeking a meeting with De Klerk. The times are changing, aren't they? ❖

Knowing the 'right' people...

Several luminaries of the ANC were invited to the recent annual investment conference of a firm of Joburg stockbrokers. Joe Slovo was one of them. RED EYE's person-on-the-spot overheard the following conversation between Slovo and the society lady seated next to him:

Lady: "Do you know Simon Katz?" (clearly someone very important)

Slovo: "No, can't say I do."

Lady: "Do you know John Allson?" (someone even more important)

Slovo: "No."

Lady: "Honestly, you people want to rule society, but how on earth will you do it if you don't know anyone?"

Slovo (irritated): "Do you know Moses Mayekiso?"

Lady: "No. Who is he?"

Slovo: "Do you know Chris Dlamini?"

Lady: "No, I don't."

Slovo: "Lady, you claim

to be a South African, but I can't really believe you!"

Apparently the lady jumped up from the table and stormed off in a huff. ❖

AFL-CIO vs NUMSA In Poland

Remember 1980-1, when many in our trade unions saw Solidarnosc, the mass worker movement in Poland, as a ray of hope for democratic socialism in the bleak Stalinist landscape of Eastern Europe?

Well, late last year, NUMSA general secretary Moses Mayekiso was a guest speaker at the Solidarnosc conference. He spoke about the workers struggle for freedom and socialism across the world. The Polish workers clapped politely.

The next speaker was AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland. He congratulated the workers on helping to overthrow communism, and sang the praises of free enterprise. The Polish workers gave him a thunderous standing ovation... ❖

A fighting union!

REDEYE came across the following letter, apparently sent by the Federal Council of Retail and Allied Workers of South Africa (FEDCRAW) to organisations which did, or did not, provide solidarity for striking Clicks workers:

"Comrades, We refer to our letter of 10th December 1990 wherein we request solidarity support from your organisation.

We note with concern your organisation has not bothered or taken interest in the struggle of Clicks workers...

It is not our intention at this point in time to draw inferences on your deafening silence. We will appreciate a definite response to avoid unilateral conclusions which may be incorrect.

... Clicks monopoly capitalists have hardened their stand and dug in their heels on the question of reinstatement of all workers. The racist state apparatus which is in their service ceaselessly harasses, intimidates and arrests workers hoping to instil fear and blunt the workers resolve to fight.

From all these developments workers are drawing all round experiences and heightening their class consciousness particularly of who constitute their friends, allies and enemies and who are demagogues, charlatans, opportunists and so scoundrels who parade as democrats and progressives when in truth they are allied to capital in a myriad of ways and are serving it as opposed to the interests of the masses of workers, peasants, petty and national bourgeoisie... (signed) Nat Kettlele, general secretary."

Fighting talk, huh? REDEYE would love to know who these scoundrels are..... ☆

Labour Action

Constituent Assembly call: stayaways and marches

On 1 February, while De Klerk opened yet another session of the whites-only parliament, over one million workers stayed away from work in support of the call for a constituent assembly. According to COSATU, a further 250 000 people were involved in other forms of mass action on the day of national action. Nonetheless, the stayaway was less impressive than previous national stayaways.

The call for mass action on 'Constituent Assembly Day' was endorsed by the ANC, PAC, COSATU and NACTU. This is the first time such broad unity in action has been forged around a *political* demand. COSATU and NACTU have called joint stayaways in the past, but around a trade union issue (the LRA) rather than a political demand.

The stayaway sparked debate in the labour movement about the use of the stayaway tactic:

- ⇒ Was there mass support for the stayaway among trade union members?
- ⇒ Were workers sufficiently aware of the importance of a constituent assembly?
- ⇒ Was the tactic used too early in the negotiation process?

COSATU did not take a national decision on the stayaway, but instead decided to leave this decision to the individual regions. The Wits, Western Transvaal and Eastern Cape regions took decisions to support the stayaway from work. Other regions decided to engage in other forms of action instead.

Many in COSATU welcomed the stronger link in ANC activity between mass action and negotiations. It came at a time when the state is attempting to paint all forms of mass action as criminal violent activities, which should have been suspended together with the armed struggle.

"The militant feelings of workers on the ground was reflected in the mass action," according to Kgalima Motlanthe, who is the chairperson of the ANC's PWV region, and the National Union of Mineworkers' education officer. In the Wits region, in particular, workers' militant mood was influenced by attacks on working class communities, such as the massacre in Sebokeng.

"Workers are frustrated that the state is dragging its feet. We marched for Peace and Freedom on 6 December, and were promised that political prisoners would be released by Christmas. There was a feeling among workers that the whole process of negotiation must be given a push," said Motlanthe.

While there is widespread worker support for the programme of the ANC, there may not have been a thorough understanding of the concept of a constituent assembly. According to the acting chairperson of the Johannesburg COSATU local, Sam Tambani, "The general membership of COSATU in our area was not properly informed about the meaning of a constituent assembly, and the campaign was not discussed thoroughly enough. Despite this, there was support for the stayaway, but that support must be deepened."

The stayaway raised questions about the position of the union movement in the tripartite alliance



Demonstrators gather on the Grand Parade near parliament in Cape Town on 2 February

Photo: Sally Shorkend/Afrapix

between the ANC, COSATU and the SACP. It was a test of democratic practice in the relationship between the organisations. Some felt that the ANC made the decision, and COSATU simply had to rubberstamp it.

COSATU's Neil Coleman acknowledges that "There were problems of co-ordination in the way that the stayaway was called." Motlanthe suggested that this was mostly a problem of moving the alliance onto a regional level where it has never really operated in the past.

The question is whether these are simply teething problems, or whether they will become deeper problems of democratic practice and accountable co-operation be-

tween the organisations.

The stayaway made many activists ask questions about the role of those who are leaders of both a trade union and a political organisation. Some of the ANC's regional leadership are also COSATU or union leaders. There may be times when such leaders experience a tension in their accountability to various parties.

There may also be an assumption in ANC structures that such leaders are speaking on behalf of COSATU when they are not in fact doing so.

There is little doubt that workers' involvement in the day of mass action strengthened the demand for a constituent assembly. Despite the controversy, the

support of the working class for this demand is clear. The challenge now is to deepen workers understanding of constitutional issues, and build on the mass mobilisation that has already taken place. ❖

(Lael Bethlehem)

Stayaway in the Eastern Cape

The call for mass action on 1 February in support of demands for a constituent assembly met with an 84% stayaway in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage.

This emerged from a telephonic survey of fifty two companies employing 37 867 hourly-paid African and col-

LABOUR ACTION

oured workers. In line with previous findings, a near total African stayaway was experienced in the area, while coloured workers' participation in Uitenhage exceeded that recorded for Port Elizabeth. Nevertheless, coloured support in Port Elizabeth was greater than it has been generally in previous years.

Only one of the companies in the sample recorded normal absentee rates. This Uitenhage factory has been relatively unaffected by stayaways since the workforce was replaced after an unlawful strike some two years ago. A second Uitenhage factory was not affected by the stayaway, inasmuch as short-time has reduced the working week to four days and production is no longer scheduled on Fridays. The results presented below exclude both these factories.

Stayaway participation

Area	African	Coloured
P.E.	95%	65%
Uitenhage	97%	87%

Employer responses

Ninety per cent of employers adopted a policy of no-work-no-pay discipline, but five spokespersons warned that they were reconsidering this stance and penalties might be imposed for future stayaways.

An additional four companies reported that disciplinary action would be taken. Only one of these has imposed an umbrella penalty,

docking the attendance bonuses of all those who were absent. The others have chosen to investigate each case of absenteeism individually, before penalising bonuses or issuing warnings if reasons advanced are not considered satisfactory.

One firm will apply this discretionary approach only to salaried employees who did not report for work.

"Hourly-paid workers will not be disciplined because the stayaway was well-supported throughout the area. We might have disciplined if we had been singled out. Each staff member who stayed away will be asked his reasons, and will face disciplinary action if they are not acceptable. We will look at individual circumstances. These are different for the person who lives in Kwa-Magxagki and the person who lives in Soweto-by-the-Sea. The more senior the person, the more responsibility he carries, and the more responsibly he should behave."

This manager added that the company could not afford to lose production, having experienced industrial action last year.

Four employers reported an unprecedented level of participation in the stayaway by salaried coloured staff, including one who said that he could not understand why the company's predominantly coloured, hourly-paid workforce stayed away on 1 February, when previously they had ignored calls to stay at home.

Six of the companies elected not to schedule production for the Friday. "It suited us to close the factory because our order books are lean and we don't need production" said one manager. Management at one firm abandoned plans to shut the plant when this proposal was greeted with an angry response from white workers.

Another company which experienced a near total stayaway by its predominantly black workforce, nevertheless kept production lines running with a small minority of white workers, hired strategically when the workforce was increased recently "to overcome the stayaway problem".

Advance consultation

Widespread consultations between management and worker representatives were initiated before the stayaway. Ninety four per cent of companies received advance notification of the stayaway.

The ANC's role in this stayaway was evident in a letter it wrote to one company requesting that workers not be penalised for participating.

Three spokespersons for management said that there were indications of union opposition to the stayaway initiated by the ANC. This could explain the willingness on the part of some shop-stewards to negotiate to work time lost on Friday 1 February. One employer claimed that workers were complaining about a lack of

democracy in stayaway decision-making. "We are thinking of independently establishing worker sentiment with a secret ballot for each stayaway. It's time to practise democracy, not just talk about it" he said.

Alternative work arrangements

These were discussed at several plants. At three of these, time lost on the Friday was worked on the Saturday - at normal rates. Agreement on a similar proposal could not be reached at a fourth factory, but 45% of the workforce nonetheless reported for work on the Saturday.

By the same token, a Saturday work proposal at yet another company was rejected by shopstewards who were rankled when a section of their constituency elected to work a double shift on the preceding Thursday rather than lose a day's wages.

Payment arrangements

Tensions surfaced over union requests that Friday wage payouts be brought forward to Thursday. Eight employers agreed to an early payout, while management at ten factories rejected such requests - which prompted workers at two of these plants to down tools on the Thursday afternoon.

A compromise was reached at five firms to pay wages on the Saturday. In Uitenhage, workers from two factories collected their pay on Friday but without repor-

ting for work. Conflict threatened outside one set of factory gates when these workers confronted departing workers who had worked their shifts. ♦

(Judy Parfit, Industrial Relations Unit, UPE)

Mass retrenchments: NUM negotiates training, trust funds

As the economy continues to decline, retrenchments have become a burning issue for workers. The struggle over retrenchment is likely to become a focus of the COSATU Living Wage Campaign.

Mineworkers have been amongst the most severely affected. The figures are shocking: in the past two years 50 000 mineworkers in South Africa have been retrenched. Mining employers expect the loss of a further 20 000 jobs this year. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) estimates that, unless gold prices rise dramatically, 100 000 jobs will be lost in the mining industry over the next ten years.

These retrenchments are having a devastating effect on the lives of mineworkers and their families. NUM is attempting to resist retrenchments, but often the union does not have the power to prevent them. Instead, it is forced to negotiate the terms of retrenchment, in

order to salvage some gains.

The first priority in such negotiations is to ensure a decent severance package. The NUM has also been demanding that companies retrain workers, so that they have the skills which will help them find new jobs. In a path-breaking agreement at Harmony gold mine, workers won the right to five weeks of retraining at the company's expense.

Another demand put forward by NUM in retrenchment negotiations is that the companies establish trust funds to finance co-operatives for retrenched workers. NUM's co-operative programme began in the wake of the 1987 strike, in an attempt to provide jobs for dismissed workers. So far, NUM has established 16 co-ops. The union hopes the trust funds will enable more to be set up.

The union has negotiated six trust funds with R1 million each. This money is available to retrenched workers in the form of loans to finance the development of co-ops. NUM's co-op division provides co-op members with education and skills training, and assists them in planning and drawing up their constitutions.

Co-operative division coordinator Kate Philip points out that, in an industry where about 60 jobs are being lost every day, the union must find new strategies to empower workers. The trade union movement may increasingly find itself

engaging in development work in order to respond to the needs of its members. ❖
(Lael Bethlehem)

Labour Struggles at the University of Durban-Westville

A university is a unique employer, because university employees range from cleaners to professors. There are enormous differences in salaries and working conditions for academic and non-academic staff, and the university is structured to maintain a division between these categories of employees. But in recent months, workers, lecturers and students have united in action at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW).

The tradition of joint struggle at UDW began in 1989 when progressive forces on campus won the struggle for the appointment of a progressive university rector. Over the past few months, the Combined Staff Association (COMSA) has united academic and non-academic staff, and has worked with the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO) to challenge the harsh conditions faced by staff.

The first struggle taken up by COMSA was to ensure that the pay rise granted to lecturers in April 1990, was extended to include non-academic staff. The Minister of

Finance had announced a 10% increase for all public service employees, but the UDW Council decided to limit the increase of non-academic staff to 5%! After a series of mass meetings, marches and negotiations, the university agreed to grant the lowest categories of non-aca-

agreed to hire all workers who had been employed by Sneller. Although wages paid by Supercare were similar to Snellers, UDW agreed to supplement these with R50 per month, and pay the long service benefits workers would have received from Sneller. This victory proved the



Staff at UDW protest against racism in the university

Photo: Peter auf der Heyde/Afrapix

ademic staff a 10% increase as well. This was seen as a major victory, and a challenge to the university's distinction between mental and manual labour.

This struggle was followed by action taken by cleaning workers. The cleaning service was contracted to Sneller Cleaning Company. Workers had long complained about this company's poor wages and working conditions. United action on the campus forced the appointment of a new cleaning contractor, Supercare. After demonstrations and protracted negotiations involving COMSA, the workers, UDW administration and Supercare, the company

potential for united action between those working for a sub-contractor boss and those working for the main employer. This is an important development, as more and more employers are making use of sub-contractors. Workers are often divided in this way, and sub-contracted workers usually find themselves at the raw end of the deal. If the union movement can unite all workers in a single workplace, this will go a long way towards countering management strategy.

The most recent struggle at UDW has been a parental rights campaign. In the past, maternity leave was unpaid, and staff on probation did not have access to maternity

benefits. The gender issues sub-committee of COMSA won the demand for three months paid maternity leave, and full maternity rights for workers on probation. Although the demand for paternity leave was turned down by the university, the provision of decent maternity benefits is a major step forward in the struggle for parental rights on the campus.

UDW is an important example of unity between academic workers, non-academic workers and students, between sub-contracted workers and other employees, and between men and women. Hopefully this unity will empower the campus community to lead the process of transforming the university into a non-racial democratic institution of higher learning in a new SA. ❖

(Ashwin Desai)

COSATU and NACTU in united action for increased wages for transport workers

City Tramways workers have awakened to their collective power while being faced with critical questions about the future of their industry.

For the first time in more than 50 years, Cape Town's buses ground to a halt as more than 1 500 drivers and co-workers downed tools between 7 and 14 February.



There are two unions competing with each other to organise the workers, but they managed to bury their rivalry and take joint action. The unions are Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), affiliated to COSATU, and the Transport and Omnibus Workers Union (TOWU), affiliated to NACTU.

The striking workers were demanding a 22% across-the-board increase and R1 200 minimum monthly wage. The strike erupted with workers occupying the company headquarters and besieging depots with buses. A banner displayed prominently during a march on the company's headquarters read: "TOWU and TGWU: Fighting for survival. Viva NACTU! Viva COSATU!"

But workers settled on the eighth day when management threatened them with dismissal. The strikers won 22% (which amounts to R30) for the lowest paid, and 15% for the highest paid. TGWU's Nic Henwood commented: "The strike fell apart after 8 days. It was illegal, it was a very new experience and workers could not hold out against the pressure. The threat of dismissal put lots of pressure on the longest-serv-

ing workers, mostly drivers.

"In the end the bosses won. The workers made major gains, but the bosses won. We did not manage to consolidate the strike, and everything the workers built slipped out of their hands. Workers are not satisfied with their increases. R700 per month is not a living wage."

According to Henwood, the key question for the present is uniting the workforce: "Tramways workers have to address the question of how to build one trade union. They will support any union which can deliver the goods - in this strike both did."

But possibly most important is the inability of the company to pay a living wage and provide a safe and cheap transport service, at the same time as making a profit. Henwood's response is adamant: "There is no room for the profit system in public passenger transport. The bosses must get out."

"Because of our gains, they are pushing up fares and stripping company assets as they bail out of their responsibility for public transport. TGWU is campaigning for increased government subsidies, but eventually for a nationalised public passenger transport system under the control of workers. This is not just a struggle to be fought by workers - it involves all organisations of the working class." ☆
(Cape Town correspondent)

Special focus

From resistance to reconstruction

The changing role of trade unions

by Karl von Holdt

The transition to democracy in South Africa is raising new challenges and new questions for the democratic trade union movement. Under apartheid the unions faced two extremely hostile enemies: the state and the employers. The unions fought hard battles to establish themselves, and learnt a range of tactics and strategies to resist both repression and co-optation. Although some areas of co-operation between business and labour did develop - they always do when there is a negotiating relationship - in general the union stance was one of 'militant abstentionism'.

This was the politics of resistance. Trade unions refused to accept responsibility for productivity,

profitability or economic growth, and rejected participating in joint projects with management. They argued that their members never saw the benefits from these processes, and that neither management nor the state were offering unions, workers or black people any real power to participate in economic decision-making.

The politics of reconstruction

This situation is beginning to change as South Africa struggles towards democracy. The negotiation of the COSATU-SACCOLA-NACTU accord on the Labour Relations Act last year points towards a new relationship be-

tween labour and employers. The eventual acceptance by the state of this accord, the calling off of the September stayaway last year, and the participation of COSATU in the National Manpower Commission which advises the Department of Manpower, all point towards a new relation between the unions and the state.

Undoubtedly these trends will accelerate once a democratic government is in place. Organised labour is destined to become a central and very powerful social institution. In recognition of this, the trade unions are beginning to debate a new *politics of reconstruction*.

But what strategies will

the unions adopt in order to consolidate their position and influence? Their decisions now will have an enormous impact on the shape of our society, perhaps for decades to come.

Accord with the state, or with employers?

We publish here a report on current thinking within the National Union of Metalworkers of SA. NUMSA's idea of a union-led national development strategy rests on the idea of a 'reconstruction accord' negotiated between trade unions, civics, rural organisations and progressive political organisations. The key player would probably be the ANC. This idea would give concrete content to the alliance between COSATU and the ANC after a democracy has been established. NUMSA thinking stresses an accord with the state through a governing party, and that such an approach could open the way to socialism.

NUMSA emphasises that this would not compromise union independence. The ANC and the unions do not necessarily have the same economic views, and the process of reaching agreement on an accord would itself involve a struggle. The unions would have to maintain their militant independence.

We also publish a paper by SACTWU general secretary John Copelyn. He argues for complete independence from the state and political parties. He argues that the unions should put all

their effort into establishing and strengthening centralised collective bargaining structures. These would provide an independent base for unions to influence society and the state. Copelyn tends to portray the future state as neutral in the conflict between business and labour.

Copelyn argues that unions will influence society through collective bargaining with employers. He suggests negotiating a series of agreements with employers, not only on traditional collective bargaining issues such as wages and conditions, but on a range of broader social and economic issues: economic growth, investment, international trade, training and education, labour legislation, etc.

Once agreement has been reached on these issues with employers, they and the unions could together approach the government and argue for them to be implemented. As Copelyn points out, the model for this bipartite approach is the COSATU-SACCOLA-NACTU negotiations over the LRA.

The NUMSA thinking envisages the reverse process: unions would approach the ANC and negotiate an accord (together with civic and rural organisations). Such an accord would be implemented partly through the state and partly through mass organisations in civil society. The organisations which are party to the accord would then have to approach business and negotiate with it on the basis of the accord.

NUMSA believes employers do not have the vision to bargain voluntarily with unions over broad social and economic issues. Nor do employers have a convincing vision for economic development. The working class, NUMSA argues, will be in a much stronger position to compel the capitalist class to act on these issues if unions and other mass organisations build an alliance with the governing party and the state on a common programme.

Towards a social contract?

The ideas expressed by NUMSA leaders and by Copelyn both break with the tradition of 'militant abstentionism'. They envisage union initiatives in training, productivity, economic policy, investment and 'worker participation'. These ideas form part of an emerging politics of reconstruction in the union movement.

But the politics of reconstruction is not simply *replacing* resistance. In both perspectives, the organisational strength, independence and militancy of the unions will be crucial if their policies on restructuring are to be implemented. The success of the new politics of reconstruction depends on unions maintaining and deepening the qualities that have been forged in the politics of resistance.

Nonetheless, it is true that if workers and trade unions start to take responsibility for economic growth and development, they will have to



Militant slogan of resistance: but will the unions be powerful enough to shape the terms of a social contract in a new South Africa?

Photo: Eric Miller

strive for greater productivity and less industrial action. This does have the potential to weaken organisation and dampen militancy.

Class struggle and a social contract

Is this then an emerging support in the union movement for the idea of a social contract?

Over the past few months many organisations and individuals have commented on the need for a 'social contract', variously described as "economic compromise" (Levy and Associates) or "social partnership" (Charles Nupen). Most of the commentators envisage a social contract primarily between business and labour, but also involving the state. Generally they argue that business will

have to accept negotiating over broader social and economic issues, and also accept worker participation in decision-making, or co-determination, from enterprise to macro-economic level. In turn, the unions would be obliged to moderate their wage and other demands, and accept the need for industrial peace.

The COSATU discussion paper reprinted here raises a number of economic issues being debated in the unions. It suggests the possibilities of a social contract should be examined.

The views of NUMSA and of John Copelyn indicate how the unions might approach the issue of a social contract. The question is, do the unions have the power and resources to shape the

terms of a social contract? Or will they be forced to make compromises that in the end weaken organisation and undermine militancy? In a post-apartheid South Africa business, international economic forces and the state bureaucracy will all form an extremely powerful opposition to the union programme.

Given these powers, the NUMSA argument is a strong one. COSATU and ANC economists already exchange ideas regularly. On the other hand, Copelyn's ideas are already being implemented as COSATU seeks to extend the scope of negotiations with SACCOLA. In the end we are likely to see a combination of both strategies. Much will depend, of course, on the attitudes of the ANC and of business. ♦

Towards transforming SA industry:

a 'reconstruction accord'
between unions and the ANC?

by KARL VON HOLDT

At a workshop late last year NUMSA delegates discussed the idea of a *reconstruction accord* between the trade unions and the ANC. The reconstruction accord would be an agreement on an economic strategy for national development. Civic organisations and rural organisations could also be party to such an accord. Such a reconstruction accord could give concrete content to the alliance between COSATU and the ANC in a post-apartheid South Africa.

