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SOUTH AFRICAN

LABOUR BULLETIN

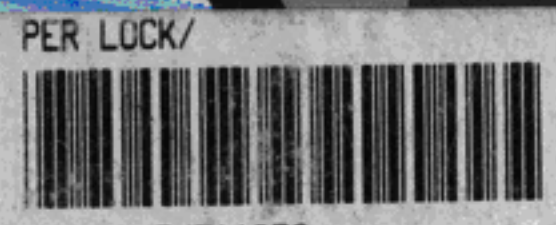
Mar/Apr 1993 Volume 17 Number 2

Chris Hani
Affirming women
Interview with Ben Nicholson



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Medical Arts Building
220 Jeppe St
(cnr Troye St)
Johannesburg
2001 South Africa

P O Box 3851
Johannesburg
2000 South Africa

Telephone No:
(011) 337 8511

Fax No:
(011) 337 9207

Managing Editor
Karl von Holdt

General Manager
Pete Richer

**Layout and
Production**
Morice Smithers

Co-ordination
Di Stuart

Writing
Snuki Zikalala

Sub-editing
Muff Andersson
Kally Forrest

Reception
Sibongile Zwane

Circulation
Sally Fincham

Photographer
William Matlala

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SOUTH AFRICAN **LABOUR** **BULLETIN**

Editorial

Chris Hani is dead. And the people of this country showed their anger with a bigger demonstration of mass action than has ever been seen before. The two national stayaways, the countrywide rallies and marches, the enormous funeral, were unprecedented.

This is not surprising. Chris Hani was a militant leader in the struggle for national liberation. More than that, he was a man of the people. Justice for the poor, the dispossessed, the exploited, was his slogan. He was often seen marching with strikers, addressing the youth, touring the rural areas, visiting MK cadres in jail. While many ANC leaders pursued positions of power and enjoyed their meetings with businessmen, diplomats and other influential people, Hani committed himself to mobilising, organising and speaking to those who do not have power and influence.

This was the leader assassinated by white racism.

It is fitting, then, that the exploited and dispossessed showed their anger and grief by bringing industry to a standstill. It is fitting that they marched through the cities of our country, bringing them to a standstill – the workers who have to fight for their dignity every working day, the unemployed who have been robbed of work and the means of living, the shackdwellers, the youth whose lives and hopes have been blighted by apartheid 'education'. These are the people Hani spoke for, and that is why racist South Africa hated him.

Now Hani is dead. Those who share his vision can only channel their anger and grief into ensuring it is a vision that cannot be ignored in the 'new' South Africa.

For the nation as a whole, for white South Africa, for the future government of national unity, the message is clear. The people who stopped industry, the people who brought cities to a standstill, the people who flocked to rallies and to Hani's funeral, are the

people who suffer under apartheid, the people who have fought it and who made it unworkable. The transition to democracy is not about complex constitutional horse-trading. It is not about replacing NP leaders with ANC leaders. It is not about ensuring business takes place 'as usual'. Democracy is about meeting the needs of the dispossessed and the poor. Democracy is about making a new life for the people and with the people.

This was Hani's belief. This is how his killers can be defeated. This is how his life can be celebrated.

Racial division in the labour movement

The focus of this issue of *LABOUR BULLETIN* is on racial division and racial unity in the labour movement. The workplace has been a microcosm of broader SA society, marked by racism and racial division. What are the prospects of a new non-racialism appearing in the workplace and in the labour movement in a democratic SA? The militant non-racial labour movement has over the years succeeded in establishing a remarkable level of unity between coloured, Indian and African workers around worker issues. However, there has been less success in many sectors, for example retail, printing and furniture. And very little progress at all has been made in incorporating white workers.

The articles published here make it clear a lot more work will have to be done to create a truly non-racial labour movement. COSATU and its affiliates will have to consider quite carefully how to equip themselves to attract more coloured, Indian and white workers. They will also have to decide what sort of relationship they want with skilled workers and the craft unions.

Karl von Holdt

TPA: the body with souls

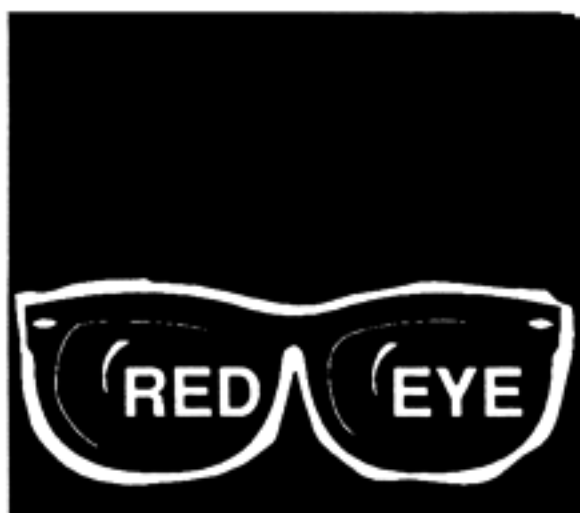
In a press statement on absenteeism on the day of Chris Hani's funeral, the TPA said: "The TPA has a workforce of approximately 88 000 souls stationed all over the Province. This makes it difficult to determine the actual number of absentee TPA staff today." REDEYE would like to know why the TPA employs souls? Is this so they don't have to pay enough to keep body and soul together?

Also, is this why the TPA was unable to determine the number of absentee souls – after all, souls are notoriously difficult to count? Furthermore, are the TPA management also counted as souls, or are they ordinary white South African bodies? REDEYE asks this question because the TPA's behaviour in last year's NEHAWU strike seemed completely soulless ... ❖

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

Four pillars

REDEYE is glad to see how well the LABOUR BULLETIN's sister publication, The SHOPSTEWART, is doing. In the NUMSA office in Pietermaritzburg, there is a table. The table has four legs.



One of the legs is broken. The table does not fall over. Under the broken leg, a pile of SHOPSTEWART magazines is doing a good job of holding the table up.

Is this what it means to be one of the 'four pillars of struggle'? ❖

Marcel the man

At COSATU's recent Campaigns Conference, NUM's Marcel Golding gave a talk on the advantages of the agency shop.

In concluding, he remarked that the agency shop and the closed shop are similar but different, like a boy and a girl born to the same family. "They have different functions," he went on. "A boy might be first prize, but a girl is also good news."

He was joking of course, and most of the conference burst into laughter.

But imagine if he had compared the agency shop and the closed shop to two children, one white, one black. Who would be first prize then? Do you hear COSATU laughing at this one?

No. Racism is unacceptable. But it seems that sexism... can be funny? ❖

Pay increases must match productivity increases - except when it comes to the bosses' pay cheques

The absolute hypocrisy and double standards of the bosses never ceases to amaze REDEYE. Every worker knows their song – that companies and the economy as a whole can no longer afford wage increases that are greater than productivity increases.

Workers should accept wage restraint and work harder before they can earn more, they sing. The latest to join in the singing is the government's Normative Economic Model. High labour costs, it says, have reduced international competitiveness and led to unemployment. The model proposes that real wages should increase by only 0,75%, while productivity should increase by 0,9%.

Meanwhile, BUSINESS DAY did a survey which showed that half of the top 60 companies in SA awarded their directors pay increases that far outstripped company performance and the rate of inflation. Top of the pops was Gencor (Derek Keys' old base) with a 100% salary increase for directors despite a drop in earnings per

share of 18% and dividend growth of 5%.

The board of directors of Rainbow Chicken, I&J, Suncrush, Murray & Roberts, Tongaat-Hulett, Sun International, ABI and Safren all enjoyed increases of 40% or more. Some of the companies told BUSINESS DAY they had increased the number of directors, hence the increased pay-bill for the board.



Goldfields of SA said their directors' pay increases are not linked to company earnings: "The profits of a company are not always a true reflection of the efforts of those who run it." Fair enough – but then why should workers' wages be linked to productivity? Productivity problems are more just as often caused by inefficient and wasteful management.

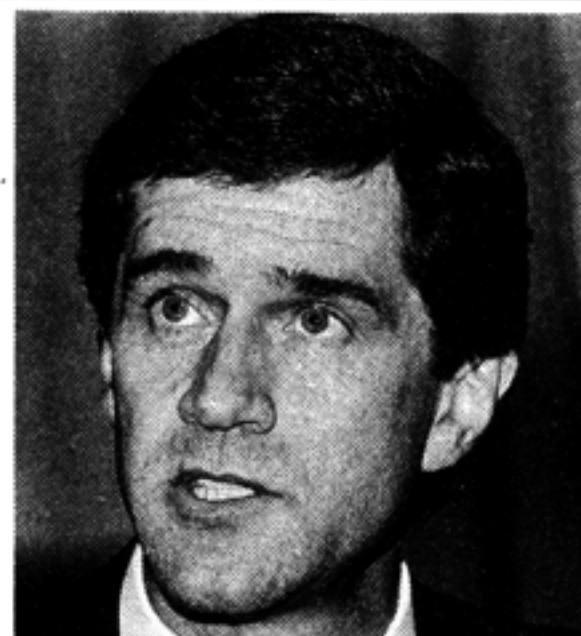
Furthermore, don't the high salaries paid to directors also push up prices and make their companies less competitive? Don't they waste company resources which should be invested in increasing productivity?

No, my friends. Workers will only accept participatory management and the productivity link when all employees are rewarded fairly and according to the same criteria. ❖

Golden handshakes ... but not for all

While on the subject of rewards, NUMSA president Mtutuzeli Tom made an interesting point recently. The politicians, generals and administrators who are responsible for the brutal crimes and corruption of the apartheid regime are now lining up for their massive golden handshakes at the public's expense. Meanwhile the six hundred workers retrenched recently at Tom's plant, Mercedes Benz, received only a modest retrenchment package. These are honest workers, laid off through no fault of their own. No pension. Little prospect of a job. Meanwhile, not only do the criminals roll in money like pigs in mud, but they set themselves up as "political consultants" too!

REDEYE understands some of the compromises the ANC has to make. But maybe we should build a massive citizen's movement to expose all these criminals – and if we can't put them in jail, at least stop them receiving our money as pensions. ❖



Roelf the wolf

The Nats recently put out a draft bill on women's rights. Well, like their draft Bill of Human Rights and the claim to be a 'non-white' party, it's all part of the sheep's clothing that the Nat wolf is trying to squeeze into.

Roelf Meyer was addressing a recent gathering of movers and shakers in the business and social world on the state of negotiations and the role of the NP in the formation of a new SA. In the middle of his address, Meyer apologised for boring the men by repeating information he presumed they must already know, but said they should understand he was doing it for the sake of the women present!

Apart from instantly losing his party the votes of most of the women present, Roelf's comment gives us some idea of how new the thinking of the old NP is. Seems like the main function of a law on women's rights should be to protect us from Roelf and his party. ☆

New plan from NUMSA

After the defeat of its national strike last year, NUMSA has tabled a bold new set of proposals to employers in the metal and engineering, auto, tyre and motor industries.

The main features of its new proposals are:

- The union believes that "fundamental change is required in the negotiating relationship" and that the basis of this relationship should be a "set of broad objectives" about restructuring and modernising the industry.
- The union proposes replacing the current annual round of negotiations with a three year programme to negotiate and implement these objectives.
- The union proposes that the average wage be increased by 15% over and above inflation, over a period of three years. This means an average increase in real wages of 5% per year.
- At the heart of the programme is a set of proposals for radically reforming the current structure of grading/training/wages/work organisation on the shopfloor.
- NUMSA proposes a complimentary system of centralised bargaining and plant-level bargaining. The framework as well as basic wages, conditions and benefits, for the above

changes, should be negotiated in the centralised forums. Changes to work organisation and productivity "awards" should be negotiated at plant level, within nationally established guidelines.

- The centralised bargaining forums should be restructured in the following way: the auto, motor and tyre sector should be integrated into one forum. On the other hand, the house agreements in the metal and engineering industry should be reincorporated into the main agreement of the industrial council, and specific agreements for sectors of the industry should be negotiated.
- Industrial policy and industrial restructuring should be negotiated in the centralised forums.
- An agency shop should be established in each industry.

Wages and reform

According to NUMSA's Les Kettledas, the union is not necessarily seeking a three year wage agreement, but will be guided in each year's wage negotiations by its three year objective and by what was achieved the previous year.

The union proposes that the wage gap between labourer and artisan be narrowed so that at the end of

three years the labourer earns 60% of the artisan's rate (currently 45% in engineering and 16% in the motor sector!). At the other end, NUMSA proposes that all artisans move up one or two grades into new grades proposed by the union. Since all of these proposals mean wage increases, the union could achieve its average 15% over three years without any across-the-board increase in real terms.

NUMSA's proposals have far-reaching implications for the shopfloor. It wants to reduce the number of grades from labourer to artisan from 13 to five, and add two grades above the artisan. It wants all level of workers to gain access to training so that they can improve their skills and move up the grade ladder.

The aim of the training/grading proposals is to create flexible and multi-skilled workers who can both be more productive and cope with new technology. This implies breaking down some of the rigid demarcations based on old technology, for example between electrician and mechanic or between production and maintenance work.

Along with this, NUMSA proposes a shift to team work, where work teams elect leaders rather than being controlled by supervisors. "All changes in work organisation," says the

document tabled to employers, "will be based on the principle of worker empowerment." The document also states that cost savings as a result of these changes should be identified so that "award systems" (ie productivity bonuses) which will be "collectively applied" can be negotiated.

Negotiations on these issues will take place at plant level.

To compliment these workplace reforms, NUMSA proposes that industry policy, adjustment programmes, modernisation measures, job security and job creation be negotiated in its centralised bargaining forums. The union wants each such forum to establish a statistical database on its sector.

Implications

The new approach pioneered by NUMSA has several implications for the labour movement:

- The SA labour movement has been built through an annual round of adversarial bargaining over a list of demands. NUMSA's approach replaces this with a long term plan for negotiating joint objectives and their implementation.
- Wage targets become part of this process and are linked to industry growth. The annual mobilisation around wage demands has been at the centre of SA unionism. If this is to be replaced by a focus on development and reform of



"Understand before we jump": delegate at NUMSA regional congress

Photo: William Matlala

the workplace the unions will have to find new ways to mobilise their members.

- NUMSA's proposals require strong institutions for centralised bargaining. If NUMSA can demonstrate that its proposals produce more predictable wage outcomes, and more stability in the workplace, employers may become less hostile to centralised bargaining.

Response of workers and employers

The NUMSA proposals were thoroughly debated and amended – in the NEC, in locals, in regional congresses and finally in the CEC. Although it was ultimately endorsed, a number of regions made it clear that the rank-and-file members and many organisers do not fully understand the proposals or their implications. The union has tried to address this

problem by including provisions for regular general meetings at the workplace to hear report backs about restructuring. Nonetheless, lack of understanding could pose a serious threat to NUMSA's new approach. The new approach is complex, and it will require the active involvement of members. Otherwise employers may be able to use NUMSA's proposals as a cover to re-organise the shopfloor on their own terms – with retrenchments, a greater workload, individual bonuses, 'participation' etc. This could disorganise the union base and generate a backlash against the entire strategy.

Other reservations expressed at a Wits Central West regional congress attended by LABOUR BULLETIN were: artisans may leave the union if they do not get wage increases; the union

should not jump before members understand; the union needs to debate the economic premises underlying the strategy – is this direction reformist social democracy, or is it socialism?

The greatest threat to this strategy may come from the employers. The NUMSA proposals amount to a comprehensive, industry-wide plan to modernise and restructure. SA employers tend to be opposed in principle and practice to such systematic “interference” with their prerogatives. Their workplaces may be in desperate need of “modernisation” – yet few of them believe it. Furthermore, employers are trying to weaken centralised bargaining.

Employers in the auto sector have put forward proposals to reduce the power of the National Bargaining Forum by only negotiating minimum wages there, and decentralising actual wages and benefits to company level negotiations. And a fraction in the motor industry are agitating for the employers association to withdraw from the industrial council. Yet centralised bargaining institutions are crucial to the negotiation and implementation of NUMSA’s proposals.

This years negotiations in the four metal industry forums will be an acid test for the future of SA industry. It will also be an acid test for the potential of strategic unionism. ❖

(Karl von Holdt)

Profit-sharing: NUM retreats and advances

At COSATU’s recent campaigns conference NUM economist Martin Nicol said that the profit-sharing agreements entered into by the union are a “retreat”. The union was forced into this retreat from its living wage policy by the structural crisis in the gold industry. To illustrate the way the crisis affects the union, Nicol pointed out that a third of the mine-workers who participated in the huge 1987 strike are no longer employed on the mines.

The broad outlines of the scheme were negotiated at the Chamber of Mines last year and cover the gold mines of Anglo American, Gengold and Randgold. The details were negotiated separately at each of the three mining houses. This agreement was accompanied by a low basic wage increase of 5%. Anglovaal and Gold Fields refused to agree to the union demand for profit sharing, and added an extra 1% on the basic increase.

The profit-sharing

agreements have provided limited but important gains for the union. Firstly, they have provided “a few extra rands for our members, as was their aim.” Secondly, they preserve centralised bargaining by combining a low industry-wide increase with the flexibility for workers at more profitable mines to earn more (although in practice the highest payouts occurred at the least profitable mines, and in general the richer Anglo



NUM officials and Anglo management sign the 1992 agreement

Photo: William Matlala

mines paid out less than the struggling Gengold mines). The payouts are calculated in a way that tends to equalise the amounts paid to workers on lower grades and those on higher grades.

These gains were sufficient for the union to dedicate itself to fighting for the extension of the profit sharing agreement to Anglovaal and Goldfields, which refused to participate last year.

Though profit-sharing is seen as a short-term retreat, it has opened the way for further advances. A union report states that profit sharing has created a "basis for extending participation and then control within the work environment. The monitoring of profit sharing schemes can be used to develop a deeper understanding among members. Understanding is the first condition for effective participation." The report commits NUM to investigate the idea of worker directors on company boards, and the idea of giving workers ownership rights as the logical outcome of profit sharing. It looks like the ESOPs project may re-emerge in SA – but this time as a militant union demand.

While NUM sees the profit sharing agreements as a retreat, Nicol comments that profit-sharing as an *addition* to negotiating a living wage has great potential.

The union also notes a number of problems with the profit sharing. "Education around the schemes has not

been sufficient," says the union report. "They are very difficult to understand and this is creating a lot of confusion."

Also, payments vary enormously from mine to

mine, undermining the principle of equal pay for equal work. Payments also vary from time to time, so workers do not know where they stand. ♦

(Karl von Holdt)

Centralised bargaining under threat

When COSATU assistant general secretary Sam Shilowa was asked which of the dozens of issues and campaigns identified at COSATU's March campaigns conference would be prioritised by the federation, he said centralised bargaining would be a key campaign. It is not difficult to see why. COSATU's whole approach to macro-economic issues and industrial restructuring is predicated on strong national centralised bargaining structures being in place. But in many industries where COSATU is organised – like the paper, retail, service, chemical and public sectors – these do not yet exist. And in many industries where there are some form of centralised bargaining structures, these are under threat by employers.

The latest example of this is in the building industry. Last year, there were five regionally based industrial councils for the building industry – in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Durban and the PWV. By the end of this year there are not likely to be any unless building unions, backed by COSATU, can stop employers collapsing the

councils by pulling out of them. Last year, the Durban council collapsed when employers withdrew and the PWV council – which covers at least 40 000 workers – looks set to collapse since the Master Builders Association (the major employer body in the industry) voted last month to pull out. Sources say it is only a matter of time before the remaining councils

collapse as employers pull out.

For building employers, the name of the game is deregulation (they regard the industrial council as far too cumbersome and bureaucratic and difficult to police) and wage cuts (they point to the millions of unemployed prepared to work for R2 an hour or less). Only the major construction companies are still paying wages at or above the council minimum and they will not sustain this for long if smaller contractors can begin to compete on the basis of starvation wages. In any event, many large concerns are making more and more use of sub-contractors who employ their own labour at much lower wages. Stocks and Stocks, for example, built the new prison in Boksburg by employing only nine people at council rates. They sub-contracted out virtually all the work - and the sub-contractors paid their workers R2 an hour.



Building workers: facing serious set-backs with the collapse of the building councils

Photo: William Matlala

Employers are shifting the burden of the crisis facing the recession-hit building industry onto the shoulders of workers in other ways too. Many of the smaller concerns, for example, are now paying bricklayers per 1 000 bricks laid instead of on an hourly basis. And the collapse of the council will have a massive effect on the paltry benefits workers used to enjoy. The R300 million

pension fund, for example, will have to be dissolved in terms of council rules. Medical aid, holiday bonuses, tools insurance and a range of smaller "benefits" will all be wound up as well. Tens of thousands of unorganised workers previously covered by the council will have no protection at all, while organised workers will have to hope their unions can do something about their plight.

Problems in contract cleaning

A recent union victory for centralised bargaining was TGWU's success in getting a cleaning industrial council established in Natal. TGWU envisaged this as part of a series of regional building blocks towards national centralised bargaining. But major employers in Natal, including Pritchards, are not even paying the minimum agreed in the industrial council - even though the agreement was finalised in September last year. So the existence of an industrial council does not always mean that employers will stick to the agreement. The union now has to fight a rearguard battle to get non-paying employers in line. TGWU are also trying to get a national council for the goods transport industry - although this is still some way off. ❖

Other sectors

In the past couple of years centralised bargaining structures in the paper, leather, hotel and printing sectors have collapsed. In the retail and chemical sectors, SACCAWU and CWIU are battling, so far unsuccessfully, to try and get centralised bargaining structures off the ground. In the mine, metal and auto industries, where there are centralised bargaining

forums, there are various kinds of pressures from employers to try and weaken them.

NUMSA, for example, wants the tyre, auto and motor bargaining forums to be rolled into one over the next three years. But motor and auto employers are fiercely resistant to combining their two sectors. A faction of employers in the motor industry is agitating for the employer's organisation to withdraw from the industrial council altogether. Partly as a result of this, last years negotiations on the

motor industrial council have still not been settled which means employers are legally obliged only to pay garage workers at rates applying in 1991/2. In the National Bargaining Forum in the auto sector, employers are currently trying to limit negotiations to basic wages and conditions only – and threaten to break up the forum if NUMSA does not agree.

COSATU has resolved to tackle the issue through:

- negotiations at the NEF – where the federation wants to establish a deadline for

- centralised bargaining to be endorsed at that level;
- targeting companies opposed to centralised bargaining (like Barlows and Dunlop) through actions like pickets and threats of disinvestment;
- demanding centralised bargaining in the public sector; and
- generally focusing campaigns and struggles at every level – from factories to NEF – to raise the issue of the need for centralised bargaining. ❖

(Dirk Hartford)

Teachers take action on desperate situation

An ex-COSATU leader who played a central role in the struggle to organise teachers into the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) said recently: "Watch the teachers - they will still play a vanguard role in the struggle for transformation in SA."

His reasons – the material conditions of teachers are appalling, as bad or worse than many of COSATU's members. Over 70% of black teachers earn less than R1

200 per month (a worker sweeping the floor of VW earns more) and some teachers earn as little as R450 per month.

This, taken together with the severity of the crisis in the schools (high pupil/teacher ratio, split shifts, no facilities or resources, no back-up, no

chance for further training), has driven teachers to the very edge. The final straw was government's unilateral decision to pay teachers (and all workers in the public sector) no more than a 5% wage increase this year – effectively a real wage cut of at least 5%. Since De Klerk



Teachers make their demands known

Photo: William Matlala

announced this decision, there has been a one day national strike of teachers, numerous regionally based teacher strikes, pickets and marches, mass actions by school students organised under the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and, most recently, threats by the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) to occupy white schools after the Easter holidays if government does not agree to negotiate teacher salaries and student exam fees.

Sources in SADTU say that there has effectively been no schooling in black schools this year and that this situation was likely to continue unless the current impasse could be resolved. There seems little hope of that

happening. Government has insisted that it cannot pay more than 5% – even after numerous meetings with both black and white teacher organisations and the NECC. SADTU is threatening a national strike on the issue and is balloting teachers. The Teachers Federal Council (TFC – an umbrella organisation of white teacher bodies) has withdrawn from over 20 educational advisory bodies in protest against the government's offer. The TFC has indicated that it will consider further action if the government does not agree to negotiate on wages. SADTU is demanding a 25% increase.

The situation seems likely to escalate in the months ahead. ❖
(Dirk Hartford)

Public sector action

The government has announced 5% cut backs in public sector staff, and a wage increase of 5%. Public sector unions, namely NEHAWU, SADTU, POPCRU, POTWA and UDUSA, have come together under COSATU to protest, and make demands.