The NUMSA unionists at the workshop argued forcefully that the unions need to

develop their own perspective on how to achieve economic growth, development and redistribution in a democratic SA. This would be the basis of an economic policy which the unions could take to the ANC - and other political organisations - as their proposal for the content of the reconstruction accord.

These ideas reflect a growing concern in the union movement about the serious economic problems facing SA. The economy is in a long-term decline, and at the same time the world economy is changing in ways that

could further weaken both the SA economy and the trade union movement.

The ideas discussed in NUMSA indicate the beginning of a shift from the *politics of resistance* to the *politics of reconstruction* in the trade union movement. As South Africa struggles towards democracy, unionists are discussing the role and responsibilities of their organisations in a new SA. The leadership of NUMSA is arguing that the unions need to initiate and lead the formulation of economic policy, rather than simply responding to the initiatives of the

state and management. This has implications for all levels of collective bargaining. For example, NUMSA is now investigating the possibility of bargaining over production levels in a way that does not compromise their members' interests.

Restructuring of the world economy

The workshop was organised by NUMSA's research department. The proposals that were discussed in the workshop are not, at this stage, NUMSA policy. They are still being discussed in the policy-making structures of the union.

Delegates from around the country heard university researchers present analyses of the restructuring of the work process in the world economy, and describe some of the restructuring already happening in SA industry. They were also addressed by three leading businessmen, who put forward their views on the future of the metal industry.

Changes in the world economy

In the past decade there have been great changes in the world economy. The changes have been so great that many researchers believe that they amount to *a new system of production. This new system*



A 'reconstruction accord': giving concrete content to the alliance between COSATU and the ANC

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

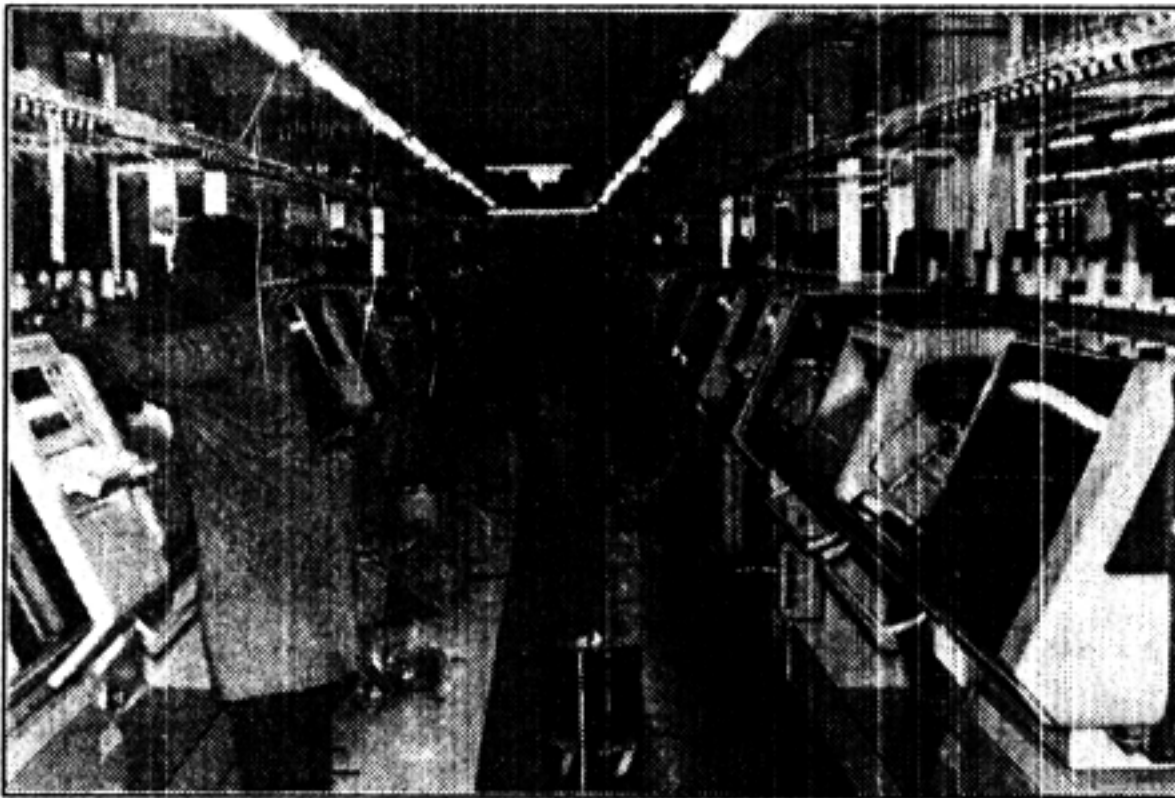
of production has been described as 'post-Fordism' to distinguish it from the Fordist system of mass production which has dominated capitalist production since the 1920s.

Researchers described some of these changes:

- More and more computers are used in production. This has linked design, production and marketing across the world.
- Computers have made production quick and flexible. The companies and countries which have become most successful on the world market are

those which can produce a wide range of high quality and varied products, and which can quickly change their products to meet new demands.

- The new system is highly competitive. Manufacturers have to continuously develop and improve their products, increase the variety of what they offer, and respond rapidly to market changes and changing demand, otherwise they fall behind. This does not only apply to companies - countries which fail to develop competitive industrial



*Computer controlled knitting machines:
new technology brings new challenges*

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

strategies fall behind and are doomed to stagnation and decline.

- Introduction of computer technology has often gone hand in hand with new ways of organising work, which were pioneered in Japan: Quality Circles, Just-in-Time, Green Areas and other forms of 'participative management'. These systems all aim to increase efficiency, productivity and quality by trying to encourage workers to use whatever ideas and skills they might have to increase production. In order to achieve productivity, quality and flexibility, management needs the *co-operation* of workers. Some analysts argue that the new system of production sees workers as a 'resource' rather than a 'cost'.
- The skills required of workers have been changing. While some workers learn a range of new skills

(multi-skilling), others lose their skills (de-skilling). There is a tendency for increasing differentiation among workers. 'Core' workers are highly skilled, receive good pay and benefits, and enjoy job security, while low-skilled 'secondary' workers enjoy none of these benefits.

- The new system of production has only been successful in countries with a highly trained workforce and very efficient technical education, starting at school. In countries like Japan, South Korea or Israel, there are so many engineers and accountants that many work on the shopfloor as ordinary workers. This obviously increases the skills on the shopfloor.
- A relatively high degree of state planning and intervention in the economy has been a crucial factor in those countries which

have successfully adopted the new system of production and become competitive in the world market. Examples are Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Restructuring in South Africa?

Researchers also addressed the question of whether the international trends described above are emerging in South Africa. The main points made were:

- While there is an increasing use of computers in manufacture, it is still at a very low level; its piece-meal use means it cannot reach its full potential.
- A number of employers are experimenting with Quality Circles, or beginning to use Just-in-Time; however, this is also still at a low level and used in a piece-meal fashion.
- There is an increasing skills differential within the black working class, with the majority of black workers employed as semi-skilled operators.
- Skilled (often white) workers are organised in different unions to the semi-skilled and unskilled black workers; this makes it difficult to develop a coherent union strategy on training and career paths.
- The low level of skills in SA, and the crisis-ridden education system, are enormous barriers to a development of post-Fordist production systems in SA. In general, the research suggests that there is a slow

and unco-ordinated drift of new technology and new methods of organising work into SA, rather than a rapid and co-ordinated transformation. The most important point, however, is how ignorant unionists and researchers are of what changes are really taking place on the shopfloor. More research is an urgent necessity.

The vision of the businessmen

Leslie Boyd, chairman of Anglo-American owned Highveld Steel, Theo van den Bergh, MD of Toyota, and Altron director Richard Savage, addressed the delegates on the future of their sectors of the metal industry.

All three businessmen pointed out that the end of apartheid will not solve SA's economic problems. Each pointed to specific obstacles. Boyd said that there is a slow-down in domestic demand for steel products. Major users of steel, such as the mining industry and parastatals such as Eskom and Transnet, are investing less and so placing fewer orders. This, together with a looming international recession, means tough times for the steel industry.

Savage argued that the electronics industry has very little potential for growth: the state is cutting back radically on the Post Office budget, so there is a decline in orders for telephone and communications equipment. Also, political negotiations in SA mean the military industry -

a major user of electronics - is cutting back its orders. There is a worldwide slump in the electronics industry, he said, and it is virtually impossible for SA to compete with Japanese and other electronic products on the world market.

Van den Bergh also painted a bleak picture of a saturated vehicle market and the difficulty of expanding exports. SA products are too expensive, and SA companies are barred from selling cars in overseas markets by conditions in their contracts with the overseas car companies which supply them with technology and parts.

All three businessmen argued that future growth will require a co-operative relationship between unions and business, and industrial and political stability. In Savage's words: "We need to develop a partnership, such as for example in Germany. Unions need to be involved in the problems facing business."

Savage and Boyd said unions would have to accept wage restraint if manufacturing is to become internationally competitive, and all three appealed for an end to sanctions.

NUMSA delegates at the workshop felt that the businessmen did not have a coherent strategy for industrial growth. The businessmen did not seem to foresee a comprehensive programme to introduce new technology or new methods

of production into their businesses.

NUMSA official Geoff Schreiner challenged Savage on this issue: "All the business speakers are asking us to make concessions on co-operation, wage restraint, sanctions, productivity and bargaining levels. But what are you offering us? What are you offering in terms of genuine sharing, and in terms of a strategic vision of growth?"

All Savage could offer was "more dialogue at plant level."

NUMSA education officer Alec Erwin then commented that "business is badly organised to look at these questions. You only look at economic issues from the perspective of your respective companies. The unions have no one to talk to on these issues, because business has no strategy. For all its weaknesses, the ANC has the most developed economic policy of all parties."

A union strategy for development

After the talks by the researchers and the businessmen, the NUMSA delegates turned to the task of developing their views. Several points were made by unionists:

● The SA economy cannot avoid the effects of global



Rural organisations and civics should also be party to a 'reconstruction accord'

Photo: Cedric Nunn/Afrapix

restructuring. Several socialist and developing countries have tried to protect themselves against international competition, but this only led to deeper economic crisis and the collapse of industry. If SA adopts a defensive approach it will only become less and less competitive internationally. It is essential to adopt an offensive strategy and take the initiative.

- The talks given by the businessmen showed that essentially business does not have a programme for substantial restructuring - they are backing the economic status quo. In some countries, for example Australia, the labour movement has taken the

initiative and developed an economic strategy for the country. The unions cannot leave the responsibility for economic development in the hands of business - they tend to focus only on the interests of their own industry.

- Because business is backing the status quo, any proposal the unions might have for restructuring will probably come up against massive resistance from the conglomerates. The trade unions will have a huge battle on their hands, and this means they will have to strengthen organisation as well as devise a strategy to break the power of the conglomerates.
- A union-led economic de-

velopment strategy will only be successful if the unions have sufficient organisational and political power. The union movement must have its own policy, irrespective of the policies of organisations such as the SACP and the ANC. There is no prospect for successful restructuring unless the working class has strong influence over state power, unless there is a strong state involved in decisive, coherent planning; and unless the state is democratic and involves the unions.

- It might be a good strategy to enter into a 'reconstruction accord' or agreement with a political party which is sympathetic to the working class

and likely to become the government. The key player would probably be the ANC, but other political organisations would not be excluded. This would not be a 'social contract' with capital, but an agreement between unions, civics, rural organisations and progressive political organisations on a national development strategy. It could strengthen the position and perspective of the working class. However, negotiating such an agreement would, in itself, be a struggle between different groups with different interests. The unions would have to develop a clear economic policy, and strengthen their organisation, as the content of the agreement would reflect the balance of forces between the different parties. After a reconstruction accord had been drawn up by the unions, the progressive political organisations, the civics and rural organisations, etc, these organisations would have to take the accord to business and negotiate an agreement with it.

- The unions would have to be very careful with such a strategy. Business is pushing for a social contract or partnership with labour, but that must be avoided. Employers will be wanting to use restructuring to maintain profitability. Union aims would be an increase in employ-

ment; earning a living wage; the production of goods and services needed by the people; and increasing worker power and positioning the working class for moving towards socialism.

- Some analysts argue that as a system of production post-Fordism requires the co-operation of the workers. This may mean that it could be used to increase the power of the workers, as managers are forced to seek their co-operation.
- Although management has a piece-meal approach to post-Fordism, it is introducing new technology and methods of production. The multi-nationals are important sources of this. Shopstewards and organisers will need training and a union position on 'participatory management', productivity and flexibility so that they can negotiate confidently. The union will need research, information and education programmes. In short, the unions will need "retooling".
- There is a desperate lack of concrete information and analysis of SA industry. This makes it difficult to plan an effective strategy. More research is needed.

Towards a union economic policy

Unionists at the workshop stressed that a union strategy for economic development

has to be comprehensive, covering all levels from the economy as a whole down to workplace organisation.

All aspects of the strategy for restructuring should fit into an overall economic strategy for growth. Current COSATU and ANC views favour a strategy of "growth through redistribution". This was not discussed in length at the workshop, as the focus was on restructuring of work.

Manufacturing industry and the metal sector

Specific economic strategies would have to be adopted. The unions would have to draw up a policy for the restructuring of manufacturing industry so that it becomes the main engine for growth. This policy would have to be linked to specific policies in each sector, eg metal, textiles, chemicals, etc. Industries and products with potential would have to be identified and developed.

For example, currently stainless steel is not manufactured in SA - the steel is exported and turned into stainless steel overseas. If SA established its own stainless steel plants, it would open up the possibility of developing a large stainless steel products sector. This kind of mineral beneficiation - manufacturing more advanced materials out of raw minerals - could be an important growth area.

There would have to be a series of councils at industry and sector level for develo-

ping and implementing these strategies - a manufacturing industry council, a metal industry council, an auto council, etc. There could be state, union and business representatives on the councils.

Training and skills development

✧ Post-apartheid SA will inherit an enormous burden of people with poor education or no education at all, and a low level of skills. This will be one of the greatest obstacles to economic development and competition on the world market.

The union movement would have to develop a comprehensive proposal for training and skills development. This would aim to provide the skills necessary for economic growth and for handling new technology. Such a training programme should also allow workers to constantly develop their skills and further their careers.

This would end the situation where workers get stuck as unskilled or semi-skilled workers, and cannot develop themselves further. The unions should push for a job grading system and for career paths that allow workers to move from one job or industry to another, and to earn equal wages for equivalent work. The union has already initiated a project to develop a training programme (see *Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 1).

Participation and productivity

The union would have to research 'participatory management' structures such as Quality Circles, and develop policies on them. Where they can advance workers' skills, their control over production or power the union should use them. The point was made that while the union may have a policy against such structures, in many factories workers and shopstewards participate anyway. This could be a problem, because it happens on management's terms and without guidance from the union.

The union should also look at issues like multi-skilling and multi-tasking, as well as bargaining over levels of production, and should assess whether they advanced worker interests or not. Shopstewards should be equipped to handle negotiations over these issues.

The unions should develop their own initiatives in all these areas so that they can increase the power and control of workers, rather than simply responding to management initiatives.

Collective bargaining

All of these initiatives would require a strengthening of union power in the collective bargaining system. Bargaining would have to take place at different levels. For example:

National collective bargaining (such as, for example, the COSATU-

NACTU-SACCOLA negotiations) could cover issues arising out of a 'reconstruction accord', such as investment priorities for public sector and private sector investment; investment codes for foreign investment; the role of pension funds in investment; labour market issues such as a framework for training, minimum wages, etc; international trade controls and incentives; and worker rights.

Industry level bargaining could cover issues such as restructuring the industry; job security and job creation; skills needs and training; job grading and career paths; benefits; wages and developing a wage policy for the industry.

The unions would have to work out what sort of issues they want to negotiate at *company* and *plant* level.

Restructuring - dangers and opportunities

Researchers and trade unionists pointed out clearly that industrial restructuring holds many dangers if it is carried out according to the agenda of big business. Some of the effects that have been felt in other countries, and are beginning to be felt in SA, are:

- job loss as new technology replaces workers
- deskilling, as skilled jobs are broken down into many unskilled or semi-skilled operations
- co-optation, as more skilled and privileged workers are drawn into co-

operative relations with management; 'participative management' explicitly seeks to do this

- deepening divisions in the working class between an elite of skilled and privileged workers, and a layer of less skilled, lowly-paid workers who have no job security; divisions also deepen between employed workers and a growing mass of unemployed.
- new technology and new management techniques are intended to increase profitability and make workers work harder.

These are the dangers when restructuring is introduced by management. The question is whether the working class can devise a restructuring programme which avoids these problems. Schreiner summed up the question in these words: "Can we devise our own restructuring programme which *advances* the interests of the working class and takes us towards the goal of socialism?"

The goals of the working class in such a restructuring were summarised by the workshop as:

- increasing employment
 - a living wage, and employment and income security
 - meeting society's basic needs
 - increasing the power of the working class
 - orientating the economy to take account of international economic conditions and the world market
- In order to achieve these

goals, the workshop concluded, it would be necessary to

- integrate industrial restructuring and a broader economic development strategy
- strengthen organisation
- 'retool the union' by strengthening research and information and education programmes
- explore the possibility of establishing a reconstruction accord with the major progressive political actors
- develop the institutions of collective bargaining.

Moving towards socialism - or revitalising capitalism?

The idea of a union-led strategy for economic growth marks a break with 'militant abstentionism' and the exclusive focus on the politics of resistance. NUMSA leadership believes that such a strategy could make the SA economy competitive in the international capitalist economy. It also believes such a strategy could bring the benefits of more jobs and a greater spread of wealth, increased worker power, and higher wages and increased skills.

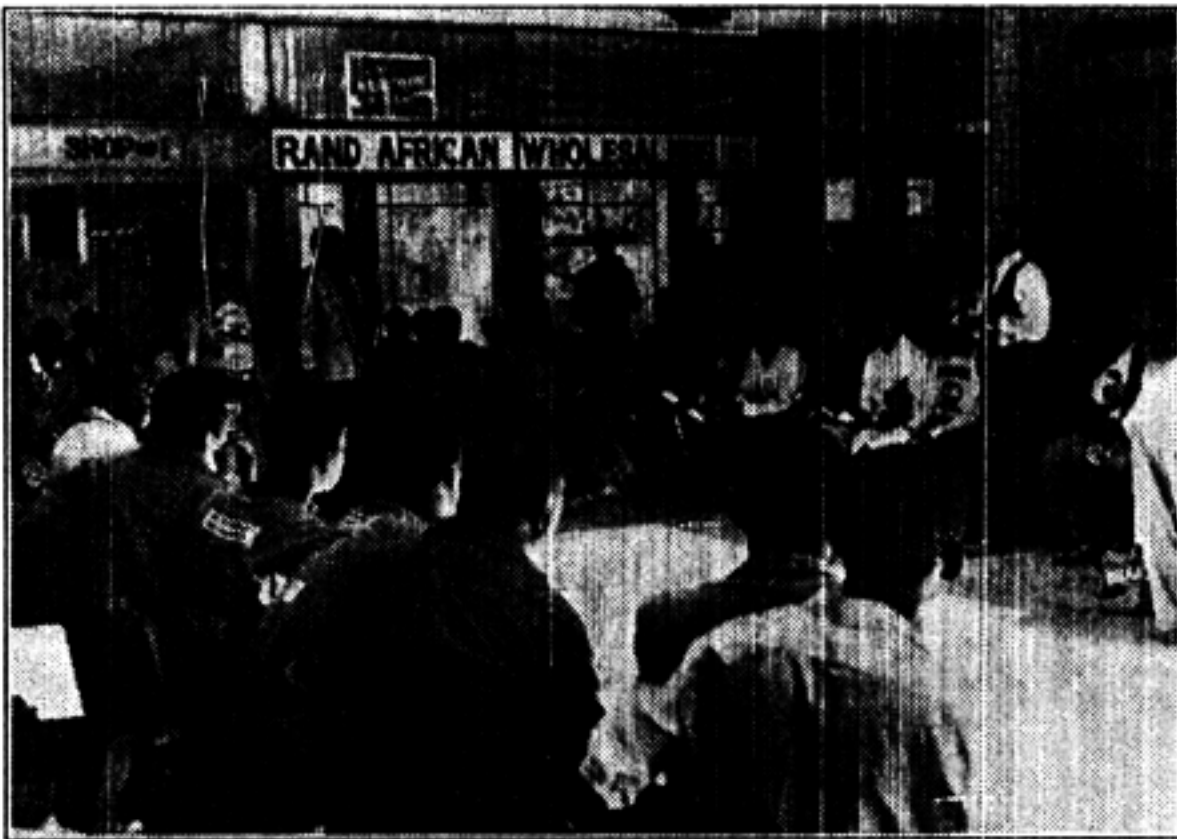
Is it possible to achieve this? The countries which have been most successful at industrial and economic restructuring have often been

authoritarian and undemocratic. In countries like South Korea and Taiwan, efforts to organise unions have been harshly repressed. It is questionable whether economic growth has benefitted workers.

One of the dangers of a union-led programme for economic growth which takes place in a capitalist society (as post-apartheid SA will be), is that the unions may land up revitalising and strengthening capitalism. The domination of capital, both in the economy and in the state, could increase and lead over time to a more co-operative relation between the labour movement and business. The prospect of any kind of break with capitalism and movement towards socialism would then become more and more remote.

The sort of industrial restructuring outlined above relies heavily on the existence of a layer of skilled workers able to use the new technology and help increase productivity. This is the layer of workers that would benefit most from restructuring and the new opportunities it offers. These are also the most articulate, confident workers who can easily rise to leadership positions in the unions.

Indeed the leadership of most COSATU affiliates already consists of such workers. There is a danger, then, that if the unions lead a programme of introducing new technology and management techniques, they could increasingly reflect the interests and aspirations of the



Union meeting, Germiston: "can we devise a programme for restructuring which advances the interests of the working class and takes us towards socialism?"

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

most skilled and articulate workers, and neglect the interests of semi- and unskilled workers.

Such a development could lay the basis for an organised labour aristocracy. This could lead to a more collaborative relationship between unions and management, assisting to revitalise capitalism rather than transform it. The underpaid and less skilled workers would be pushed to the margins of society.

Trade unionists at the workshop were aware of these dangers. They stressed that a training and skills development programme must reach all workers, including the least-skilled. Such a programme must upgrade the skills and provide employment for all workers.

They also stressed that a union strategy for restructuring would only be successful if the working class has sufficient organised power - in

the workplace, in collective bargaining forums, in the communities and rural areas, and in the state - to back up its proposals and compel society and the capitalist class to accept them.

They stressed too that a working class strategy for industrial restructuring and economic development would have to focus on *increasing* the organised strength and consciousness, and the skills and control, of the working class, or it would never lead in the direction of socialism.

The ideas explored in the workshop are exciting, and offer the hope of economic growth that may lead, not to a revitalised capitalism, but to transcending it. However, if these ideas are to become a real force in society, the union movement will have to strengthen its capacity for research, education and struggle. ☆

Collective bargaining: a base for transforming industry

SACTWU general secretary JOHN COPELYN* argues that a new perspective of trade union independence is emerging in COSATU. Unions should establish their independent base in institutions of collective bargaining. They can then use this base to contribute to transforming society. Trade unions should avoid relying on political organisations or the state to do this.

The union movement has grown tremendously over the last fifteen years. Over one million workers have joined unions in COSATU. These unions employ over one thousand full time officials to carry out their work. A shop-steward movement has been built which includes over ten thousand cadres.

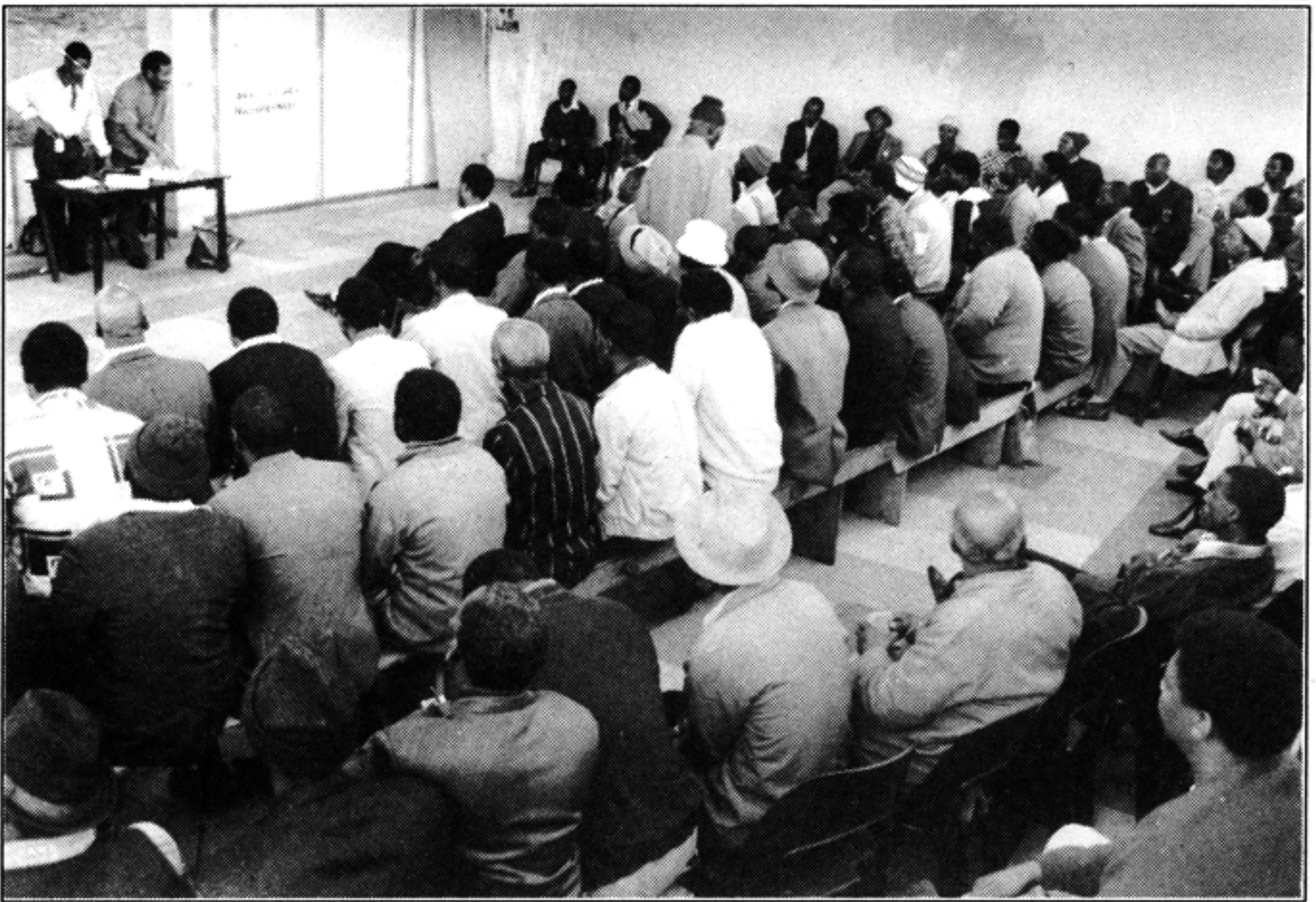
The power of this movement has been felt by all

people in our country. For decades the working class has been utterly suppressed—under harsh apartheid laws. Now mass action of many kinds, including protest marches, stayaways, strikes and sit-ins, have become common activities. Now the working class is an organised force engaged in negotiations with the state over amendments to unacceptable laws,

starting cooperative factories and worker colleges and sending scores of workers abroad to interact with the international worker movement.

And yet, with every advance, there are new problems and new challenges the movement must face and overcome if it is to play a progressive role in the lives of its members and the lives

* This is a revised version of a paper first presented at the Institute for Personnel Management Annual Convention, 17-19 October 1990, Sun City



Union meetings: complete independence from state and political organisation will safeguard union strength

Photo: Labour Bulletin

of working people in general in our country. The central challenge facing the union movement at present is whether it is to be an *independent* movement or not.

What is union independence?

The fight for the right to independence is essentially a fight for the right to criticise both employers and government freely on behalf of the members of our unions.

Unions have, in general, been established with widespread independence from employers. The changes that South Africa is currently experiencing are unlikely to affect the union movement's independence from employers, so I will not discuss

that issue in this paper.

The key area that is worth analysing, however, is the relationship between unions and government. Whether the government is prepared to tolerate union opposition to its programmes and policies is what makes the government a *democratic* one. What makes the union movement an *independent* one, however, is whether it is prepared to risk the anger of the government in the pursuit of its members' mandate.

Until now there has been no doubt that we are prepared to risk angering the government. We do so every day. In the past, when the government was more openly hostile to the union movement, our opposition

meant bannings, house arrests, detentions and even assassinations. Today, even though the government might find it more difficult to openly attack the union movement *our* attitude has not changed. We remain fiercely protective of our members' rights irrespective of whether this makes the Government angry.

Independence after apartheid?

The issue we must address is : what will happen after apartheid is gone?

Let us say the people's government rules our country. Let us say the laws they pass are better and generally more progressive than the last government. Let



Striking Soviet miners: only in the last two years have workers started to organise independently of the state

Photo: ILR

us say this government was voted into power with significant support from organised labour. In such a situation will the union's struggle be at an end? Will we say that, now the workers' interests are protected by the people's government, unions should not make the tasks of that government more difficult by pressurising and threatening mass action?

Will we support the government in saying that the workers must recognise the broader goal and not pursue sectional interests? Will we explain to the members that no matter what happens they should not rock the boat because the government is doing its best? . . . Or will we remain an *independent* force?

We are not the first hopeful working class to deal with such problems. In the Soviet Union, for example, the dictatorship of the Tsars was overthrown and a Revolutionary Government came to power. Workers were so excited at this victory over the forces of oppression under which they had lived that they did not worry about their trade unions. The unions fell under the control of the revolutionary party.

It has taken workers in that country *seventy-three* years to recover from that mistake. For all those years they had no *independent* unions. It is only in the last year or so that workers have again started to organise independently of the state.

It is only now that we see, for the first time, a union led strike of USSR miners struggling against the government on issues of economic policy, constitutional rights and other issues workers find fundamental.

Clearly a mistake over the issue of union independence could cost us very dearly.

Dangers of the COSATU-ANC-SACP alliance

Over the last year or two there have been a number of developments in the trade union movement which have been extremely worrying to all people who are seriously committed to independence within the trade union movement.

In COSATU a resolution has been adopted which declares it to be "in alliance" with the African National Congress and the SA Communist Party. There are huge pressures to use the union movement, and the large organisational base it represents, to recruit members for both these organisations. On a whole range of issues COSATU has simply echoed policies of these organisations.

Major policy statements of the ANC are almost never contradicted by COSATU, even when on paper there are substantial differences between the two organisations.

On the one hand these developments are hardly surprising. There is widespread agreement in the trade union movement that the unions ought to play a prominent role in the downfall of apartheid. There is broad acceptance that we are not by any means the only force against apartheid, and that our struggle for the end of minority rule should be linked to the work done by such other organisations.

On the other hand, these developments represent major dangers to the independence of the trade union movement in a post-apartheid society. It is possible, if we go on blindly with the present rhetoric, that the union movement will simply degenerate into being the labour wing of government.

It is possible that union leadership will, in time, be regarded by union members as

being responsible for all bad planning, poor laws and all social evils brought about by a post-apartheid government because the union movement is so bound up in this "alliance".

While I do not wish to dismiss these dangers, there are a number of developments in COSATU and its affiliates which indicate the union movement is unlikely to become a passive junior partner of an ANC-led government after apartheid. Three examples will suffice to demonstrate this.

The Worker Charter as proof of the resurgence of union independence

The debates within the union movement about the content of the Workers Charter shows a developing consensus about union independence.

While the SACP and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) quickly produced Worker Charters after the ANC Constitutional Guidelines were produced, COSATU did not follow this route. Instead, COSATU affiliates agreed that there should be a number of workshops to discuss the charter. From these a commission was established which has drawn many workers into discussing the idea of a Workers Charter, by mixing mass campaign work with a lot of study on worker rights in various other countries.

Equally importantly, the commission has facilitated

much debate between senior union leaderships from different unions and created the opportunity for a really carefully considered formulation of worker rights in a post-apartheid society to emerge.

While we are perhaps still several months away from a Charter being drawn up in COSATU, we are already at a point where the major unions are developing a consensus that an important part of this Charter ought to be a contribution to the new constitution for the country.

Debate is focusing around issues such as the following:

1. The constitution should provide that, if a certain number of voters (say 300 000), petition the state on any issue including the promulgation, amendment or repeal of any law, the state should be bound to submit such an issue to a national referendum and be bound by the result.

2. The State President should not be eligible for more than two terms of office.

3. There should be a separate Constitutional Court with powers to nullify legislation which contravenes a Bill of Rights.

The significance of these views is that they seek to *limit* the powers of government. These views suggest the trade unions are interested in limiting the power of the government. The relationship between government and unions can get very tense.

Unions are seeking to pro-



A state-legislated minimum wage will weaken organisation

Photo: The Star

protect themselves against laws which offend mass organisations such as the trade union movement, and against laws which undermine the protections afforded to civil society under a Bill of Rights. These are precisely the concerns of a union movement which wishes to maintain its *independence*.

Minimum wage laws or free collective bargaining?

In the discussions over minimum wage laws, too, a view is emerging which supports the independence of unions.

Recently there was a significant disagreement over the issue of whether the unions should pursue a demand for minimum wage legislation.

A number of unions argued that in a post-apartheid society it should be possible to persuade a democratically elected government to pass a law that all workers should be paid above a minimum standard of living. There was further debate over the amount this should be. Those arguing for this view were concentrating their efforts on a figure of R700 per month.

The above argument can be attacked in different ways. One could question whether the effect of such a law would not be nullified very rapidly by a galloping inflation. However, debate in the union movement focused on the question of what effect such a law would have on the right of organised workers to

bargain for themselves.

In the end, many unionists accepted that it is not desirable to have the state setting wage levels in industries where unions are engaged in collective bargaining.

Rather, the state should be encouraged to improve the rights of workers to organise and bargain through their unions. Minimum wage laws should be left for industries where workers cannot organise effectively, such as the domestic service industry.

These arguments mean that wages will be determined by bargaining between employers and unions in each industry. It is seen as undesirable to have the state intervene heavily in the bargaining relationship.

The reason for this is not so much the idea that such intervention will have worse results for workers, though experience in other countries often shows workers' real wages fall where such legislation is introduced. Rather, the reason for rejecting minimum wage legislation is that such intervention will fundamentally undermine union independence.

Dual leadership under attack

The third example I would like to discuss is the issue of COSATU leadership turning out to be at the same time the leadership of the ANC and the SACP.

Some union leaders have argued that there is no difficulty in serving two masters within the alliance. They argue that when they are representing the union they will put forward the mandate of the union. When they are representing the SACP or ANC, they will put forward the mandate of that organisation. Provided they always clarify which hat they are wearing, no confusion will arise.

To other union leadership this is incorrect. They feel strongly that wearing two hats represents a fundamental surrender of the independence of the union.

In all fairness it must be noted that several of the union leaders who are wearing two hats have indicated that they see themselves as being active only on the interim structures of these organisations. Whether they

make themselves available for the permanent structures which will develop next year for the ANC and the SACP, will depend on the outcome of the debate over dual leadership within the union movement.

While this debate has not yet resulted in a consensus, there are several unions in COSATU where worker leadership has argued strongly that union leadership cannot serve two masters, whether those masters are in alliance or not. In fact this view is gaining such ideological hegemony that I believe it is very likely to grow into the dominant position within the union movement.

Some leading union figures may well become members of parliament in a future democratic South Africa. They might even become cabinet ministers. Hopefully they will be much better politicians than the present ones - *but* it seems unlikely they will be permitted to keep their position in the trade union movement when they enter the road to parliament.

Collective bargaining institutions - an independent base for trade unions

In this paper I have argued that the central challenge for unions is to maintain their independence. The reason for this is that unions will not vanish in a post-apartheid society. They will either function as the labour wing of a governing party and affect the workplace primarily

through influencing that government on legislation affecting labour, or they will function as free and independent organisations primarily influencing the workplace through their collective bargaining and other independent activity.

If the unions choose the former option (ie a labour wing of the government relying on legislation to affect the workplace) it will be the death knell for democracy in a post-apartheid society. When institutions of civil society become so tied up in the workings of government that they become an integral part of the state machinery there is less and less space for any criticism of the manner in which the state operates.

If the trade union movement is to maintain its independence, it is not enough to simply adopt an ideology of independence. We will also have to map out an *alternative vision of a just society* in which unions play an important role which is fundamentally independent of the state.

The union movement will have to identify areas of activity that will provide it with an *independent institutional base to constructively influence society*.

The union programme

Such independent institutions could develop out of the activities of COSATU and its affiliates, and the practice of collective bargaining as it

has developed over the past ten years, if we build them carefully. But we will only succeed if we compel employers to change their attitude to collective bargaining.

I would like to discuss briefly the possibility of struggling for two basic institutions as the platform where unions can substantially influence the development of South Africa, if we have the will to do so.

National Industrial Councils

The most powerful base which unions have is the platforms they use for collective bargaining. If these platforms remain as they are now, bargaining will continue to be limited to short term changes in wages and working conditions. In general, the content of these negotiations will not be affected by a new post-apartheid environment.

Accordingly, any major contribution the union movement might seek to make to society will not find expression through collective bargaining with employers.

Some large corporations have acquired fierce reputations for being slayers of Industrial Councils. They still believe that unions are weaker if they are encouraged to bargain at factory or company levels. But the battles at OK or Mercedes, or the Cotton Division of the Frame Group, show that such bargaining only results in

uneven pressures within industry and an obsession for the industry concerned.

If employers persist in this view, and prevent unions from using collective bargaining to deal seriously with the social and economic concerns of their members, unions will have two choices. Either they will have to abandon any attempt to represent the social and economic concerns of their members, or they will have to focus their attempts on developing close ties with political parties which will give them access to state power.

This of course will take us back to square one. Unions will see that the only way forward is to tie themselves ever more closely to the state and to seek to influence society through political machinery.

There is, however, a far more workable alternative. We could adopt a system where there are *national* negotiations in each industry rather than the irrational and patchy arrangements we currently have. Enormously creative opportunities would then open for unions, for example:

1. Agreements would become possible on issues such as industrial restructuring, developing a growth strategy for SA industry which is not based on a low-wage policy, and on import and export tariffs. Influencing the state to implement such agreements will undoubtedly be a more viable

option than the unilateral appeals made by employers in the past. The state would function as an *enabling* institution, enacting in law the agreements reached by organised labour through collective bargaining.

2. Negotiations in such a forum could fundamentally influence the development of a set of tertiary national educational institutions (universities, technikons, etc), changing the focus and controlling structures of these bodies.

3. Negotiations around health care could contribute to the development of a health plan for South Africa, which over time would alleviate the enormous pressure on the major hospitals.

4. Negotiations about the most constructive way of investing provident and pension fund monies could be one important form of affirmative action to redress the economic deprivation of the former victims of apartheid. But more significantly, it would open the way for major trade union participation in investment policies in a new SA.

National negotiations with employers

Finally I would like to focus on an area of trade union success. This is the area of the COSATU/SACCOLA negotiations. These discussions started off badly and with widespread and well documented allegations against SACCOLA of bad faith bar-



The LRA struggle led to the COSATU-SACCOLA-NACTU accord and the introduction of new legislation: are such accords the way forward for the union movement?

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

gaining. COSATU and NACTU combined a strategy of negotiation and mass pressure. A number of points of agreement have now been reached, and accusations of bad faith bargaining have not been made for some time.

These positive results led to the first cancellation of a national stay-away by COSATU, in September 1990.

While there may be many things which these negotiations have so far failed to produce, they have given unions a vision that this is the way to go in order to influence the government on laws affecting workers. This bargaining process could be expanded in future and develop further functions such as choosing the judges for the future Industrial Court,

and approving future labour legislation.

Conclusion

I have focused in this paper on the key challenge facing the trade union movement in a new South Africa: its relationship to political parties once its members have the vote.

I have argued that unions need to maintain complete independence from political organisations and the government. In order to do this we need to build up institutions that will provide an independent base for unions to influence a new South Africa.

Historically, socialists have been fixated on the idea that the state is the crucial institution for transforming the quality of life of workers and

the oppressed. This fixation resulted in the Eastern European model of socialism.

A perspective which gives a substantially greater role to the independent organisations of civil society - such as trade unions - can do two things. Firstly, it holds greater promise of a democratic transformation of society through organisations which depend for their power on the constant involvement of their membership. Secondly, it helps to build an organisation capable of exercising a strong check on the institutions of the state, and the exercise of state power. ✧ ↵

COSATU policy discussion paper

Labour Bulletin publishes a discussion paper produced by COSATU in preparation for its important National Congress in July.

This paper is presented by the COSATU secretariat to the membership in all structures - locals, regions and affiliates. We are presenting our ideas and thinking on four key areas:

- Organisational tasks
- Political questions
- International links
- Economic development

We call on all members to debate and discuss these ideas and the direction we are suggesting. We hope that these discussions will assist our CEC to steer the federation during 1991. In particular we hope that they will assist delegates to contribute effectively to our July National Congress.

We have tried to keep this paper short. Only the main issues are highlighted. Many questions are extremely complex and require further debate. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these points with affiliates and regions. ↪



ORGANISATIONAL TASKS

1.1 Organising is the engine of our work. We can be strong only if we are strongly organised. We must restructure the federation to enhance our organising abilities. This means re-aligning resources towards organisation - strengthening our regions and locals; assisting our weaker affiliates; improving the quality of service to members.

1.2 More attention must be paid to this by all COSATU

affiliates and departments. This means, for example, more effort towards staff training and development. We must equip union organisers to cope with the demands of the 1990s. Our media must have more organisational content. We must develop a journal to help arm shop stewards and organisers for the day-to-day struggles on the shop floor.

2 We still need to organise the unorganised. There are three areas which need attention.

a) in many existing sectors the vast majority of workers are not unionised - this includes construction; railways; printing; transport; municipal and others.

b) there are many new sectors to organise. We must learn to accommodate the demands for unionisation from 'professional workers' and those in white-collar occupations. This includes employees in financial institutions, nurses, civil



servants and even policemen and prison warders. We also need

to make progress in organising a farmworkers union. Our achievements in this field have been disappointing so far.

c) there are new areas of the country to organise. We need to be more responsive to calls for unionisation from workers in the rural areas and homelands. We must also explore the possibility of pooling affiliate resources in smaller towns so that we improve the service given to members in these areas.

3 Many new issues are emerging at the bargaining table. We should not negotiate every issue separately in each affiliate. A number of national issues can be taken up which will strengthen the organisational ability of the federation and the affiliates. Priorities for 1991 should include:

a) exploring the possibilities of developing our provident fund strategies. What advantages would there be to pooling our experiences, and using the enormous assets in these funds to make investment decisions which would benefit the economy and help to restructure it?

b) developing a new LRA suitable for a post-apartheid South Africa.

c) developing the range of issues which could be the subject of national collective bargaining between COSATU and employers. These

could include negotiating appropriate collective bargaining forums for all industries; negotiating an agreed calendar of apartheid free public holidays; negotiating a practical and effective programme for upgrading the skills of black workers and for conducting a nationwide literacy programme.

d) conducting a massive campaign against AIDS. AIDS will devastate our country and its people in the years ahead. Since there is no cure for this deadly illness, we must develop a campaign to educate workers about ways to avoid AIDS.

4 Trade union unity remains a priority. Our slogan of "one country, one federation" is still the correct one. Despite the apparent reluctance of some to discuss unity, we stress that our doors remain open. We call for a joint meeting with NACTU to discuss trade union unity and the role which we envisage for trade unions in a future, democratic South Africa.

4.2 We must also pay more attention to bringing independent and unaffiliated unions under our umbrella.

5 There is an urgent need for COSATU to re-examine its constitution. There are discrepancies between our actual structures and those in our constitution. These anomalies must be corrected. We also need to make our constitution more appropriate to the needs of the 1990s. We are aware that only our National Congress can amend

the constitution. In preparation for this we believe the CEC



should establish a preparatory commission to do the groundwork for congress.