The demands include that there be no cuts in public sector spending, and that retrenchments and

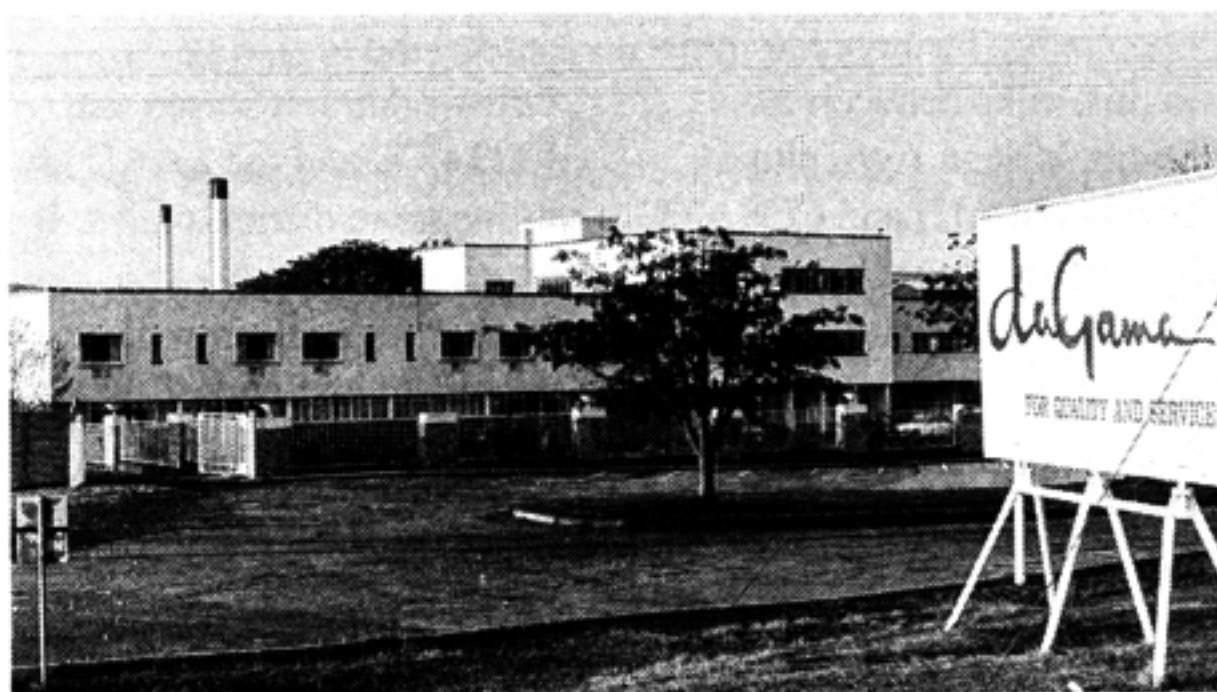
restructuring be negotiated with unions and communities. They reject the 5% increase and demand that negotiations be reopened. They further demand that public sector workers fall under the Labour Relations Act applicable to other workers, and that workers in the homelands be allowed to organise freely.

The unions have adopted a programme of action which includes involving organisations linked to the public sector, popularising their demands, and conducting public sector marches on 8 May in towns and cities all over South Africa. ❖
(Kally Forrest)

Strike roundup

Strike figures in the first quarter of this year were dramatically lower than in previous years. According to Andrew Levy and Associates 65 000 person-days were lost this year, compared to 135 000 in 1992 and 180 000 in 1991. But it is not certain things will remain that way.

- The plan by VW to retrench 2 700 workers, and the indication from auto employers at the National Bargaining Forum that they are not prepared to countenance real wage increases (even over a three year period) is fuelling tempers in the auto industry. Sources on both the union and employer side are not discounting the possibility of strike action in the sector this year.
- In the retail sector, the derecognition of SACCAWU by Checkers-Shoprite (SACCAWU's strongest base) and the ongoing retrenchment of union members in the chain store could also lead to strike action.
- Meanwhile a strike by 2 500 workers at three Da Gama textile plants in East London over wages and a night shift allowance is in its third week. Da Gama has said it will decrease its wage offer to the workers



by 50c for every week they remain on strike, while SACTWU has said it will remain out until its demand for a R40 a week increase is met. East London textile workers earn half the wages of workers in Natal for exactly the same work.

- POTWA members in the eastern Cape came out on

strike while wage negotiations were in progress.

- 900 TGWU members at Springbok Security have had two strikes this year and succeeded, in the second strike, in winning their demand for a refund of monies owed to guards for uniforms. ❖

(Dirk Hartford)

Government policy for economic growth: deregulation, weaker unions, lower wages

The Labour Research Service has done a critical summary of the government's Normative Economic Model (NEM). Below are some of their points.

The model blames high labour costs and low worker productivity for reduced international competitiveness and unemployment. LRS

points out that worker productivity has risen and productivity problems lie with capital.

The NEM blames conflict between labour and capital for stifling economic growth. In particular it blames industrial councils and centralised bargaining forums for getting rid of competition. In some industries, according

to the NEM, workers and bosses co-operate to keep wages high.

The model proposes that wages and salaries should go up by only 0,75% each year and that productivity must go up by 0,9%. LRS concludes that the extra 0,15% in productivity increases will go to the employers as extra profit.

The key to the government's wage policy is wage competition. The government wants the National Manpower Commission to find ways of "introducing much greater flexibility in the determination of wages relative to productivity".

Dismantling centralised bargaining is key to this wage competition policy. This implies a return to plant bargaining where employers determine their own capacity to pay rather than this being laid down through centralised bargaining. A return to plant bargaining also implies an overall lower wage bill as less organised workers will win lower wage increases than a more organised workforce.

The NEM also aims to decentralise government's own wage setting to take account of "differences in productivity, levels of responsibility and cost of living for different geographic areas". Small business is to be exempt from "burdensome" manpower legislation as well as "so-called minimum standards".

The NEM argues that the "current adversarial relationships in industrial relations must come to an end. The complementarity, rather than the conflict, in the interests of workers in an industry and the interests of the community at large should govern these relationships...."

But LRS concludes that the government's Normative Economic Model "is based, like previous government policies, on low wages and low standards. This brings the model directly into conflict with workers and their trade unions – whose co-operation is necessary, however, for the model to succeed. On this alone, the model must fail." ❖
(Kally Forrest)

Basic labour legislation extended to farmworkers

On 7 April the cabinet decided to extend the Basic Conditions of Employment Act to agriculture.

This announcement followed COSATU's angry statement that the government had reneged on its agreement to extend the Act by April 1, and COSATU was seriously reviewing its participation in all government/labour

negotiating forums. Previous to this, talks between the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) and COSATU had broken down because SAAU was insisting that the implementation date of the BCEA be extended. COSATU pointed out that the date had already been extended far beyond the 1992 agreed deadline.

The Act will be implemented from May 1 and will stipulate maximum daily and weekly working hours, lunch hours, payment for Sunday work and sick pay. The legislation will allow for a 48 hour week which can be extended to 52 hours at peak times. This legislation opens the way for further talks between government, COSATU, and SAAU, on the extension of the Wage Act and Labour Relations Act to the agricultural sector.

Commenting on the passing of the BCEA the president of the Transvaal Agricultural Union said his constituency will defy the Act and any other new labour legislation in the sector. A worker for the Farmworkers Research and Resource Project, anticipating problems with the implementation of the Act, said that COSATU should campaign for a clause in the legislation protecting workers against dismissal should they try to enforce their new rights.

In the light of the above comments, and the struggle to

extend the BCEA to farmworkers, it seems that COSATU and the SAAU are in for some difficult talks. It also seems unlikely that further legislation will be passed by the end of the current parliamentary session – especially as the Wage Act and LRA deal with minimum wages and the right to strike. ❖
(Kally Forrest)

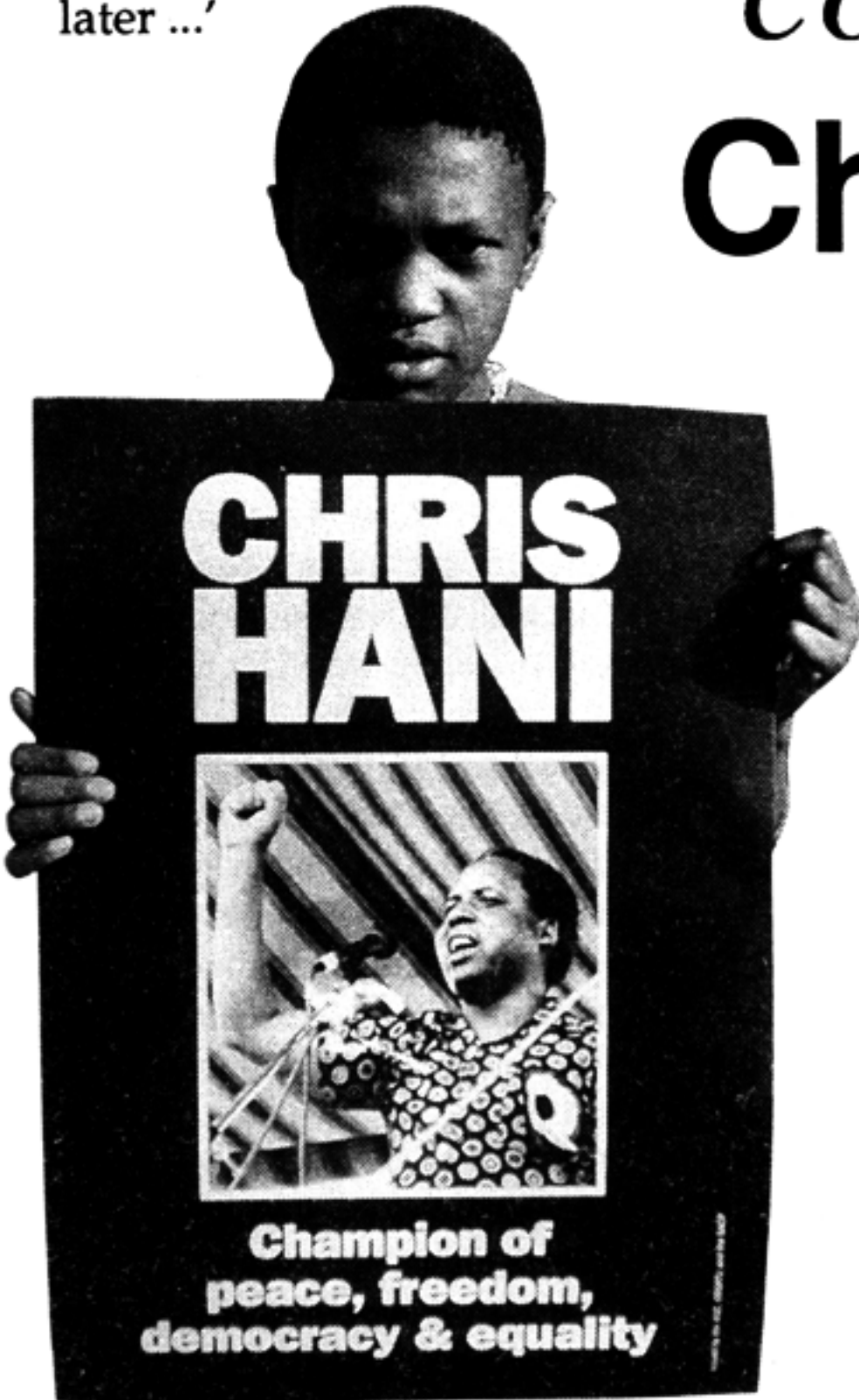
COSATU plans childcare day

The March COSATU Campaigns Conference agreed to use 1 June (International Children's Day) as a COSATU 'Child Care Day' of action. Workers will demand 20 days paid time off for childcare, and financial support from management to set up childcare facilities in the community or the workplace.

To popularise these demands, COSATU is calling on shopsteward councils to hold discussions, lunchtime demonstrations and pickets before and on "Child Care Day". COSATU wants parents to take their children to work on 1 June to underscore to bosses that 'Workers are also parents'. ☆
(Kally Forrest)

'I don't expect to live long,' CHRIS HANI told LULI CALLINICOS* in one of his last in-depth interviews, just ten days before he was assassinated. 'As we move closer to elections, covert operations will be stepped up. They will get me sooner or later ...'

comrade **Chris Hani** *speaks ...*



Boksburg meant his address was dangerously well-known. Comrade Chris explained:

'After all these years of underground struggle, I owe it to my family to provide them with some stability. My wife and children deserve a normal family life.'

These words were ringing in my ears ten days later, when the shock of Chris Hani's assassination struck the nation.

In the interview, Comrade Chris spoke eloquently about his admiration for Comrade OR, and also answered questions about his own eventful life. He also spoke about many aspects of the liberation movement, including the PAC, the BCM, some of the MK operations, and the SACP. In this article, there is space for only a few extracts from the late Comrade Hani's extensive discussion.

Early ideals and the influence of the Youth League

In his youth, both the church and Marxism contributed to Chris Hani's ideals. Comrade Chris attended a Catholic mission school until Standard Six. In the village, very few people

Chris Hani and I were chatting at the start of a two-part interview on his relationship with Comrade O R Tambo. I had not yet switched on the tape to record his impressions. Horrified at what he had said, I asked why then did he not leave his house. The publicity of his move to the white working-class suburb of Dawn Park in

* This article is drawn from the 40-page transcript of the interview, undertaken by Luli Callinicos of the History Workshop at Wits University, author of *Gold and Workers*, and other popular history books.

were Christians. But Hani was impressed by the commitment of the monks and nuns.

'There is something basically one admired in them. A sense of hard work, selflessness. These people would go on horseback to the most rural parts of the village, taking the gospel to the people, encouraging kids to go to school. Praying for the sick and offering all sorts of advice. They were not only priests, but they were nurses, they were teachers, they were social workers. That had a very very strong impression on me and in the formation of my character.'

In 1957, at Lovedale High School, Hani began to get politicised:

'Given my background, I was attracted by ideas and the philosophy which had a bias towards the working class; which had as its stated objective the upliftment of the people on the ground. For about six or nine months I was in the Unity Movement. It was strong amongst intellectuals in the whole of the Eastern Cape ... But later on I began to examine the Unity Movement, and didn't see them being involved in the mass struggles of our people. The struggle was waged in their minds, in their heads, a theoretical struggle.

'The activism of the ANC began to make me shift my political allegiance. I met comrades who were already in the YL like Comrade Sipho Makana, Anderson Ganyile who was banished from Pondoland during the Pondo struggle. I began to be exposed to the writings of Govan Mbeki who was writing a lot on the problems of the rural areas and the struggles in the Eastern Cape, [and to] the contribution to the ANC by the YL in terms of the militancy.

'As youngsters, people like Tambo, Mandela, Mji, Anton Lembede, Sisulu etc were our idols. These were our heroes. These young people who actually transformed the ANC and made it to become an organisation which was militant, which was actually engaging the white government. We admired them because we saw in them a different type of intelligentsia. An intelligentsia which is selfless, which is not just concerned about making money, creating a comfortable situation for themselves, but an intelligentsia which had lots of time for the struggle of the

oppressed people of SA. How they used their legal knowledge to alleviate the judicial persecution of the blacks through the pass laws, through Bantu Authorities, or the Group Areas. I must say my life was shaped by the outlook of people like comrades Tambo, Mandela, Duma Nokwe and others.'

Why Chris Hani joined SACP

'Why did I join the SACP? Why was I not just satisfied with the ANC? I belonged to a world, in terms of my background, which suffered I think the worst extremes of apartheid. A poor rural area where the majority of working people spent their time in the compounds, in the hostels, away from their families. A rural area where there were no clinics and probably the nearest hospital was 50kms away - generally a life of poverty with the basic things unavailable. Where our mothers and our sisters would walk 3kms and even 6kms whenever there was a drought to fetch water. Where the only fuel available was going 5, 6kms away to cut wood and bring it back. This was the sort of life.

'I had seen the lot of black workers, extreme forms of exploitation. Slave wages, no trade union rights, and for me the appeal of socialism was extremely great. Where it was said that workers create wealth, but in the final analysis they get nothing - they get peanuts in order to survive and continue working for the capitalists. I didn't get involved with the workers' struggle out of theory alone. It was a combination of theory and my own class background. I never faltered in my belief in socialism despite all the problems currently. For me that belief is strong because that is still the life of the majority of the people with whom I share a common background.'

The relationship between the Party and the ANC

'The Party in those early years actually was very much involved in preparing us theoretically for the understanding of Marxism. Why it is important to become both a member of the ANC and the Party. Why is there no contradiction between the two? The need to yoke together the national and the class

struggle, the priority being national liberation, the liberation of mostly the black, leading to a democratic situation. And why it was important that the struggle should continue beyond a national democratic state to socialism. We were being equipped theoretically to understand these issues ... The Party shaped our non-sectarian approach to the struggle in SA. The Party convinced us that the main area of struggle was in the ANC. It was important to have an ANC which accepted the Freedom Charter, which committed itself to the implementation of the Charter.

'The CP has always explained the need for the alliance. Not just explaining it, but it has participated in building and strengthening the alliance. And the broad non-sectarian approach of the Party actually inspired young people to see the ANC as a legitimate vehicle for national liberation and democracy. As a left-inclined nationalist movement, different from the nationalist movements which we have seen in a number of third world countries.'

The role and influence of the ANC

'When you compare the ANC with other liberation movements, it is a movement which taught that for liberation to be meaningful, socio-economic restructuring of society is important. But above everything else, the ANC looked at the need to broaden and strengthen the alliance. The ANC never saw itself as the sole participant in the struggle. It realised that there were other forces, other organisations, and all the time the ANC wanted to draw these organisations into a broadly based united front.

'We bring on board everything. The ANC has got that tradition. The ANC will reach out even to those people who are within government institutions. Take the homelands administrations - the Bantustans. People who collaborated with apartheid against us. We are not vindictive. Once somebody says, look people, I am ready to work with you. We don't say no, we are going to set up a trial or a commission. We say, come brother, join the struggle. Come sister, join the struggle. We understand why you did certain things. And I think this has earned a lot of respect for the

ANC. That is what makes the ANC different from the PAC and AZAPO.

'The ANC is like a big omnibus. A train that stops at every station to enquire whether there are passengers or not. It doesn't just throw quick glimpses, then we are passing. It actually stops and says, are there any passengers around. And if they come, please, there is still space in the train.

'I think [this approach] shows maturity. It shows the application or the implementation of a strategy of isolating the main enemy. The homelands guys were never the main enemy. These were just small cogs in a machinery of oppression. It shows a deep understanding of strategy. Who is your main enemy. How do you isolate that main enemy? How do you actually bring in some peoples who are serving that enemy to your side?

'The ANC [also] had a radical non-racialism which accepted the need to build a South African nation out of all groups in our country. We never saw whites as settlers. We saw ourselves as fighting a system and not fighting a race. If today the language in this country is non-racialism, it owes it to the consistency of the ANC, to the commitment of the ANC to non-racialism, even under difficult conditions. That is why I think the ANC has influenced so many organisations. Today they won't admit, De Klerk, Zac de Beer and others won't admit that the alliance stuck under very difficult conditions to non-racialism. And I think that legacy is important, and is something that we must fight for in this country all the time.'

The historical importance of MK

'In 1961, with the growing repression, with the growing violation of basic human rights, with the imprisonment without trial, detention without trial, the question was being asked, were we going to continue in the old way with non-violence, with non-violent protest? ... [On the other hand] our people knew nothing about military struggle. The last wars that we fought were fought towards the end of the 19th century. People had been deskilled in terms of understanding war. The task of moving to an

armed struggle was found daunting by many leaders of the ANC. There was not even a single country which was an independent country, next door to SA. There was no rear base. People felt that, some people were saying, was this not an exercise in adventurism or something of the sort. How realisable was the strategy of armed struggle? Those who opted for armed struggle used the expertise of comrades who had been involved in the last war, in the Second World War. What was important for many of us was the armed propaganda.

'We wanted to encourage our people to fight back and not to be demoralised. We wanted the other side to understand that we are sick and tired and if they don't want to sit down and negotiate, we are going to fight.

'[But] what people don't understand is the fact that every MK comrade was trained not just to shoot or to place a bomb. Part of the integrated training of MK was part of being

political organisers. They were taught that, look, you won't survive if you don't create organisations around yourselves. You have got to build up the underground, you have got to build the mass movement, you have got to build civics, you have got to help in the building of trade unions. So wherever MK comrades came into this country they would actually set up political discussion groups. To discuss strategies, to discuss the need to form organisation, mass organisation. That was our approach, that you won't survive, you must be like the fish and for the fish to survive, you must have water in which it will swim and survive. So that was our approach, and a lot of MK comrades participated in setting up student structures, civic structures, trade union structures. We said to them it is important for every MK cadre to deepen the political consciousness of our people. To produce leaders. That it was not enough for you to just

"The enemy has struck and it has struck where it hurts most"

"WHEN I HEARD THAT SAM TAMBANI was shot dead on 12 April 1992 at the Protea police station, I could not believe my ears. I initially thought that maybe it was a case of mistaken identity. Even now, I cannot accept that I will never see that smiling and honest face again," says Simphiwe Nanasi, a close friend and comrade of Sam Tambani's.

SAMUEL MBULAHENI TAMBANI, who was chairperson of the National Education sub-committee of NUM and an ex-officio member of the NEC, died in a hail of bullets from the police while leading a march to protest Chris Hani's assassination.

NUM's education officer, Mannie Depitso, describes Sam Tambani as a worker and community leader. Sam was born on 23 August 1953 at Tshiozwi village in Venda. He left school at an early age and, like so many

others, was forced to look for work in Johannesburg. He worked at Gundelfingers for seven years. During this time he joined the underground structures of the ANC. In 1979 he was employed by the Anglo American Corporation as a purchasing clerk. He became a member of the General Allied Workers Union (GAWU) in 1980 and within four years was elected as an NEC member. He joined the underground structures of the SACP in 1982. In 1983, he participated fully in the structures of the UDF and helped set up branches in SOWETO. He was instrumental in the formation of COSATU in 1985. He became the Secretary General of the ANC SOWETO branch in 1992.

As an education officer and as one who was himself deprived of education, Sam was interested in upgrading the educational level of

be a leader in that area, you must reproduce yourself ten times and even twenty times.'

On the labour movement

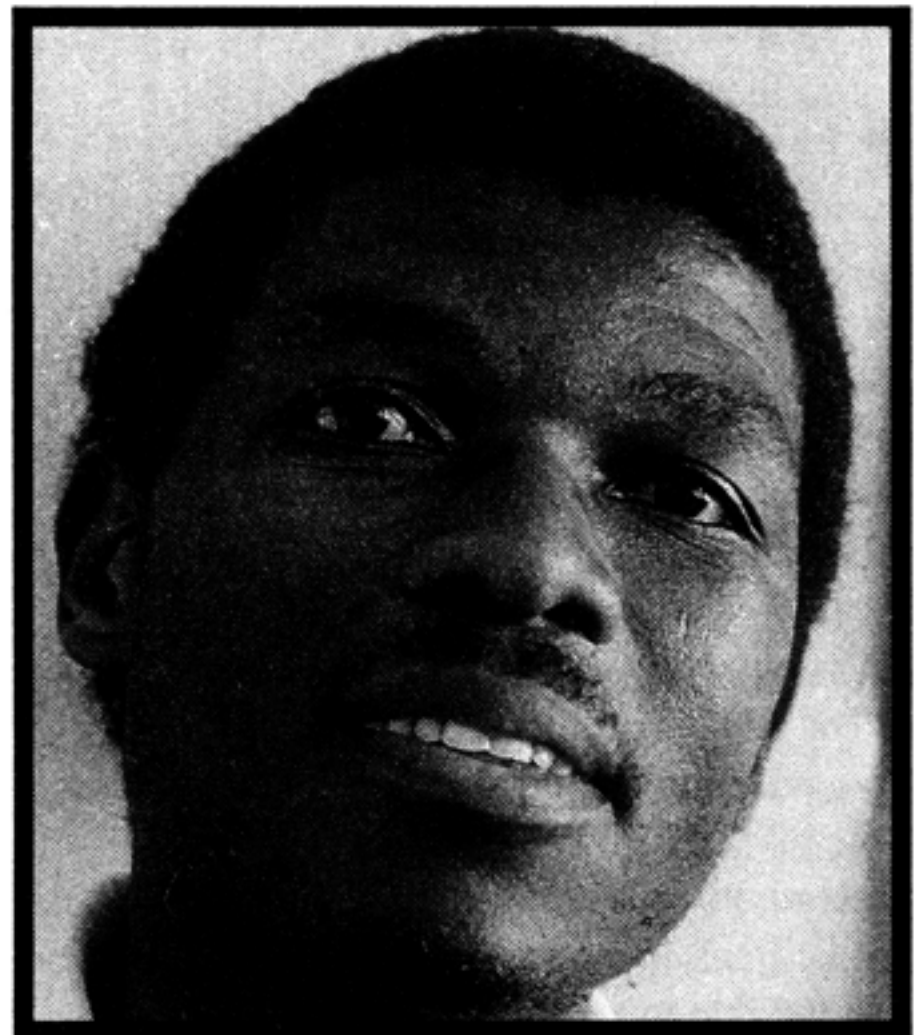
'If there was any organisation which helped to initiate the unity of the unions in this country, it is the ANC and the alliance. In the 1970s, we actually, through SACTU, and through the SACP, established contacts with trade unionists in this country. Quiet contacts. I was in Lesotho from '75. I was nearby and I was having meetings with SAAWU, with GAWU, with individuals from FOSATU. As individuals, not FOSATU as an organisation because FOSATU was not monolithic. In FOSATU we had elements which were pro-SACTU, pro-ANC, pro-SACP. There was a struggle about the tendencies within FOSATU. But our approach was that we must form one federation in SA. We should bring together, weld together, all these tendencies. We should go to what was called the populist

or charterist unions, which were very close to the ANC Congress tradition like SAAWU, like GAWU, like the Food and Canning Workers Union. And then weld them together with those which had been promoted and founded by intellectuals, and as a result of the old Wages Commissions Board and everything. Our approach has always been to say the trade union struggle is part of the broad national liberation struggle. That the victory of the national liberation struggle would actually create better conditions for the workers in this country, and that the workers had to participate in the struggle. They would not have to remain on the sidelines as spectators. If in the final analysis we got a COSATU it was because of the influence we had built up. The influence we had initiated into the unions, especially SACTU, the SACP and the ANC. I am happy to say that if today we have a militant revolutionary trade union movement, it was because of the slow grinding, pushing strategy

the miners. He introduced the Education Blitz campaign with the aim of imparting maximum knowledge to senior shaft stewards within a month. Says Depitso, "Together we would select the most influential shaft stewards and give them intensive training on trade union work. We would then impart that knowledge to the miners, not only at the shaft level, but also in their hostels. In this manner we managed to train many workers within a short space of time. General political knowledge was also imparted to the workers. Sam always emphasised that we should build a sustainable leadership and believed in training others so they could take over.

"Sam was always available when he was needed and would never complain when asked to help at odd hours," adds Depitso. He will be remembered by his colleagues and comrades as an unselfish person, a person who was prepared to share knowledge and information with all.