5.2 We are also calling on all members, all structures and all affiliates to consider the following:

a) **defining a role for locals** in our constitution so that they can be represented in regional structures;

b) **increasing the number of national office-bearers** to eight with the addition of two more vice-presidents. Each vice-president would then take responsibility for a specific area of work.

c) replacing the present Exco with a **20-person executive** (8 office-bearers plus 12 others) elected by delegates at the National Congress.

d) abolishing the practice of having separate education of office-bearers elected at a separate education conference. This would mean **closer integration of education** into all our structures.

We need to explore the possibility of electing the education secretary and chairperson at the National Congress and including them as part of the executive.

e) including **affirmative action for women** within our constitution. This could begin by ensuring that not less than one-third of all positions on the new national executive should be occupied by women.

f) rethinking our attitude to-



wards worker control. In some respects we are prisoners of our

history. We often retain the appearance of worker control, but sacrifice it in practice. We must ensure real worker control in our key structures. At present there are many cases where worker control is not meaningfully practised.

g) The time has come to consider electing a person who will leave the factory to be a **full-time president**. We are aware that this is a controversial proposal and we believe it should be considered deeply. It could be possible to avoid possible dangers by limiting the person to not more than two terms in office.

Political questions

6.1 Events have moved rapidly over the last year since the unbanning of the ANC, SACP and others. The challenge facing us is how to redefine our role at a political, economic and ideological level. While our primary activity is organising workers around shop floor issues we must, as trade unions, remain politically active. Indeed, this duty to engage in the political life of the country applies to all mass organisations and organisations of civil society (eg churches, consumer organisations, civics, youth movements etc).

6.2 We see the need for trade

unions to remain independent and politically active organisations both now and in a post-apartheid society. The major difference in the current phase is that we do not have to substitute for banned organisations as we sometimes did in the past.

6.3 In developing our policy we need to focus on the tripartite alliance, the negotiation process, the constitutional process and the question of trade union independence.

7. Tripartite Alliance (ANC/SACP/COSATU)

This was intended to be the engine of the struggle. We must develop policies that:

- a) elaborate a set of guidelines that ensure proper coordination and respect for the democracy of the component organisations;
- b) ensure a structured relationship and tighter coordination on major policy initiatives;
- c) ensure that the programme of the alliance relates to the concrete demands that the people are making on the ground - eg housing, land, education, and an end to violence. We must develop a people's agenda.

8. Negotiation process. Our view is that negotiations on the creation of a climate of free political activity (ie talks about talks) must involve the ANC and the government as the armed parties to the conflict. However, in the actual negotiation process, which should commence later this

year, COSATU should consider:

- a) allocating resources, including skilled people, to help strengthen the negotiating teams and the reporting back process;
- b) whether it sees itself becoming directly or indirectly involved in the negotiation process;
- c) how to ensure that our struggles impact on the larger political developments. We need to intensify our anti-privatisation struggles, our Workers Charter campaign, and ensure that our demands, such as the right to strike, are included in a new constitution. These struggles will also consolidate our presence as a vibrant mass organisation participating in the broader civil society.

9. Constitutional process

It is critical that our people are involved in the process of drawing up a constitution.

- a) We need to clarify the relationship between four aspects of our approach and the context in which we are demanding them. These are: the interim government, the patriotic front, the all-party conference and, most importantly, the constituent assembly. We see the **constituent assembly** as the democratically elected body responsible for drafting a national constitution. We see the **patriotic front** as the means for ensuring the greatest possible unity within the anti-apartheid movement.





We see the interim government as essential to ensure that the

existing government stands down and allows the constituent assembly to meet in an atmosphere of relative peace and 'neutrality'. We see an all-party conference as the means towards ensuring agreement on the practicalities of an interim government and on the process of movement towards a non-racial democracy.

b) COSATU needs to determine how key worker demands, such as the right to strike, and other basic rights are included in the constitution.

10. Independence

10.1 One principle of our alliance is the independence of organisations. We need to be more active in developing our position on issues before alliance meetings, in publicising the issues we intend raising at alliance meetings, and in publicising the outcome of such meetings. These meetings are not private. They are the property of the people.

10.2 There is much debate in our ranks over the question of one comrade wearing "many caps". This debate is healthy. It does not relate to dual membership of COSATU and political organisations, which we encourage. The debate concerns the issue of dual or triple leadership. This debate should be conducted with an

understanding of the ongoing needs of the struggle. At a practical level, it is clear that a comrade, no matter how committed he/she is cannot perform two full-time tasks with equal competence. Apart from the workload question, there is the issue of simultaneously representing two independent organisations.

10.3 We need therefore to debate:

- a) whether to have a separation of leadership at national and regional level and, if so, who it should affect;
- b) to what extent does dual leadership sacrifice our autonomy?
- c) how does dual leadership affect the capacity of our comrades to discharge their duties?

International links

11.1 COSATU's international policy has been one of **active non-alignment**. However there have been considerable changes, economic and political, in the world situation in recent years.

11.2 The restructuring of the world has created **three poles of economic development**, namely: the European Common Market with Germany as the centre and having access to huge markets, raw materials in the East; the Pacific rim with Japan as the centre; and North America with the United States as a centre. Workers in the developing countries, mainly in the

Southern hemisphere, are increasingly going to be squeezed. The



inequalities between the North and South are going to be heightened.

11.3 In addition, the end of the Cold War is leading to **changed political alignments**. The collapse of the regimes of Eastern Europe and the turmoil in the Soviet Union has impacted on international political developments.

12 The collapse of the East European regimes have also largely led to the collapse of their established trade union movements. In several of these countries independent unions are being formed outside official structures. The WFTU has been severely weakened by these developments. The ICFTU on the other hand has been strengthened. Several national centres in Eastern Europe have already applied for affiliation. However, **the Cold War has not yet ended on the trade union front**. Indeed, the international trade union movement is lagging behind the political developments. COSATU has not been very active in this process of re-alignment.

13 At present COSATU's international relations are mainly as follows:

- (a) bilateral relations with national centres from a number of donor countries - Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.
- (b) bilateral relations with na-



tional centres linked to joint projects - chiefly Italy and Canada and, to

a lesser extent, Australia and the United Kingdom.

(c) relations with the Commonwealth Trade Union Congress (CTUC) especially on our study tour programme.

(d) relations with Southern African Trade Union Co-ordinating Council (SATUCC), the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

14. Given the above, we propose that a much clearer international policy be developed along the following lines:

(a) that we **affiliate to OATUU**. Although many problems exist in the African trade union movement, it would be valuable for COSATU to play a more active role in strengthening OATUU.

(b) that we also **attend SATUCC meetings** as a member country while simultaneously encouraging bilateral contact especially with NUNW (Namibia), OTM (Mozambique) and ZTUC (Zimbabwe). Affiliates must also play a role in strengthening **industrial sector unity** in Southern Africa. South Africa's political and economic future is strongly connected to the region.

(c) that we maintain and strengthen **our relations**

with the CTUC as this gives us greater access to meet with many national centres in the developing world.

(d) that we remain unaffiliated to any international co-ordinating centre. We should also adopt a position of actively promoting the unification of the trade union movement - including ICFTU, WFTU and WCL. However we should participate in the ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on South Africa and put forward proposals to restructure this committee.

(e) that we strengthen our **links with national centres in developing countries**, particularly in countries such as Brazil, India, Philippines and South Korea where militant union struggles are taking place.

(f) that we **maintain all existing bilateral relations**, especially with national centres which have assisted as donors or with projects. An additional focus should be to develop our expertise and technical skills programme, namely, human resource development, vocational training and industrial relations.

15.1 The question of sanctions and international pressure is being widely debated on the world stage. It is important to stress to the international community that the pre-conditions for negotiation have not yet been met. Not all exiles have returned and not all political prisoners have been released. ANC members and supporters still

find themselves detained by police, harassed and threatened by



askaris. Unionists and union property are attacked as they were in the past. De Klerk appears unable, or unwilling to bring his security forces under control. In this context we call for the **maintenance of international pressure**, including sanctions. It is important that, **before the April deadline, no pressure should be eased.**

15.2 As COSATU we must, however, note the steps which are being taken by sections of the international community to lift sanctions prematurely. We need to explore the possibility for **linking the lifting of sanctions to concrete movement** towards a non-racial democratic dispensation and a forward-looking investment code.

Economic policy

16 The economy faces a **structural crisis.**

- a) apartheid is limiting expansion - eg illiteracy is an obstacle to the introduction of technology;
- b) almost no investment is taking place in the productive sector;
- c) we are still heavily reliant on raw material exports such as gold, coal etc;
- d) we are still dependent on the importation of heavy machinery;
- e) the quality of many of our manufactured goods is poor and not competitive on world



markets;
f) our agricultural policy is disastrous - food prices are

high, land allocation is wasteful and unjust, and subsidies to inefficient farmers are a drain on the economy.

17 There is widespread agreement that **our economy needs to be restructured.**

The struggle is to determine the agenda of that process.

17.2 The working class must develop an economic policy which provides for a democratically run economy and which ensures that:

- a) the economy grows and jobs are created;
- b) the standard of living of the working class is increased;
- c) the basic needs of the people are met (eg housing, health and education);
- d) the economy is able to compete internationally;
- e) the inequalities caused by apartheid are addressed;
- f) we have a mixed economy with a socialist orientation, and containing private, public and co-operative sectors.

17.3 The main economic issues which face us are the forms of ownership, the growth path we envisage, the problem of education and training, and the issue of collective bargaining.

18. **Forms of ownership.**

The democratic state must play an important role. More important is the role workers through their organisations play. Nationalisation in itself does not necessarily mean worker control. The key ques-

tions therefore are:

- a) what sectors of the economy should the state intervene in and set up state enterprises?
- b) how do we deepen worker participation in planning, production and distribution, as well as other key areas of decision-making?
- c) how do we ensure that enterprises are run efficiently and productively?

19. **Growth Path.** Questions we must address include:

- a) How should the economy grow to meet the needs of the people, at affordable prices, and at the same time create jobs and compete internationally?
- b) What role should COSATU play in economic restructuring?

20. **Education and Training.**

Bantu education has left millions of people illiterate. Yet literacy is a precondition for the successful restructuring of the economy. Major employers have already embarked on projects in this area. As COSATU we need to:

- a) develop a comprehensive literacy programme with clear principles and engage the employers and the state on the content and details of their programmes;
- b) develop policy at a macro-education level - eg science and technology, role of universities, technikons;
- c) ensure that black people, including existing workers, are provided with the necessary skills and training to allow them to perform the most complex tasks in every

factory and mine.

21. **National Centralised Bargaining.**

We need to find ways to bridge the differences between white/black, urban/rural, employed/unemployed, and male/female workers. COSATU still represents only a fraction of the workforce. We have to avoid a situation where we create a labour aristocracy of unionised workers. The issues to consider include:

- a) do we demand a national minimum wage, a sectoral minimum wage, or no minimum wage ?
- b) do we extend our negotiations with SACCOLA to cover other areas such as employment creation, education and training, bargaining forums, a 40 hour week, provident fund, and a national health system ?
- c) what should be our relationship to a future democratic state ?

We need to examine carefully the possibilities of a social contract. ☆

31 January 1991

[Note: COSATU's original document has two clauses labelled no. 19. We have taken the liberty of relabelling the second clause. Thus our document has 21 clauses where the original has 20.]



Overlapping leadership in alliance partners

The debate that is going on within COSATU's ranks about the federation's alliance with the SACP and the ANC is most welcome. It is of fundamental importance that the federation should encourage an extensive debate on this, especially on the overlapping leadership between the alliance partners. We should always avoid duplication of leadership and the concentration of powers in a few individuals. People cannot be effective having their feet in two political organisations and in the trade union federation as well.

Workers in South Africa are fortunate that the COSATU federation was formed during the era of perestroika and glasnost. This enabled the federation to lay a sound basis for democracy for South African workers. COSATU has its own internal democracy. Workers have confidence in the leadership and, when they do not, they are in the position to call it to order and accountability.

Decisions are not taken from 'above' and implemented 'on behalf of' the workers. COSATU members are fully involved in the policy making of the federation. It is only through debates and thorough discussions of all issues that we can reach a common conclusion. The leadership should always take its people with it. Workers must always be involved in their union activities and they must know everything about their union or federation.

SNUKI ZIKALALA, ANC/SACTU journalist, argues that trade union leaders should not 'wear two hats'. He draws on his experience as a SACTU member and as a student and journalist in Bulgaria.

Learning from others people's mistakes

Those of us who have studied in 'socialist' countries know that system very well. We have witnessed with our own eyes how trade unions in 'socialist' countries are simply conveyer belts for the communist parties. It is one thing to read the theory but quite another to observe its implementation and the manipulation of people's minds. Some of us witnessed the disintegration of the party and how its influence declined when it was no longer possible to deliver the goods - food rather than slogans.

We would be committing a political crime if we allow our trade unions to commit the same mistakes which were committed by the trade unions in the 'socialist' countries'. We have to learn from other people's mistakes, especially the Soviets.

In the 'socialist' countries, the basic material resources of production - that is the means of production, land, minerals, transport - were publicly owned since they were nationalised by the party. In actual fact, however, the right to command them belonged to the Communist Party Politburo and Central Committee, and to sectoral ministers and committees whose members were appointed by the Politburo.

The state, on behalf of the people, determined within five year and annual plans, what goods and deliveries were to be made by individ-

ual enterprises. The state was the guarantor that everything produced in keeping with its plans was of 'social' and 'consumer' value. Workers were not fully involved in planning and decision making regarding the economy of



the country, as declared in the propaganda material. They were only paid for their labour inputs and not for the results of their performances.

Leaders of the trade union federation were appointed by the party, and the trade union newspapers were fully under

the control of the party. Union dues were compulsory and workers had no right to belong to alternative unions.

Progressive mankind hails Michael Gorbachev, leader of the USSR, for ending that authoritarian 'command' system. It is falling like a pack of cards. There is now tolerance of dissenting voices and workers are in a position to discuss and debate the issues that affect their lives.

Some republics, too, for the first time in 50 years, are publicly questioning their incorporation into the Soviet Union. This is because they were not consulted in the first place, and their opinions were suppressed.

We don't have to copy what the 'socialist' countries were doing. They have realised that they committed a lot of mistakes, hence workers don't have confidence in them. They were putting party politics before trade unionism. That is why socialism has not yet come into being. People eat food and not party politics.

Evaluating our own history

In this era of perestroika and glasnost, we have to evaluate our history and make objective and constructive criticisms. As Karl Marx says "We must always be critical of history." We don't have to fear openness and to point out mistakes and failures.

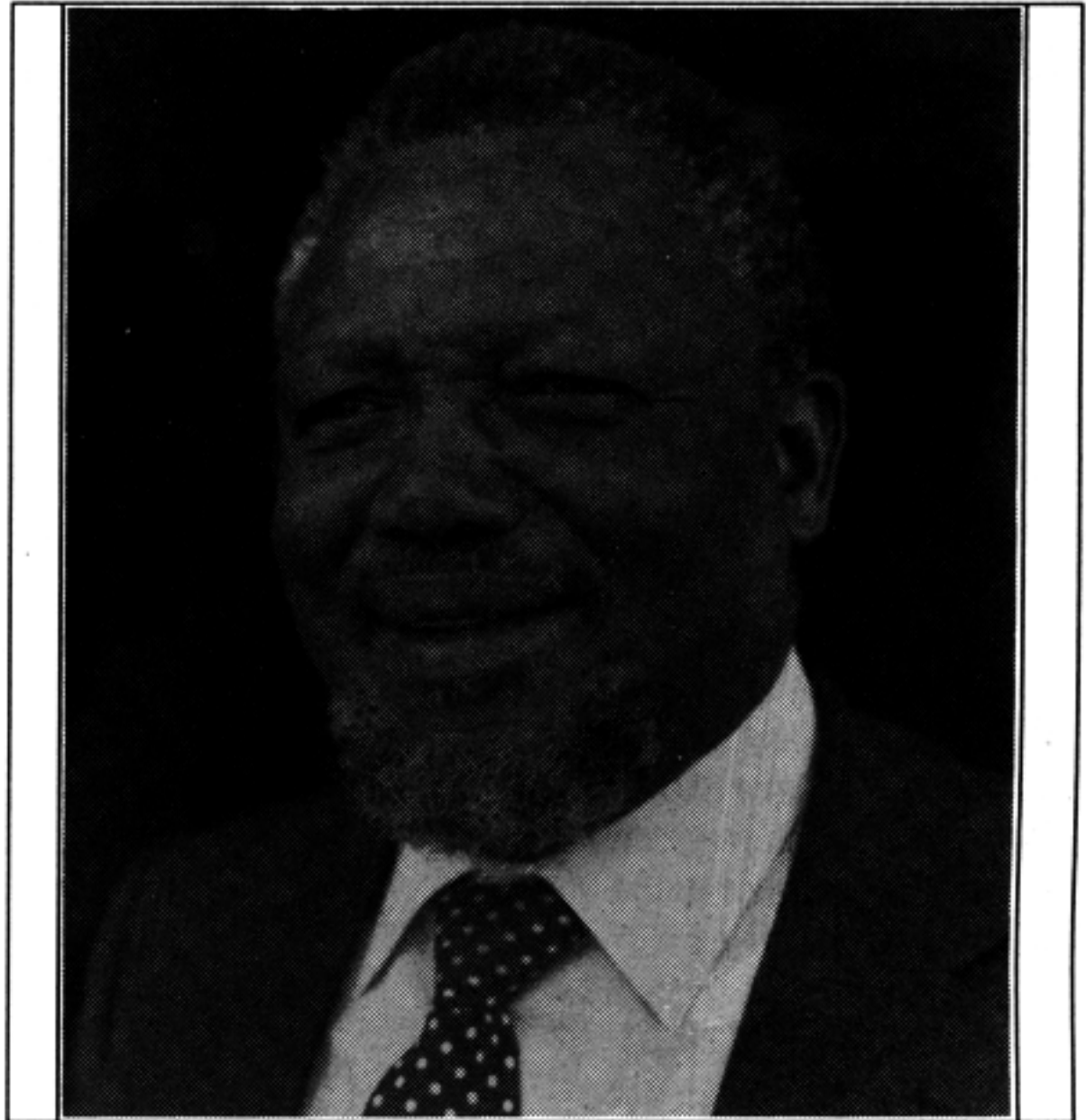
It would be of great value if the younger generation had the history of the ANC/

SACP/SACTU alliance. This was an alliance which was formed in 1955 on a solid foundation and leaders of this alliance, to this day, are in the forefront of our struggle. The alliance united all progressive forces which were fighting against the racist regime. Its activities were well known until 1960 when political organisations were banned.

Because of the nature of our struggle it was very difficult to know of this alliance and how it co-ordinated its activities. Members of this alliance were forced to work under absolute secrecy. One hopes that the ANC/SACP/SACTU leadership will one day give their archives to the historians.

As a member of both the ANC and SACTU, I was able to observe a number of weaknesses in this alliance. Too much power was concentrated on a few individuals. For example, the last President of SACTU was also Deputy Treasurer General of the ANC. Most of his time was taken up with the financial administration of the ANC.

Our Secretary General was a member of the NEC of the ANC and also a member of the PMC (Politico-Military-Committee). These two leaders were not able to attend to problems of both the ANC and SACTU in the way that they would have liked to. They were overworked and had very little time to read or update themselves on contemporary problems.



John Nkadimeng - as general secretary of SACTU and NEC member of the ANC, he was "overworked" and therefore unable to "attend to problems of both.... in the way (he) would have liked to".

Photo: Benny Gool/Afrapix

They were not kept abreast about developments by their advisers (if they had any). This is not a personal attack at all. Leaders have to read a lot and be well informed so that they can take rational decisions.

The involvement of one leader in many political committees makes him become ineffective and results in duplication of work. It also brings about disharmony within the ranks of the union or federation, because decisions which are taken at the NEC of the ANC will also be implemented by members of the trade union federation. This therefore brings into question the independence of

the federation/SACTU.

The ongoing debate on the alliance is a healthy one and I think that we should keep it in that spirit. Criticising what one has observed does not mean that one is against the alliance. We have to be made aware of our shortcomings.

Differences between trade unions and political parties

Workers should know the difference between the role of the trade union movement and political parties. We must not take people for granted, assuming that they know everything. Slogans bring only temporary victories but information and

education permanent ones.

A trade union movement is an organisation of workers irrespective of their political affiliation. Its main aim is to fight for the social needs of workers. It takes care of workers' problems whether they are working conditions, better wages, pensions, education, health and safety, housing etc.

A trade union movement deals with workers' problems at the work place. It deals directly with the employer and is independent of him. It is also important that it should be independent of the government and of any political organisation. ┘

'Workers should know the difference between the role of the trade union movement and political parties.'

A political party, on the other hand, acts through the institutions of the state and local authority. It is involved in parliamentary politics.

The ANC at the moment is a liberation movement. For the past 30 years it has been operating under illegal conditions, hence its structures were undemocratic. Because of conspiracy, it had to appoint its middle cadres, and some of its leaders were also not democratically elected.

It is only now that the ANC is democratising its

structures, and the process of moving from illegality to legality is no child's play. Up to today the ANC has not reached the target of one million membership.

The SACP is a Marxist-Leninist party. Its political programme is completely different from that of the ANC. It wants to build a classless society where there is no exploitation of man by man. This is a party that has been working under illegal conditions for the past forty years. Like all other communist parties it was under Stalinist hegemony. Its cadres had no notion of mass democracy and were indoctrinated on Stalin's command administration system.

Before perestroika, it ad-



Lenin's notion of trade unions as a 'transmission belt' was practised by unionists in the Soviet Union - even Soviet union officials (above) admit that this led to workers becoming disillusioned with existing unions

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

hered to the Leninist concept of a "transmission belt" relationship between party and trade unions, although it is an undeniable fact that some leaders of the party have been in the forefront of both trade union and political organisations.

They have played a very important role in our struggle, if we underplay their undemocratic ways of doing things. The communist party, like the ANC, is still building its structures.

The whole political climate is going to change when the ANC becomes a party. This will have to happen when we start the process of constitutional negotiations. The ANC, the SACP and COSATU are all calling for a Constituent Assembly. This means that the ANC, as well as the SACP, will have to have their own candidates for the assembly.

The SACP has to put up its own candidates, who are not members of the ANC, for the Constituent Assembly or the non-racial parliament. It can draw its membership from the labour movement. Actually that is where it belongs. The trade union movement cannot have its own candidates representing the federation but it can sponsor ANC or SACP candidates.

Having outlined the differences that exist between the alliance partners, we are therefore in a better position to have an overall picture of the relationship of the individual organisations.