To NUM, the loss of Sam Tambani is great. Everybody remembers him as an honest, sincere, hard working and ever-smiling



comrade, even when things were tough. It is rare to find people of his calibre. Workers and people who never knew him always felt at ease when they were involved with him in organisational work. ❖



Chris Hani marches with COSATU's Jay Naidoo and the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union during a dispute with Sasol

Photo: William Matlala

of influencing all these trade unions in FOSATU. We didn't say because some elements rejected us in FOSATU, we didn't say, no, no, no, to hell with them. We felt that it was our duty to engage ourselves in the struggle to influence FOSATU. And I think ultimately we have succeeded in building a federation which ultimately became close to the national liberation struggle.'

A new enemy

'The ANC has emerged as the central organisation leading our people to democracy because of its own history, its own track record, its own non-sectarianism, its readiness to be flexible in tactics. To stick to strategy but be flexible in tactics. Its avoidance even of romanticising the armed struggle, and placing it above other forms of struggle. An ANC ready to negotiate when conditions change. You must remember that we have been criticised for negotiating with the regime before it announces a mutual cease-fire. I think we have grown from strength to strength

because of the ability to explain coherently our strategies.

'I think, finally, the ANC will have to fight a new enemy. That enemy would be another struggle to make freedom and democracy worthwhile to ordinary South Africans. Our biggest enemy would be what we do in the field of socio-economic restructuring. Creation of jobs. Building of houses, schools, medical facilities, overhauling our education, eliminating illiteracy, building a society which cares, and fighting corruption and moving into the gravy train of using power, government position to enrich individuals. We must build a different culture in this country, different from Africa, different from the Nationalist Party. And that culture should be one of service to people. Some of us, especially we in the Party, have been discussing how we should cut down the salaries of Ministers, of parliamentarians and all the subsidies, so that if you are in parliament in Cape Town or Pretoria, you actually rent a flat like everybody. We are thinking in terms of a number of guidelines so

that those people who go [into] parliament or go into the government should be those who are prepared to serve the people, not because it is a way of enriching people. And I think the ANC therefore must now position itself to tackle the problems of grassroots people. And that is why the ANC must allow the formation

of many democratic formations in this country, organs of civil society, like the civics, independent trade unions, students' organisations, teachers organisations, organisations of housewives, women, gays and everybody else, so that it is kept reminded of the need of the people on the ground.' ☆



The Chris Hani stayaways

The assassination of Chris Hani on Saturday 10 April sparked off two stayaways which were among the biggest seen in South Africa. The first took place on Wednesday the 14th. The day also saw massive marches in most

cities across the country and close to one hundred commemorative meetings.

The second stayaway took place on Monday 19 April, the day of Hani's funeral, which was attended by over 100 000 mourners.

On both days the SA LABOUR BULLETIN surveyed the same sample of 44 COSATU organised employers in the PWV region, employing some 25 000 workers. The sample included manufacturing, retail, transport and public sector employers. The survey revealed a stayaway rate of 91% on the Wednesday and 92% on Monday.

These appear to be the highest figures recorded in this area. The LABOUR BULLETIN recorded figures between 90% and 100% in last years mass action campaign, and the Labour Monitoring Group recorded 90% on 16 June, 1986.

The LABOUR BULLETIN also surveyed employers in the mining industry. Here there was a marked difference in the stayaway figures for the two days. On the Wednesday there was a negligible stayaway in the mining sector – some 20 000 participated. NUM and the Chamber of Mines agreed that where workers so decided, they could take two hours off for memorial services.

On Monday, however, employers reported a stayaway of 90 000, or 20% of the workforce employed in mines affiliated to the Chamber of Mines. All but 37 500 had made prior arrangements with management. In a number of Genmin mines this meant workers working extra shifts to make up lost production. The stayaway affected all mining houses except JCI.

The SA Chamber of Business did a national survey of its affiliates. On the Wednesday, it reported a 90 - 100% stayaway in PWV, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, and 88% in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

On the Monday, it reported a “marginally lower” stayaway: 85 – 100% in PWV, 20% in Cape Town, 70 – 90% for PE, and 88% in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. (*STAR 21 April 1993*)

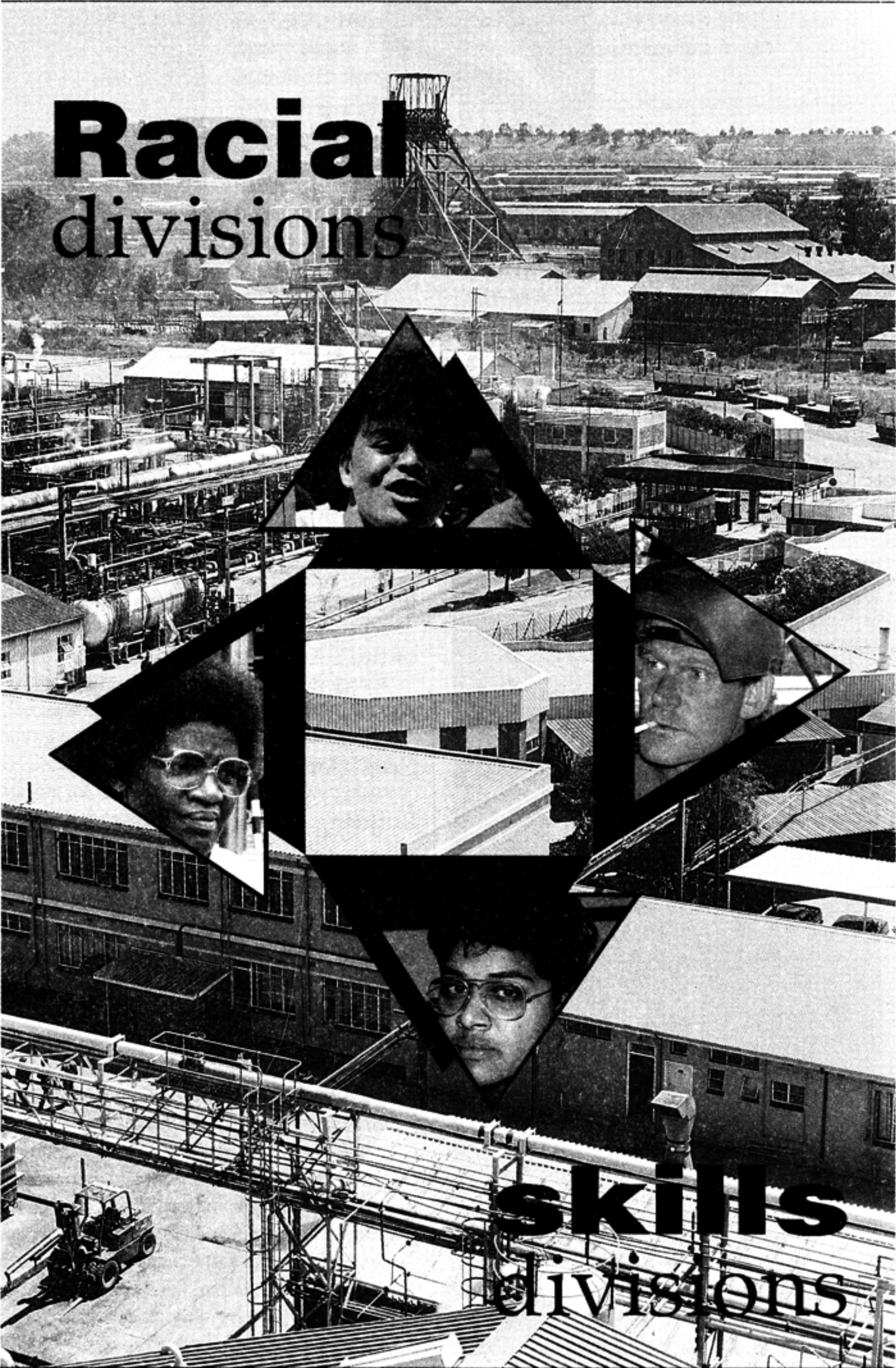
The SACOB figures taken with ours suggest that the Wednesday stayaway was among the top three stayaways ever recorded, together with the mass action stayaway last year, and the June 16 stayaway in 1986 which took place just four days after the declaration of the second State of Emergency.

The following comments can be made:

- The Wednesday stayaway was the most rapidly organised in our history. It was a response to an immediate event, rather than part of a well-prepared campaign or a commemoration of a symbolic day, as in the past. This shows not only a high level of organisation in community and unions, but a depth of national outrage.
- Some of the figures are disputed. For example, one company reported a 60% participation in the stayaway, while shopstewards in the union concerned say it was 100% on both days.
- Most employers adopted a no-work no-pay policy. Some workforces negotiated a day's leave with their employers or agreed to work in the lost time. There have been no reports of dismissals.
- Employers were unusually sympathetic. The majority expressed shock and concern at the murder of Hani. The Chamber of Mines and other businesses donated funds to cover the funeral costs. FAWU shopstewards negotiated donations of bread, rolls, chickens, coke and milk for the wake. Businessmen in the Border region sat on the podium at the commemoration meeting there. Columbus management read a message of support at the Middelburg meeting.
- The level of support for the Monday stayaway by mineworkers seems to be the highest since the Kinross stayaway and the May Day stayaway, both in 1986. This is testimony to the popularity of the SACP and Chris Hani among mineworkers.
- The Wednesday stayaway in Cape Town was the highest ever recorded in that city (SACOB figures).
- The scale of the stayaways, demonstrations and the funeral made Chris Hani's death a national event, a state event. In doing this, it revealed the ANC, backed by the tripartite alliance, as the real leaders of the nation: the future government. Chris Hani's death dramatised for the nation the passage from the old to the new. ☆

(*Fiona Dove, Sally Fincham, Snuki Zikalala, Di Stuart, Karl von Holdt*)

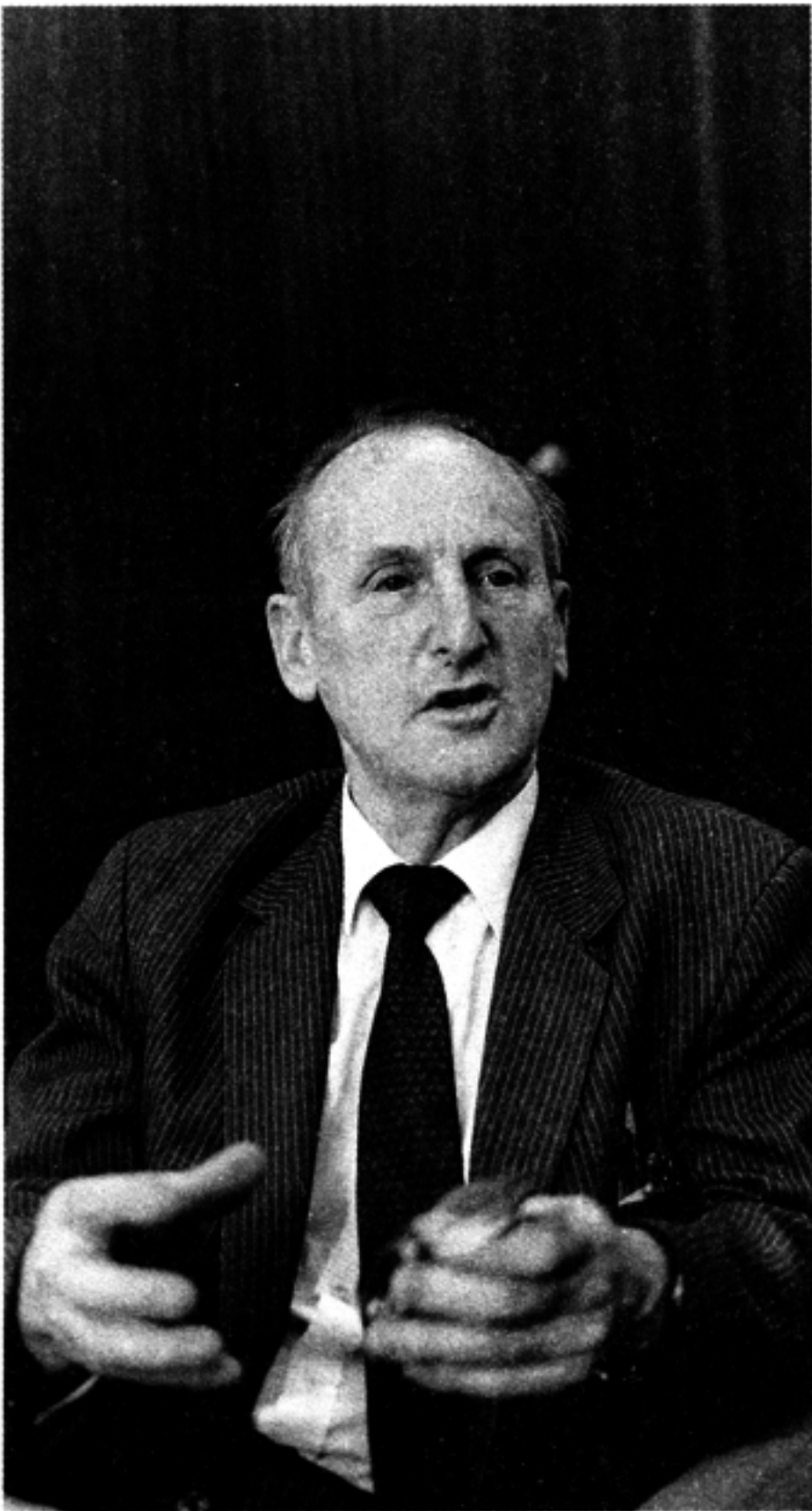
Racial divisions



Skills divisions



“Artisans *are* *the* key people”



BEN NICHOLSON, general secretary of the SA Electrical Workers Association and director of the Confederation of Metal and Building Unions, speaks to SNUKI ZIKALALA and KARL VON HOLDT.

Bulletin: *In which industry does the SA Electrical Workers Association (SAEWA) organise?*

Nicholson: As a craft union, you will probably realise that we are involved in most industries. We are party to the Industrial Councils in the building industry, electrical contracting, and the iron, steel and engineering industry. We are also organised in Eskom and in the pulp and paper industry, the explosives industry, petroleum and the chemical industry. Although our membership is small compared to the total employees in those industries, our members are the key people.



Bulletin: How many black members do you have in SAEWA?

Nicholson: Seventy five percent of our membership is white and 25% black. The union is predominantly

white, but with black workers coming into the skilled ranks, they tend to flock to us. They do not go to COSATU unions because SAEWA is an organisation which has been devoted for years to the skilled people. We know the requirements, we look after their interests and determine the regulations which apply in their profession or trade. All the artisans in the mining industry come to us.

Bulletin: Do black members occupy any leadership positions?

Nicholson: A number of them are branch chairmen and secretaries. Surprisingly enough, both the branch chairman and secretary of the Welkom branch, which is in the heart of the mining industry, are black. They were elected by white artisans over a year ago.

Bulletin: Is the role of the craft union being eroded or undermined, or is it still something important and ongoing as far as you are concerned?

Nicholson: Very much so. You find that skilled people tend to prefer to be governed by a skilled organisation, because they understand the debates that are going on in the industry. Artisans are the key sector in the whole industry. We determine what an operative is, what training they should get. We comment on draft regulations which regulate, for example, the installation of electrical equipment. We provide legal assistance for member accused of breaking regulations. The fully qualified artisan wants to widen the wage gap. They are the versatile people – they can go anywhere, do anything.

Bulletin: What is your vision of the future of craft unionism in SA

Nicholson: As numbers have become the ruling criteria, the craft unions obviously have to give consideration to the idea of pooling their resources and forming one big union concentrating on skilled and semi-skilled workers. Quality doesn't count anymore - only quantity. We will be on a winning streak if we have both.

Black workers naturally drift towards the union which has the reputation for servicing them as black workers. If we can pool our resources we should be able to really improve the quality of our services to skilled workers. For example, no-one in the black trade unions can give real input on training schedules. Our officials can. They are in touch, they see what's happening on the shopfloor with changing technology.

Skilled workers have different needs, they expect different things. For example, benefit schemes. To my knowledge, none of the black unions has these. The original unions actually started out as benefit societies. We have a long history of providing benefits. If we pool resources we can provide even better benefits.

Bulletin: What kind of issues do your members debate at branch meetings.

Nicholson: We have tremendous difficulty with the employer at this point in time trying to fragment without agreement. Fragmentation is undermining the role of the artisan, breaking it up into little functions. They are not only fragmenting the job to operatives, but fragmenting in what is now called multi-skilling. This is a very serious problem. Really what they are seeking is two trades in one, and to eliminate a lot of people. How can you have a fitter knowing the whole gambit of an electricians job? It is unfair, you do not expect an accountant to be a lawyer as well.

In the chemical industry, you have process workers who are involved in managing the plant. He just gets trained as that particular



employer wants to train him. He is fact trapped in that company. He would not be able to command the same job in a different plant. So we say let us have a basic apprenticeship for process workers in

the chemical industry. This could be a proper apprenticeship. The employer would have to engage him on a three year apprenticeship contract and guarantee training for three years. At the moment he does not do that. He just engages the guy, puts him in some low wage operation, sees potential after a while and says I will drag you to this or that.

It pains us everyday of our lives that we have to say, put that guy into an apprenticeship. The employer will say that it is too expensive. That is the real answer to our skill shortages. Not to train for a bit of a job, but to train as far as possible.

Bulletin: *How do you view NUMSA's proposals for training and grading in the metal industry?*

Nicholson: NUMSA is trying to transplant a system from Australia when it hasn't even been completed there. I believe the system is incorrect insofar as the relation between the training for semi-skilled and fully-skilled people is concerned.

You cannot have the same training modules for the semi-skilled and fully-skilled person. It depends on the educational level of that person - if he can assimilate the information he should be fully trained as a skilled person. In Australia you have higher educational standards. In South Africa many of our people do not have the educational qualifications to become fully skilled. If you have different educational standards you need different levels of training. We believe a second training board should be established, for semi-skilled people. If you put the two together, one will suffer. We fear it will be the skilled people because they are a minority - yet our country desperately needs these skills.

NUMSA's proposals are the employers' way of approaching training. The employers do just the bits and pieces that suit their business. This means the worker does not have portable skills. With an apprenticeship the employer is under a contractual obligation to train the person fully. With NUMSA's scheme

SA Electrical Workers Association became non-racial in 1978

"SAEWA WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1937. At that time we were a multiracial organisation including whites, coloureds and asians. We also organised operatives, not only artisans. In terms of the Act, African workers were prohibited from being members of a registered union. This went on until 1956 when the government took a decision to have racial unions. My predecessor at that time panicked a little. We

split and formed a union for coloured workers. This went on until 1978 when blacks began to be significant in the electrical industry.

"In 1978 we were able to convince our members, we said 'there is no way you are going to prevent blacks becoming artisans. You will never keep it white, no matter what you intend to do. So why not encourage it, make sure that these people are

trained properly and that they get the same wages and conditions of employment, so that you are not in danger?'

"We took a decision to form a black section. We formed the Electrical and Allied Workers Union. The executives of the three unions met on a quarterly basis to discuss common problems. Those were excellent meetings. We used to get all shades of views.



there is no obligation.

We want to talk it through. But it is not a matter for the wage bargaining forum. It should be discussed in a separate forum, and we will support the employers on this.

Bulletin: What are your relations with the COSATU affiliates on the shopfloor and in the industrial councils?

Nicholson: We prefer to reach consensus positions before we go into negotiations, but unfortunately we have been frustrated by unions introducing items which have nothing to do with wage negotiations per se - for example, training, or the elimination of discrimination. Those issues are very important but they should be addressed in a correct forum.

The worst aspect is that they are reluctant to move from their initial demand. We are realistic and we know the economic situation. We say for the good of our members we must

make a new proposal in response to whatever the employers have said. But the NUMSA guys will never move until they have threatened strike action.

I must say that when we had Cyril Ramaphosa in NUM I used to enjoy it. Cyril was a good negotiator. I had the greatest respect for him as a negotiator because he knew when to bend and when to take decisions, which is very essential in this business.

Bulletin: What is your relation with NUMSA or NUM on the shopfloor?

Nicholson: The shopstewards from different unions tend to sit together when it is plant level negotiations. They debate plant issues which are being introduced by management. For example, change of working conditions, change of job categories and procedures. They will absolutely be together on those issues. There is no question about it. There might be different tactics. Difficulties arise when our shopstewards refuse to take part in industrial action.

Black shopstewards in our association tend to think the same way as the white shopstewards. Maybe that is why they come to us. They oppose indiscriminate strike action.

“This was prematurely ended by certain radicals who were not Africans but coloureds, who demanded that there must now be one union. At that time the white section was all craft. When they were forced to choose they said there is no way they can be ruled by non-artisans. It was not race but skills. It had nothing to do with race. They said that they must retain the right to have a skilled executive. They said that it was premature.

Then EATU and EAWU decided to break away and

formed a new union which is now MEWUSA.

Structures

“We have the National Executive Council, and a management committee which deals with the day to day affairs of the union. We have 38 branches throughout the country. Some branches are geographical, while others are for specific sectors of the industry. For example, in the big cities there is always a concentration of members who are from lift repair companies

so we have a separate branch for them. Electrical contracting and engineering form the same branch because of common interests. Other sections have their own branches. It is better that way because you do not get people bored listening to other people’s problems.

“We have lost so many good guys because as soon as they prove themselves to be good shopstewards, management grabs them. The leadership potential of these people is significant.” ❖

When it comes to a vote for a legal strike, they will tend not to accept it.

Bulletin: *NUMSA is talking about the need to restructure the industry and make it competitive, increase the skill levels and productivity levels. What is your opinion about that sort of thing?*

Nicholson: I must say that management has the right to manage, but they must take into consideration the views of the workers. We therefore have gone along with NUMSA, particularly in the engineering industry. We have had talks with experts in the aluminium, steel and electronics sectors. These talks will lead to a discussion on how the unions see restructuring of the sectors.

We must participate in the restructuring of industry, but with all respect to my colleagues from COSATU, we do not have all the answers. In fact management and the industrialists are the ones who get paid for planning this sort of thing.

Bulletin: *What would your response be to participative management?*

Nicholson: What is participative management? It says I will manage and you will participate. Whilst there is a necessity for participation from the shopfloor, nevertheless, there is a need to recognise that management is managing.

Bulletin: *What is your attitude towards the NEF?*

Nicholson: We have not been invited. We will make an approach to the secretaries so that we are officially involved. We are not going to beg. I think in fact we should be invited. Maybe we were not because COSATU seems to have taken unto itself the role of being the only spokesman for labour. In this case they were frustrated a little bit by FEDSAL (Federation of South African Labour Unions) because FEDSAL was already in.

Bulletin: *What is your relationship with FEDSAL?*

Nicholson: We were actually having a discussion with FEDSAL about a closer affiliation, but our affiliates did not think that FEDSAL was the right organisation for them. FEDSAL is a white collar organisation and the methods of dealing with issues did not appeal to our affiliates. That is why FITU (Federation of Independent Trade Unions) was formed – as a home for those organisations which did not feel at home with anybody else including FEDSAL. A number of CMBU affiliates are members of FITU, although not SAEWA.

Bulletin: *Is there any prospect in the medium term future of some closer working relation developing with NUMSA?*

Nicholson: The philosophy of NUMSA is not in line with ours. The philosophy of our association is dictated by its craft orientation. NUMSA's philosophy is dictated by the philosophy of the proletariat, that people must have. Our philosophy is that people can only have if they are prepared to work for themselves. Until we can resolve differences of philosophy which are fundamental, we find it difficult to say yes this can happen. We tend to be realistic and very forthright. We do not promise things.

We have managed to survive together which is something. I am sure that our degree of co-operation will improve as our philosophies merge.

Bulletin: *This different philosophy, is it not primarily a political question?*

Nicholson: Absolutely right. It is a political question. We are only hoping and praying that once we have a new government politics will be taken away from the trade union sphere. I accept politics was entered into because there was no other way of expressing political rights. ☆

What is the future of craft unions? Will they remain a significant force outside COSATU, or will the industrial unions broaden their base and recruit more artisans? KARL VON HOLDT discusses the options.

COSATU *and* *the* craft unions



White workers,
black workers.
Indians, coloureds,
Africans.
Monthly-paid,
weekly-paid.
White-collar
workers in collars
and ties, blue-collar
workers in overalls.
Artisans, operators

and labourers. In SA the divisions of colour and skill and occupation are many and complex. These are reflected in divisions in the labour movement.

COSATU has emerged as the dominant labour centre, but it cannot claim to represent all layers of the working class. COSATU is organised as a mass movement of black workers, mostly African. Its membership consists almost entirely of blue-collar workers below the level of artisan. NACTU has a similar profile.

In most sectors the majority of artisans are white, and they are organised into predominantly white craft unions or into industrial-craft unions dominated by white, coloured and Indian workers, such as the SA Typographical Union

(SATU) and the National Union of Furniture and Allied workers (NUFAW). The majority of white-collar workers in the private sector are either unorganised or are members of unions affiliated to the Federation of South African Labour Unions (FEDSAL). In the public sector most are members of conservative staff associations.

What is the future of the craft unions and white-collar unions? As more black workers move into these occupations, will craft and white-collar unions remain a significant force outside the major industrial affiliates of COSATU and NACTU? Or will the industrial unions manage to broaden their base and recruit more highly skilled blue-collar and white-collar workers?

In this article I will discuss the relation between the craft unions and COSATU's affiliates.*

Apartheid ensured that the great majority of artisans are white. By 1989, 68% of SA's 234 000 artisans were still white. Only in the building and furniture industries were black artisans in the majority. African artisans were in a tiny minority – 6% of the total compared to 17% coloured and 4% Indian**.

* The next issue of SA LABOUR BULLETIN will focus on white-collar unions.