COSATU must maintain its independence

COSATU as a federation must maintain its independence - financially *and* politically. Leaders of the federation must not hold elected office in any political organisation. If a leader of the federation gets elected in a political organisation he must resign from his official position in the trade union. You cannot serve two masters.

'Leaders of COSATU must not hold elected office in a political organisation. If a leader of COSATU gets elected in a political organisation, he or she must resign from the trade union.'

We cannot continue with the politics of the past. This hinders a lot of progress. Leaders won't be able to deliver the goods. They will simply transmit to the labour movement decisions which are being made at a political meeting. This does not mean that a trade union leader cannot be active in his party branch or be elected to a party congress. Views of a trade union leader can be known but he must avoid tak-

ing part where a political decision is made.

We should try to de-ideologise the labour movement. In South Africa we have a number of trade union federations: NACTU - which is aligned to the black consciousness movement, UWUSA to the Inkatha Freedom Party, and white trade unions which support the Conservative and the Nationalist parties. We also have millions of workers who are not organised. Our main task is to form a strong trade union unity.

Workers' demands are common and they have a common enemy. That is why it is important that at factory level we should not place emphasis on political affiliation. A worker, irrespective of his political membership, must get the same representation. Before the employer, workers must speak with one voice.

If a leader of a trade union movement is also a leader of a political party, it will be difficult for him to win or to represent workers from other political organisations at the plant level. Workers who don't belong to his political organisation will be prejudiced and they will band together and oppose any suggestion that comes from him, not because it is not progressive but just because it comes from a member of the ANC or SACP.

For example, the interne-cine strife that has taken the lives of more than 800

people has been blamed on supporters of Inkatha and the ANC. People who are being used by the right-wingers are workers who have a common enemy and objectives. If they were politically conscious as workers, as we always claim, they would have seen who the enemy is. Education is more important than political slogans.

At the plant level, a political activist must put his party politics aside and work for workers' unity. It does not mean that 'he who is not with you is against you'. The concept of 'there is no middle road' is very danger-

'The concept of "no middle road" is very dangerous. It does not mean that "he who is not with you is against you".'

ous and must be discouraged.

We don't all understand or grasp things at the same time. We differ in political understanding and must learn to tolerate different political views. Pluralism and internal democracy are the basic principles of a trade union movement.

The overlap of leadership will weaken the trade union movement, which is why some of us were happy when Cyril Ramaphosa was not co-opted onto the internal

leadership of the ANC. This would have taken much of this time and he would not have been able to attend to the NUM's problems properly, especially now when Anglo-American is retrenching mine workers. Workers need proper representation and their leaders must be well prepared with information when facing employers at the negotiating table. An employer will never agree to postpone a meeting just because a leader is attending a political meeting or is not ready because 'last night he was at a political meeting'.

Employers are interested in production and the workers in their basic social needs.

The permanent role of trade unions

According to American sociologists, people get involved in politics 'once every five years' when they cast their vote, or at times when legislation affecting their lives is being passed.

In South Africa after we have achieved our goal of non-racial democracy, we have to uplift the living standard of our people. This can only be done by trade unions persuading the employers to use part of the surplus value for the benefit of the workers.

Worker-employer struggle is permanent whereas the political struggle is par-



FAWU's Chris Dlamini - serving the union and the party at the same time

Photo: Paul Weinberg

minimum and maximum programmes of the alliance. They must learn through the mass media about problems or progress within the alliance. We are no longer working under illegal conditions. We must teach our people democracy not autocracy.

Trade unions in South Africa have a mammoth task. Once their experienced leadership gets involved in party politics, they won't be able to fulfil their tasks. We will find ourselves involved in ANC, SACP, PAC, AZAPO, Inkatha and Nationalist party politics more than in

liamentary where workers go once every five years to vote either ANC, SACP, Nationalist Party or for other political parties. To date neither 'socialist' nor bourgeois governments have fully represented the interests of the working class.

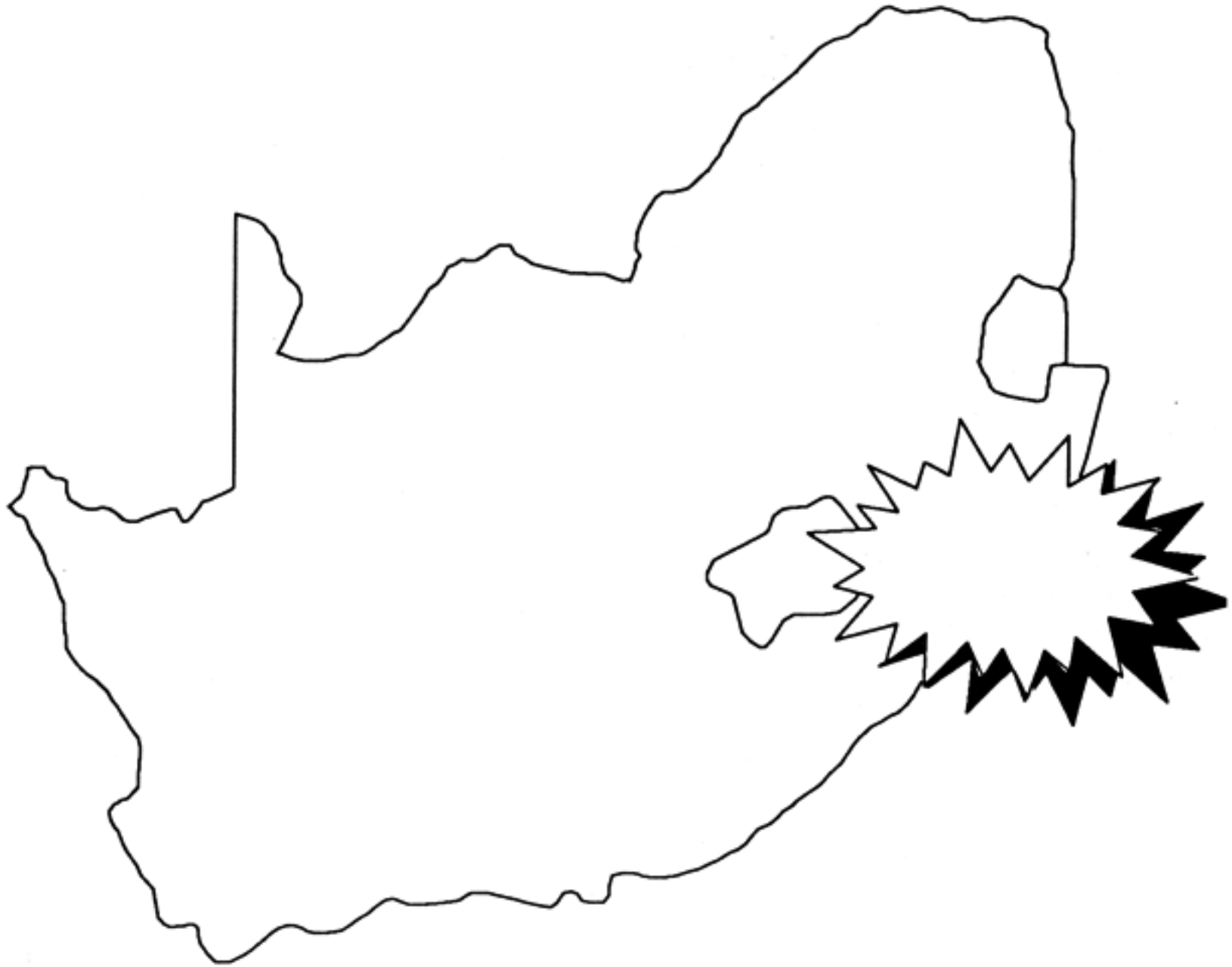
'Pluralism and internal democracy are the basic principles of a trade union movement'

The trade union alliance with ANC/SACP must not be a paper one. Workers must be fully informed about the

the trade unions. Employers will be in a better position to exploit workers. It is not politics that uplifts or betters our living standards, but economic growth.

The overlap of leadership will also affect the independence of the trade union. Once a political party makes a mistake, the trade union or federation will be afraid to openly criticize the political party. This is what has already been happening. The federation will be compelled 'for unity's sake' to follow an unendorsed line without consulting the workers.

Let's all work for trade union unity. Individual leaders can play their political part, but this must be outside the union. They must not hold dual power. ☆



Ending the violence in Natal

The recent meeting between the ANC and Inkatha, led by Mandela and Buthelezi respectively, is an important step in the direction of peace. JAY NAIDOO raises some of the issues facing the democratic movement in attempting to build on the current peace initiative.*

* *The article is written in Jay Naidoo's personal capacity. Naidoo is SACCAWU National Education Co-ordinator, member of the Joint Working Committee since it was established in January 1989, and chairperson of the ANC Western Areas branch in Southern Natal*

Ending political violence and developing a new democratic political culture which enables political differences to be discussed freely and peacefully is one of the most important and difficult tasks facing the 'new South Africa'.

In a discussion paper issued last September (which provoked much debate within our ranks), I proposed that "what we require is a multi-party agreement between the main protagonists - Inkatha, the state and ourselves - which binds all parties, because of their mutual interest, and contains an effective mechanism of enforcing and 'policing' the implementation of the agreement". (see *Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 4)

ANC - Inkatha agreement

The recent meeting between the ANC and Inkatha, and the agreement which came out of that meeting, is a step forward in the same direction as that proposed in my discussion paper. The agreement commits both organisations to "take steps to prevent acts of violence and destruction amongst their members"; to promote "political tolerance and freedom of political activity" and, in particular, "to create a climate between them free of forced recruitment and vilification".

Agreement was also reached on opening up public facilities for use by all, in particular meeting venues and schools; on the need for "an effective peace-keeping role

by security forces"; on co-operation in "initiating and implementing non-partisan reconstruction programmes in areas devastated by violence"; and developing "codes of conduct based on accepted principles and practices which do not impinge negatively on the rights of individuals and political groups and which are equally applicable to both organisations and all security forces".

In addition, a process of communicating down to members was agreed. This will include a joint tour of affected areas by Mandela and Buthelezi, and further peace meetings between the youth and women's organisations of both ANC and Inkatha.

In the three weeks following this meeting, while there has been increased contact between the leadership of the ANC and Inkatha, there have still been serious incidents of violence in at least three areas of Natal.

In trying to assess what possibilities of success the current peace process holds, we need to take a sober look at our strategies and the role any agreement could play in bringing about peace.

Nature of the violence

Firstly, though, I would like to comment on the causes and nature of the violence.

Violence has been a key part of the state's internal destabilisation strategy - through the direct role of the security forces and hit squads, as well as through vigilante groups throughout

the country.

Inkatha represents African middle-class interests and the interests of the traditional chiefs. By pursuing a policy of participation in apartheid structures, it inevitably came into conflict with the mass struggles of the MDM and the ANC.

There was thus a coincidence of Inkatha and state interests in attacking a common enemy - the democratic movement. But we should not make the mistake of seeing Inkatha simply as a puppet of the government. It is a political organisation representing specific interests, and thus, as the situation changes, it is possible that Inkatha may adopt a role which conflicts with the government.

There is plenty of evidence of state support, training, encouragement and even leadership in the violence by Inkatha against its opponents. It has, therefore, been accurate for us to say that this is not 'black on black' violence but violence of the apartheid regime against the people, with Inkatha as its agent in Natal.

However, after four years, the violence has become much more complex. A culture of violence has developed. A cycle of revenge killings perpetuates violence. Deteriorating social conditions, the collapse of the education system and rising unemployment have all seriously compounded the problems.

The violence of the apart-

NATAL VIOLENCE

heid state is fuelled and perpetuated by social conditions of poverty and competition over scarce resources - for example, between squatters and township residents over housing. Differences among the people, based on class, race, ethnicity, residential area, and others, have been ex-

major factor has been an inability to build an effective and disciplined organisation in the townships over the past years. The link between the grassroots and the leadership has been very weak in Natal, so leadership has been unable to intervene effectively in crises.

ters - and not only in self-defence. In certain areas, the state has been able to manipulate our grassroots organisations into fighting amongst themselves, as happened in several areas near Pinetown.

Through its sophisticated security machine and agent



Victims of the violence

Photo: Aron Mazel/Afrapix

exploited by the state and its allies.

On the ground Inkatha structures are often dominated by warlords, chiefs and renegade police. This means that Inkatha as an organisation does not always have the capacity to discipline its own members.

Subjective weaknesses on the part of the democratic movement have also contributed to the violence. One

Many young people, supporters of the ANC, deprived of proper schooling and employment, have turned to crime. Of course, it is not only ANC members who have chosen this route - but it is something which could possibly have been prevented through political education and disciplined organisation.

Against this backdrop, acts of violence have been committed by ANC suppor-

provocateurs, the state has managed to directly manipulate certain opposition structures, including the ANC, PAC, AZAPO, Inkatha and other opposition forces.

Multi-faceted approach to end the violence

Clearly, ending the violence will take much time and a multi-faceted approach. Often we have suffered from

the illusion that an agreement alone will end the violence. This is as mistaken as the view that defence and 'bringing in MK' will provide a final solution. An agreement on paper alone will definitely not be sufficient to bring it to an end.

It has always been perfectly clear that a policy of trying to win this 'war' militarily (by physically overpowering the state/Inkatha forces) could not succeed because the state could always increase its firepower and repressive capacity in the situation.

While it is essential to defend our communities against violence as best as possible, the struggle to achieve peace has to be a political effort. This means doing political work and winning over as many people and forces as possible to the cause of peace. A culture of political tolerance needs to be developed to enable political differences to be settled peacefully.

In the middle of last year, Inkatha had made peace talks a mere illusion of words, lengthy correspondence and broken accords. The JWC (Joint Working Committee of COSATU and UDF) decided to launch the highly successful "Defend Natal" campaign to pressurise De Klerk into taking meaningful action (see *Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 4).

This did not imply that peace talks with Inkatha had been rejected absolutely. Under circumstan-

ces where sufficient pressure had been built up on Inkatha and the state, peace talks could again become viable, as has now become the case.

Implementing an agreement is, like the phase of negotiation itself, a new phase of struggle. Once an agreement has been signed it will not simply implement itself as we want. We will have to struggle over how it is implemented in an attempt to shift the balance of forces in our favour.

Developing a way forward

In developing a way forward we need to address a number of matters :

1. Popularise the 29 January agreement

We need to ensure a clear understanding and commitment from leaders, members and supporters to what has been agreed. Copies of the agreement should be distributed in as many languages as possible. The agreement makes an important contribution to developing a culture of political tolerance and gives the ANC and COSATU greater space to organise.

It is important that senior leadership does not act in a way to undermine the agreement and the peace process. If there are mixed signals from the leaders it will create confusion on the ground and lead our members and supporters to act wrongly. This will make it impossible to demand that other people comply with the agreement.

2. Campaign and organise to implement the agreement

Where necessary, campaigns should be conducted to ensure that Inkatha and the state comply with the terms of the agreement. There will have to be campaigns at various levels to ensure that, for example, pensioners are not discriminated against because they do not carry an Inkatha card, or that excluded students are re-instated at schools even though they refuse to join Inkatha.

This holds possibilities for extending our organisational base and support. In residential areas and hostels the agreement can be used to win people to a position of peace - without having to change their political affiliation. Those who oppose the agreement or who wish to continue with 'warlord' type activities can thus be isolated.

3. Campaign for peaceful conduct by the security forces

The codes of conduct which have to be drawn up in terms of the agreement will set a standard of behavior for the security forces, as well as both the ANC and Inkatha. This will ensure a certain measure of public accountability. In the context of negotiation and political change, this will facilitate the drive to clean up the security forces. A vigorous campaign will have to be conducted to expose misbehavior and weed out those who are unfit to serve in the security forces in a new South Africa.

4. An effective monitoring mechanism must be developed

It is also vital to establish an independent monitoring mechanism that could identify problem areas where violence may break out, so that it can be prevented.

Monitoring could also serve as a check on both organisations and the security forces to ensure peaceful conduct.

5. The state must be bound by the peace process

The state is a key actor in the violence, both actively and passively. It must be compelled to stop provoking and participating in the violence. It must also be compelled to accept responsibility for preventing violence and for implementing justice. So far, it has been able to create the image that the violence is a problem among blacks. The state needs to be drawn more formally, through negotiations and pressure, into the peace process, since it holds the key to any real hope of peace.

6. Development and reconstruction projects must consolidate the peace

Peace has to be sustained by material improvements. The struggle for resources fuels the current violence. Consolidating a peace process will require also that serious thinking and effort is given to socio-economic development projects - particularly for refugees and displaced people, the youth, squatters, hostel dwellers and the unemployed. It is essential that such projects are not partisan

but distribute the benefits to all people regardless of political affiliation.

7. Disciplined community defence must be established

Defence has still to be developed in a systematic and disciplined way. Defence is not purely a military activity requiring weapons and street battalions. It is essentially a political process in which the community participates in resolving differences, gathering intelligence which may assist it in preventing attacks, conducting local level peace talks, recruiting, meeting with the police and so on.

Many of these types of activities have been conducted in different areas in an uncoordinated way already.

8. Local level peace talks must be encouraged

The experience of the Lower Umfolosi Peace Accord must be taken to other areas. With an overall agreement in place, local level accords have greater a possibility of consolidating peace on the ground.

The processes mentioned above must go hand in hand with the other ideas contained in the agreement such as the joint tours. It is essential to take a coordinated and systematic approach.

ANC role

Since the JWC was restructured late last year, the ANC has started to assume a pivotal role. In order to live up to its tasks, the ANC will have to address important organisational issues.

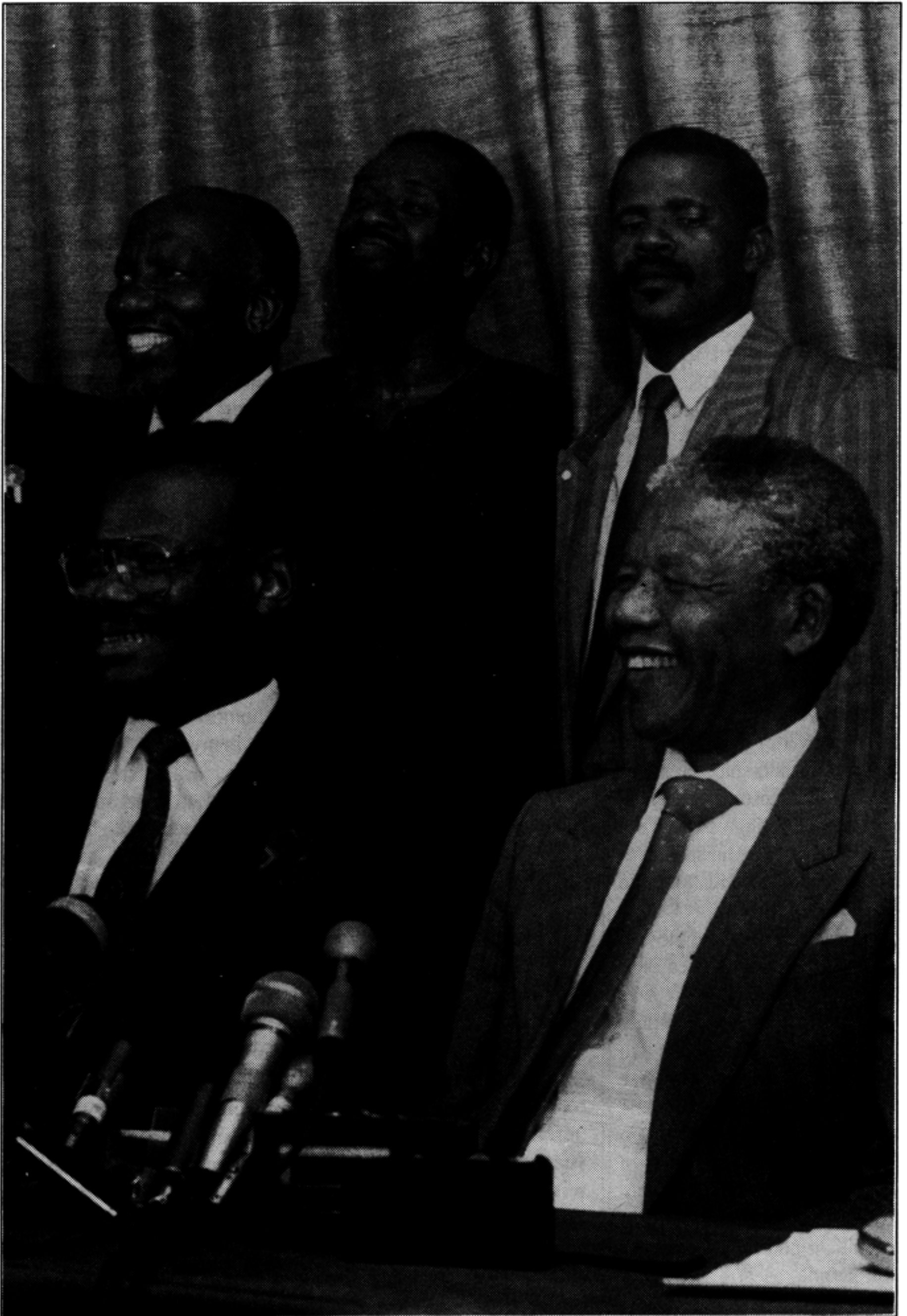
Firstly, the ANC has to

achieve a coordination of its leadership structures so that its senior leadership are tuned in to what is happening on the ground and can act effectively. At the moment they are fire-fighters rushing from area to area.

At the same time, the ANC has to be able to plan and lead. This requires that the ANC develop its own cohesion among its leadership, and develop effective links with COSATU. Since its unbanning, the lack of cohesion of the ANC leadership has become a well-known problem, and this is true in Natal as well.

Building effective organisation is essential if we want to build on the peace process and take advantage of its opportunities. A half-hearted approach will be worse than doing nothing, because it will lead to disasters and lead people to believe that no political process can end violence. This will surely lead to anarchy and the loss of credibility of the leadership.

The obstacles are enormous. Violence will not end overnight. The cycle of revenge killing will not end suddenly. The wounds of these years of violence and of thousands of murders will take a terribly long time to heal. The task of our organisations, despite all obstacles or frustrations, is to continue all our efforts until we achieve peace among our people. ☆



Mandela and Buthelezi with fellow delegates at the peace talks in January - will the smiles lead to real and lasting peace?

Photo: Rafs Mayet/Afrapix

Lessons of losing power: the case of Nicaragua

Since winning the elections in February last year, the US-sponsored UNO coalition has tried to roll back the gains of the eleven-year old Sandinista revolution, but has met with fierce resistance from organised workers and peasants. Alejandro Bendana, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) Secretary for Foreign Affairs, visited South Africa late last year, and spoke to DEVAN PILLAY* about the current situation in Nicaragua, in particular the extensive self-criticism the Sandinista's have been engaging in since losing the election.

A year ago, on February 25 1990, the Sandinista government of Nicaragua was voted out of office in favour of a US-backed coalition. Eleven years after the overthrow of the brutal Somoza dictatorship - years of hope and reconstruction amidst sustained US aggression - the revolutionary Sandinista movement could not muster more than 41% of the vote.

It was a devastating blow to all those who had placed their hopes in Nicaragua. It was seen as one of the few genuinely popular attempts to construct a new society, free from hunger, inequality and imperialist exploitation.

Was this merely a sign of the times - yet another indication of the 'failure' of socialism and its rejection by the people, as in Eastern Eu-



Nicaragua in relation to the USA to the north

rope and China? Or was this defeat the consequence of years of US-sponsored war with its severe impact on human lives and a fragile economy, compounded by errors of the revolutionary

movement?

As the new National Opposition Union (UNO) government, led by Violetta Chomorro, tries to roll back the many gains of the revolution, mass struggles by workers, students and peasants have erupted throughout Nicaragua. This is a strong indication that, unlike Eastern Europe, the vitality of the revolution still remains in the consciousness of a vast section of the population.

The FSLN remains the single largest and most cohesive political party in the national assembly. There are indications that they are trying to learn from their mistakes, and intend to re-establish the party, on a much firmer basis, as the next elected government.

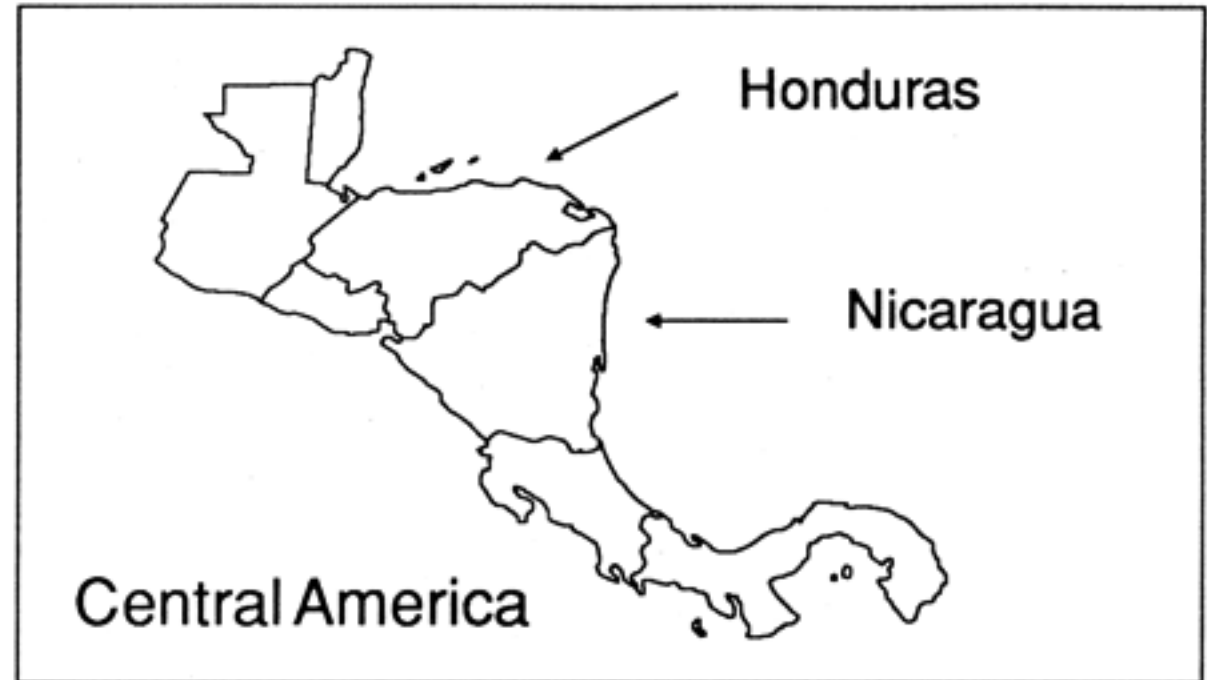
* Devan Pillay was until recently a staff member of the Labour Bulletin, and is now editor of Work in Progress. This article is based on a talk organised by the UDF Working Group on International Relations in Johannesburg last September, and an interview with Bendana.

The 1990 election defeat

In the (internationally-recognised) 1984 election the Sandinistas won 61 of the 96 seats in the national assembly and 67% of the vote. In 1990 they won only 39 seats and 41% of the vote. The UNO won 51 seats and 55% of the vote, while two other parties, the Social Christian Party and the Movement for Revolutionary Unity, won one seat each. In local elections, the UNO won 96 seats to the FSLN's 31. However, the UNO failed to win 60% (56) of the seats in the national assembly to enable them to change the constitution.

"The US did not expect us to lose the elections" says Bendana. Indeed, neither did the Sandinistas themselves, since most opinion polls predicted an FSLN victory. The UNO's election rallies were far smaller than the FSLN's.

The Sandinistas had calculated that only 15%, at most, of the population was right-wing. However, this was the "wrong question to ask", says Bendana. It was not just a question of sympathy for the revolution, but *organised* sympathy. It was also a question of how much discontent there was amongst the people, given their hardships. In fact, after ten years of fighting a US-sponsored



counter-revolutionary war, there was a deep war weariness amongst the people, and a "cry for peace" - peace, not by military means, but politically, says Bendana.

The election result was a blow to the Sandinistas. Looked at another way, however, the fact that the Sandinistas won 41% of vote showed, in Bendana's words, that "people were still willing to sacrifice". It showed "how far the revolution had penetrated" because four out of every ten people were prepared to *continue* to endure hardships imposed by the war and the siege economy, for the sake of preserving the revolution.

The Sandinistas had three objectives: to end the war, to win the elections and to preserve the revolution. They achieved two out of three: "Losing the elections was the price for preserving the revolution and stopping the war" argues Bendana.

The Sandinistas believe that, despite the continuing battle to prevent the rolling back of gains made by the revolution, they have neutralised the ultra-right

extremists, and committed the new government to respect the 1987 constitution which entrenches crucial democratic rights.

In addition, there is a commitment to respect the integrity of the armed forces created by the Sandinistas. If these institutions assume a non-partisan character, argues the FSLN, then "their very patriotic and popular formation constitutes, at this time, the best guarantee that they cannot be used as instruments of anti-popular repression".

Thus, the FSLN feel confident that, as things stand, the election defeat does not mean "the end of revolutionary works or the disappearance of the Sandinista organisations and institutions." (*Resolutions of the El Crucero Assembly, 17/6/90*).

The UNO coalition

The UNO coalition consists of 14 different parties glued together by the USA. These include the ultra-right National Action Party, the rightwing Conservative Party, the Social Democratic

party, and even the Communist Party of Nicaragua (PCN). These parties, asserts Bendana, were "forced and bribed" by the US to come together in an unstable alliance against the Sandinistas.

While some Sandinistas hold out the possibility of winning over UNO votes on certain issues (see *International Labour Reports* No 40), these will not necessarily come from what, on the surface, seem to be the natural allies of the FSLN. The formerly pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) and the Maoist PCN hold 6 of the 51 UNO seats. Simple arithmetic shows that, if these two 'left' parties in the coalition defected to the Sandinistas, then the UNO and the FSLN would have 45 seats each. The two 'non-aligned' seats could then act as power brokers, with the possibility that, through skillful politicking, the FSLN could regain control of the national assembly.

However, these calculations do not seem to feature in the tactical perspectives of the FSLN, the main reason being that they see no possibility of getting cooperation from the PSN and PCN. In the face of popular unrest last year, these 'left' parties in the UNO coalition were silent. They have "no meaningful weight", explains Bendana, and their politics are motivated by "opportunism".

The PSN was in fact the 'official' communist party, formed in 1937, and banned

for most of its existence. Some of its members helped to form the FSLN in the early 1960s, and many more became Sandinistas in later years. The PSN, as such, opposed the Sandinista's guerilla strategy against Somoza, believing that conditions were not right. Instead, it formed alliances with non-socialist opposition parties, although after the 1979 revolution, when it was legalised, it gave critical support to the revolutionary government for a number of years. Their main grievance against the Sandinista government, according to Bendana, was that they were "not taken more into account".

The PCN is a 1967 pro-Chinese breakaway from the PSN, and, according to Bendana, is "not to be trusted". In the early years of the revolution, the PCN accused the Sandinistas of not being radical enough. It organised strikes and land seizures, and the government imprisoned a number of its leading officials. Yet now, says Bendana, the PCN espouses a view that there needs to be "further capitalist development" before socialism can be built - which in practice means that they support the rightwing policies of the new government. In this they aim to "give a human face to capitalism", says Bendana.

Both these parties have tiny support bases and, says Bendana, "no platforms of their own". Nor do they produce publications of any substance. They do, how-

ever, have a presence in the trade union movement, especially the PSN (see box on page 62).

The new Nicaraguan President, Violeta Chamorro, who does not belong to any of the parties in the UNO coalition, won 54,7% of the votes cast, as against 40,8% for the FSLN's Daniel Ortega. She leads a highly unstable coalition, with three distinct groups competing for power (CIIR, 1990).

Chamorro, herself, draws her support from the moderate Las Palmas Group, comprising 'modernising' entrepreneurs, relatives and friends. The most prominent figure amongst them is the *de facto* prime minister, Antonio Lacayo, leader of the Social Democratic Party (and former contra ally). Opposed to them is a group around the viciously anti-Sandinista Vice-President, Virgilio Godoy. He opposes Chamorro's willingness to negotiate with the FSLN. A third group is made up of conservative landowners and businessmen organised into the Superior Council for Private Enterprise (COSEP). They want a return to the order of the Somoza era.

Bendana observes that "No-one, not even the US, is optimistic about the present government". The Chamorro administration, with the assistance of the FSLN, has managed to avoid civil war breaking out (see later). But it faces a deepening crisis. It has not managed to disarm all the Contras; the USA has



An FSLN banner depicting the alliance of workers, peasants, womens' and youth organisations

Photo: Peter auf der Heyde/Afrapix

failed to give the financial aid it promised (because it believes the Chamorro government is not antagonistic enough towards the FSLN); and the economy is in a crippled state. The new government's radical free market economic policies are already eroding whatever popularity it has.

Workers oppose new economic policies

Under the 'structural adjustment' prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the Chamorro government has curtailed social services, food subsidies and pension benefits. It has altered legislation favourable to popular interests and the trade unions, which had been de-

veloped during the course of the revolution', explained Bendana.

The first strike broke out five months after the 1990 elections, when mainly government employees protested against the suspension of the civil service law, which had been instituted by the Sandinista government, guaranteeing job security to senior government workers. The new government, however, wanted to sweep away the entire bureaucracy.

The CST trade union federation (see box on page 62) joined the strike because the government also wanted to revise the labour code, which provided for consultations with the unions over wage and other decisions.

The second strike oc-

curred in July over the arbitrary decrees of the new government. There was an attempt to roll back the agrarian reforms of the revolution (see later), as well as a failure to adjust the monthly wage index, which was linked to a rise in inflation. The unions demanded the right to be consulted on the closure of private and public industries and on forced privatisation (under US pressure), especially of co-operatives in the countryside. Workers were particularly opposed to the denationalisation of textile factories because of the threat of dismissals.

The government's economic policies were geared towards agro export interests, whereas there were no incen-

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tives at all for manufacturing for domestic consumption and production of basic goods. Private companies were going bankrupt and the unions took up the defence of these companies, demanding tax relief for them, as the workers did not want to see production break down.

The political overtones of the strike, according to Bendana, lay in the awareness of workers that this was a new rightwing government which was determined to "measure how far they can go to dismantle the gains of the revolution". The workers had to draw a line: the government could not win the right to dismantle everything they had gained. It was a "test of wills", he says, but the government had to back off. It had to learn to negotiate with workers, and "take their interests into account" if it was to stabilise the economy and the country as a whole.

Students take to the streets

The "fiscal necessity" imposed by the IMF and World Bank, says Bendana, has been largely responsible for the "situation of considerable unrest right now". Students have been particularly hard hit. They took to the streets during the July strikes, even going to the extent of building barricades, in protest against a 20% decrease in the university subsidy, an end to the students' transport subsidy, as well as an end to water and electricity subsidies. The government also



Rural poverty and land hunger has led to mass resistance by peasants to attempts to grab their land

Peter auf der Heyde/Afrapix

tried to curtail university autonomy, which had been established under the Sandinistas, and to increase education fees.

This was in the context of a rise in the cost of living of between 40-50% in the previous five months. The government tried to link the new currency to the dollar, but still paid salaries in the old currency, resulting in a great drop in living standards. Bendana concedes that, in many ways, the Sandinistas would have been forced to impose economic measures similar to those of the UNO government to deal with the economic crisis. They would have had to "decrease the massive government budget deficits" through reduced state spending and withdrawing "unproductive subsidies". However, he says, a Sandinista government would be "more sensitive than just throwing workers out onto the streets". Although its

measures would be painful, it would seek to relocate retrenched workers into other areas of the economy.

The UNO policies have led to a "jump in labour unrest" because the Chamorro government introduced its new economic policies without providing for a social cushion. The working people, while willing to sacrifice for a "government of the working class which provided gains from the revolution", were not willing to sacrifice "in the interests of the rich".

Peasants defend their land

In the countryside there had also been a marked shift in the consciousness of the people since the revolution. When the Sandinistas were in power, land-hungry peasants occupied unused privately-owned land. This put pressure on the FSLN government to enact an agrarian reform law in 1981,

which provided for idle land to be confiscated and distributed to landless peasants, many of whom then formed co-operatives.

Since the 1990 election, the government has been trying to roll back the agrarian reforms, as absentee landlords have returned to the country demanding their land back. Former Contra rebels were also promised land by the UNO government. The small peasant producers and livestock owners, now organised into the National Union of Farm and Cattle Ranchers (UNAG), have been involved in a militant defence of the land. For, as Bendana says, they "feel that they have invested a considerable amount of labour in developing the land, and feel that it is now theirs. They do not want the fruits of their labour expropriated." This is in accordance with a principle of the revolution: the land is for those who work it. In many cases peasants have re-occupied land taken from them, resulting in violent confrontations with ex-Contra rebels.

In the war against the Contras, the Sandinistas armed the peasants. There are still many weapons in the countryside. The government wants to collect these weapons from the peasants and at the same time take over their property. This, says Bendana, is "hardly an inducement" to the peasants,

who feel that they need the arms to defend their property. He argues that, under the constitution, the government has to respect the agrarian reform "which the revolution put into place".

In September the FSLN and their allied trade union federation, the CST, entered into an agreement with the government, dubbed the *concertacion*, whereby the latter's right to implement a free market programme is accepted, on condition that it is done gradually, that agrarian reform is continued, ownership of state industries and privatised lands is transferred to workers and peasants, and reforms are introduced through constitutional means (CIIR, 1990).

The FSLN sees its task as pressurising the government on schools, clinics etc, and making sure that the Contras cease to exist. Bendana notes the irony of the politically unprecedented situation in Nicaragua, where "a right-wing government is in power, with a leftwing army". Usually it is the other way round.*

Self criticism

Ever since its electoral defeat, the FSLN and its allied mass organisations have im-

mersed themselves in intense discussion over why they lost. This discussion, which is on-going, has involved extensive self-criticism. This was reflected in the preliminary evaluation of the past ten years, made by the crucial El Crucero Assembly of the party's central committee with organisational representatives of the different social sectors, in June 1990. The FSLN's First National Congress in February this year will see a fundamental debate within the party as it seeks to overcome the errors of the past. Bendana sees the main errors as follows:

Confusion of party and government

According to Bendana, the FSLN "made a mass confusion" between the people, party and government. The Sandinista government had some important successes. It brought down Nicaragua's illiteracy rate from 52% to 12%, reduced infant mortality through extensive health campaigns, and mobilised the youth to combat the US's Contra war.

However, to achieve this, people were drawn out of the party into bureaucratic roles in government. This weakened the party. At the same time, the party was turned, in Bendana's words, into "the Ministry of Political Mobilisation for the government". As such, the FSLN were held

* Since September, however, Umberto Ortega, the FSLN head of the armed forces, has been replaced, and the size of the army drastically reduced



Literacy in Nicaragua: one of the great achievements of the Sandinista revolution

Photo: Communication in popular Nicaragua (ig)

responsible for government inefficiencies, failures and the mistakes that were made. One of the most serious of these was to underestimate the negative impact upon the people of obligatory military service imposed to conduct the war against the contras.

Insufficient organisational democracy

The question of democracy was largely reduced to multi-partyism and elections with universal suffrage and the secret ballot. However, the

Sandinista Front, says Bendana, "had not democratised itself sufficiently". After 27 years it is only now, in February 1991, that the FSLN will have its first leadership elections and its first congress.

The Front, after it came to power, did not make organisational adjustments away from its vertical military orientation. It was, in Bendana's view, "accustomed to giving orders, and unaccustomed to listening". This was a function both of military necessity and of being in government. Bendana believes that "governments do not make revolutions - people

and parties make revolutions".

Bendana notes that where the FSLN was genuinely representative" was precisely where the revolution was strongest. The party won the 1990 elections in 19 major municipalities. He asks: "Why did we win in some and not in others?" The answer, he says, lies in the fact that there were "genuine leaders" in some areas and not in others. "The people can see which leaders are not with them."

Loss of autonomy of mass organisations

The elections, says Bendana, taught the Sandinistas that there are three sources of power: the government, the army and the mass organisations. If the mass movement is organised, then victory is assured. However, insufficient emphasis was placed on this. The mass movement was "not sufficiently autonomous and democratic", he says.

Under the Sandinistas, the mass organisations were excessively professionalised, with cadres even placed on the government payroll, causing them to cease to rely on the community itself. This meant that, after the 1990 election defeat, aspects of party and mass organisation collapsed because they lost the support that they had come to expect from government.

Equally importantly, the Sandinistas did not distinguish clearly between leaders of the party and of mass organisations. In the past, the

leaders of mass organisations - youth, rural and urban unions, women - were members of the FSLN. There was, says Bendana, "a tendency to appoint or delegate leaders" to the mass organisations. Now, however, through the process of self-criticism, there is "more of a democratic impulse. We are talking amongst ourselves."

The civic Committees for the Defence of the Revolution played a critical role during the war, but Bendana feels that it was a "mistake to draw them into the party and government". It is now felt that those leadership positions are best filled by Sandinista sympathisers rather than cadres, because "it is sometimes better to strengthen the party from outside the party". The FSLN now believes that there is a great need for mass organisations to be independent of the party although, in Bendana's view, not all Sandinista cadres necessarily understand this principle.

Combining national and sectoral concerns

Initially, the revolutionary Sandinista government was too influenced by the East European model. There was a "lack of confidence in the masses", says Bendana, and it is now the task of the organisations to become "more responsive to the bottom". Before the revolution, organisations of women, youth, teachers and so on were small nuclei which acted as

support groups to the FSLN, with particular sectoral responsibilities. During the revolutionary war, they began to "divert their agenda points", says Bendana, and concentrate on what the FSLN demanded from them to preserve the revolution.

Bendana believes that



Viva AMN LAE! - Long live the Women's Organisation of Nicaragua

Photo: Communication in popular Nicaragua (ig)

there has to be a "correct balancing of national concerns and local concerns". It is "indispensible to distinguish between national and sectoral demands" and to allow mass organisations to mobilise independently around their sectoral demands.

The FSLN, as a national party, tries to represent the interests of the whole nation. As such, it is constantly concerned to try and balance the different forces. But "that is

not the priority of sectoral organisations", says Bendana. They must focus on their own concerns, which will give the masses a greater capacity to debate policy with the national front.

For much of 1990, organised women, youth, teachers, and the revolutionary defence committees have been immersed in internal discussions. They now want elections for the leaderships of their organisations to be held, and "they are defining what they demand of the Frente (Front) as women, youth, etc." They want to know whether their concerns and objectives are being incorporated into the Front's programme and objectives. This is particularly so in the case of the trade unions "the most organised of all the mass organisations" (see box on page 62).

Revolutionary crackdowns

The Sandinistas have also questioned the correctness of their actions against right-wing forces during their period in power. At one point the Sandinista government shut down the rightwing newspaper *La Prensa*. They also cracked down on right-wing trade unions, and expelled from the country catholic bishops who were harbouring Contras.

The movement now asks whether the costs were greater than the benefits. It seems, on balance, that their actions served to hinder the

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Ethnic minorities and Nicaraguan nationalism

The Meskito 'Indians' are indigenous people who reside on the East (Atlantic) Coast of Nicaragua, the region where most of the country's black (ex-slave) population is also found. It is a sparsely populated, geographically isolated area, where less than 4% of the total population live.

The Meskito, says Bendana, "never felt part of the Nicaraguan nation", because the revolution never took place there. There was never a struggle against Somoza, because he largely ignored the area, leaving it to the Americans to exploit. There was no "pre-existing commonhood in search of an identity", says Bendana, and "no anti-imperialist consciousness" existed amongst the Meskitos. Essential common ingredients were lacking.

Thus, serious problems arose when the revolution was introduced in the area "where the revolution had not taken place", with the result that the "we ran up against prejudice and mutual misunderstandings on both sides", feels Bendana.

There was an initial effort to introduce literacy amongst the Meskito in their own language, and to "promote the protection of their own language". This, it was felt, gave recognition to the Meskito need for self-expression and autonomy. However, the Sandinistas soon discovered that it was not only a problem of indigenous culture, "but also a deep-rooted colonial mentality among the leaders of the Meskitos, who tended to be Moravian priests".

This colonial mentality arose out of a hundred years of occupation by the British, who promoted an anti-Spanish attitude amongst the indigenous population. (In fact the area had much more in common with English-speaking Belize, which in 1981 split off from Guatemala and became independent.) Thus a colonialist culture and structure was pitted against the new revolutionary culture and organisation from the Spanish-speaking part of

the country. Furthermore, the latter did "not come from below, but from above", Bendana stresses.