RACIAL DIVISIONS, SKILL DIVISIONS

Confederation of Metal & Building Unions: Paid-up membership	1987	1990
Amalgamated Engineering Union of SA	31 000	30 000
Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers of SA	18 000	23 000
Engineering, Industrial and Mining Workers' Union of SA	21 000	25 000
Iron Moulders' Society of SA	1 863	2 000
Radio, Television, Electronics and Allied Workers' of SA	2 150	2 400
SA Boilermakers', Iron and Steel Workers', Shipbuilders' and Welders' Society	55 000	30 000
SA Electrical Workers' Association	22 000	22 000
Total	151 013	134 400

Council of Mining Unions: Paid-up membership	1987	1990
Amalgamated Engineering Union of SA	31 000	30 000
Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers of SA	758	4 500
Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers of SA	18 000	23 000
Iron Moulders' Society of SA	1 863	2 000
Mynwerkers Unie	30 000	27 985
SA Boilermakers', Iron and Steel Workers', Shipbuilders' and Welders' Society	55 000	30 000
SA Electrical Workers' Association	22 000	22 000
Total	158 621	139 485

Tables showing the membership of craft unions

Directory of South African Trade Unions (SALDRU, Cape Town)

Craft unions have a long history in SA. Many reserved themselves for white workers only. As more black workers become artisans, some became non-racial, for example the SA Boilermakers Society, the SA Electrical Workers Association and the Artisan Staff Association. Others are still reserved for white members only – for example the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Motor Industry Employers Union.

Several craft unions have transformed themselves into industrial-craft unions by opening themselves up to all workers on a non-racial basis. NUFAW (now affiliated to NACTU) did this in 1980 by opening up the previously white, coloured and Indian (mostly skilled) union to African members. It now has a closed shop for all workers in the furniture industry. SATU opened itself to all grades and all 'races' of workers in 1981, and established a closed shop in the printing industry*. But until recently it still had separate racial branches, and workers on lower grades than

artisans were only entitled to a 1/2 or 1/4 vote each! This entrenched the control of skilled, mostly white artisans.

Generally, even when the craft and industrial-craft unions are not openly racist and sexist, they tend to be dominated by white male artisans, or in some cases skilled coloured and Indian workers. Their privileged relation to the state and employers in industrial councils has made them into conservative 'sweetheart unions', averse to industrial action. Many of them are wealthy, owning buildings, controlling large pension and benefit funds, and staffed by well-entrenched bureaucracies.

Obstacles to recruiting artisans

Where COSATU affiliates have tried to recruit members of craft and industrial-craft unions, they have encountered the following problems:

- Racist attitudes, fear of African dominated unions, conservatism and aversion to

** see Paul Lundall and Zaid Kimmie, SA LABOUR BULLETIN Vol 16 No 6 1992

* The closed shop ended with the collapse of the Printing Industrial Council in 1990.

militant mass struggle. These attitudes are not confined to whites or to artisans.

- The 'craft consciousness' of artisans – they are set apart from other workers by their special training and higher rates of pay, by their position in the production process, by the fact that they are often monthly-paid rather than weekly-paid. The craft unions promise to protect this position.
- Most artisans hold supervisory positions, and most identify more with management than with the rest of the workers.
- Members of craft and industrial-craft unions are reluctant to forfeit the range of benefits they receive as members of these unions – medical aid, pension funds, legal assistance, etc.
- They are often prevented by a closed shop agreement from joining other unions. In addition, recognition agreements often exclude skilled workers on higher grades from the bargaining units represented by COSATU and NACTU affiliates. So even if artisans join, they cannot be represented.

Generally, COSATU affiliates and craft and industrial-craft unions have a history of conflict, but in some sectors where the COSATU union has become the dominant force, a limited degree of co-operation has emerged. For example, until NUMSA became the major force in the engineering industrial council, the craft unions and employers used to sideline NUMSA (previously MAWU) by signing the agreement while NUMSA was still in dispute.

"They had no sense of solidarity," recalls NUMSA's collective bargaining secretary Les Kettleidas. "In fact they would actually *increase* pressure on the employers to settle, rather than to resolve the dispute with NUMSA." Even now sometimes they support the employers and negotiate against NUMSA. For example, last year the Council of Metal and Building Unions opposed NUMSA's demand for a moratorium on retrenchments. "How can a trade union argue against another trade union on job security?" asks Kettleidas.

NUM has co-operated with the white craft unions in negotiating retrenchment packages and procedures, profit-sharing agreements, and

in mining summit meetings. NUM experiences conflict with these unions at workplace level, rather than industry level – over racism, over their different relations with management, over the different interests of their members.

PPWAWU has had a long history of conflict with SATU and NUFAW in the printing and furniture industries. This is a much more direct conflict than that between NUMSA and NUM and the craft unions, because SATU and NUFAW are industrial-craft unions which have tried to use the closed shop to block PPWAWU's entry into the industry.

The printing and furniture sectors are characterised by large numbers of Indian and coloured workers, and the closed shop has enabled the industrial-craft unions to recruit all levels of workers. PPWAWU has made progress in organising African workers but has failed to make inroads into the non-African majority. It has 5 000 members in the furniture industry (out of 25 000) and 11 000 in printing (SATU has 26 000). Large numbers of NUFAW and SATU members have in fact come out in support of strikes called by PPWAWU (Indian members of NUFAW in last year's Afcot strike, SATU members during the 1990 Nampak strike), yet the same workers are reluctant to join PPWAWU because of the benefits they will lose and because COSATU is seen as 'radical'.

SATU rejected PPWAWU's attempts to discuss the pending collapse of the printing industrial council in 1990. However, last year SATU agreed to support the PPWAWU-initiated campaign for centralised bargaining in the sector – probably because it feared being left out.

Changes in industry

There are a number of new developments in industry that will confront both COSATU affiliates and craft unions with new challenges.

- The end of white political power will mean the end of the privileged position of white worker organisations.
- COSATU affiliates have launched a drive for representation on industry training boards (ITBs). This will break the

monopoly control that craft unions have had over access to skills and training. COSATU affiliates are using these forums to put forward proposals for radical new training, grading and wage policies (see *Adrienne Bird*, SA LABOUR BULLETIN Vol 16 No 6 and *Snuki Zikalala ibid*; see also page 6 of this issue). These proposals would give all workers access to training and career paths, breaking down the rigid distinction between artisans, operators and labourers. They also intend turning supervisors from "cops" into "coaches".

- The above proposals correspond to changing technology in many sectors. New technology undermines many of the craft skills controlled by the craft unions. For example, the demarcation between electrician and mechanic is becoming blurred. Technology in the printing industry has changed so much that SATU has been called a "pseudo-craft" union (see *Godfrey*, p254). Many employers are engaged in a drive to fragment artisans' jobs.
- There is an increasing number of black artisans. As South Africa moves towards democracy, and affirmative action programmes are developed, this number will grow.
- COSATU affiliates are becoming involved in industry restructuring forums. COSATU is becoming aware of how important skilled workers are in any process of restructuring.

These changes are likely to undermine the position of the craft unions. They have remained relatively strong because of the racial division of labour, their monopoly of high-level skills, and their privileged relation to employers and the state. As these conditions change, they will have to change or be marginalised.

COSATU strategies

Different COSATU affiliates are responding to these changes with different strategies, depending on conditions in their sector.

NUMSA, for example, is seeking to avoid confrontation with the craft unions in its sector around its proposals for industry training and

grading. "We have to understand where the artisans are coming from and try to accommodate their concerns," says NUMSA's Adrienne Bird.

The union argues that the craft unions cannot hold onto their skills and job demarcations forever. Changing technology and work organisation, and job fragmentation, reinforce the loss of white political power.

According to Bird, NUMSA is asking the craft unions to let go some of their lower-level skills and support the NUMSA training-and-grading proposals. In return, NUMSA will fight for two new grades *above* the artisan level, thus providing a career path from artisan to technician and eventually to engineer. This should accommodate the two major grievances artisans have – recognition for skills they may have over and above those scheduled in the apprenticeship training contract, and the opportunity to upgrade their skills to keep pace with technological change. It is not yet clear how the craft unions will respond, but Bird believes it may be possible to avoid antagonising them (see *the interview with Ben Nicholson*, page 24).

PPWAWU faces quite different problems in the furniture and printing sectors. While SATU and NUFAW are dominated by skilled workers, they are open to all grades, and have used the closed shop to protect themselves from PPWAWU. According to PPWAWU's Rob Rees the "amandla approach" has not been very successful in the struggle to win a majority in these sectors. In an effort to provide a package of benefits similar to those of NUFAW and SATU, PPWAWU has developed its own provident fund and medical aid scheme. But a weakness has been that organisers and worker activists are not well versed in PPWAWU's benefits, and often fail to out-argue their rivals in front of the workers.

"We need to equip the unions for a different kind of organising," comments Rees.

"COSATU as a federation should also consider developing benefit schemes such as a union controlled health scheme. It is big enough to provide better and cheaper benefits."

PPWAWU may also have to reconsider its



Benoni Training Centre: will African artisans join COSATU or craft unions?

Photo: William Matlala

strategy of trying to out-organise NUNAW and SATU, and rather try to support groupings inside those unions which seek to reform and democratise them. In the long run, this could open up possibilities of a merger.

NUM's collective bargaining agreements cover the unskilled and semi-skilled sectors of the workforce, and the union concentrates its organising almost exclusively on them, according to assistant general secretary Marcel Golding. However, it has now recruited close to 2 000 white skilled workers (*see page 48*) and also has black members who have been promoted out of its bargaining unit. This year NUM is likely to put forward a demand for its recognition agreement to be amended to include these members.

Employers in the mining industry are keen to end the closed shop arrangements with the predominantly white craft and white-collar unions. While there are different views on this in NUM, Golding believes the union should support the closed shop, but amend it to a multi-party shop. This would allow NUM to compete with other unions in the closed shop,

and it would allow workers to decide which union to join. NUM (or any other union) could then represent its members wherever it has recruited more than a certain percentage.

Organising monthly paid workers

COSATU affiliates have generally established themselves among weekly-paid workers, but have very little base among monthly-paid. Unionists often complain that their best and most able worker leaders are promoted out of their bargaining unit and so out of the union.

Now some COSATU unions are beginning to target monthly-paid workers for recruitment. The increasing number of black workers in these jobs makes this more feasible. Unionists hope this 'second wave' of unionisation will increase their membership and increase their influence in the workplace. Indeed, if COSATU affiliates are going to make serious attempts to drive restructuring at company level, they will need these more skilled workers on their side.

The SACTWU strike at Frame shows how successful these efforts can be (*see page 35*).

And Frame is not an isolated example – SACTWU is currently negotiating recognition in the monthly-paid bargaining unit at Romatex. But as the Frame example shows, if unions want to succeed in this second wave of unionisation they will have to equip themselves to deal with the grievances of this layer of workers, and provide them with consistent, quality service.

This will not be easy. Organisers are over-stretched. More significantly, most have been recruited from the ranks of weekly-paid workers and so have little understanding of the working conditions and grievances of monthly-paid artisans, clerical workers and technicians. Employers and craft unions will also resist attempts to extend bargaining units or break into closed shops.

Many changes

COSATU affiliates are exploring new frontiers. It is difficult to predict how successful their attempts to move beyond their traditional base among weekly-paid workers will be.

Whether black artisans are attracted towards COSATU affiliates or towards the craft unions will depend on the extent to which either meet their needs. Black artisans may well feel their position is compromised by COSATU affiliates which put forward demands to close the wage gap and increase the skills of all workers. However, the craft unions will have to shed their history of paternalism and racism if they wish to attract increasing numbers of black artisans.

NUMSA's Kettleidas doubts whether many of the craft unions are capable of becoming truly non-racial. Even those that do will not be able to attract black workers, he believes, because they are not fighting organisations: "They have no track record of struggle, they always settle."

On the other hand, NUMSA's Adrienne Bird reckons some black artisans may seek to protect their positions by joining craft unions. She notes that the right-wing unions that organise white production workers rather than artisans (Yster en Staal, MWU), support

NUMSA's training proposals because it is in their interests. NUM's Golding agrees, arguing that, while it was easy to unite all black workers in the apartheid era, in a democratic SA things become more complex. "Artisans often have a supervisory role, and you cannot collapse supervisory workers and the workers they supervise. They have different interests, and specialist unions may be necessary for a long time."

There are signs that some of the craft unions are also rethinking their strategy.

Confederation of Metal and Building Union's director Ben Nicholson believes the craft unions should consider merging to form one giant craft union, in order to counter the strength of COSATU (*see page 26*). If Bird and Golding are right and the craft unions do succeed in attracting black workers, then as craft unions lose the privileged position they were guaranteed by apartheid, they may become less conservative, less opposed to industrial action and less hostile to COSATU.

Ultimately COSATU's proposals for restructuring training and grading would mean ending the privileged status of the artisan. If COSATU's proposals are implemented, changing technology and the restructuring of work will combine to undermine the position of craft unions.

"Craft unions will have to exist until we have restructured the entire production process and grading system," comments Golding. "The current system on the mines works strictly according to supervision. But if we transform work organisation so the supervisor is no longer part of management, but part of a team, there will no longer be a need for a separate craft union."

This will take a long time. In the medium term, the craft unions are likely to survive and retain their influence. ☆

Sources:

Najwah Allie, *Directory of SA Trade Unions* (SALDRU, Cape Town, 1991)
Shane Godfrey, *Industrial Council Digest* (IRP, Dept of Sociology, UCT, 1992)



rainbow **strike** *at* **Frame**

The Frame Textile strike in November last year was a landmark – for the first time a ‘rainbow’ alliance of African, Indian and white monthly-paid staff joined hands and downed tools together. SACTWU legal officer MIKE MURPHY reports.

We are used to reports of white scabs working during ‘black’ strikes. But the Frame monthly-paid workers strike points to the possibility of a different approach. In

workplaces where weekly-paid black workers are well organised, there is potential for a ‘second wave’ of unionisation amongst monthly-paid employees.

History of organisation at Frame

The battle by NUTW (now SACTWU) to organise the giant Frame Textile Corporation (nearly 30 000 employees) began in the early 1970s, and recognition was finally won in 1986. The agreement between company and union obliged the company to bargain with monthly-paid employees but only in a separate bargaining unit from the weekly-paid, and only as majority was achieved in the Paterson grades C1 to C3.

The success of the union in handling worker problems in 1987 and 1988 amongst the weekly-paid, and the promotion of union members into the C1-C3 grades, led by mid-1989 to a demand for organisation amongst the monthly-paid staff. Frame was starting the huge process of retrenchment that has cut the company to a workforce of 9 000 today, but this process only accelerated the recruitment of staff seeking protection against unfair retrenchment or poor retrenchment packages.

By the end of 1989, SACTWU negotiated its first salaried staff agreement, covering its majority membership in the C1, C3 and B-monthly grades at the biggest Frame factory, Frametex at New Germany.

Organisation has gradually extended in the Frame New Germany complex to the present position, reflected in the table below.*

SACTWU membership relative to total employees (approx)

INDIANS:	190 out of 210
BLACKS:	117 out of 130
WHITES:	50 out of 115
TOTAL:	357 out of 455

The group most reluctant to join SACTWU was the C2 grade employees. These are predominantly white artisans, on artisan's rates of pay. But SACTWU now has over 60% membership in C2 grade, and is only eight members away from majority amongst the whites. Only two years ago it was said of the whites: "They will never join a black union."



Workplace issues for salaried staff

While the weekly-paid workers' struggles have focused on wages, the organisation of monthly-paid staff was focused on 'favouritism'. This was a grievance about management giving preference in employment, in promotions, and in 'merit increases' to their 'blue-eyed boys' – mostly whites.

The union demands, for the first two years in the monthly-paid bargaining unit, therefore concentrated on correcting the enormous pay discrepancies between workers performing the same jobs. The focus was on a fair grading system, and levelling out the pay gaps by distributing the annual increase away from the high-paid towards the low-paid.

While the higher-paid workers remained outside SACTWU, there was little resistance to this redistribution process. But it soon became clear to the higher paid workers that if they did not join the union they would receive lower pay increases than the lower-paid workers.

SACTWU also succeeded in closing the other loophole for favouritism, namely the merit increase, which was abolished. All this allowed higher-paid workers to overcome their dislike of COSATU unionism, and to join SACTWU. By the 1991 bargaining round in the monthly-paid bargaining unit, the

* The racial categories throughout this article are not used because of support for apartheid, but because we recognise that non-racialism must be built out of the reality we live in.



Shopstewards at Frame: part of a landmark strike

Photo: Cedric Nunn

SACTWU demand was an across-the-board percentage increase. This remained the same in the 1992 bargaining.

Another key demand was to set annual negotiations and implementation dates for the monthly-paid at the same time as for the weekly-paid. This co-ordination was vigorously resisted by the company, which admitted that such a change "would give the union too much power". This demand is still on the table.

Lead-up to salaried-staff strike

From 1990, Frame has been in deep financial trouble. In 1991, having suffered losses of over R200 million, the company tried to enforce an 8% settlement on the monthly-paid when inflation was fanning at 16,2%. Strong union resistance involving a number of in-factory demonstrations led to a 12,5% deal being struck.

During 1992, the company avoided

processing staff disputes in order to avoid financial outlay. The result was that minor issues that would normally have been settled were blown up into long-running grievances, and more major issues were delayed so that the belief grew that the company "did not care about its monthly-paid employees".

This perception was dramatically reinforced when bargaining started in September. Barely two months after awarding the weekly-paid workers an increase of 15,6% (calculated year-on-year) or 10,7% (calculated normally on the split increase usually used at Frame) the company announced its 'offer' to the monthly-paid of a *decrease* of 10%. After this absurd bargaining ploy was dismissed by the union, the company dug its heels in at its 'final' offer of a wage freeze.

The response of the monthly-paid at a general meeting was one of outrage. From the white artisans came the proposal for an immediate "down tools", but this was outvoted in favour of the Labour Relations Act dispute

procedures. The union negotiating team was told to suspend negotiations until the company came with an offer similar to the 1991 settlement, and to meet the company again only at the Conciliation Board meeting arising out of the dispute over the company's "insulting" pay offer.

When the CB application was filed the company adopted delaying tactics with the result that the CB never met, and with the further result that their "insult" was allowed to fester for the full 30 days. When the union announced a strike ballot the company panicked and rushed forward with a 5% offer. This was clearly too late, and did not deter the staff from voting 94% in the ballot in favour of "industrial action". The ballot was however, more of a signal of staff anger to the company than a definite decision to strike.

There followed a period of 'wait-and-see' on both sides, during which attempts were made to get across to the company the unfairness of treating the staff so much worse than the weekly-paid. But the MD, when called to a general meeting in the canteen, barricaded himself behind a door with armed guards outside, and sent the Personnel Director to the meeting. He was promptly ejected.

A new final offer of 8% was again too little too late, and the time had clearly come to strike – or back down. A go-slow proposal was rejected – clerical workers pointed out that it was difficult for them to make this count – and a show of hands vote was taken on an all-out strike.

This was undoubtedly the Rubicon vote. The monthly-paid shopstewards had felt from the start that members would not strike – that they were by custom too concerned about loss of pay, and the danger of dismissal. The weekly-paid shopstewards had scoffed at the prospect of a staff strike and it seemed clear that the company was also sceptical.

Yet when the spontaneous vote was taken, it was unanimous. Another vote on "How long for?" and "when do we start?" was taken unanimously minutes later.

Why this new-found militancy?

How to explain this militancy from traditionally non-militant workers?

Obviously, everyone was angry at the company and inflation had been particularly severe on everyday food items in the last year. But the fears expressed before the vote were perfectly rational:

- Have we got the *right* to strike?
- Won't we just lose money if we go on strike?

These fears were addressed in the meeting by explaining, firstly the 'protected strike' right under the LRA. This is made far stronger at Frame by a clause in the recognition agreement which stipulates that in the event of a strike the company must 'fire all or none' and 'rehire all or none'. Secondly, a 'balance sheet' of monetary gains and losses was drawn up, showing that a 1% increase was worth spending 3,2 days on strike over to win that 1%, before one actually loses anything in monetary terms.

Another factor which influenced the decision to strike was the existence of a vociferously pro-strike minority – the white artisans who, by being out of the bargaining unit in previous years, had suffered lower percentage increases than other staff.

Having voted to strike, the staff began to raise problems that had not occurred to them before. For example: "What do I do when my boss – whom I know personally – comes to me outside the factory, takes me by the arm, and says 'Come on, Joe, lets get back to work'?" This problem, of close personal relations, was solved by emphasizing the legality of the strike under the LRA.

It had been provisionally decided at the Wednesday meeting to start the strike on Monday morning. But when it became clear on Thursday that management were using the interim days to prepare to ride out the strike, an urgent general meeting was called and the strike started there and then. Each member was given a notice by the union explaining the fundamentals of strike action: pickets, disciplined attendance at strike meetings etc. This notice was also used as 'proof' to anxious

spouses of the legality of the strike, to counter anticipated phone calls from management to harass employers – via domestic pressure – into breaking ranks.

Bringing the strike forward by four days meant hurried organisation of pickets, and the key for the meeting venue (the local ANC hall) could not be located, so that members had to stand in the road for several hours. In spite of this only a handful of members went to work on Friday, which was the first test of individual commitment.

Picketing continued on Saturday to cover the shift workers, and on Monday the first strike meeting recorded an over 90% attendance. Out of 357, a total of six members crossed the picket line, two of whom had arrived at the gates 'under safe escort' in a police car.

Role of weekly-paid workers

The weekly-paid workers went on strike in 1990 for three weeks. The monthly-paid workers had 'worked' but there was little to do. Now the situation was reversed, but the loss to the company was far greater – to pay the weekly-pays for doing nothing as the factory ground to a halt was an obvious pressure on Frame to settle.

The weekly-paid workers were fascinated by the Friday demonstration at the main gate by the strikers: banners, slogans, even the occasional *toyi-toyi* by their supervisors and foremen was certainly something new. But this tactical distancing between the two sections of the workforce could not be sustained indefinitely.

By the third day strong discontent was voiced by some of the monthly-paid production staff around certain higher-skilled weekly-paid workers carrying out monthly-paid functions. On the Monday a proposal to picket the weekly-pays from Tuesday was carried by an overwhelming majority, to loud applause.

The other advantage of having the weekly-pays at work was the availability of information around the effectiveness of stopping production. Another useful source of

information was the C4 grade employees (head foremen) who had joined SACTWU during October, but were too new to ballot and join the strike. With this information it was possible to know the state of production in every mill and plan accordingly.

Strike leadership

The majority group, the Indians, took the dominant leadership role during the strike, with the agreed tactical exception that white artisans crossing the picket line would always encounter white picketers.

This tactic had problems: because the majority of white artisans were not union members, their crossing of the picket lines gradually demoralised their fellow artisan picketers. This meant that by Monday the white workers, who had been confident of shutting down the sites through control of lights, water etc had lost confidence in winning the strike.

Black monthly-paid leadership were exerting a different kind of influence. Since nearly all monthly-paid blacks have risen via promotions from the weekly-paid ranks, their attention was on their 'connections' amongst the weekly-pays, to ensure that no weekly paid workers crossed the picket once the pickets started targeting the weekly-pays.

Settlement

From day one of the strike, the pickets had put up a placard on the main gate of the factory, inviting the company to settle at a compromise figure:

SACTWU 12,5% – Frame 8%

Meet us halfway, Mr Simeoni

And from day one, the company adopted the position that the 8% offer had been conditional on no strike. Frame's posture now was that the 'offer' was 0%, a piece of wishful thinking that nobody took seriously.

Settlement was reached on the afternoon of day four when a 9,5% increase was agreed to by a full-house of the general meeting. There was a feeling of elation amongst the membership: they had won their first strike!

A few days remained before the December

shutdown. But even in this short space of time what became clear was the totally new spirit amongst the monthly-paid. As one shopsteward said: "Everyone is united now, after being on strike together. We're all comrades now! We've done something together, and we've shown we can stand up for ourselves."

The scabs can look forward to repercussions in 1993 as a result of this new spirit. But the repercussions proposed are in keeping with the entirely non-violent strike, where not even management complained about intimidation. The proposal is to hang a 'list of honour' on the factory gate once a month, with the names written large on it of "all those ladies and gentlemen that went in to work while we were outside fighting for *their* increase".

After the strike there was a surge of new members into the union – the waverers clearly saw on which side their bread is buttered.

Some organising conclusions from the strike

This strike showed that the issues of inter-racial co-operation will be worked out in a real context rather than in the abstract. The strike also showed that this traditionally conservative sector can be surprisingly militant in the face of rocketing inflation. But in order to organise successfully this monthly-paid sector there are some key issues:

- There is little culture of united action but this solidarity can develop rapidly through regular workplace meetings.
- There is no tradition of direct democracy as is well-established in the COSATU unions. But the constant reminder that the union is the workers themselves, and does not move without a mandate, empowers and unifies workers. Workers began to say "We will decide, and then we will do it. No-one will tell us what to do!"
- Once the issue of united action has been overcome the real and rational barriers of united action can be addressed: "Won't I get fired?" etc.
- The monthly-paid are more demanding than the weekly-paid sector and this is the

biggest challenge facing unions – the need to upgrade their quality of service. The questions asked of unions are very direct: "Are you prompt, efficient, and focused on our problems?"

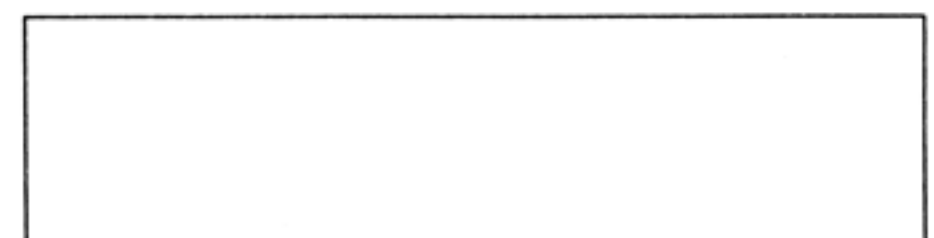
Monthly paid workers also have potential from their vantage point in the production process to critique current management practices. From this vantage point, it is clear that the "low productivity of South African labour" which management constantly complains about is in large part the result of poor management. In Frame, management has to decide if it will respond to demands which infringe on 'management prerogative', such as:

- weeding out of poor management
- an end to excessive managerial perks
- reasonable productivity deals which eliminate wasteful practices.

What lessons for non-racial unionism?

Here and there in recent times there have been examples of individual white workers joining black unions. But apartheid has typically placed non-African workers in the higher-paid jobs so the possibilities of genuine inter-racial co-operation has never been tested on any large scale.

With the opening up of higher-grade jobs to Africans the monthly-paid sector has become more ethnically mixed, and so the primary focus of non-racial unionism will therefore, be located in the monthly-paid sector. Workers in this sector will have a clear choice: racial division and powerlessness, or inter-racial co-operation to fend off attacks on their living standards. The Frame strike shows that, where there is a struggle for common goals, the potential problem of racial conflict can be overcome if the union is sensitive to its members' different cultural backgrounds. ☆



Trade union unity, and the problem of factory floor divisions between Indian and African workers has been the subject of much debate. CWIU organiser HASSAN AMRA investigates the organisation of Indian workers in different sectors and draws some lessons.

indians *and* africans: *workers* divided?

Management divide-and-rule strategies

Management strategies over the apartheid years have played a large role in dividing Indians from their fellow African workers. The way industry has organised itself has entrenched divisions between different groups. The employment of Indian workers into more skilled, higher grade jobs has entrenched a racial identity. This has reinforced the different political and social experiences of Indians and Africans under apartheid.

Indian workers often have a higher level of education and skill, and see themselves as superior to African workers. Management has recognised the advantage of a divided workforce, and uses intimidatory tactics to discourage Indian workers from joining trade unions. Organisers and shopstewards give examples of such tactics:

- "They (management) send messages to workers via supervisors or senior personnel to the artisans and monthly paid workers that they would not qualify to join the union because they are skilled workers. They tell these workers that they need specialist unions or must form consultative

committees where they could directly represent themselves to management."

- "Your wage increases will be retarded because you are in the minority, and the union will concentrate on the lower waged workers so you will lose."
- "You cannot join the African workers union, you come from a different cultural background."
- "The African unions are militant and unreasonable in their demands, and they often embark on illegal strike action, you will be forced to join the strike, and we will not be obliged to keep you on, we might even have to close down the factory."

Other management tactics include undermining the bargaining process. After wages have been negotiated by African workers, Indian workers are often granted a percentage or so higher increase so management nurtures the loyalties of Indian workers.

Despite these tactics, some unions have successfully united Indian and African workers. Experience varies from sector to sector.

Indians in the teaching sector

Schools are racially divided so Indian teachers only come in contact with other Indians. This is different from other sectors and has made united action with other racial groups very difficult. The formation of the non-racial SADTU (SA Democratic Teachers Union) however, has enabled teachers of different ethnic groups to come together.

The recruitment numbers into the recently formed SADTU in the greater Durban area are significant. Some 5 500 teachers are members of the union, of which 4 500 are Indian teachers. There has been a significant increase in Indian membership since union recognition by the House of Delegates in October 1992 – teachers are less afraid of victimisation by the department. Also, at the launch of SADTU the predominance of ANC aligned teachers kept teachers of different persuasions away. But since the chalk down of teachers in Soweto last year, non-members are starting to see SADTU as politically independent.

The quality of service offered by the union has also improved. A union official pointed out “more members tend to join the union after gains have been made at site level. When you win a disciplinary case, for example, the non-union members assess the effectiveness of the organisation and if they are satisfied that the quality of service is of a high standard, they would sign up for membership.”

The petroleum sector

The petrochemical sector in the Durban area employs an equal number of Indian and African workers. The sector is organised by the CWIU (Chemical Workers Industrial Union) and the membership is a replica of the workforce – 50% of each race group. An Indian shopsteward explained: “the company employed people on the basis of high educational standards. They did not divide workers according to race, at least on the face of it there was no racial criteria of selection or of promotion. However, there is concern amongst the workers because it cannot be justified how all the foreman are

either whites or Indian.”

Union recruitment started in the mid-80s and it was African workers who joined. Indian recruitment only really began after union recognition, and substantial gains had been made with wages and working conditions. According to one shopsteward: “For the first time the Indian workers from the refinery saw that African workers from the Island View site were negotiating their own conditions of employment, whereas previously we just had to accept what the bosses gave us.”

The recruitment of Indian workers was not without effort. Recruiters had to constantly dispel the issue of racial identity. A shopsteward explained: “From the initial drive we went in strong explaining to the Indian workers that it is only because of the relative size of the Indian population that the union has a majority of African membership. If the workforce of this country was mainly Indian workers, the majority of the union membership would have been Indian. We also emphasised that we are not only fighting a racial struggle against unjust apartheid, but that workers have their own interests to protect and so we are fighting a class struggle. We managed to convince the Indian workers that it was senseless to have many specialist unions representing us, and that one strong and united union would be able to do the job more effectively.”

But once recruited, Indian workers have been as militant as African workers. When workers embark on strike action their unity does not falter. Through joint economic struggle, workers have come to see the divisive nature of hanging onto racial identities.

The textile and clothing sector

Workers in the clothing industry in Durban are about 70% Indian. The industry is organised by SACTWU (SA Clothing & Textile Workers Union) and its membership is about 50% Indian and 50% African.

The organisations that came together to form SACTWU had divergent traditions. The



Garment workers: the formation of SACTWU was preceded by clashes between Indian and African workers as ACTWUSA and GAWU tried to organise the same workers

Photo: William Matlala

unions that finally merged to form SACTWU were the Amalgamated Clothing & Textile Workers Union of SA (ACTWUSA) and the Garment & Allied Workers Union (GAWU). ACTWUSA came from the merging of African based unions where the dominant tradition was that of the COSATU affiliated NUTW with a history of strong shopfloor organisation. GAWU came from the merging of two TUCSA (Trade Union Council of SA) affiliated unions with a tradition of racially based closed shops of Indian and coloured membership with low levels of militancy.

These different traditions led to shopfloor clashes. Even at the time of merger talks members of ACTWUSA and GAWU clashed on the shopfloor. Although the conflict took on a racial character, the underlying reason was the poaching of members. According to one official: "There were a lot of problems between Indian and African workers when ACTWUSA attempted to organise in the same

factories where GAWU had a presence. In certain factories the conflict between Indian workers in GAWU and African workers in ACTWUSA reached a level where physical violence erupted."

The birth of SACTWU did not bring immediate resolution to this conflict. At a factory in Durban, for example, a series of workshops were run to forge unity amongst workers. A SACTWU member said: "The Indian and African workers learned to understand each other more. This was mainly due to the education programmes and the training of the leadership. Since the formation of SACTWU the relationship between the Indian and African workers got very much better, and we have experienced no incidence of racial division."

The tradition now that seems to dominate SACTWU is the more militant ACTWUSA one – Indian workers have learnt the benefits of strong factory floor organisation.

The municipal sector

In the greater Durban area there are about 15 000 municipal workers, the majority belonging to some kind of worker organisation. Indian workers belong to the Durban Integrated Municipal Employees Society (DIMES) with a closed shop agreement with the municipality. The membership of DIMES represents about half the total workforce of which 80% are Indian. DIMES has a tradition of being a mainly non-militant benefit union.

African workers belong to the SA Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), a COSATU affiliate, with a membership of 2 500. The union says it has had no success in recruiting Indian workers. Organisational, rather than race, divisions exist between the unions.

In the 1992/3 wage negotiations, in a bargaining forum where six unions negotiate with the City Council, the only union to refuse the 14,5% increase was SAMWU. DIMES did not support the subsequent SAMWU protest march to the city hall demanding a living wage. A DIMES organiser attributed this nil support to the lack of progress in the unity talks between the two unions.

Some conclusions around organising Indian workers

Many activists and academics view Indian workers as 'conservative' and difficult to organise. However, the experience of organising Indian workers varies greatly from sector to sector. In addition, Indian workers in many sectors have a long history of trade unionism in organisation like DIMES, GWIU etc. While these unions may have a conservative history, the mere fact that they belong to organisations is a contribution to unity. It is easier to persuade such an organisation about the need for unity than to recruit Indian workers individually.

It seems clear that where shopstewards' committees provide quality, trained, and well-informed leadership they are able to overcome racial divisions – this is especially true because Indian workers had the advantage

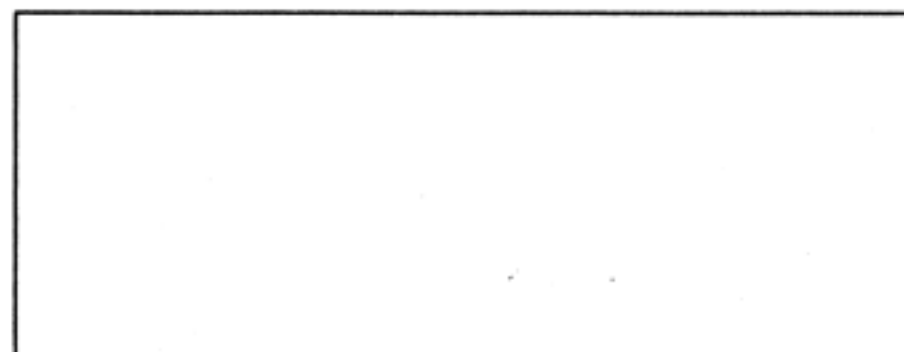
of better education under the apartheid system. "The protection and security of being represented by educated and trained shopstewards is certainly attractive," said one CWIU shopsteward.

Another shopsteward also suggested that it would be an advantage to have more Indian worker leadership: "We went to a company to recruit the truck drivers who were mainly Indian workers. What helped to recruit these workers is that we freely discussed specifically Indian concerns. It helps by having Indian workers on the recruiting team and in other leadership positions. It becomes easier to reach out to the Indian worker."

It is also clear that Indian workers are more cautious, and have higher expectations of unions than African workers. They tend to wait for union recognition and evidence of successes before joining. This is one of the problems facing SAMWU in the Durban municipality: "In negotiations we are not in the majority. We cannot significantly influence the outcome of the wage negotiations so we are unable to attract Indian workers."

Indian workers are often less militant than African workers, but this can be overcome. According to a former SACTWU official, "We saw that Indian workers were not used to embarking on industrial action so they were scared. But with education the relation between Indian and African workers thawed, and they took action as a united force." It is also clear that a high quality of service is crucial to keeping these workers in the union.

A CWIU official observed that Indian workers would join the union when they had problems, but "once their problems were solved they would resign". However, "if they are properly organised and educated, and they had made a conscious decision to join the union they become very militant." ☆



coloured workers: joining COSATU, voting NP?

MIKE COETZEE* discusses the dilemmas facing COSATU and the ANC in the Western Cape.

A draft survey to be published by the Centre for Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape (*Ethnic consciousness and potential voting behaviour in the coloured community*), made a number of revealing findings.

- The coloured community, who constitute 11% of the SA population (excluding the TBVC territories) has a relatively low level of education.
- The majority are working class. The majority has attained more socio-economic privileges than Africans.
- The majority of respondents in the survey viewed themselves as part of a group classified 'coloured'.
- The community shows a hesitancy in its acceptance of an African as president of South Africa.
- It shows a low level of organisational affiliation and appears to be politically marginalised.
- The overwhelming majority, 74%, support De Klerk as president in a new SA and the NP (62%) as the party they would vote for in an election, as opposed to 9% for the

ANC and 5% for Mandela. The support for the NP is derived from its success in creating an image of itself as the chief architect of the current political changes.

- There is a correlation between education, income and the voting trends of the community. The NP primarily draws its support from the less educated sections of the community and from the low and upper middle income earners.

These survey figures make known a number of facts about the coloured community and do not come as a total surprise to activists in the Western Cape. It therefore justifies the concerns raised by the debate on the 'Coloured Question', but rather a bit too late.

History of resistance

Although not having a definite political affiliation, the history of resistance of coloured people shows a different pattern from time to time, especially amongst students and youth. In recent times, post 1976 and during the United Democratic Front era, students and youth have been in the forefront of pitched battles with the police and the authorities.

* Mike Coetzee is head of the Workers' College in Bellville, Western Cape



COSATU's coloured members: who gets their vote in a general election?

Photo: William Matlala

Various communities have been mobilised around specific localised economic and social issues to varying degrees of success. This brought about a relatively strong civic movement in the Western Cape that laid the basis for the foundation and the acceptance of the UDF. Despite the success of the UDF in mobilising members of the coloured community around short term political goals such as the campaign against the Tricameral Parliament, it was unable to entrench a political tradition and loyalty.

No organisation or political formation has been able to establish a political tradition and loyalty amongst the mass of coloured people in the Western Cape to date. The only exception

has been COSATU. At various times COSATU affiliates such as SACTWU have managed to mobilise campaigns, but only around specific campaigns and issues that serve the immediate interests of workers such as the anti-LRA and Living Wage campaigns, but this has only been for a limited duration. The participation of coloured workers in stayaways has also increased in recent times, after extensive mobilisation by COSATU.

A distinct feature is the absence of any form and tradition of political leadership acceptable to coloureds having emerged over the last decade and a half.

Workers' Day
MAY 1
AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Consciousness

Despite the UDF era and COSATU's ability to organise large numbers of working class people into its ranks, we still find that coloureds have not become members of political organisations and possess a conservative political consciousness.

Union activists maintain that the political conservatism is confined to rank and file membership, but a ray of sunshine is evident amongst the union leadership and shopstewards.

A number of negative perceptions about the ANC exist amongst coloured workers and are articulated in different forms and sometimes very crudely, being:

- the ANC is an African organisation*
- the ANC is too radical*
- they cannot relate to the national political agenda of the ANC.*

When a union organiser explained the need for unions and their members to have control over their pension and provident fund monies, the first response was, "as long as COSATU does not give our money to the ANC".

Unionisation

Progressive union organisation has increased dramatically with the launch of COSATU in 1985. However, it has evened off in most sectors, except in the public sector where steady progress is evident.

The level of unionisation in the Western Cape with an estimated economically active population of 3,5 million is very low, with approximately 175 000 members in COSATU and much less in NACTU. The craft unions still find support amongst coloured workers.

Whilst coloured workers tend to identify their economic interests with African workers, they

tend to identify their political interests more with whites, and in particular with the NP.

Implications

COSATU in the Western Cape finds itself in a very precarious position, being in an alliance with the ANC and the Communist Party, but its members not giving support to this alliance. This poses an organisational and tactical problem.

COSATU, being the only formation with membership and following in this constituency, will be expected to deliver the coloured vote to the ANC in the forthcoming elections. The ANC, with its functioning branches, is sound in the suburbs and middle class coloured areas but displays a marked weakness and absence from the large working class areas.

With the urgent need to define a political strategy for winning the elections, a number of options are being debated:

- The ANC should be remodelled and its image changed if we hope to 'market' it to coloureds in the Western Cape.
- A 'rainbow coalition' of different organs of civil society should campaign on a progressive ticket, being non-hostile and non-antagonistic towards the ANC.
- A coloured political party should be formed, or the ANC should enter an alliance arrangement with the Labour Party.
- COSATU and other organisations should campaign against the NP, but not pro-ANC in the region. This would ensure that the NP gains few votes, and would thus strengthen the position of the ANC.

Whatever the result of this debate, there is a sense of urgency and desperation. ☆

Press Freedom Day

MAY 3

SOUTH AFRICAN UNION OF JOURNALISTS

recruiting white members *is uphill struggle* **for COSATU**

COSATU affiliates encounter many problems in organising white members: closed shops, white racism, black suspicion. SNUKI ZIKALALA reports

In negotiations with employers on wages, job security, retrenchments and pension funds, it is the black trade unions which are putting up ambitious demands. White workers are beginning to feel insecure as their unions no longer defend and satisfy their interests.

As artisan and former member of the SA Boilermakers Society, Daniel Pretorius, puts it: "The Boilermakers Society was no longer delivering the goods. We were not getting the support from it when we were in need. This has a psychological effect on us. The union is only interested in getting subs from us yet it did not see to it that I got my severance package when I was injured in the mine, nor protected my job."

Pretorius is one of the disillusioned skilled white workers who has recently joined the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) and is encouraging more workers to do so.

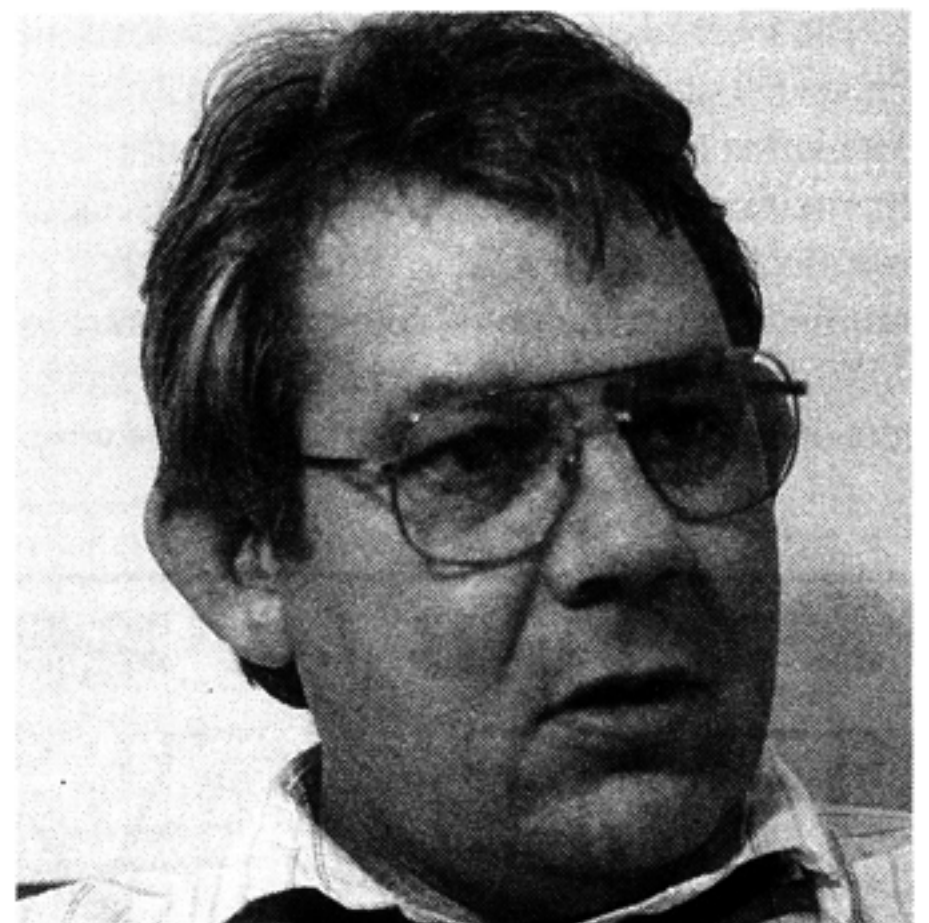
COSATU unions have recognised that without drawing a large number of whites into their constituencies, they will not be able to

close the racial gap that exists at the workplace. However, despite their non-racial principles, these COSATU unions have encountered many problems in organising conservative white workers.

The problem of closed shops

NUM has appointed Louis Vosloo, a former miner from Impala Platinum mines, to recruit white miners. "The majority of white workers are racist. It is very difficult to organise white workers as their unions have signed closed-shop agreements with the bosses. We are not allowed to enter and organise workers in the mines," says Vosloo.

According to Vosloo, NUM has organised



Louis Vosloo: recruiting for NUM

Photo: William Matlala

1 800 white workers in the mines. They range from shift bosses, electricians, fitters and turners and banksmens (lift operators). The problem for NUM is that these white workers are in bargaining units covered by closed-shop agreements with the various white or mostly white union. This means that NUM cannot defend the interests of its white members at plant level (see page 48).

As a matter of urgency, NUM has given social assistance to white workers who have been neglected by their unions. NUM has won a number of legal cases for these workers.

Despite the fact the NUM has managed to help white workers who have been neglected by the unions, their participation in the union's activities is minimal. They are hardly seen at rallies or NUM locals. And workers are now beginning to question their loyalty.

Vosloo admits their presence is not felt. He says some of the white workers are concerned about the influence of the ANC and SACP in union affairs. "You must understand that most of them belong to the Conservative Party, and the fear of communism which has been drummed into their heads since childhood is still prevalent."

Black workers hostile

NUM is not the only union faced with this problem. White workers who have joined the South African Railways and Harbours Union (SARHWU), Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (NUMSA) are also facing the problem of assimilation. Some of the white workers end up not paying subscriptions because they feel neglected by their unions.

SARHWU's organiser Johann Beaurain says the problem affects both black and white members of his union. "The natural feeling among SARHWU members is to avoid white workers because of the scars of apartheid. Many SARHWU members do not communicate freely with their white colleagues," he says.

SARHWU's organiser suggests there is a need to reconsider the way union meetings are conducted. "We have to adopt a different style of organising white workers. ANC-SACP



Johann Beaurain of SARHWU

Photo: William Matlala

slogans do not appeal to white workers. Instead they have a negative effect on our organisational ability. Our meetings have to deal with work-related issues first and encourage a lively debate among workers." Beaurain also suggests paying attention to the specific grievances of white workers and incorporating them in union demands.

The white members in SARHWU do not attend meetings and their participation in union activities is very low. Some are reluctant to attend meetings because of the hostile attitude of their community and family toward a union with a mainly black membership.

"We need to understand this and communicate with them, so that they are armed for debate with friends and relatives," says Beaurain.

Neglect

NUMSA's regional organiser Robert Gammage describes similar problems. Gammage, who joined the union in 1985 while working at Eskom's regional office in Johannesburg and became a shopsteward until he retired in 1988, says education will help workers overcome their suspicions.

NUMSA has few white workers. It is not in a position to negotiate for their wage increase

RACIAL DIVISIONS, SKILLS DIVISIONS

or conditions of employment. Like in all the other unions, whites' participation in union activities is non-existent. Gammage attributes this to lack of information and the manner in which meetings are organised and conducted.



White workers: a need to integrate them into union structures

Photo: William Matlala

According to Gammage, "African workers hardly tell their colleagues about meetings. Sometimes these meetings are conducted in African languages and this becomes a problem for us. It is a fact that white workers do not participate in mass actions or industrial strikes and this worries their black colleagues. We still have a lot of spade work to do."

During one of our visits to Eskom headquarters in Johannesburg, LABOUR BULLETIN had the opportunity of talking to white workers who are NUMSA members. They asked not to be identified as they were afraid of reprisals from management.

They say they joined the union only last year, after being threatened with retrenchment. NUMSA defended them and their jobs are now

secure. Though they are members, they have never been called to any meeting. They are critical of the union's programme of mass action, but are prepared to take part in organisational matters of their union. They claim there is very little communication. "We still have to break the racial barrier," they say.

Will the racial barriers be broken?

COSATU affiliates have made little headway in trying to win white workers into the black-dominated industrial unions. Despite the fact that COSATU unions have the potential and the ability to organise more white counterparts within their ranks, and have strong organisational structures and a history of good service, they are failing to break the racial barrier.

White organisers who have been targeting members of their racial group have not been able to change their unions from within. African shopstewards are still very suspicious of their white colleagues, some for security reasons but also because they fear that if the whites stand for shopstewards' elections they will win them and "run" the union.

The mistake made by most unions is that when a white worker joins the union, he or she is expected to perform miracles, to be well aware of union procedures, policies and recruit hundreds of white colleagues into the unions. Yet there is very little trade union education or attempts to involve white workers in organisational matters. One white organiser could not differentiate between the ANC and the SACP.

As Gammage points out, more education has to be given to both black and white. Workers struggle against capitalist exploitation and apartheid has formed racial attitudes among the workers. Though white workers are prepared to be serviced and to be members of black-dominated industrial unions, they are still not prepared to be involved in industrial actions.

This process should not be one sided. African workers and shopstewards will have to involve their white colleagues in decision making and in policy formulation. It is only through active involvement of other racial groups that racial tensions can be removed. ❖



Orkney: a town of contradictions and despair

Orkney is a mining town not far from Klerksdorp. It is dominated by CP and AWB members, but NUM is using it as a recruiting base. NUM organiser Louis Vosloo is like the mayor of the small town. When we arrived, droves of workers came to greet him and shook his big hands. He asked the workers how many members they had organised. They smiled, saying they were waiting for Vosloo to arrange a mass meeting in the town.

The town is dead during the day. We saw women taking their precious belongings to sell at a pawn shop. We saw many workers limping as a result of injuries from mine accidents.

When the workers saw Vosloo, they asked about cases which have been taken up by NUM. They admitted they are identifying themselves with NUM now because their unions have turned their backs on them.

They were very open: "We never thought we would join a trade union led by a black

man. NUM has done more than I expected. The very same black leader I was made to undermine, is the one who cares more about my health, my family and job security," said one white miner.

According to Vosloo, white workers who have joined NUM have been given legal and medical advice. "White workers are very ignorant about their rights. Their unions have never cared to give them the information to help them when they are in dire need. We have discovered that a number of white workers who have been injured at their workplace have been dismissed and did not even get their severance packages. Rand Mutual hospital - which is a mine hospital - has a reputation for refusing to acknowledge mine accidents. This leaves workers in a desperate situation. We are now handling their cases and we might enter into a dispute with Anglo-American."

White miners are becoming increasingly critical of their unions. Those who are

disabled because of mine accidents are very angry. They say their unions have not taken up their cases or supported them in crisis situations. Instead they keep writing letters to remind workers to pay their overdue subs.

We were invited to an NUM member's house – Jeremia Cornelius Lingenfelder. It is a small three-bedroomed house filled with old and dilapidated furniture. Lingenfelder's wife and her friend and the children were a sight for sore eyes. Because of their obvious poverty, they were thin, and nervous. They smiled and shook hands with us.

Mrs Lingenfelder made us black coffee and said there was no milk. She complained that the family had not eaten proper food for days.

Barely holding back the tears, she told us how her husband had worked for the mines for the past 14 years until an injury made him redundant. His family were expected to move out of the house and had nowhere to stay. She related her husband's problems at the workplace as if she had worked alongside him.

The husband, who did very little talking, said he desperately needed emotional support. "I am now half paralysed due to a mine accident, but the mine management refuses to take the responsibility. I have been sacked and am not entitled to my severance package. My family has nothing to eat and there is tension inside the house."