The Moravian priests were very conservative, and very influential as spiritual and community leaders. They adopted a stance against the Sandinistas whom they saw as atheistic. It was the case of "new forms of thought upsetting traditional structures of domination". These problems combined with a number of other factors to make the Meskito's vulnerable to counter-revolutionary pressures in the early years of the revolution.

Nicaragua's east coast had been both ideologically and economically colonised. The local economy before the revolution was controlled by American interests, in particular the mines, fishing and lumber industries. There was an abrupt US withdrawal from the area at the time of the revolution, particularly after the mines were nationalised. The Atlantic coast held no strategic value in military terms. Once its economic potential was virtually exhausted, there was no real incentive for American economic interests to stay. They destroyed the mining equipment when they left, resulting in massive unemployment. Prior to this, when they left the fishing industry, Somoza had sold off the fishing boats. And the lumber companies left primarily because they had wiped out much of the forest - and paid no taxes whilst doing so.

The US withdrawal led to rapid economic decline in the region, which upset the way of life of the Meskito. The area became poverty-stricken as the people were deprived of their main sources of employment. This was further compounded by the war with the Contras. Because all this coincided with the revolution, the Meskitos blamed the Sandinistas.

These objective problems were further compounded by the fact that the "revolution had not sent its best cadres" to the region to sort out the problems. There were severe



Ethnic minorities in Nicaragua

"The peoples of the Atlantic Coast - autonomy means to recognise equal rights for all ethnic groups, regardless of their number" (published in El Tayacán [Managua], 1985)

Map: Communication in popular Nicaragua (ig)

communication problems, as well as an "historical resentment towards anything Spanish". The region was only nominally under Nicaraguan sovereignty. The revolution to the Mestikos meant merely another change in government which they felt had nothing to do with them.

By 1981, political and cultural differences between the Mestikos and the Sandinistas came to a head, and the US became involved. They tried to reach out to the Moravian leaders, and draw the Mestikos "to the counter-revolutionary army based in Honduras", where they hoped to "induce them to become part of the Contra army". Thus a vicious circle developed, with suspicion on both sides.

By 1984, "the revolution knew it had to respond politically, not militarily, and try to address what the Mestiko was fighting for". The FSLN had come to realise that Mestiko opposition was not an imperialist plot, but an expression of "local grievances and demands". These, Bendana feels, were not

incompatible with the revolution. Thus the first autonomy project was initiated, through a process of common discussions. This led to their own laws and their own forms of organisation being implemented, in other words, a larger measure of self-determination, not only politically but also in terms of control over their resources.

By 1987, autonomy for the Mestikos was entrenched in the constitution. Many authorities of the area eventually became Mestiko, including the police and army. This led to the Mestikos identifying their autonomy with defence against the Contras, who were still trying to force them to fight against the revolution. According to Bendana, the message came across to both sides. "We learnt that there could be no revolution without autonomy, and they learnt that there could be no autonomy without the revolution". The autonomy they had gained, says Bendana, is "irreversible, even the new government cannot reverse it". ❖

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revolution rather than defend or advance it. In Bendana's view, it probably pushed many people towards the side of the counter-revolution, and gave the US more ammunition with which to continue its aggressive policies towards Nicaragua.

The question of the church was a particularly sensitive problem. There had been a long-running battle with the hierarchy of the official church, although the Sandinistas, says Bendana, were the "first to promote Christians in the revolution". There were three priests in the cabinet who espoused a revolutionary Christian thought. Christian communities were mobilised for the revolution, and the popular church emerged. The official catholic church, however, tried to stifle this development and Pope John Paul publicly attacked the Sandinistas. With the crack-down on some bishops, says Bendana, "We are not sure we came out winning because of the strong religious sentiments of the people".

Imposing cultural conformity

The revolution made another error in imposing a degree of conformity on the cultural life of the Nicaraguan people. It encouraged artists to "promote the culture of the revolution", states Bendana, which had the effect of confining the artistic community to "the promotion of the rev-



La Prensa attacks the idea of a Christian Sandinista militant

Photo: Communication in popular Nicaragua (ig)

olution's social, political and military objectives."

However, many artists did not want to restrict their creativity in such a way. It took a while to realise the necessity to "promote all forms of culture previously restricted to a few", says Bendana.

In promoting only a 'revolutionary culture', many people, in particular the youth, became alienated. In Cuba this 'revolutionary culture' has been strictly enforced, with the result that "Cubans now have problems with the youth", observes Bendana. Nicaraguan youth, too, were made to listen to 'revolutionary songs' or, where pop music was allowed, it was confined to 'revolutionary rock'n roll. The danger in this was most clearly seen during the 1990 elections when the UNO brought in American pop groups who seduced the youth.

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Trade Union Movement

Nicaragua has a number of trade union groups, each of which is allied to a political party. By far the largest, with well over 100 000 members and 608 affiliates, is the Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST), which was formed in 1979 out of a range of pro-Sandinista unions that had been clandestinely engaged in the struggle against Somoza. These unions were the largest before the revolution and were consciously organised around the task of insurrection.

Closely allied to the CST is the Association of Agricultural Workers (ATC), also officially launched in 1979, which represents around 150 000 agricultural workers on private and state farms. Another Sandinista-allied union is the more than one hundred thousand strong National Union of Farm and Cattle Ranchers (UNAG), formed in 1981 to represent the interests of private agricultural producers including cooperatives.

The 15 000 strong General Confederation of Labour - Independent (CGT), which split from the Somoza-dominated CGT in 1968, is tied to Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN). This confederation describes it-

self as 'Marxist-Leninist' and generally supported the Sandinista government, although at times it organised strikes against it.

The much smaller Confederation for Action and Trade Union Unity (CAUS), formed in the mid-1970s, is allied to the Communist Party of Nicaragua

(PCN), and gave critical support to the Sandinista government. Another left-oriented union is the Workers Front (FO), which is tied to the Trotskyist Popular Action Movement - Marxist Leninist (MAP-ML), and also has a few thousand members.

On 12 May 1990, a National Workers Front (FNT) was formed by the CST, ATC and other Sandinista-aligned unions - including the health union (FETSALUD, 19 000 members), the public sector union (UNE, 45 000 members), the technicians union (CONAPRO), and the journalists union (UPN) - as well as the Workers' Front.

There are three main rightwing unions, each representing less than 2 000 workers, which campaigned for the UNO during the 1990 election, and which receive funding and training from the American AFL-CIO. These are: the 18-year old Nicaraguan Workers Confederation (CTN), which is tied to the Social Christian Party (PSC), split in 1982. It now has a rival, the Independent Nicaraguan Workers Confederation, which in Bendana's opinion "nobody takes seriously". The third group, the ICFTU-affiliated Confederation of Trade Union Unity (CUS), is tied to the misleadingly named Social Democratic Party (PSD). Formed in 1962, the CUS's membership dwindled significantly after the revolution.

These rightwing unions strongly opposed the Sandinista government, and tried to channel workers grievances, in particular over the budget and taxes, towards challenging the legitimacy of the government. But now, says Bendana "the shoe is on the other foot", and the UNO government is forced to recognise the



Nicaraguan workers

Photo: New Era

dominant Sandinista unions. This has to some extent alienated the CTN, given the intense competition in many workplaces over the affiliation of unions to one of the federations.

During the period of Sandinista rule, the Sandinista unions found themselves in

the unfortunate position of having to defend the government. This, Bendana feels, "was a real problem in the light of a deteriorating situation for workers". These hardships were a great test for the leadership. There were attempts to promote increased community and worker initiative to solve problems. Workers' stores were set up, where workers produced clothing and exchanged them for processed food at lower prices. Straight barter arrangements were made, where cooperatives producing foodstuffs exchanged them for factory goods.

There were "moments of strain" in the union-government relationship, says Bendana, although "not to breaking point". These mainly concerned bad management practices. Workers, says Bendana, "were angry because they were forced to sacrifice, while management made mistakes, or were corrupt". There was also resentment about the privileges - such as special shops - for state functionaries and higher party cadres (International Viewpoint, 26/3/90).

After the revolution, management had to adjust to the new mentality of labour, otherwise it would not have been able to operate. Under the UNO government, there have been attempts to reintroduce the pre-revolution mode of relationship, but these have not been successful. The Sandinista government allowed workers a large measure of participation in management decision-making, in particular in cooperatives. Workers therefore know how to look at company books and know about bank arrangements, and are in good position to continue the struggle. ♦

from page 62

International Solidarity

Although the international Nicaraguan Solidarity movement was the greatest international solidarity movement, after the international anti-apartheid movement, Bendana feels that it was still insufficient. It was important enough to prevent the US from invading the country, but more could have been done to sustain the solidarity pressure. He feels that the solidarity movement, in which the international religious community provided the backbone of support, put a "disproportionate amount of effort into the USA".

The Eastern Bloc countries had provided crucial support during the revolution, but with its collapse, Bendana feels, it is now necessary to "forge another type of International". This, however, still needs to be thoroughly debated. The July 19 Sandinista Youth, for example, is divided on the issue. Some leaders believe that the FSLN should join the social democratic Socialist International. Henrie Petrie, its full-time coordinator, believes that "We need to win more political space internationally. The so-called social democracy played an important role in support of the Nicaraguan revolution." However Carlos Fonseca Teran, the son of the founder of the FSLN Carlos Fonseca, disagrees: "I'm opposed because we are not social democrats. It is the way Marxism-Leninism has been

practised that is in crisis, not Marxism-Leninism itself" (*The Militant* 2/11/90)

The Sandinistas' belief in political pluralism has not affected its relationship with the Cuban Communist Party. There is a very close relationship and a deep respect for each other's right to develop their own system to suit their particular conditions. Generally, the FSLN strives to open a dialogue "with as many groups as possible", says Bendana. Besides the Cubans, they have particularly close relations with the Workers Party of Brazil, which last year almost won the presidential elections there (see WIP 67). They are also close to the FMLN in El Salvador and the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala.

Debate to continue in party congress

The way forward in the new conditions "will be refined at the February congress of the FSLN", says Bendana. The Sandinistas, he says, have always believed in "political pluralism, a mixed economy and non-alignment", and that the path to socialism lies "through defence of integral democracy".

Since 1961, when the FSLN was formed, it has had

a strong Marxist current but it has never, says Bendana, "proclaimed socialism as an objective". When the Sandinistas came to power, unlike Cuba, they did not aim to create a 'Marxist-Leninist' state. It was the working class, particularly through their unions, that spoke of socialism.

The broad front perspective of the FSLN requires that it appeals to the broadest possible sectors of the population, in order to "maintain our hegemony of popular interests". But this imposes a dilemma: how does the Front continue to attract the widest support without losing its revolutionary core? How does it ensure that the capacity of the revolution to advance is not halted?

The FSLN have argued against embarking on a strategy of insurrection against the Chamorro government because "these are our rules" that they are playing under, says Bendana. They cannot govern without the Sandinistas' cooperation, and "it is not in our interests to force a collapse".

These are issues that will be dealt with at the February congress, with strong input from the mass organisations which, as indicated earlier, have now refused to allow their particular concerns - as workers, women, youth, etc - to be swamped by the national concerns of the Front.

References

Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR)
"Update on Nicaragua : After the 1990 Elections" (Nov 1990).



Conference on 'Marxism in South Africa - past, present and future'

A three-day conference on 'Marxism in South Africa - Past, Present and Future' is to be held at the University of the Western Cape, under the auspices of UWC's Marxist Theory Seminar, from Friday 6 to Sunday 8 September 1991. The conference provides a forum for assessment of the achievements and limitations of Marxist theory and practice in SA, and debate on the way forward in the changed conditions of the 1990s.

Contributions are invited on topics concerning the historical development of Marxism in SA; theoretical issues of Marxist economics, politics, philosophy, etc, especially as these relate to SA; and problems and prospects for building a Marxist tradition in SA today.

Enquiries to: **Marxist Theory Seminar**
c/o Department of Philosophy
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville
7535.

LABOUR RESEARCH SERVICE

Temporary research posts for returning South Africans

The Labour Research Service intends to create one or two "temporary research posts" for returning South Africans. Successful applicants will undertake research projects commissioned by the Labour Research Service in the fields of wages & bargaining, company and industrial analysis, and economic policy as it affects trade unions. A further possible subject would be investment analysis. The posts will be for a minimum of three and a maximum of six months. These positions will particularly suit persons needing transitional employment prior to serving in the trade union movement.

The Labour Research Service provides back-up research for major national trade unions especially in the area of wage bargaining. A large computer database of wage agreements is maintained and there is a strong training component.

The successful applicants for these posts are likely to have an economics degree and research experience, and must be returning South Africans.

The salary is fixed, and no fringe benefits are offered. Some assistance with removal expenses may be available.

Applications for these posts, containing full details of experience and qualifications, together with the names of two referees, should be made in writing to:

The Labour Research Service, P.O. Box 376, Salt River 7925, Cape Town, South Africa.

There is no deadline for applications.

Culture

Bring culture to the factories!

A proposal from the Culture and Working Life Project, Durban

We hereby motivate for the inclusion of a series of cultural rights in the agreements between shopstewards, trade unions and managements.

1. Our research has noted a fundamental shift in South African industrial life. In these times of broader political changes there is a growing search for new principles of shopfloor relations between management and labour. This search is for ways to start making factories something more than alienating environments dedicated only to production and profits.

Some managements are searching for new ways to encourage worker participation, new ways to motivate workers and a new perception which views labour as a human resource. This new approach has begun meeting half way the demand by trade unions for more worker participation at work. It seems we are in a new era which recognises, on the one hand, the conflicting nature of

factory life, and on the other, has moved beyond paternalism to seek new solutions.

2. Trade unions (and in this COSATU has been the most successful) have stimulated the development of hundreds of cultural groups, have tapped an untold talent which has been mobilised for trade union campaigns and educational purposes. Dance groups, choirs and theatre groups have sprung up all over the country, and have played a predominantly political role. However, as the climate of negotiation has introduced new political processes, these groups will increasingly be playing a more *educational* and *social* role. They will be increasingly reflecting an occupational culture in a new industrial environment. Sustaining these cultural activities will be an important area of trade union concern.

3. Workers are faced with poor infrastructures in the townships, which hampers cultural activity.

The design of townships (and here in Natal the townships have become places of fear), the lack of transport facilities and the minimal leisure time workers have, exacerbate these problems. There will have to be pressure for cultural activity to take place in the most convenient and safe places. Once again, the place of work might offer some solutions.

4. Most black workers have been excluded from broader cultural developments, locally and nationally, both as producers and consumers of cultural activity. They feel cut off from the dynamics, skills and resources around them.

For these reasons it would be rational and desirable to open up a space within working hours for the creation and consumption of culture which would begin making factory life less of a functional, alienating environment.

Proposed rights

We propose the following rights should be negotiated between shopstewards and managements:

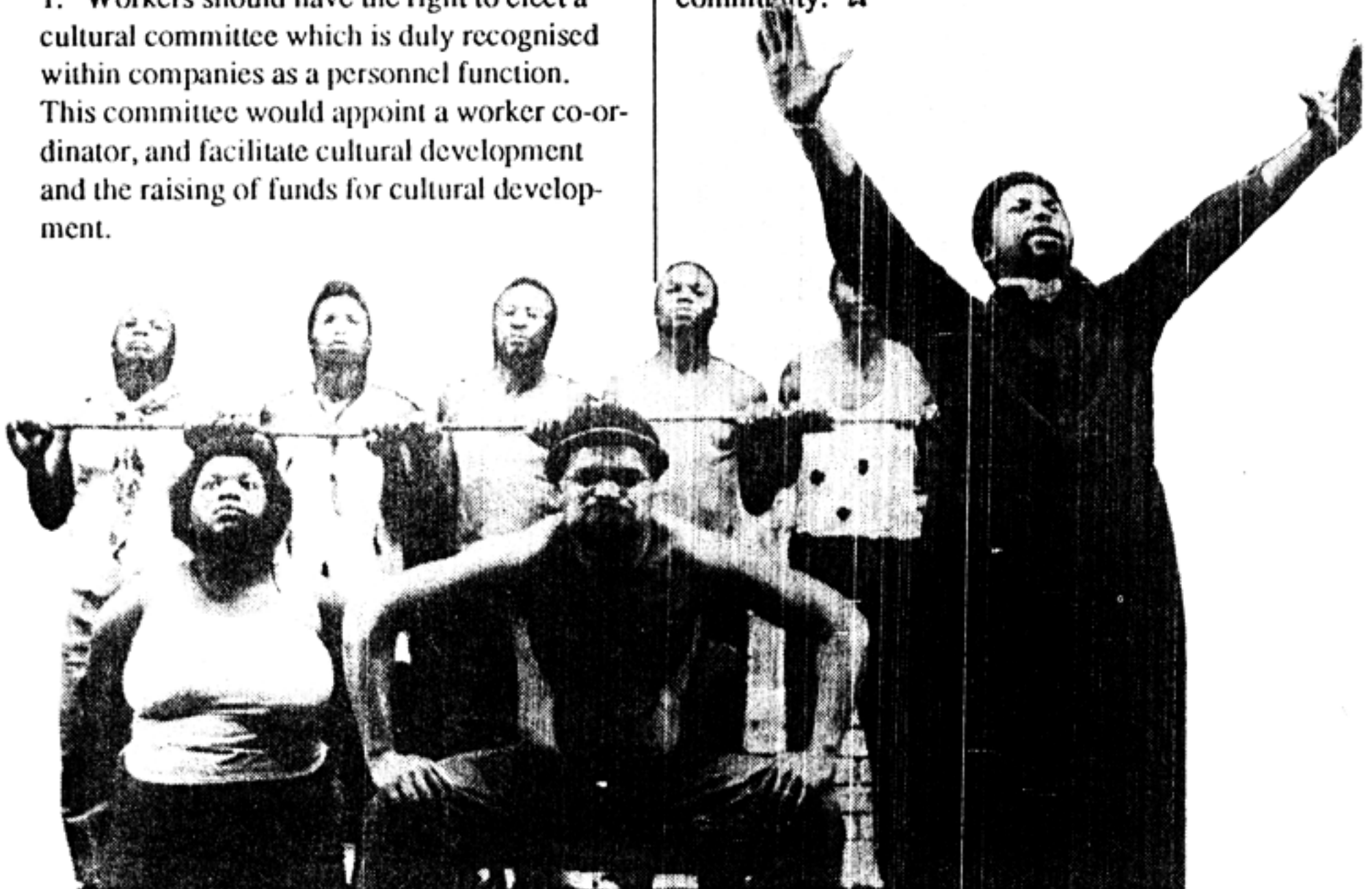
1. Workers should have the right to elect a cultural committee which is duly recognised within companies as a personnel function. This committee would appoint a worker co-ordinator, and facilitate cultural development and the raising of funds for cultural development.

2. The committee should have the right to make use (within reasonable bounds) of factory space and premises, for the encouragement and development of cultural activity.

3. The committee should have the right to enter into agreements with cultural organisations to bring performances and activities to factories without disrupting production. For example, through the Natal Culture Congress, the committee could enter into agreements with the Durban International Film Festival for screening films on the shopfloor; with the South African Traditional Musicians Association for performance groups; or with LIWO, the Librarians Organisation, to create a mobile library facility, or with sporting organisations.

4. The worker co-ordinator and its committee should be entitled to 40 hours per year for training and education work in the field of culture through his or her trade union.

5. The committee should also be a consultative forum for managerial decisions about sponsoring cultural skills and venues in the community. ☆



Worker theatre

Photo: Cedric Nunn/Afrapix

The Manpower Training Act

The CENTRE FOR APPLIED LEGAL STUDIES (CALs) assesses the Manpower Training Act

The Manpower Training Act 56 of 1981 is the least known of the laws regulating labour relations. However, if trade unions wish to represent the interests of their members on issues such as training, and ensure they have fair access to training facilities, they will have to become familiar with it. Major changes were made to the law in 1990. These are designed to shift much of the responsibility for administering training from the government to the private sector. Unions are already being called upon to respond to private sector initiatives in this area.

History

The Manpower Training Act was enacted in 1981 following recommendations of the Wichahn Commission. It replaced a large number of laws which had created racially segregated institutions for the training of employees. It was the first consolidated law to regulate and promote training in all sectors of the economy. In 1990, the Act was changed to encourage greater private sector involvement in training.

One of the central institutions dealing with training is the Manpower Training Board. This is an

advisory and research body which advises the Minister of Manpower on training matters. Representatives of the state, labour and capital sit on the Board.

Before the amendments made to the law last year, the Manpower Training Board appointed *training committees* to administer training in particular areas and industries. These committees had equal numbers of employer and employee representatives, but they have now been replaced by *training boards*. The training board is the institution that employees and trade unions are most likely to come across when dealing with issues related to training.

Training boards

Training boards may be established by employers or trade unions (either on their own or together), or by an industrial council. Once established, the training board can apply for registration in its industry from the Registrar of Manpower Training. Like industrial councils, the training board will operate for a particular industry (for example, the metal industry or the chemical industry), either in a particular region or nationally. Only one training

board may be accredited for a particular industry and area.

Although both employers and trade unions can establish training boards, it is likely that the initiative to establish training boards will come chiefly from employers. The Act does, however, give the Registrar of Manpower Training limited powers to ensure that employees in the industry concerned have some representation on training boards. However, there is no requirement that employees or their trade unions have equal representation with employers. This is a change from the previous system where the training committees appointed by the Manpower Training Board had equal numbers of employer and employee representatives.

An important feature in the Act is that an employer must negotiate with any group of employees over the establishment of training boards. This provision appears to apply in at least two situations.

Firstly, employees would be entitled to demand, as a collective bargaining issue, that their employer establishes a training board for their enterprise. Secondly, an employer who wishes to establish a training board would have to negotiate with their employees on the formation of the board.

The usefulness of this provision may be limited by the fact that the duty to negotiate in the Act relates to *individual* employers, and only the country's



Training for the workforce is a collective bargaining issue

Photo: Tsaks Mokolobate/Learn and Teach

major employers (such as TRANSNET, ESCOM or ISCOR) are likely to form their own training boards.

However, it may be possible to argue that the provision also places a duty on groups of employers or employers' associations who wish to form training boards, to negotiate with their employees on the matter. It may also be possible to argue that

the refusal by employers or employers' organisations to negotiate with representative trade unions on matters of training would be an unfair labour practice.

Training boards have wide functions. They are under a duty to ensure that their industry has enough trained personnel, and that employees in the industry are offered re-training so they can upgrade

their skills on an on-going basis. In addition, the training board is responsible for administering apprenticeships in their industry.