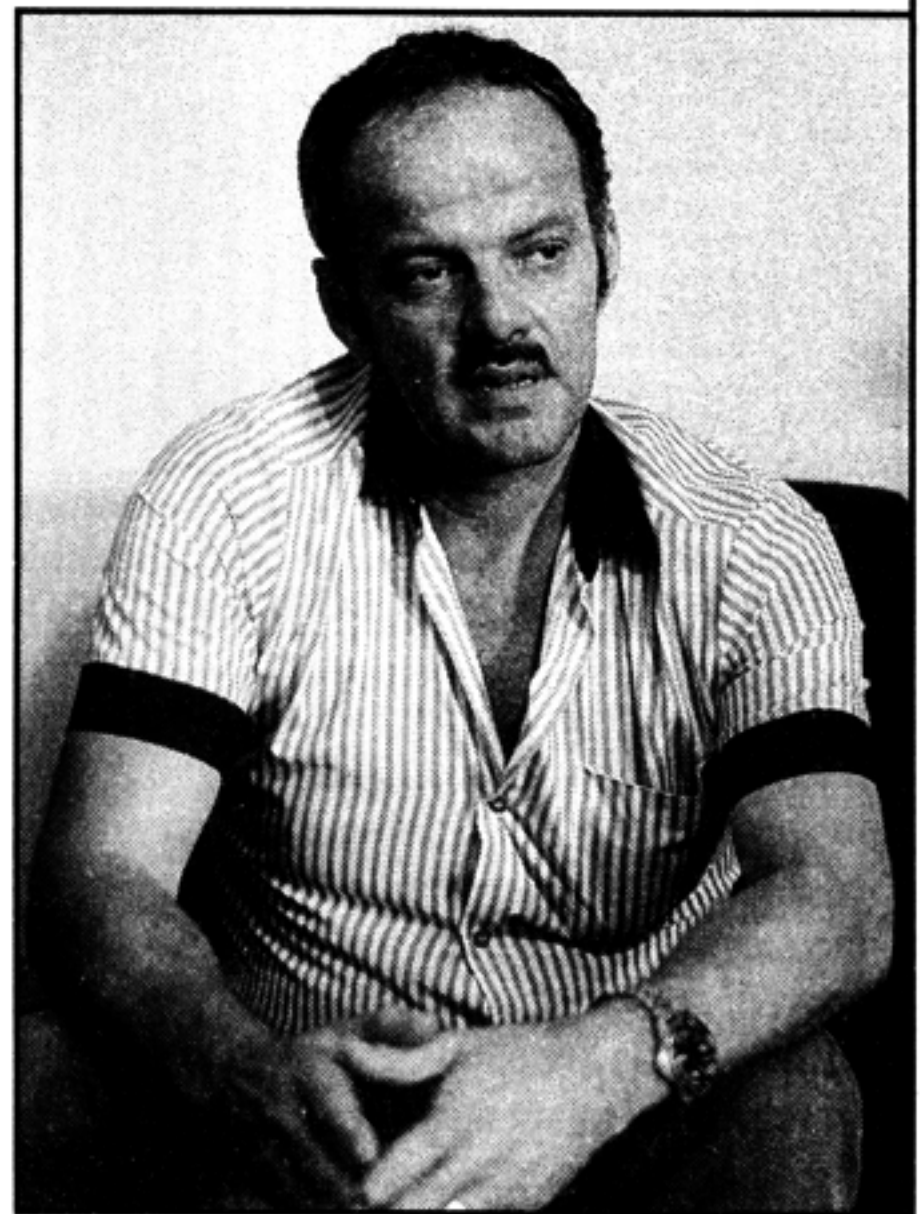
Lingenfelder's wife has been forced to sell milk so that the children can have something to eat. Pawn shops have become their last resort as they sell off their valuable goods to buy food.

"It is only when we heard of NUM organiser Louis Vosloo that we decided to join the union. So far my husband's health problem and severance package is being fought for by NUM and we are satisfied with the progress," says Mrs Lingenfelder.

Miners' wives who bear the brunt of consequences of their husbands' unemployment are furious. They are demanding that NUM organise a protest march

into the heart of the CP and AWB town.

"We are sick and tired of being treated like children. When our husbands were physically fit and productive, mine management and the MWU showered us with praises and asked for more from them. Today they are crippled and struggling to get their severance packages. How do they expect us to live? If this happens to whites, what about black miners? I am sure they are just dumped in the bantustans without benefits," says Mrs Lingenfelder.



It was sad to listen to white workers telling us about their sufferings. It was also difficult to leave the town as more and more workers came for advice from Vosloo. Some were prepared to vent their sufferings in front of us as blacks, but one old man asked us to leave the room. He held his grandson very close and did not even allow us to play with him.

I asked myself: "Will he be ever able to swallow his pride and shake James Motlatsi's hand...?" ☆

Race and work: the figures

Imraan Valodia

According to the 1991 Population Census ⁽¹⁾, the total population in South Africa was 30 986 920 ⁽²⁾. The racial and gender breakdown of the population is as follows:

TABLE 1 shows that Africans form 70% of

TABLE 1 – SA population figures

	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Female	10 781 538	1 679 907	497 669	2 548 278
Male	10 864 932	1 605 811	488 952	2 519 833
Total	21 646 471	3 285 718	986 620	5 068 110

the total population in South Africa. Whites form 16% of the population while coloureds and Indians form 10% and 3% of South Africa's population respectively. The gender breakdown of the population is about equal, with men forming 49.95% of the population and women forming 50.05% of the population.

The Economically Active Population (EAP) is that part of the total population that is able to work. The EAP is calculated by subtracting housewives ⁽³⁾, children, scholars, students, the disabled and aged from the population.

The EAP in South Africa is shown in TABLE 2 below.

The EAP in South Africa totals 11 624 368. The EAP forms 38% of the total population. In other words, just 38% of the population is able to work. A large portion of the South African population is young. Children, scholars and students form 45% of the population.

TABLE 2 – Economically active population

	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
Female	2 942 470	582 062	120 628	936 154	4 581 314
Male	4 554 471	777 153	259 074	1 452 256	7 043 053
Total	7 497 041	1 359 215	379 702	2 388 410	11 624 368

Africans form 64% of the EAP, while whites, coloureds and Indians form 21%, 12% and 3% of the population respectively. Although women form over 50% of the total population, they form just 39% of the EAP.

Occupations by economic sector

TABLES 3 TO 6 in the following pages show the occupations by economic sector of the workforce for each of the race groups.

TABLE 3 shows the occupation and employment by economic sector for African workers.

In terms of occupations, the table shows that most African workers are employed in service

related occupations. This includes workers like drivers, messengers, security workers, catering workers and domestic workers. A very large proportion of professional

African workers are employed in the service sector. These workers would be teachers, doctors and nurses employed in community services. There are very few African workers employed in executive and management jobs.

A large proportion of African workers are employed in semi-skilled (operator and miner) and unskilled occupations (miner and labourer). They perform these jobs mainly in the manufacturing and service sector of the economy.

TABLE 4 shows most coloured workers are employed in service related occupations. A significant number have clerical, farming related occupations. About 13% of the coloured workforce are employed in semi-skilled operator and related occupations. Just under 10% are employed as unskilled labourers.

About 17% of coloured workers are employed in the manufacturing sector, mainly in semi-skilled occupations. 15% of the coloured workforce have occupations in the

agriculture sector, with just 13 758 having occupations in mining.

RACIAL DIVISIONS, SKILLS DIVISIONS

TABLE 3 – African workers

Type of Occupation	Total	Agriculture	Mining	Manuf'ring	Services	Other
Professional	287 503	774	2 978	4 908	272 101	6 742
Executive	33 320	434	414	5 790	19 086	7 596
Clerical ⁽⁴⁾	519 490	5 464	23 611	50 254	391 093	49 068
Service ⁽⁵⁾	1 774 145	25 923	56 568	106 965	144 210	142 585
Farming	926 269	803 567	2 664	6 052	93 694	20 292
Skilled ⁽⁶⁾	381 798	3 561	13 567	83 871	116 436	16 4363 ⁽⁷⁾
Supervisor	76 473	2 479	25 654	21 484	16 251	10 505
Miner ⁽⁸⁾	384 873	548	375 127	1 678	2 594	4 926
Operator ⁽⁹⁾	534 950	13 086	35 773	259 781	103 921	122 389 ⁽¹⁰⁾
Labourer ⁽¹¹⁾	920 976	48 267	178 909	176 929	312 161	204 710 ⁽¹²⁾
Other ⁽¹³⁾	1 657 244	5 715	4 995	12 404	46 518	1 587 612
Total	7497041	909817	720261	730117	2814055	2322789

TABLE 5 shows the profile of Indian workers. Most Indian workers are employed in clerical and sales occupations. A fair proportion of the Indian workforce have skilled professional and managerial occupations (together they form 16% of the Indian workforce). About 13% of Indian workers are employed in semi-skilled operator and related occupations. Just 10 964 Indian workers have unskilled occupations.

In terms of economic sector, most Indians are employed in the service sector, mainly in clerical jobs. About 26% of Indian workers are employed in the manufacturing sector, mainly as operators,

although many perform clerical functions. Very few Indians have occupations in the mining and agriculture sectors of the economy.

TABLE 6 shows the occupations by economic sector for white workers. We can see that in terms of occupations, most whites have clerical and sales occupations, with a significant number having professional and managerial occupations. About 13% of the white workforce have jobs in artisan and related occupations. A small percentage (3%) of whites have semi-skilled occupations, with just 7 072 having unskilled occupations as labourers.

Most whites are employed in the service

TABLE 4 – Coloured workers

Type of Occupation	Total	Agriculture	Mining	Manuf'ring	Services	Other
Professional	72 448	177	262	3 149	65 873	2 987
Executive	15 303	167	78	3 054	9 215	2 789
Clerical	183 718	1 512	1 156	26 405	135 175	19 470
Service	230 665	2 882	1 400	12 305	197 151	16 927
Farming	200 980	183 846	305	2 845	9 410	4 574
Skilled	117 935	1 383	2 137	32 287	30 579	51 549 ⁽¹⁴⁾
Supervisor	19 357	447	484	9 869	5 553	3 004
Miner	2 754	24	1 956	344	210	220
Operator	179 029	3 219	2 665	102 376	29 711	41 958
Labourers	131 813	7 854	3 084	36 844	48 617	35 414
Other ⁽¹⁵⁾	205 214	859	229	7 012	10 475	186 639
Total	1 359 215	202 370	13 758	236 491	541 935	364 661 ⁽¹⁶⁾

Table 5 – Indian Workers

	Total	Agriculture	Mining	Manuf'ring	Services	Other
Professional	36 793	113	127	3 562	31 170	1759
Managerial	23 707	203	53	4 396	16 219	2 886
Clerical	122 691	869	545	23 316	86 433	11 528
Service	31 795	320	98	3 224	25 594	2 559
Farming	3 054	2 135	11	218	513	177
Artisan	39 105	449	331	15 000	13 889	9 436
Supervisor	10 536	182	91	6 309	2 727	1 227
Miner	389	1	98	177	84	29
Operator	50 634	311	130	37 052	7 404	5 737
Labourer	10 964	120	39	5 520	3 480	1 805
Other	50 888	106	42	2 993	4 567	43 180
Total	380 502	4 809	1 565	101 767	192 088	80 273

Table 6 – White workers

	Total	Agriculture	Mining	Manuf'ring	Service	Other
Professional	442 058	5 702	13 964	48 074	346 173	28 145
Managerial	275 827	5 748	5 248	58 379	174 617	31 835
Clerical	777 860	10 578	14 230	90 950	609 838	52 264
Service	243 305	1 103	2 994	6 601	225 439	7 168
Farming	82 070	77 349	244	905	2 710	862
Artisan	301 889	3 323	30 443	91 220	125 232	51 671
Supervisor	58 977	785	12 483	21 249	16 490	7 970
Miner	21 025	84	19 075	567	440	859
Operator	48 540	955	3 726	20 084	16 868	6 907
Labourer	7 072	267	385	1 212	3 357	1 851
Other	129 785	1 543	2 372	9 513	33 568	82 789
Total	2 388 408	107 437	105 164	348 754	1 554 732	272 321

sector in clerical and professional occupations. 15% of whites work in the manufacturing sector in skilled occupations. The mining and agriculture sectors each provide employment for about 5% of the white workforce. ☆

Notes

- (1) Population Census 1991, after adjustment for undercounting.
- (2) Population figures exclude the "independent" homelands.
- (3) According to the census, there are 2 376 172 "housewives" in South Africa.
- (4) Clerical jobs include sales jobs.
- (5) Service jobs include drivers, messengers, domestic workers, catering and so on. Just under 50% of workers in this occupation are domestic workers.
- (6) Includes artisans, artisan aides, and related workers.
- (7) Includes 126 842 skilled workers employed in the construction industry.

(8) This category shows miners not doing administrative, or executive jobs. It therefore gives us an indication of the number of semi and unskilled mine workers. This category includes quarry and related workers.

(9) This category includes related semi-skilled workers.

(10) Includes 59 839 workers employed in the construction industry.

(11) This category includes related unskilled workers. Note that this category shows unskilled workers in production related occupations. Farm labourers are shown under farming occupations.

(12) Includes 96 723 labourers employed in the construction industry

(13) Includes unemployed

(14) Note this includes 36 805 artisans employed in the construction sector.

(15) Includes unemployed.

(16) Includes 85 004 workers employed in the construction sector.

Keys *and* Patel: *the* economic debate *continues* ...

In the last issue of LABOUR BULLETIN, we published interviews with Finance Minister Derek Keys and COSATU's Ebrahim Patel. In this issue we ask a panel of experts to comment.



"A tricky business"

Tito Mboweni: Department of Economic Policy, ANC

The issues raised in the two interviews are all important, but I will only comment on three of them: the difference in the approach of COSATU and the government, as represented by Patel and Keys to the National Economic Forum; their approach to incomes policy; and finally, how components of the

democratic movement intervene and/or negotiate with the state and business on policy issues which impact on all sectors of society.

It is quite clear that Keys and Patel approach the National Economic Forum from completely different angles. Keys sees the NEF as a forum to "reach consensus on certain issues and the different parties will then have to give effect to that consensus". COSATU, according to Patel, sees the NEF as a "negotiating body" through which COSATU would "seek binding agreements". It seems that these key forces in the NEF have glossed over a fundamental difference about the status of deliberations at the NEF. This will impact at some point on the processes of the NEF, unless revisited as soon as possible. This

ambiguity must be removed and the status of the deliberations clarified, in accordance with the procedures adopted in other negotiating forums.

It is evident that the critical issue of an incomes policy has not been fully considered by these two participants of the NEF, and this could become a new obstacle. An incomes policy is important given the fact that business has consistently argued - and it surely will in the NEF - that one of the key costs of production is rising wages. Yet one could argue that there are many other structural problems which are responsible for the high cost structure. The democratic movement - and in particular COSATU and the ANC - need urgently to develop an incomes policy.

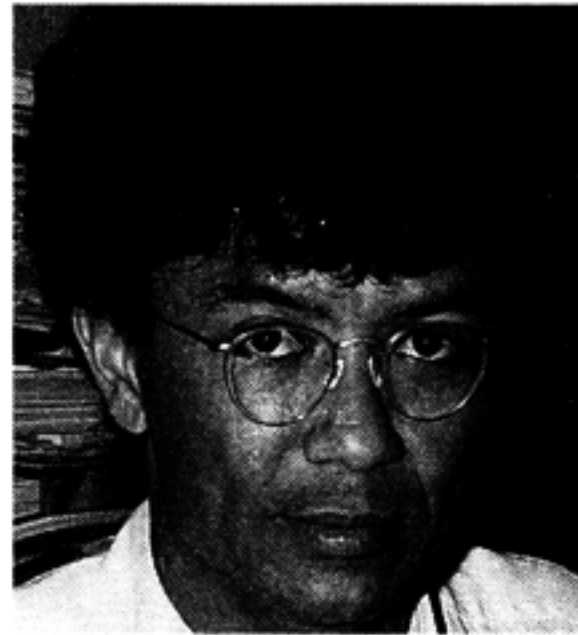
This brings me to the core

of my observation: that when one enters negotiations about the economic future of South Africa, one must have clear and well-supported positions to put on the table. One cannot negotiate such critical issues on an ad hoc basis and muddle through. To this end one must assess whether Keys and Patel have developed coherent policies which they use as their negotiating positions. Keys will certainly use his Normative Economic Model as his negotiating position, which he has already presented to the NEF.

COSATU on the other hand has only "essential elements of a macro-economic framework" arising out of their Economic Policy Conference and the work of affiliates. There does not seem to be an overall mass democratic movement framework which COSATU uses at the NEF.

This raises questions of how the democratic movement as a whole should intervene and negotiate around specific issues which relate to the short, medium and long term restructuring of our society. We need mechanisms of ensuring that any component of the democratic movement in such negotiations – be it constitutional, local government, housing or economic – acts in such a way that others are fully behind proposals submitted. This will maximise the unity and impact of the democratic movement and ensure that such proposals are within the overall

perspectives of reconstruction shared by the mass democratic movement. ❖



"Much still to be done"

Marcel Golding: Assistant general-secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers

The interview with Derek Keys provides interesting insights into government thinking on the direction of the SA economy. The subsequent publication of the Normative Integrated Economy Model and the details of the budget complete the puzzle of the government's growth strategy. There are four observations that I would like to make on the Keys interview.

It is probably correct to assume that the *National Economic Forum* will not be able to solve all the economic and developmental problems that we inherit. But it will be the key forum to negotiate a developmental framework agreement between government, business and

labour. Specific task groups will be able to work on defined issues that require concrete proposals for implementation. In some respects, Keys' approach has been different from his predecessors in his willingness to engage the trade unions, but much still has to be done to develop a culture of openness and disclosure on many fronts. COSATU's participation in the NEF is directed to engage the government and employers within the framework of our programme for reconstruction and development. For that reason it is focusing on the issues of job creation and industrial policy amongst others.

On *wastage and corruption*, Keys' response is totally unsatisfactory. Where billions of public money have been mismanaged and where black people cannot correct it, it is evident that Keys has already made the transition from businessman to politician by his rather facile defense of government's financial management and conduct. In a similar vein, the issue is really not so much about government consumption and expenditure, but rather where this expenditure and consumption is directed. It is correct and necessary to attack corruption, because the mere redesign of government machinery does not in itself mean no corruption.

On the issue of *human resource development* Keys'

interview is least helpful: "There is quite a lot in place. As you know the techniques are not full." Yet it is a key pillar on which we have to develop our international competitiveness. Historically, our international comparative advantage resided in cheap labour exploiting the abundance of minerals we possessed. But in the 21st century, it has to be in the efficiency and productivity of our labour, effective work organisation and management of our enterprises.

Fundamental to this is education and skills development. A coherent vision, that would take the existing and potential workforce from its present stage of low skills levels on career paths which would provide greater flexibility to industries as well as the labour market, is imperative. Existing surveys show that over 60% of our population is functionally illiterate. If we are to develop the competitiveness of our industries, a national adult basic education is necessary as a platform on which we can develop the skills of our workers. For our managers too, education is required to ensure our industries are able to deal with the global competition.

It is now generally acknowledged that *investment* is fundamental. Whilst Keys' is correct that the fiduciary duty of institutions with huge contractual savings requires prudence, measures should be

undertaken that will encourage them to invest in areas that would benefit the country. The removal of prescribed investment has now left all the decisions to fund managers. Alternative mechanisms should be sought that would encourage investment in enterprises that have sound economic fundamentals, but that may not fit the classical blue chip profile. This would still involve choice for the fund manager, but would provide the necessary capital formation desperately required by these developing enterprises. ❖



"Keep a close watch"

Nicoli Natrass: Economist, University of Cape Town

Derek Keys can be a forthright and refreshing Minister of Finance. This is reflected in his recent interview with the *LABOUR BULLETIN*. Rather than rabbit on unintelligibly about the balance of payments, elasticities of demand and the like, Keys bluntly (and

correctly) informs us there are no soft options left: we are caught between a rock and a hard place.

Great stuff. But never forget that Keys is a consummate politician. He can be as wily and obtuse as the best of them. It is not for nothing that Keys is something of a hero in government, business and labour circles. But he travels a dangerous road. Those who hold out the promise of a costless, co-operative path to collective prosperity tend to come unstuck when the inevitable conflicts appear through the gloss.

For example, Keys argues that creating a climate conducive to growth is not a zero-sum game: if we could get organised labour to adopt a stance which would have a positive effect on business confidence, it would be to the advantage of everyone.

Indeed. But let's dig a little deeper. What is this stance that labour must adopt? When pressed, Keys disarmingly admits he isn't sure. He says there is probably a role for an incomes policy (involving some wage restraint in return for improved patterns of government spending), but is uncertain whether the time is ripe: "if we had an incomes policy 15 months ago I think wages would not have come down as effectively as much as they have."

Are we to deduce that Keys believes falling wages are a precondition for the restoration of business

confidence and that lower wages will boost employment? He may well be right on both scores. However, if the 'stance' Keys wishes organised labour to adopt is that of sacrificial lamb for the greater economic good, then he should say so. But then again, what politician would?

And what does Keys think an improved pattern of government expenditure would entail? In short, cutting day to day running costs of government. A fine aim, but why does he believe that addressing government corruption (a wasteful misallocation of tax revenue by anyone's book) is a side issue? And why does he include education, which surely should count as investment in human capital, as part of such expenditure?

Beware the wolf in social-democratic clothing. Labour should keep a close watch on this politician. ❖

"Remarkably harmonious"

Edward Osborn: Chief Economist, Nedbank

Without being patronising in the least, I found the interviews with Keys and Patel read together as being remarkably harmonious, that is with the neat blend of the smooth worldly wisdom of Derek Keys and the earnest enthusiasm, but breadth of vision, of Ebrahim Patel.



Besides transparency there has to be involvement and participation in the whole process of decision making for economic consequences to be legitimate and therefore acceptable. It was most encouraging to read Patel's remarks about action at the affiliate level, the identification of issues that will capture the interest and involvement of members, and the goals of unionism lying beyond the immediate preoccupation with wages to embrace a greater holistic developmental perspective. We now have markedly improved prospects of moving from years of bruising confrontational behaviour to an era of consensual negotiation based on mutual respect and equal constituency authority.

The NEF is in many respects an institutionalising of these characteristics. The NEF objectives were the sole instance of contradiction in the interviews – the consensus of Keys and the formal agreement of Patel. This matter is central and will

have to be resolved early. My own predilection is for consensus. I am concerned by the apparent motivation of COSATU to use the NEF as an instrument of securing power through decisions which will be legislative on government and business. Besides being impractical it will turn the NEC into a fractious pit of conflict.

Keys' and Patel's remarks about industrial policy are complementary, both stressing the fundamental importance of progress dependent on improvements to productivity, not as is often so narrowly perceived as more sweat, but as a function of improved management and appropriate technology, and fresh investments. As Keys says there will be scope for both labour and capital intensive industries. Indeed any form of planning that is prescriptive in this regard from the start will be doomed to failure and will be wasteful of capital resources. From this point of view I personally welcome the modest and limited purpose of Keys' Normative-Integrative-Management-System to be normative.

Understandably Keys had little to say about the budget at this stage and Patel had quite a lot, all quite unexceptionable and sensible. But the real scope for cutting state expenditures has yet to be revealed. It is easy to presume that there is much scope, but it always proves

to be hell's own job to cut back on a bureaucracy. Furthermore I believe COSATU is either naive or politically overplaying the dividend from the elimination of corruption. It has to be said that corruption is not something specifically voted for by Parliament and what is to be gained from eradicating corruption is improvement of delivery and the quality of service, not necessarily savings.

Yes, one must welcome proposals for commissions to re-examine the whole system of taxation – but this is not entirely new for there was that of Margo in recent years – and of departmental performance in delivering service; and of course whatever further strengths that can be given to the Auditor-General, who is an officer of Parliament.

There remains one enormous problem and that was alluded to by Patel, namely that of what he describes as patronage within the state. The problem goes deeper, for it is one of loyalty that any state is entitled to expect of its bureaucracy.

The problem is to effect a blood transfusion that is equitable, fair, least harmful to blighted promotion opportunities and expectations, and does not end in a bloated civil service that ultimately, as in the case of Zimbabwe, needs traumatic IMF attentions. ❖



“Conflicting priorities, Mr Keys?”

Alistair Smith: NUMSA researcher

Mr Keys holds employment creation as the main priority. But in the same breath he warns us that his government is unlikely to do anything concrete about creating employment, particularly not in the classical reflationary way (ie increased government spending on capital projects especially infrastructural projects that are labour intensive).

A further indication of exactly where minister Keys' loyalties lie is his view on investment and mega projects:

Firstly, without a moments hesitation he rushes to support continued investment in two highly capital intensive projects, the Alusaf expansion project and the Columbus stainless steel project on the grounds that this country has always had capital intensive projects in the past. It is interesting that he cites massive investment in the OFS minefields as our most recent and major precedent.

However, if we consider the 'benefits' of capital investment in the recent Mossgas and Sasol projects we may well conclude that we should be very cautious with continued investment in megaprojects. Unless of course "we" are a big conglomerate with profitable interests in the continued abuse of the country's resources.

Secondly, Mr Keys argues that capital and labour intensive projects are not incompatible, as labour intensive projects are not too expensive. This rather crude formulation does not explain why we are still sitting with an unemployment figure in excess of 4 million people. Why don't we then start as many labour intensive projects as we need?

Mr Keys also argues that there is nothing "funny" about these projects. By this he means that they will not require export subsidies or tariff protection. However, this is a touch misleading as it is no secret that neither of these projects would have gone ahead if it were not for the special tax concession under section 37E of the company tax act. This provision allows for accelerated depreciation of the group's interests before the project is actually commissioned, ie before actual production commences. In the case of Alusaf the project would not have seen the light of day if the company did not get a

commitment from Eskom for preferential tariffs. By linking the cost of electricity to the world price of aluminium, the public utility will effectively be subsidising the cost of the major input if the world price of aluminum is below a certain level.

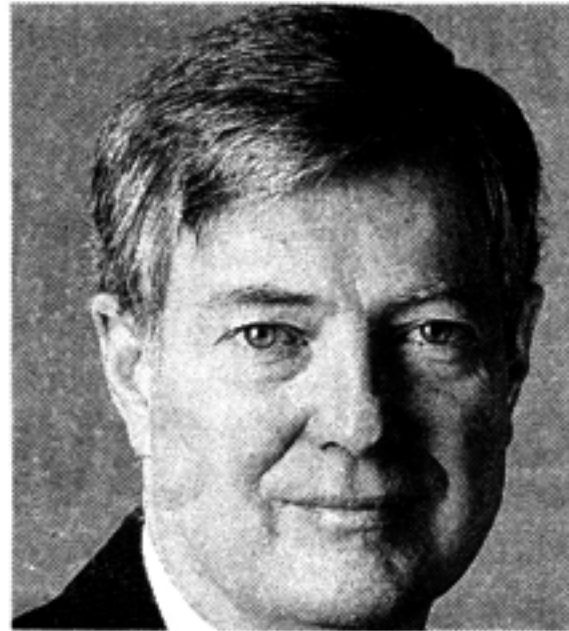
However, whether or not there are subsidies or assistance is not the major issue, as it may well be in the interests of society at large that we embark on certain projects that require some "funny" intervention such as tariff protection or subsidy.

But if investment is scarce, then we need to ensure that where it does take place it is going to benefit society and not just private shareholders. This should all the more be so where society is expected to subsidise private investment.

Apparently Mr Keys does not agree with this. He is not too keen to spoil his friendship with those behind such projects, by forcing them to further enhance downstream activities, where the potential for job creation is the greatest. In fact he is firm in his view that driven by market forces they will of their own volition see the need to develop downstream activities. So when it comes to big capital interest in big projects for big profits then big doses of assistance and friendship are in order. When it comes to addressing the main priority (or is it a small priority?) of reducing unemployment it is best left to the spirit – or ghost – of the

entrepreneur driven by market forces.

It would be foolish to suggest that the choices and policies required are simple and straight forward. Obviously the issues are quite complicated. It is precisely because of this that the simple market approach of Keys is so objectionable. Concrete policies and programmes to address employment creation, industry development, skills development etc are not going to fall from the air or be delivered by the market. They involve political choices that are underpinned by conscious and committed intervention. ❖



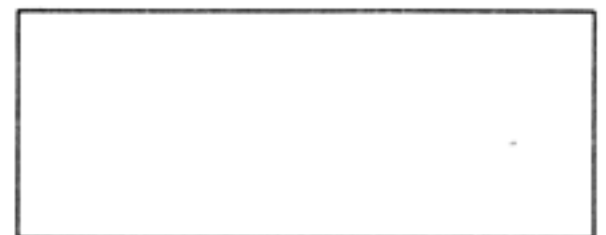
"Difference in perception"

Paul Hatty: Chair of Industrial Policy Committee of SACOB

The business community represented by the South African Chamber of Business (SACOB), is committed to the National Economic Forum (NEF) and is a full participant in its operations.

We are concerned at the difference in perception of the role of the NEF between Minister Derek Keys and Ebrahim Patel. It is important that all players in the NEF have a common view of the Forum's role and remain committed to it. However, this may only evolve as members gain experience in working and negotiating together. The business community recognises that the government has the responsibility to govern, but does visualise the NEF playing a slightly more direct role in policy and strategy formulation than Minister Keys has intimated.

In order to address those issues which need to be addressed – which will undoubtedly include the issue of industrial restructuring - the NEF will require an appropriate structure. SACOB believes that a working group/forum that addresses issues related to the manufacturing industry should be constituted under the umbrella of the NEF. It could well also have working groups/forums that focus on agriculture, mining or other sectors of the economy. The advantage of such a structure would be to ensure a greater degree of co-ordination and consistency in policy-making than has been the tradition in the past. ☆





Slung over the entrance of the Snowflake flour mill in Isando is a banner proclaiming "We stand for peace and democracy". The shopstewards at the factory chuckle about it.

"That's Premier's nice talk," says one. "Theirs is democracy of a special type – democracy diluted with the free market." JANE BARRETT* investigates

participation *at* **Premier:** *worker empowerment* *or co-option?*

The focus of this article is an assessment of the Premier Group's 'corporate responsibility' programme (including its human resources policy), particularly as manifest in the Group's food division. What is Premier's agenda, and how do workers in the group see the programme? If one of the key struggles in the Premier food division is now around "degrees of participation", as Food and Allied Workers

Union (FAWU) general secretary Mandla Gxanyana puts it, what form does this struggle take?

Management's stated philosophy is that labour is to be treated as a "resource", not simply as a cost. Group chairperson Peter Wrighton has set the objectives for human resources in 1993 as being participative management and affirmative action. He has

* Jane Barrett is national organiser in Transport & General Workers' Union (TGWU).

stated: "We don't just employ people's hands, but their heads" (Premier video: *The Premier Group - seeking solutions*).

A series of what the company calls "co-determination committees" have been established in the food division, each with equal management/worker representation. These include committees dealing with social investment, a feeding scheme, housing, job creation, provident fund, bursaries, management development and training, safety, and literacy. The division distinguishes between these co-determinant spheres of activity and negotiation structures covering group conditions of employment, provident fund contributions, leave conditions, bonuses, and procedural agreements.

The division identifies further issues for consultation (company closures and rationalisation plans, disclosure of information, grading systems, a remuneration structure, and affirmative action plans). Finally, information on the economic and financial status of the company has been identified as an area where there is "an exchange".

Retrenchment and restructuring

Peter Wrighton caused a stir earlier this year when he tried to join a march of workers to the Premier head office. The workers were protesting against retrenchment. Many Premier workers were outraged, and Wrighton's participation was prevented. A shopsteward comments that Wrighton was attempting to create sympathy towards the protesters, but that ultimately "retrenchment is for profit – that is more production with less people".

MacDonald Mothake, a full-time shopsteward at the Isando Snowflake factory, believes the bottom line is that "the company always announces its intention to retrench, and then asks for comment. It basically means a rubber stamp for the company." He goes on to suggest that if management responded more positively to worker representations on wastage and inefficiency, the retrenchments might not be necessary. However, "when retrenchments come, management will come with all sorts of language to say the economy

is doing this and that." Edward Radebe, a shopsteward at Premier Petfood's Isando plant, adds that while some of the companies in the division are not doing as well as others, "the sore point is that workers are not involved in planning around how to respond to the problems. Some managers are actually causing the drop in production. But it's always the lowest level workers who are made to suffer. Nowhere are managers retrenched."

Radebe is cynical of the redundancy support fund which has been negotiated with the union. "It is for the public," he argues, "just to show that Premier is trying to ease the pain." The redundancy fund operates as a contributory fund from which retrenched workers can draw for a period of up to 12 months. Retrenched workers have the option of drawing from the fund and registering as part of a labour pool which can be drawn on for temporary employment, or of taking a redundancy package.

There is widespread suspicion that the retrenchments and down-scaling are part of a longer term strategy of restructuring the food division. Gxanyana reports that the company is in the process of changing its distribution formula. The division plans to close rural distribution centres and concentrate on the main centres. This will affect the operations of the National Food Distributors (NFD).

The union has argued against the closure of depots in rural towns, arguing that this is not in keeping with the group's stated commitment to social responsibility. "The proposal means taking away what is already there. The company should be contributing to the development of the rural areas," says Gxanyana. States Radebe: "Retrenchments have been an issue ever since 1988 when the division started with Farmfare and Bonny Bird. Five hundred workers from Mamas Pies have just been retrenched through closure ... the hidden agenda is for Premier to become simply a holding company."

Premier Food human resources director Corrie Cloete categorically denies this. He insists that while there may be further rationalisations, the food division is essentially

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in the shape and form in which the Group intends it to remain.

Disclosure seems to be one of the issues here. Cloete says it is the Group's policy to disclose financial information to the union. But the union complains information is only disclosed when decisions have already been taken. It is also significant that no 'co-determination committee' has been established to discuss company restructuring, profitability, efficiency, wastage and retrenchment.

Training

According to Chief Executive of the food division, Willem de Kok, training is high on the list of priorities for the Group. Four million rand is set aside annually for training (Premier video: *Premier Group — seeking solutions*).

Premier Group director Lekgau Mathabathe concedes very few workers in the group have historically been provided with any training.

Management in the food division has identified literacy as one of the starting points of the training programme. They have calculated more than 3 000 workers in the division are illiterate. The literacy training programme is monitored by the joint education and training committee, whose agenda includes financial training for shopstewards and joint management/shopstewards training on the recognition agreement.

Motlhake and Radebe point out there has been a struggle over the implementation of the literacy programme. Many managers have been unwilling to release workers during working hours to participate in it.

Cloete admits there was such a problem in some factories, "due to genuine production problems", but says it has been resolved. He even suggests the union was initially somewhat resistant to the idea of a literacy programme.

An approach to skills training has evidently not been part of the agenda of the committee to date, although according to Cloete the head of the division's mill school has recently been asked to sit on the education and training committee.

When asked whether the division has



considered challenging the traditional hierarchy of skills and qualifications, Cloete insists such an approach would lead to the de-skilling of positions, and that the company and the union are at one in not wanting to see that happen. He admits in some factories the operators "know the machines backwards", but that such operators could not qualify as foremen as they are illiterate and are therefore unable to handle writing reports and so on. The literacy programme, he argues, would address this problem, rather than redefining positions. In so far as the setting of standards is concerned, Cloete appears to be content to leave the process in the hands of the Chamber of Milling, which issues certificates.

Radebe and Motlhake express a different approach. They identify access to skills training as the key to real worker participation in the division. They talk of training as central to worker empowerment. They complain that many supervisors would be able to run a department on the basis of their experience and knowledge, but because they do not have formal qualifications, they still "have to phone the boss who is sleeping at home to have a decision made about a problem." Motlhake

says in the 11 years he has worked for the food division, despite the establishment of the various co-determination and negotiating committees, he has seen no change in worker control over production. While in some factories (including the Epol factory), workers now work to production targets, and knock off once these have been reached, Motlhake argues that decision making about *how* production takes place have not changed.

Even in terms of the existing hierarchy of skills and skills training, Radebe says the division has been tardy in facilitating training. He says there has been a long battle with management to send artisan aids "to be taken to school to qualify. The company has agreed in principle, but the process hasn't started. In any event, we are worried that those people who go for qualifications will be failed, despite their experience." Which takes Radebe back to the argument that a reformulation of the training and qualification programmes is necessary.

Affirmative action

Chief Executive De Kok describes the company as an equal opportunities employer

which opposes discrimination. Martin Mabiletsa, the corporate manager of external affairs, admits racism and discrimination still exist in the Group – particularly in the rural areas. Premier Petfood shopsteward and FAWU vice-president Peter Malepe, insists discrimination exists even in the urban plants of the division.

A programme of "affirmative action" has been approved by the Board and has been put to FAWU in the national negotiating forum for discussion. The programme includes the establishment of a committee to which complaints about discrimination could be put. "There must be a mechanism for action against transgressions of policy," says De Kok.

However, Premier shopsteward and FAWU treasurer Ernest Theron argues that blockages against the promotion of black workers are "informal – that is, there are criteria these days which did not exist before". Motlhake and Radebe believe the affirmative action programme and its 'Business Management Development Programme' are geared almost exclusively to middle management, and usually to outsiders.

But Cloete insists the affirmative action

Company Profile

The Premier Group employs roughly 49 000 employees, 19 700 of whom are in the Food Divisions. The Group consists of five Division, namely Food, Pharmaceuticals, Cash and Carry, Retail, and Entertainment. Having diversified substantially some years back, the Group has recently been restructured to become essentially a grocery and pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution group of companies (both wholesale and retail). Total turnover was R12,5 billion in 1992, 30,4% of which was in the Food Division. The compound growth rate of the Group over the past five years has been 29% per annum. The principle shareholders of the Group is Anglo American (40%), with Liberty Life holding about 30%.

The Food Division comprises the following companies: Premier Milling (wheat and maize); Blue Ribbon Bakeries; Epic Oil Mills; Hospitality Caterers; Premier Petfoods (50% owned); Clark Cotton; National Food Distributors; and Premier Fishing. The Food Division accounted for 45,1% of trading profit.

Workers in the Division are represented by the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU), a COSATU affiliate. Collective bargaining on wages takes place at a company level within the Division. The union has demanded centralised bargaining for the whole Division, but management has refused, arguing that it can only enter into industry bargaining if other companies come in on the process. On a number of wage issues, negotiation takes place within a national forum for the Division. ❖

WORKER PARTICIPATION PROGRAMMES

programme is not targeted at management, or at outsiders. He explains that in terms of the training and development programme of the division, those who stand out with leadership potential are given promotional opportunities - like promotion into the established hierarchies as foremen. He says that from the union's point of view the problem is that often the people who stand out for potential promotion are shopstewards.

Manas Matau, the human resources director of Premier's bakeries, also

feels there have been a fair number of internal promotions of black workers. He says in Epic Oil the production foremen and production superintendents are largely black. He points out that the corporate manager of external affairs, and one of the directors in the baking section of the food division, are black.

According to Radebe, however, almost all administrative positions throughout the Group (including the head office) are filled by whites.

The comments made by worker representatives on training suggest they would set far greater store on changes in approaches to skills training, as well as changes in their decision-making powers, than to what they see as largely ineffective affirmative action initiatives.

Housing

Wrighton argues that as many as 1 900 workers in the food division gained access to housing through the housing committee in 1991. He and Willem de Kok insist that whilst the committee has failed to meet the expectations of workers, it has been effective in cutting across the red tape and in locating and accessing land for workers to build houses. Sebei Motsomeng, a shopsteward at Epic Oil in Isando, boils the problem of housing down



Premier shopstewards: sceptical about management's schemes

Photo: Jane Barrett

to affordability, and criticises the division for not subsidising housing. He argues that even those who are assisted administratively in getting bonds often end up not coping with the instalments, and so lose their homes. He also points out that the company's small loan scheme administered by the housing committee has no say over the amount of money voted by the division to housing.

Feeding scheme

The feeding scheme is also regarded with some suspicion by the shopstewards. The scheme operates at the local factory level, with joint committees deciding on the best means of distribution. The local committees more often than not decide on schools as the means of distributing food.

Mothake suggests that the feeding scheme is an attempt at popularising Premier's products by making them familiar to consumers.

The effect of the programme on union organisation in the group

Mothake expresses a concern that one of the effects of Premier food's programme has been that "the militancy of shopstewards has been watered down. The same goes for the general membership. These days if we call a general

meeting we hardly get anyone." Radebe says this is "not because people are tired, but because we now have a relationship which is said to be of mutual agreement with management." Motlhake sums up the frustrations of many of the shopstewards when he says laughingly: "There is a committee for everything. The company wants to be seen as the champion of negotiations. But sometimes I think it would be better to have management refuse altogether rather than be invited to the table and then find a refusal."

The shopstewards face a serious dilemma. They perceive that they and management remain on opposite sides of the fence in terms of real control, but they have difficulty in formulating responses which keep up the contest. Gxanyana confirms this when he states that the main problem is that the "proposals always come from management, and the union has to respond. The union lacks the capacity to respond in an informed way." They have begun to identify areas of real empowerment – skills training,

grading, disclosure of information, negotiating around efficiency and wastages, financial decision making (for example, in the area of housing) and so on – but are having problems in putting forward concise proposals.

FAWU and Premier workers will need to identify which of these issues offers the best prospects for empowerment. They will then have to formulate detailed proposals and challenge management. Only then will the shopstewards be able to move beyond cynicism about management's initiatives and engage in struggles for power and control – and only then will Premier food division face the real test of integrating genuine worker participation in management. ☆

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affirming **women in** *the* **workplace**



Maternity rights and childcare facilities are important in supporting women's equal right to paid work. But not all women workers are mothers of small children and so these are

not the only issues affecting women workers.

Black working class people in South Africa have suffered race and class discrimination. But the gender specificity of this is not well understood. For example, black working class men have not had the education and training opportunities of white workers, but this lack of opportunity has been even worse for black working class women. Families' financial constraints, and traditional notions of women's social role have restricted women even more than men.

Similarly, racist job segregation excluded black workers from many jobs and trades, but sex-based recruitment limited women's access even further. Where black workers predominate in particular grades, or industries, wages have dropped. Where black women predominate the value given to that work is even lower.

In reality, the justification for the low value of women's work in terms of gender roles

In this article FIONA DOVE looks at the gender structure of wage work in South Africa, and union attempts to give women equality in the labour market

simply does not exist. Crudely, employer logic has been: all families have two parents, only one needs to work and tradition dictates this be the father, so he should get paid more. This may be bourgeois reality but it is not working class reality. A large proportion of black households are in fact headed by women supporting their families on very low wages. In any case, the migrant labour system was always used to justify not paying a family wage to African men.

Winning wage parity

One of the first issues progressive trade unions took up for women members was the question of equal pay.

A 1981 Wage Act amendment prohibited separate pay structures based on race and sex in wage determinations. This meant that men and women doing the same work could not be paid at different rates. Sectors not covered by wage boards, however, were not covered by the law. CAWU (Construction & Allied Workers Union) had to resort to strike action as late as 1988 to win parity, and it took CWIU (Chemical Workers Industrial Union) and POTWA (Post Office & Telecommunications Workers Association) until 1990! Chris Bonner of CWIU suspects some homeland employers still discriminate against women.

Sometimes organisers have been ignorant of the law and have not questioned separate pay structures. FAWU's (Food & Allied Workers Union) Viva Mtai says this was their problem as late as December last year! On the whole though, discrimination in this blatant form has been eradicated.

Unionists are aware that gains for most women workers have been negligible. Martin Nicol of NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) points out, where men and women do the same job, they are given different titles: "the grading system in the mining industry is structured in such a way that there is a wide spread of wages for similar work." The same phenomenon was observed by unionists in other industries.

Deciding value

So the principle that wages cannot be determined by sex has been established, but the practice continues in a less obvious way.

COSATU unions are beginning to examine grading systems to ensure the principle is enforced. "A first step in removing race and sex as criteria for grading, is to rationalise and reduce the number of grades," says a draft proposal to the March COSATU Campaigns Conference. Objective criteria have to be developed to determine how a worker is graded.

NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers), SACTWU (South African Clothing & Textile Workers Union) and SAMWU (South African Municipal Workers Union) have agreements to negotiate grading systems with employers this year. SACCAWU (South African Commercial Catering & Allied Workers Union) is pushing to have a say in the Hospitality Industry Training Board constitution, and thereafter hopes to reshape the grading system in the hotel and catering sector. Their proposals have equality for women high on the agenda.

Job segregation

It is uncommon for men and women to do the same jobs because sex has long been the basis for recruitment policies. Interviews with collective bargaining co-ordinators and

delegates to the COSATU Women's Conference last year, revealed that women in COSATU unions are clustered in the lowest grade jobs, such as teamakers, cleaners, low level machine operators, and in the lowest paid sectors, such as forestry, domestic service and clothing manufacturing. So it is clear that it is not enough to say the same job should receive the same pay regardless of sex, because women still end up in the lowest paid jobs.



Recognition that sex cannot be the basis for determining wages has also opened the way to challenge this unequal valuation of different work done by men and women. NUMSA has spearheaded a COSATU participatory research programme that is exploring the possibility of a national training/grading framework across industries. This could fundamentally challenge devaluation of work dominated by women, and open up opportunities for women to enter categories of work, or whole industries, where they have been excluded.

According to SACTWU's Connie September the clothing industrial council has agreed to negotiate desegregation of jobs this year. NUM has a policy on equal access to all jobs for men and women, although Nicol says there has been no noticeable impact on the mines.

Training

Lack of access to training has been an important aspect of women's exclusion from particular trades. In 1987, for example only

0,2% of African women workers were artisans*. In 1989, there were no women apprentices in the furniture, building or motor vehicle trades, and only 0.8% of those in the metal and engineering industry were African women**. In 1992, there were 1 800 African apprentices in the metal and engineering sector - and only seven women!

COSATU wants to institutionalise training and career paths which open up possibilities for women to break through old job barriers. It is envisaging a system where every worker has access to education and training. Modules completed would be certificated by industry training boards and recognised nationally.

Ideally, the training offered would enable workers to gain skills applicable across industries. This would give them greater freedom in choosing jobs, and would start to break down sex and race-based job segregation.

A NUMSA bargaining demand is that every worker should have the right to paid time off to complete at least two modules of training a year. And according to Khaya Moila, POTWA wants a say in choosing trainees for all jobs this year, and is committed to women being given more opportunities.

Affirmative action

Affirmative action is a way of promoting those who are discriminated against. In industry it is commonly understood to be about quotas in recruitment or training programmes. This is only part of it. The exercise would be pointless if the oppressive social relations and institutions underpinning such discrimination are not also radically changed. This is why COSATU is calling for a complete reconstruction of society - every vestige of apartheid must go.

It is clear that black working class women have been the most discriminated against in South Africa. If any group should be prioritised for upliftment, it should be them. And so reconstruction must involve the

elimination of sexism. Reconstruction is not just a legal matter. It is a question of changing attitudes and practices. Albie Sachs, in *Protecting Human Rights in a New South Africa* (1990, p12) argues for constitutional backing for affirmative action. He says this would oblige the state to use institutions and resources to promote the rights of all citizens.

Affirmative action is integral to the success of NUMSA's industry training programme. Obviously the NUMSA proposals are primarily directed at eliminating race discrimination, but they are also wanting to address gender discrimination. The one problem is that in most COSATU-organised industries, the workers are mainly men.

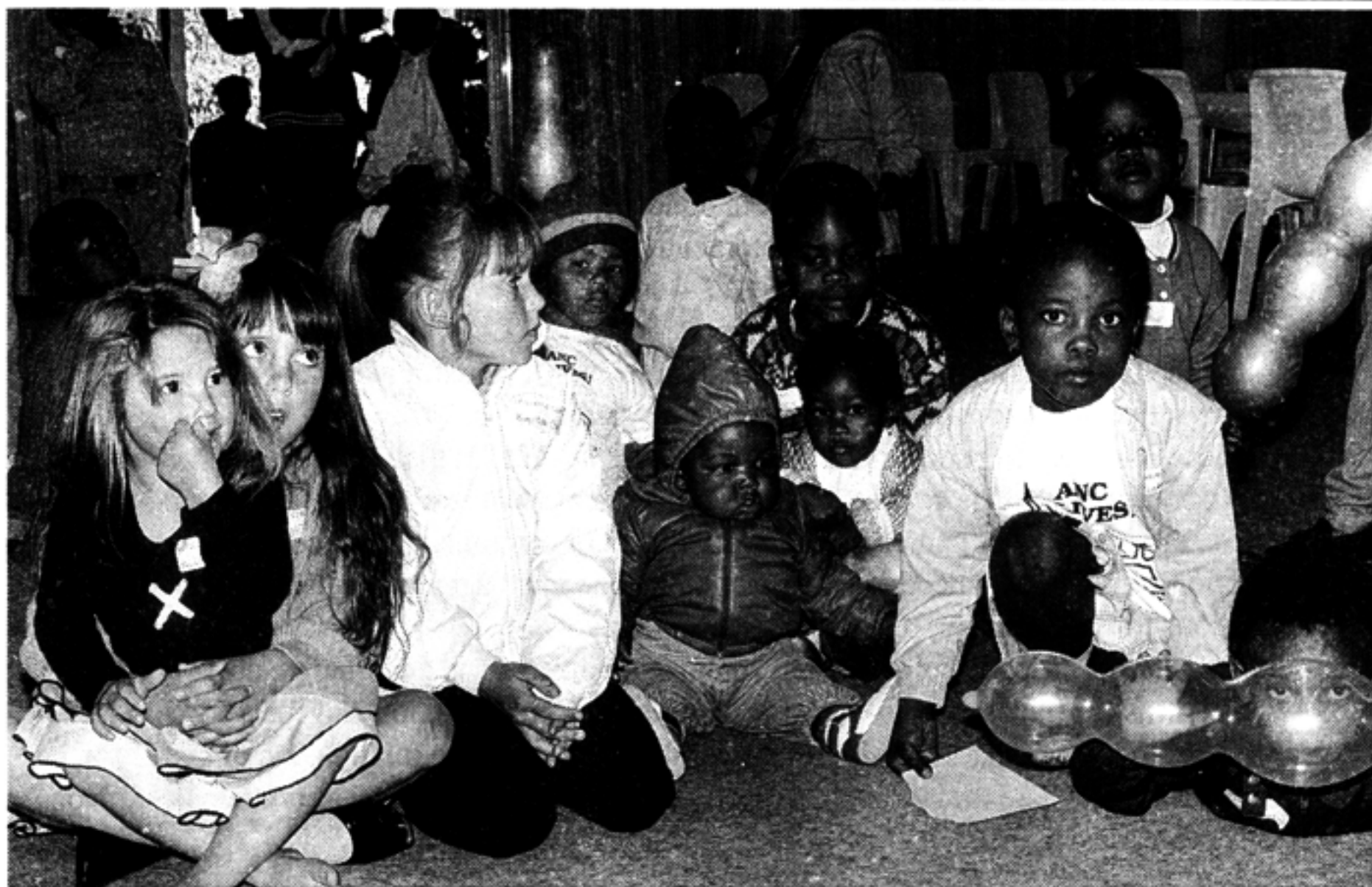
NUMSA's industrial councils have agreed to negotiate the union's proposal for a Code of Practice to End Unfair Discrimination. Central to this is affirmative action to ensure women have access to training and jobs where they have been excluded. This is also part of SAMWU's proposals on job evaluation to be negotiated this year. Although CAWU tabled job segregation to its industrial council in 1991 without success, Thabo Morale says CAWU will raise affirmative action this year. Affirmative action was raised at SACCAWU's bargaining conference this year, and is central to its proposals on the HITB constitution.

CWIU's Bonner says "job classifications are being challenged throughout industry and affirmative action has been tabled as a demand since 1991, but more research is required on how to implement such policies." CWIU has a policy that all jobs should be open to men and women, and "women shall be in 50% of the jobs". They recently held a women's forum workshop on affirmative action to start giving some definition to this.