The apprenticeship system

Traditionally, black workers were excluded from training in the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeship system combines formal training at an institution such as a technical college with on-the-job training and experience. While there have been no racial bars in the apprenticeship training system since 1981, informal job reservation has limited the number of black apprentices and qualified artisans.

The 1990 amendments to the Manpower Training Act have changed the system of apprentice training. Now apprenticeship training consists of a number of separate training modules or short courses which the apprentice must complete. An apprentice may only move from one module to the next after he or she has passed a proficiency test. Apprenticeships in different industries vary as to the amount of formal training and work experience the employee must have before becoming an artisan, but all involve a combination of formal training and on-the-job experience.

The conditions of apprenticeship in an industry are set by the Minister of Manpower on the recommendation of the training board in the industry. These conditions

include the qualifications needed to become an apprentice, and could be used to exclude employees without adequate formal education.

The Manpower Training Act also empowers the Minister of Manpower to establish training schemes. The Act has been used to provide unemployed people with basic skills training so as to allow them to enter the job market. In addition, the Minister has established training schemes in a wide range of occupations including the training of computer programmers.

Training centres and training in labour relations

The Act also provides for the establishment and voluntary registration of three types of training centres: regional, industry and private training centres. An interesting provision in the Act is that nobody may conduct training in labour relations at a training centre unless he or she is registered with the Department of Manpower. This restriction does not apply to registered trade unions, employers' organisations, federations, industrial councils, or to employers providing training to their own employees. The prohibition however could apply to organisations such as consultants, unregistered trade unions or aid or support organisations.

A little known provision in the Act provides for financial grants to be paid to registered trade unions, em-

ployers' organisations or federations, to cover the cost of approved labour relations training. However, in 1988 (according to the Department of Manpower Annual Report) no requests were made for this type of financial aid.

Funding

The Act also provides for the funding of training. It creates the Manpower Development Fund which grants loans to training centres and industrial council schemes for capital expenditure. In addition, the Act allows industrial councils or groups of employers to impose levies on employers to raise funds for training schemes. Up to 1990, employers who ran training schemes received tax advantages, but this has now been scrapped by the Receiver of Revenue.

Victimisation

Like all other labour laws, the Manpower Training Act contains a victimisation provision. This makes the penalisation of an employee (by, for instance, dismissal or reducing conditions of employment) for trade union activities a criminal offence. The Manpower Training Act applies to all sectors of the economy. Therefore it appears that the victimisation provision offers protection to state employees, farm workers and domestic workers who are excluded from most other labour legislation. This provision may be of use to trade unions in these sectors, until they are incorporated under the Labour Relations Act. ☆

Labourers' record wage increases

(Based on 'Wage Review No. 6' by Labour Research Service)

Average wage increases of 21,9% were settled by unions for labourers in the second half of 1990, despite the poor state of the economy. This is the highest figure for the second half of the year since wage monitoring was first begun in 1987. Half the bargaining units achieved increases of between 17% and 27%.

The 280 wages reviewed by the Labour Research Service's AWARD (Actual Wage Rates Database) show that 94% of the annual wage increases were above inflation, which was running at 14,2% during the period. In real terms, therefore, labourers' wages increased by an average 6,2%

The greatest relative advances were achieved for the lowest paid.

And increases were usually higher where negotiations took place for the first time. This was the case in some local authority

negotiations which figure prominently in the top ten labourers' wage increases for the period

The top increase went to workers at a Botshabelo factory, Sun Ho Plastics, organised by SACTWU. However, this increase moved their wages up to only R60,00 per week.

Similarly, SAMWU achieved very large increases for labourers in two municipalities. But their wages still remain below R100,00 per week; whereas the average wage for labourers for all sectors is R179,17 per week.

The average wage of R179,17 per week excludes local authority and mining wages.

If these two lowest paid sectors were included, the average wage would be very much lower. Even at R179,17, however, this average labourers' wage stands well below the LRS' housing-based living

**Top ten wage increases for labourers
(July - Dec 1990)**

Rank	Company	Wage	Date	Hours	Increase	Union
1	Sun Ho Plastics	R60.00	Sept 90	46	84.6%	SACTWU
2	Municipality, Despatch	R93.23	Jul 90	45	83.6%	SAMWU
3	Samancor Manganese (Surface)	R115.39	Jul 90	49	71.8%	NUM
4	Leather IC Tanning	R161.28	Jul 90	42	60.7%	NULW
5	Municipality Untentweni	R93.23	Jul 90	45	57.6%	SAMWU
6	Samancor Manganese (U/ground)	R132.69	Jul 90	49	54.1%	NUM
7	Municipality Port Shepstone	R92.58	Jul 90	45	53.7%	SAMWU
8	Municipality Port Elizabeth	R126.92	Jul 90	45	51.9%	SAMWU
9	Wanda - Frasers Furniture	R184.62	Jul 90	45	50.9%	SACCAWU
10	Oranjerivir Wynkelders	R72.00	Sep 90	45	44.0%	NUWSAW

wage estimate of R260,00 per week.

The auto sector workers received the lowest average wage increase, at 15,9%. However, they still get the highest average wage which, at R284,76 per week, makes them the only sector being paid above the LRS' living wage estimate.

LRS points out that "there is a vast difference between the top and the bottom

wages. The top wage of R305,20 - paid by Mercedes Benz (East London) - is six and a half times greater than the bottom wage of R47,50 paid by the Municipality of Bathurst."

Seven companies featured in the top ten companies' wages table are in the auto sector. No fewer than eight of the companies featured in the top ten are organised by the National Union of Metal-

workers (NUMSA). The other two are organised by the Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union (PPWAWU).

Wage settlements

Industrial councils, where employers and unions bargain, set large wage increases, averaging 23,1%, although some took more than twelve months to raise wages. Only one of the 24 industrial councils in the survey settled below inflation. The average wage for labourers covered by the 24 industrial councils is R164 per week.

Wage Determinations, set by the state's Wage Boards, on the other hand, have set poor increases for labourers. They prescribed only 10,2% on average. This is well below the rate of inflation, and only half of the average wage increase for all labourers. The average wage for labourers covered by these wage determinations is R90 per week. ❖

Average weekly labourers' wages by sector

Auto	R284.75
Plastic packaging	R235.42
Iron, steel, engineering	R209.20
Paper, packaging, printing	R203.31
Building products	R185.94
Wood and furniture	R184.12
Average wage	R179.17
Wholesale and retail	R174.46
Passenger transport	R166.14
Goods transport	R162.40
Hotel and catering	R159.00
Textile, clothing, leather	R147.54
Building and construction	R142.62
Food and beverage	R126.60
Mining	R115.06
Local authorities	R107.84

What do other wage surveys say?

Levy, Piron and Associates -

Notes that labour action, during 1990, was dominated by an increase in strike action. With four million mandays lost, this represents an increase of 29,4% on 1989. Wage issues accounted for 66% of mandays lost and brought an average wage increase of 17,4% (Their figure is lower than the AWARD average because their survey covers all manual grades.)

PE Corporate Services -

Carried out a survey of 1 200 companies across the country. They find that the average labourers' wage in the manufacturing sector is R183 per week. This is slightly higher than the AWARD average because PE Corporate generally cover the larger wealthier companies. They predict that almost half of all African workers could receive wage settlements below the expected inflation rate in 1991.

Bureau of Economic Research, Stellenbosch University

Also predict that workers can expect increases in 1991 which will be barely above an expected inflation rate of 13.5%

Spotlight on economics

"Another hard year ahead"

The latest (October 1990) figure for South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - the sum total of all production - shows a 1% decline. But, with an average increase in population of at least 2,2% , the real decline in South Africa's GDP is actually even more than 1% . Financial journalists and economists expect little change in GDP in 1991. Various factors will affect the economy.

World Economic Downturn

The world economic downturn and the Gulf war have destroyed hopes of an economic recovery in South Africa.*

The downturn, especially in the USA and the UK, will affect South African exports of base metals, iron and steel, ferro-alloys and raw materials.

This will put pressure on South Africa's Balance of Payments : as earnings from exports decline, spending on imports are predicted to rise.

Effects of drought on Balance of Payments

The failure of the maize crop in many areas means that South Africa will have to import between R1 billion and R2 billion of maize. The wheat crop is also poor and the sugar industry is threatened.

The drought will also reduce employment and incomes in rural areas. At the same time, food prices will increase, which will raise the inflation rate because food prices account for 23% of the Consumer Price Index's 'basket of goods' - upon which assessments of inflation are based.

Effects of high interest rates on inflation

Interest rates have been kept high by the government in order to try to squeeze down inflation. But factors such as recent oil price rises, and

* The Gulf war could, however, bring some unexpected consequences for the economy. Capitalist wars are usually good for companies engaged in the production of war supplies, such as Armscor.

ECONOMIC NOTES

poor agricultural conditions will keep inflation high.

So, next year, the economy will have to cope with high interest rates and high inflation, at the same time.

Predictions for 1991

The steel and engineering industries can expect continued retrenchments. The auto industry's car and truck sales are unlikely to increase in 1991. The building industry will continue to decline and probably not recover until 1993. The gold price has hit a brick wall at \$400 an ounce. A gold price below \$400 means further retrenchments in the gold mining industry.

The one sector which will be less affected is the food industry. This is usually least affected by economic recession, because food is the last item of consumption to be reduced.

Tough year ahead for the unions

The Labour Research Service believes that unions will find 1991 wage negotiations tougher than any year since 1986. There will be threats of retrenchments and factory closures. However, well-organised unions should be able to win increases of 15% and more, so preventing wages from falling in real terms.

Bosses response

Surveys show that only 58 per cent of companies surveyed expect to increase wages by more than 15 per

Inflation

Area	Consumer Price Index (1985=100)	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)
	Nov 1990	Nov 89 - 90
Cape Town	215.5	16.4%
Port Elizabeth	219.1	14.9%
East London	211.0	15.5%
Durban	206.2	14.6%
Pietermaritzburg	211.6	14.9%
Witwatersrand	217.6	15.4%
Vaal Triangle	211.4	15.0%
Pretoria	225.3	15.5%
Klerksdorp	224.5	14.3%
Bloemfontein	191.7	11.6%
OFS Goldfields	216.0	15.3%
Kimberley	205.6	14.5%
South Africa	215.6	15.3%

Source: Central Statistical Service

Inflation

Area	Consumer Price Index (1985=100)	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)
	Dec 1990	Dec 89 - 90
Cape Town	215.9	15.5%
Port Elizabeth	219.9	13.9%
East London	211.5	14.4%
Durban	206.9	13.3%
Pietermaritzburg	211.9	13.1%
Witwatersrand	219.9	15.1%
Vaal Triangle	211.4	13.5%
Pretoria	227.3	15.0%
Klerksdorp	226.9	14.0%
Bloemfontein	192.0	10.1%
OFS Goldfields	217.6	14.7%
Kimberley	206.2	13.3%
South Africa	217.1	14.6%

Source: Central Statistical Service

cent during 1991 for African hourly paid workers. Should management at most companies (66%) have their way, most artisans can expect increases between 10 and 15 per cent. ☆

(Based on LRS' January 1991 "Bargaining Monitor")

LRS and exiles

LRS is offering temporary research posts to returning South African exiles. For more details, see page 65

Profile

One-man striker

Morice Smithers interviews ERNEST BUTHELEZI, Transvaal regional secretary of Food and Allied Workers Union

I was born in 1962 in Diepkloof Soweto, but my parents moved me to Zululand at the time of the Soweto uprising in 1976. My father remained here in Johannesburg, working for Exclusive Books. My mother had been a domestic worker for most of her life, but she stopped doing that work when we moved to Natal. I finished schooling in 1982 and then I moved to Johannesburg to find a job.

In 1983 I found a job at OK Bazaars which I kept for about 18 months. I joined the trade union immediately. That was CCAWUSA.

It has always been my view that we should fight corruption and exploitation of man by man. At the OK there was high exploitation and low salaries. I was keen to learn and to see that wages were increased, so I would attend union meetings. But I was not impressed with the way CCAWUSA was operating at that time. There were no factory floor structures. You would see workers meeting in a general meeting only when there were going to be wage negotiations. Other issues like dismissals were never really addressed. Many of the demands were not made on our own. They would just be coming from the leadership. Of course this is still the case in some unions.

The main problem we had was the racism in OK Bazaars. The whole problem between myself and the OK came when one of my colleagues was dismissed for an offense without being proved guilty. We met in the toilets and the changerooms to discuss the issue and agreed to go on a strike, but the

staff were scared and so we started a strike with only few.

One man strike!

After we had given our demands to management, I ended up being the only one who was not prepared to work! I was moving around the place engaged in this one man strike. I went on for the whole day, with management trying to talk to me because they wanted me to work. I returned to work the next day but things were bad from then on. In December I left because I didn't want to work in a place where the workers were so weak.

I then started work at Irvin and Johnson in February. I joined the Food and Canning Workers Union. Being a merchandiser, I was sent out to work alone at supermarkets to pack out I&J products. But I joined the union and I made it my task to try and encourage the other merchandisers to join as well. The workers in the factory and the drivers helped me to do this. We managed to organise 70% of the merchandisers.

In 1986 I was elected as a shopsteward. In 1987 I was elected the vice chair of the shopsteward committee in the factory and then I was elected as treasurer of the JHB branch of FAWU as it was by then.

Late in 1987, we were involved in a wage strike which was the first strike in I&J Distribution. It was one of the most organised strikes. We camped in a tent inside the premises after the company had obtained a court order evicting us from the canteen. Then in March 1988, I was detained for a short time under

the State of Emergency for my activities in the Soweto UDF Area Committee.

Then came 26 October 1988, the day that led to my dismissal with 16 other employees. We had observed the call for a stayaway in protest against the municipal elections on that day. The company felt that we had to be dismissed in order to gain control over the workers who had become militant and uncontrollable.

After dismissal, I worked temporarily in the union branch office. I was helping with recognition agreements and negotiations. In January I wanted to be released to go and find a job, but the office bearers decided that I should work for the union full time. I still wanted to be a worker. I liked participating as a worker in the structures of the union, but I couldn't refuse, so I worked full-time for the union.

In 1989 I was elected as the branch secretary in Johannesburg. In 1990, I was elected the regional secretary of the Transvaal and that's as far as I have gone.

So I have learnt a lot in the years since I left school. In fact I should say that FAWU has to be credited for what I am today because that is where I got most of the experience that helps me today.

I am a member of the ANC. I assist in the township in building other structures but because of the demands of my job in the union, there is a limit to what I can do in other organisations. It is my belief that I can't serve them equally.

I have been associated with SACP members over the years, though unaware of the fact. They have had an influence on my politics. In regard to membership of the party, I don't wish to comment. But I will say that I am grateful for the decision made by the leadership to open the SACP to all people, making it a mass party.

I believe that socialism has the answer for the problems of our country. But this does not mean a one party system.

I used to believe that a one party state would be good in South Africa, but the experience of the East has shown that if there is no opposition, you will make mistakes. In the situation of a one party state, debate is limited to members and thus it is easier to reach consensus without knowing the feelings of non-members. There were certainly many problems resulting from Stalin and from those people who followed his ways of operating. But the question is: how do we want *our* country to be run? We have to decide that.

I think we have to be careful of a mixed economy. I believe we need to plan carefully, but to be aware that we must always move towards eliminating capitalism. The mixed economy may be the starting point, but I am not that happy with it as a long term system. But we do need to be careful also that we don't end up with the destruction of the economy, as in countries like Angola, that arises from counter-revolutionaries.

The ANC and socialism: I am not too optimistic

I think the relationship between the unions and the political organisations is very important. Political organisations have contributed a lot to the building of the unions and the unions helped to fight for the rights of the political organisations. So the interests of both must be looked after. But in terms of the experiences of the East, each must remain independent of the other and respect the decisions that have been taken by the other.

The alliance is important in terms of fighting the struggles of the moment. Of course we don't know what will happen when the ANC comes into power. It may be dangerous for the unions to be in alliance with the party that is in power. They might end up not seeing the things that are wrong with the government and so the alliance will have to be reviewed. But at the moment the question of wearing two caps is irrelevant because you are not talking of political organisations that are in power. You are talking of organisations that are fighting apartheid together.

It is important that the interests of the workers are protected always. I am not too optimistic that the ANC will protect the interests of workers and that it will be in favour of socialism when it is the government. There are many different types of people who have joined the ANC. I think it is the duty of those ANC members who are in favour of socialism to ensure that in the next congress and the future congresses of the ANC to come, they put their views that will pave the way for policies that will make the ANC a party that will ensure socialist objectives. But I am not too optimistic about that.

Political changes challenge unions

The union movement is faced by a number of challenges: one is that of taking part in the structures of our society which has been under apartheid system. There has been a drastic

change in terms of the general political situation. What we have been doing in 86 - 89 is now changing because the ANC and other organisations have been unbanned and they are taking their rightful place in the political atmosphere. We may even need to amend resolutions that we have taken before in order to ensure that they meet with the new conditions that will prevail in the future, and to ensure that the trade union movement is going to be strong forever and to try and build the democracy that is needed. We must educate workers on the factory floor so that they participate effectively in the unions structures and in other organisations too. I have always believed that the trade union movement is the school of building worker and political leaders.

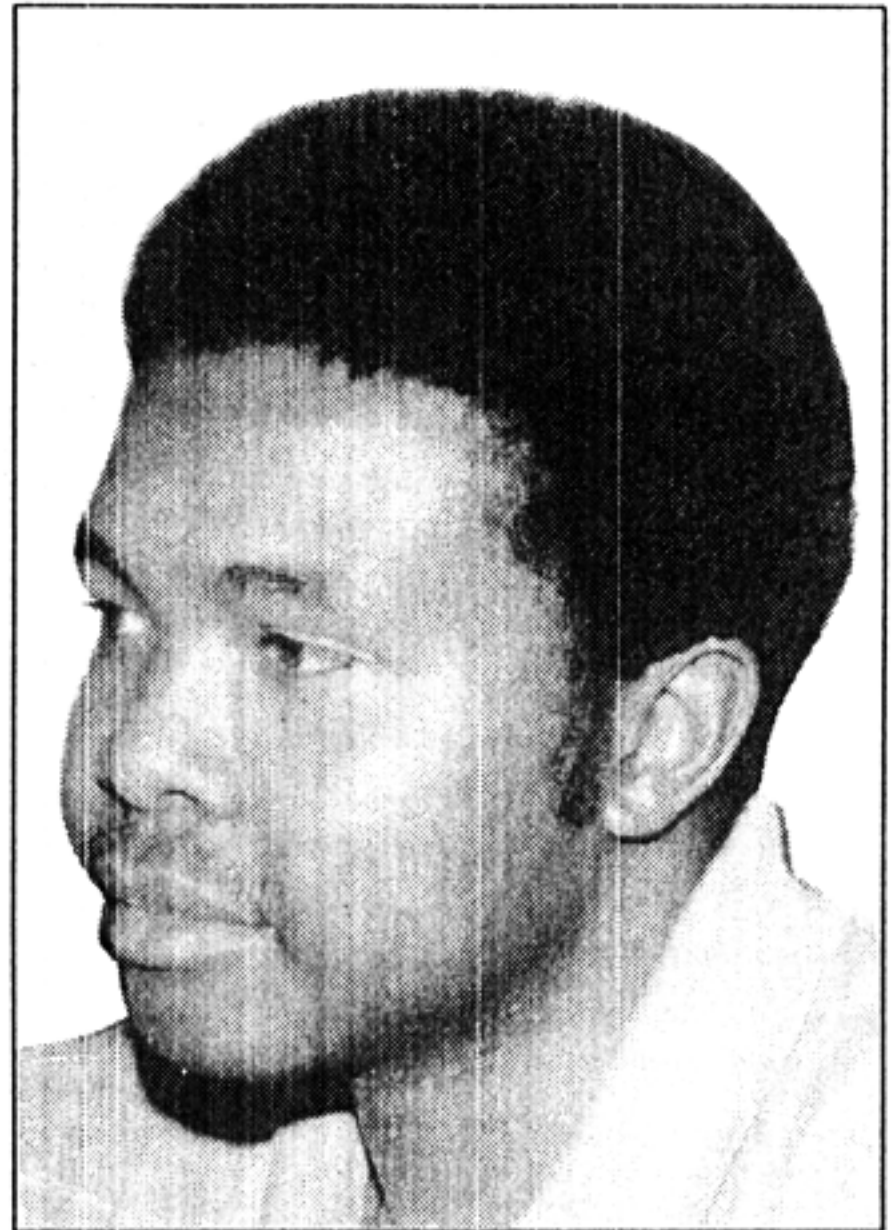
The unions were political bases through which people could participate in political organisation. But now this has changed. And we find that while we encouraged union members to be active in community and political organisations, we didn't stress the importance to workers of consolidating their unions. We did not guide them to show them that the trade union, even in a future South Africa led by the ANC, will still be necessary to protect the interest of the workers.

We are starting now to address that problem. Some workers believe that if the ANC is there, their rights will be protected and they will get high wages, that the government will say workers must have a minimum of R1 500. That is not the case. If the ANC becomes the government, it would have to take into account the effects of having a minimum wage of, for example, R1 500, based on the economy of the country.

The entire people, workers and capitalists, will be represented by the government. The government will have to take care of the interests of all the people of South Africa and so workers must have their own organisation to represent them in their own problems. Even if the SACP came into power, the rights of workers would not necessarily be guaranteed as it would have to cater for all the people of the country. Without the participation of the workers, there is nothing that can be guaranteed.

Bulletin articles helped members address problems

For FAWU, we have to face the problems that you have recently written about in the *Bulletin*. We are having problems, it is true, but it is to be



expected. All unions have problems. In some cases, workers have actually demonstrated against their own unions. But it is the duty of each and every member to see that the problems are minimised.

I believe the *Bulletin* articles have contributed to making more members aware of the fact that we are having problems in the union and to immediately address those problems in a constructive and objective manner. If it had stayed at an internal level, it may have caused even more problems in the way of splits. But because it came to the attention of workers, they have taken it on themselves to attend to it. Some people might think that publishing the story may have contributed to extending the problem. There is also the concern that management might take advantage of union problems being made public to serve their own interests.

But if the aim was to make workers, including workers in other unions aware, then it served a good purpose. Of course, sometimes it might be better to publish when a dispute is over and one can look back at the whole process and learn from it. But one should always remember also that often these problems are between officials, and not between workers. But they still have an effect on workers. ☆



1991: The Year of Mass Action for
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