It is essential for COSATU to work out clear guidelines for affirmative action around both race and gender. Without these, it will be impossible to monitor progress. These guidelines will be important in confronting

* Quoted in Debbie Budlender, 1991 *Women and The Economy, Paper 7, Women and Gender in Southern Africa Conference*, p10.

** *Manpower Survey 1989, Occupational Information, CSS.*



Temporary company creche set up on Childcare Day in 1992: company creches would help to make work environments more women-friendly

Photo: William Matlala

reluctant managements. While it is widely accepted that affirmative action is necessary for black workers, management are not aware, or concerned, about addressing the specific discrimination faced by women. A human resource manager, working on affirmative action for a large corporate group, said recently that her company is only concerned with redressing past race discrimination, and that management does not see the specific problems of women. She feels that to acknowledge gender discrimination would be admitting something in themselves, whereas race discrimination can be blamed on apartheid, 'out there'.

Women-friendly workplaces

Employers will have to invest more in training, and with the unions' emphasis on portable skills, they will have to put creative thinking into giving workers a long-term future in the company. In the end, if COSATU unions actively take up women's issues it will be in employers' interests to develop a

women-friendly work environment. This means a work culture which actively discourages sexual harassment, promotes equal treatment of women, accommodates women's specific needs, and offers women a secure future. If employers do not offer benefits to women they will risk losing workers to other employers who do.

Some unions are already negotiating around concerns specific to women. Health and safety issues are the most common, for example, access to contraceptive advice, cervical cancer tests, protection from work harmful to reproductive capacity, and transport for night workers. Discrimination in company benefits such as housing loans, pensions and medical aids are also being challenged. Such discrimination usually relates to women's marital status and definitions of 'breadwinner'. Good maternity rights, childcare facilities and family considerations, are becoming increasingly important, particularly for sectors employing many women.

Comment on interviews with bargaining co-ordinators

Various national officials were asked about collective bargaining developments in their unions with reference to gender. Some commented that answering the questionnaire had been a consciousness-raising exercise in itself – one official even took notes of angles to raise at a forthcoming bargaining conference. PPWAWU's Rob Rees spoke for many over-stretched negotiators in commenting that "it wouldn't be extra work! Just a gender-sensitive approach to normal collective bargaining issues."

All those interviewed stressed that any statistical information they gave was just guess work. No accessible data is kept on numbers of men and women officials, negotiators, and members. Frustration was expressed at the poor level of centralising, and collating information on national collective bargaining, let alone local agreements with specific implications for women.

On the issue of proportions of women amongst organisers and negotiators, only SACTWU was confident it had proportional representation. No union had specific gender-sensitivity training for their officials or shopstewards. The relationship of gender or women's forums, where they exist, to collective bargaining structures was non-existent. Nor had this been considered. ❖

Empower the women

In the last seven years of collective bargaining, the real gains for women have been maternity rights and the eradication of separate pay structures within the same job grade.

Interestingly, the new issues of childcare and training/grading/career paths are seen as general worker issues, rather than being specifically for women. This is positive because it indicates an holistic analysis of worker issues, one which takes account of gender discrimination. But this is only at a formal level, and there is a danger that women will not be empowered through the process except as rank and file members.

The new collective bargaining arena should also be seen as an opportunity to empower women in the unions. It could attract many more women to the unions, and give them the space to become more active. In order to ensure that men do not overlook women's issues, attention should be given to the disproportionately few women shopstewards, and women in union negotiating teams. Only SACTWU is satisfied that women are proportionately represented on negotiating teams, with CWIU and SAMWU to a lesser

extent. SACCAWU and POTWA are red-faced on this issue.

The union gender/women's forums need to look at how they can assist the process. Collective bargaining around these new issues has only just begun. Clear details have not been worked out and little discussion has happened on the shopfloor. In the interviews done with collective bargaining co-ordinators a real hunger was expressed for back-up research and resource material in tackling some of the gender issues raised. All expressed a genuine seriousness about a gender-sensitive approach to organising and negotiating. In fact, most saw this as an organisational imperative, particularly where unions are not able to recruit more women – for example, PPWAWU (Printing Paper Wood & Allied Workers Union) in forestry or NEHAWU (National Education, Health & Allied Workers Union) amongst the nurses.

The 1980s raised the more obvious issues for women workers, but the 1990s look set to get to the heart of things. It will be interesting to see how far the union movement gets by the year 2000! ☆

managing the **democratic revolution**

ARI SITAS argues that corporate capital has the upper hand in managing the transition process in South Africa

It is 20 years since the Durban strikes of 1973 and the emergence of a new trade unionism in South Africa. Most of the credit has to go to those thousands of people who created COSATU, NACTU and many more centres for worker democracy and rights.

We are on the eve of major social changes with serious implications for the labour movement. By all public accounts, trade union leaders and shopstewards are confident of tomorrow's prospects.

The recent COSATU shopsteward survey confirms this optimism. It is a serious indication that democracy and socialism are central to their agenda, their beliefs and aspirations.

In this contribution though, I will argue against the grain.

My argument arises from a suspicion that what we say and what we do, what we believe and what we *have* to do are very often different. I will argue that at the moment all the cards are being stacked against real democracy; that corporate capital in South Africa has taken the initiative and in fact has the upper hand, despite trade union strengths.

Business in transition

During the last 10 years, trade union and community struggles have driven a wedge in employer ranks in South Africa. There is now one grouping of corporate capital bent on reform, which is, according to one of its



spokespeople, "community-conscious", while a second grouping remains stuck in apartheid's time-warp.

The first group, however small, has launched a – sometimes

bumbling and chaotic – project for transition. And, despite what we might wish to think, it has been highly successful.

Whether a class, a fraction of a class, a power-bloc or a group is successful can be evaluated through the following:

- a. If it manages to make its interests and claims appear natural and legitimate. If this is the case, we can say such a grouping enjoys legitimate authority.
- b. If it manages to define the language and the patterns of change for the society in question. If this is so then such a grouping is dominant.
- c. If it manages through its ideas and actions to lead society in a process of change. If this is so then such a grouping is hegemonic.

I argue here that corporate capital in South Africa has established its authority (a), it is indeed dominant (b), but for various reasons it has not been able to place itself in a hegemonic position. That it might still do so, remains a historical possibility.

Capital's authority

The horrific violence in black communities, the war in Natal and the collapse of social infrastructures have opened up a space for responsible bystanders to act as normalising agents. This opportunity has been taken up with remarkable vigour by many employers and employer interests.

Starting from 1987, the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce played a catalytic role in the peace process in its burning environments. Since then, individual employers, the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), various chambers and regional associations have positioned themselves as the neutral facilitators of peace and stability. From the local area to the National Peace Accord, corporate interests have become the voices of normality and reason.

Furthermore, in all the sectors of possible change, business interests are represented: education, health, schooling, housing, development and so on. Through bilateral and tripartite arrangements their interests are seen as natural, legitimate and a central pillar for reconstruction.

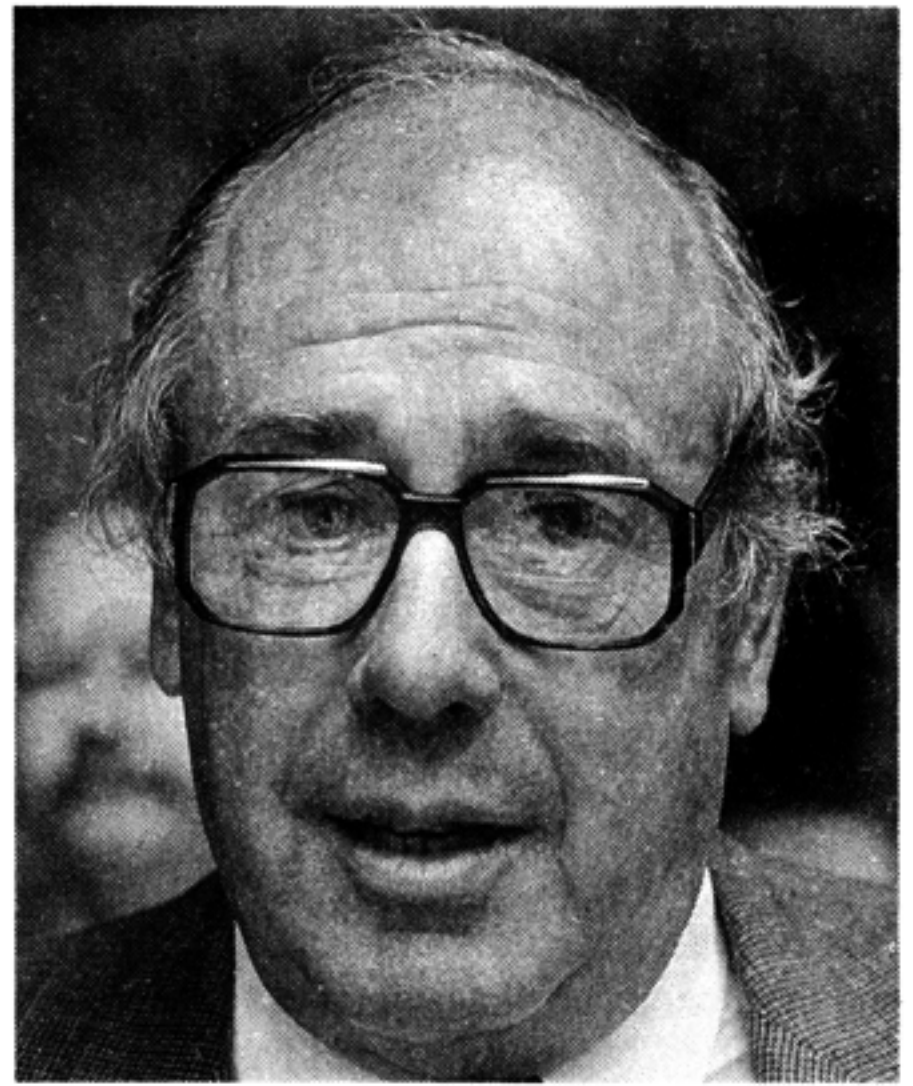
For their part, the relationship with labour has been regulated and brought into proper collective bargaining arrangements. A number of arrangements, or accords, or social contracts are beginning to tie the parties together.

What also appears natural and beyond anybody's control is the economic crisis, which is like an epidemic inflicted on an innocent managerial class with devastating effects: lay-offs, short-time, wage freezes. The most responsible thing society can do is to create conditions of stability for the economy to have a time for cure and regeneration.

In short, the success of the reform wings of corporate capitalism has been to create its legitimacy and place it centre-stage in the transition process.

Capital as dominant

What has also been achieved by corporate capitalism is the definition of the *terms* of change and reconstruction. Within its ranks a whole range of professionals and intellectuals have, with the assistance of the mass media,



John Hall, from Barlow Rand to National Peace Committee: defining the patterns of change?

Photo: Elmond Jiyane

framed the language and the prospects of change.

Crucial to this has been the economic growth debate. Not only are industry's interests taken for granted, but in every calculation and consideration its profitability and performance is at the centre of everyone's worries.

At the same time all major decisions are on the desks of professional experts whose income depends on the mental labour they perform for the institutions that hire them. Most strategic thinking in the country has placed corporate interests on the crest of all influential outcomes. For example, the communication and media fate of the Peace Accord, on which thousands of grassroots lives depend, has been placed in committees run by corporate advertising agencies.

Inside the factories and shops, professional managers, experts in human resource and participative management are creating a new corporate image: of the social or caring factory. Workers are not seen by them as commodities but as a social force or as a "resource for innovation". Hundreds of

practical initiatives are taking place in a vacuum where very few unions dare to tread.

Beyond the shopfloor a new social responsibility ethos is developing rapidly: child care, education, unemployment, literacy and small business initiatives are taken on board and addressed in ways that have enhanced the credibility of the corporate world in the lives of ordinary black people.

Considering all the above, corporate capitalism has not only put on a caring face, but has rather initiated a range of practical initiatives and expert opinions that have defined the language and patterns of change.

Nevertheless, this reform project, however powerful, is not what we can term *hegemonic*. It cannot establish its leadership over sectors of the population.

It cannot achieve such a position because there are lines of disunity within its own possible business ranks. There are serious conflicts of immediate interest over tariff policies, taxation, affirmative action, investment priorities, pricing policies, relationships to financial institutions and so on.

Also, it is hampered because it is seen by the black community as a bastion of the white status quo, and many communities simply use its initiatives in instrumental ways.

Furthermore, it has no socio-political vision that it clearly articulates. And no political party at this stage can represent all of its aspirations: The National Party is still too close to the past, the ANC is still feared despite its more recent

and more moderate economic principles and Inkatha, despite its commitment to capitalism, is too small a movement to deliver.

The only credible move that would place the reform wing of corporate capitalism in a hegemonic position is a return of the PACT government of the 1920s. But this time it would be a 'pact' government based on joint NP-ANC rule, a pact which accepts the authority and dominance of the claims and interests of corporate capital.

Forward march

I must not be misunderstood: each of the above claims could also be read as an incremental victory for labour: decent wages, participation in decision making, economic forums, a social democracy, a move away from apartheid and now, a very important reconstruction accord and so on. I am convinced the labour movement has been central in the transformation of all relationships in our society*. But, I do also have a strong sense that history is starting to slip away.

The forward march of labour in South Africa has not been halted: but the maps, the paths and the road signs have been changed. Without understanding the directions for this new geography, one could easily get lost. The question that should haunt us then is: can labour's interests be 'hegemonic', can labour's aspirations gain dominance and authority? Or are we satisfied with the landscape that these maps describe. ☆



* On this see my "Trade Unions and Democracy in the 1990s" - in K Nurnberger's (ed) A DEMOCRATIC VISION FOR SOUTH AFRICA, Pietermaritzburg, 1991.

The second conference* of trade union centres in the Indian Ocean region raised some very important questions for labour internationalism in the 1990s – and even into the 21st century. KARL VON HOLDT was there.

a new labour **internationalism?**

What are the possibilities of South-South labour solidarity? What are the limits to labour internationalism? And lurking within these questions – though never explicitly debated at the conference – what role is the ICFTU currently playing in developing labour internationalism? What role could it play? Is a new and more vigorous labour internationalism possible without the ICFTU and its resources? These are some of the questions raised by the conference debates.

Common themes

The conference brought together an incredibly wide range of union experiences (see box). Despite the diversity, several common themes emerged. Firstly, many of the trade union movements are involved in a struggle for democracy – the Koreans, the Thai, the Indonesians. Progressive unionists from these countries face severe repression. Over the past four years 2 500 unionists in South Korea have been detained. Twenty-one of the KTUC's 25 executive members have spent a period in jail – nine of them twice! In Indonesia, the official trade unions are controlled by the military regime, and all other labour activity is banned and brutally repressed.

The second theme was the struggle for trade union rights. While unionists in Indonesia,

Thailand and Korea are struggling for basic union rights, unions in India, Sri Lanka and Australia are fighting to preserve the rights they already have from attack by the state. In many countries in the region, workers in huge plants in free trade zones or export-processing zones have no rights at all. Women workers from such zones in Malaysia and Indonesia told us harrowing tales of the conditions they face. Women workers are often the worst exploited.

The third theme is the struggle for economic development. Unionists from SA, Australia, India and Zimbabwe spoke about the threat to domestic industry as tariff barriers come down and their economies are opened to international competition. Investment is booming in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand - but wages are low, there is limited or no democracy, and trade unions are weak or repressed. Korean capitalism appears to be facing an accumulation crisis as militant unionism takes root and wages rise. The KTUC delegate told us 100 000 jobs were lost in one year in the footwear industry when factories moved to Indonesia and Bangladesh. Vietnam is struggling to make the transition from command economy to market economy, and the unions fear the burden will be borne by the

* In Australia in November 1992. The first conference was reported in SA LABOUR BULLETIN Vol 16 No 5

workers. In India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have dictated policies of financial deregulation, privatisation and low wages.

The fourth theme that emerged is the extent to which progressive trade union movements in the region are seeking to build broad popular alliances in a struggle for democracy and people-centred economic policies. In India, for example, CITU is actively involved in building an alliance of trade unions, community organisations, unemployed youth and students in a “patriotic” struggle against the economic policies of the government, the IMF and the World Bank. “Our national agenda is the protection of our economic sovereignty and self-reliance. We need to expand the domestic market, which means forging links with the peasantry. We are combating closures and unemployment,” said Tapan Sen. CITU delegates had come straight from a massive demonstration of one million in Calcutta!

In South Korea, the KTUC has a policy of “developing and strengthening the people’s movement”, Eun-Cheol Shin told the conference. “We already have a national alliance for democracy including labour, the student movement, intellectuals and farmers.” The Thai unionists were also closely involved in the popular movement and street protests last year that forced democratic concessions from the authoritarian state. The labour movements in Philippines and SA have a long history of engaging in the broader national democratic struggle.

Undermining economic sovereignty

The conference also heard expert analysis of new trends in the global economy:*



Australian unions demonstrate against the withdrawal of labour rights in Victoria

Photo: Nicola Taylor

- World finance markets have become increasingly deregulated. It has become much more difficult for governments to control or influence the movement of finance and capital in and out of their countries.
- There has been a world-wide trend to reduce government economic regulation or intervention. This often means removing labour rights, removing state controls on investment, deregulating labour, capital and land markets, cutting public expenditure, devaluation, privatisation, etc. The World Bank has been very influential in this trend.
- There has been the rise of the global corporation which integrates production in a number of different countries. For example, an auto company may manufacture engines in one country, springs in another, body panels somewhere else, and assemble them all in a fourth country. Some 50% of world trade is now conducted, not between different countries, but between different branches of the same company. The same kind of thing happens at a financial level – Ford is believed to move half a billion dollars a day between different countries.
- The market has become increasingly competitive world wide, and corporations are forced to increase their capacity to

* Howard Guille, 'Trends in the Global Economy and Implications for trade union strategy'; Craig Littler, 'Global politics and the new managerialism'

respond to a range of market demands, to innovate and develop new products, to cut costs, to develop flexible production and fast response times.

- There is a trend towards a new managerial strategy, which seeks a more highly skilled and committed workforce and seeks to marginalise and exclude trade unions.

Economist Howard Guille pointed out that all of these changes undermine the economic sovereignty of the nation-state by reducing government's capacity to intervene in any aspect of the economy. Indeed, governments are forced into competition with each other to provide the most attractive conditions for global corporations to invest. This is exactly what is happening in the Indian Ocean region.

This undermining of the economic sovereignty of governments also weakens the power of the labour movement, since trade

market lies in unions moving into politics and government. We have got to contest ideas with national elites and intellectuals." He pointed out that there are ways to challenge and influence international agencies. For example, the World Bank is constitutionally required to convene an Advisory Council which includes among other things labour representation. The Advisory Council has only met once, and none of the social democratic governments who are members of the Bank has ever asked for it to be reconvened.

Resolutions

After much discussion, the conference resolved:

- To implement an exchange programme of workers and organisers in the region, in order to encourage the development of strong independent unions in countries that have relatively weak union movements. In this way organisations could share their experiences and challenges.
- To encourage each respective national organisation to adopt the Social Code of Conduct approved by the conference. This Code sets out the basic trade union rights of access, recognition, and other organising rights, as well as a range of worker rights (eg freedom from racial or

Trade union centres represented at the Second Indian Ocean Rim Conference, December 1992

Australia – Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)

India – Centre of Indian Trade unions (CITU)

Korea – Korea Trade Union Congress (KTUC)

Pakistan – Muttahida Labour Federation

Philippines – Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU)

South Africa – Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

Sri Lanka – Industrial Transport and General Workers Union

Vietnam – Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (TLD)

Zimbabwe – Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Public Services Association

Unionists from **Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia** also attended.

unions have often relied on sympathetic governments to implement policies that encourage investment, provide jobs, regulate the labour market and establish labour rights. Now, wherever the labour movement is too strong or the government imposes too many restrictions, capital simply moves elsewhere.

Guille did, however, conclude that the new trends in the global economy open up some new possibilities for union action such as targeting global transport and communication links.

He also argued that "the control of the

gender discrimination). It also calls for carefully targeted boycott campaigns on export companies which fail to comply with the standards set out in the Code.

- To publish a newsletter twice a year.
- That women in the participating organisations establish a regional network. There was a strong gender caucus in the conference (see page 88).
- To establish a co-ordinating committee to monitor and implement the above resolutions, to undertake research with a

view to establishing alternative economic and political strategies, to consider campaigns against free market restructuring and political repression, and to convene another conference in 1994.

The conference thus made an important start in developing labour solidarity in the region. Comrades from different countries got to know each other, and discovered many similar problems as well as many different ones. Some practical possibilities for developing solidarity and mutual assistance were identified.

Everything now depends on whether these are implemented.

Difficult questions

There are difficult questions that will have to be confronted by the unions in the region if an effective labour internationalism is to develop.

Firstly, the emphasis of the decisions taken at the conference is on strengthening the weaker trade union movements in each country.

Certainly, strengthening labour in each country, and forging practical links between them, can only strengthen the capacity of labour to resist capital worldwide. But the analyses presented to the conference showed that capital is immensely powerful in each country because of its mobility at an international level. This mobility means that it can compel the government – and the workers – of each country to compete with the governments and workers of all other countries. Unless labour can develop a proactive strategy to challenge capital at this level, it will always find itself responding on a terrain defined by capital. Such a proactive strategy would mean campaigning to place regulation on the international agenda – which means, as Guille noted, “moving into politics and government.”

The scale of such a campaign may seem daunting, but without it labour internationalism will remain limited and weak. It may be possible to start with existing struggles that could be extended and linked. For example, progressive trade unions in India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe are currently trying to mobilise against economic policies imposed by the World Bank and the IMF. In SA and Australia COSATU and ACTU are mobilising around their

own economic proposals, in opposition to policies similar to those of the IMF and the Bank. Surely those struggles could be linked, however modestly? Each of these labour movements celebrates May Day, and they could exchange speakers. A list of common demands could be drawn up around the theme of restoring economic sovereignty. A joint delegation could put their position to the Bank and the IMF, and they could try to win the support of sympathetic governments for convening an Advice Council. At the same time, they could campaign for support for these ideas among political parties, movements and intellectuals in their own countries.

This introduces a second question. Do the progressive labour movements of the South have sufficient resources and capacity to really develop an effective South-South solidarity against the immense power of capital? Or do they need the financial, institutional and technical resources that only the unions of the North can provide – which means utilising the ICFTU? For example, some of the International Trade Secretariats associated with the ICFTU provide effective solidarity and support and have the capacity to challenge corporate power through world company shopsteward councils (for example in the auto industry). It is significant, too, that the Indian Ocean Regional Conference was only made possible through funding organised by ACTU – an ICFTU affiliate, and indeed the only ICFTU affiliate which attended!

It may be argued that the ICFTU provides financial support to some extremely nasty organisations in the region – such as the militarised ‘official’ unions in Indonesia (associated with the military dictatorship and brutal repression of progressive unionists), or the FKTU in Korea. But it may be possible to use the Social Code to campaign within the ICFTU for the expulsion of such reactionary bodies, and for the implementation of progressive policies in the region.

These are controversial questions, but they will have to be debated and tested by progressive trade unionists in the militant organisations of the South, if a new and effective labour internationalism is to emerge. ☆

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Women fight for gender-conscious resolutions

Too few women found themselves at the

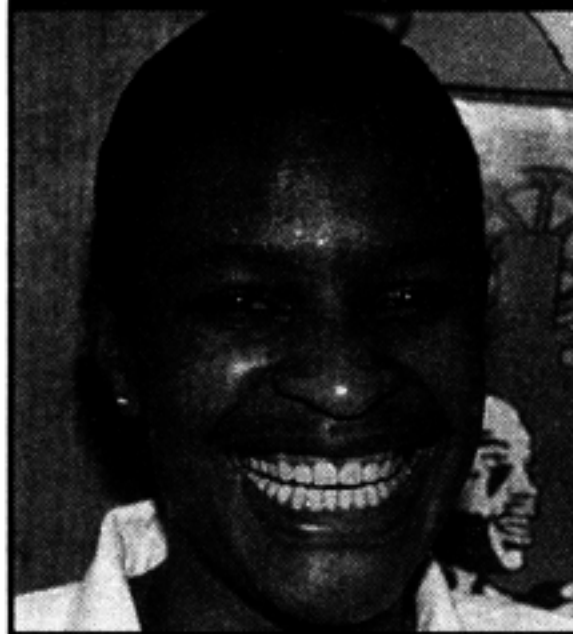
SECOND INDIAN OCEAN RIM CONFERENCE, notes COSATU administrator MATAPELO MAKGOMA who was there.

This conference (December 1992) mirrored the situation in the trade union movement – not only in our country but throughout the world. It was attended by about 13 countries on the Indian Ocean Rim. But out of 72 delegates, only 12 were women.

If one looks at the women delegates themselves, one noticed only one comrade who was an office bearer of a union, not a federation. She was Cde Uma Maheswari from India, vice-president of the insurance union in Madras. All other women delegates were workers and union officials who did not have influence in their unions. They came to share their experiences as workers faced by different situations.

Out of the discussion we discovered that women

women IN THE UNIONS



constitute the majority of working people in all countries, but that few hold decision-making positions. A lot of potential leadership could be developed if women were given a chance. But other factors also hinder women's growth, like:

- cultural background;*
- the domestic division of labour in society as a whole;*
- the laws of individual countries;*
- lack of facilities, preventing women from taking part in certain activities;*
- being made to feel insecure in their jobs; being made to believe that only through fearing and respecting men will they retain their posts;*
- education and a working environment not conducive to women's development.*

I could set an example with the women of Indonesia, where a worsening of the economy has aggravated unemployment, and has led to massive migration by women.

Free Trade Zones have been used to force workers, mostly women, to compete for lower and lower wages.

It was amazing how women

delegates fought to ensure that resolutions adopted by the conference also included those of women. These were integrated into the final Indian Ocean Rim resolution document.

Some resolutions adopted for circulation at our various centres/federations were:

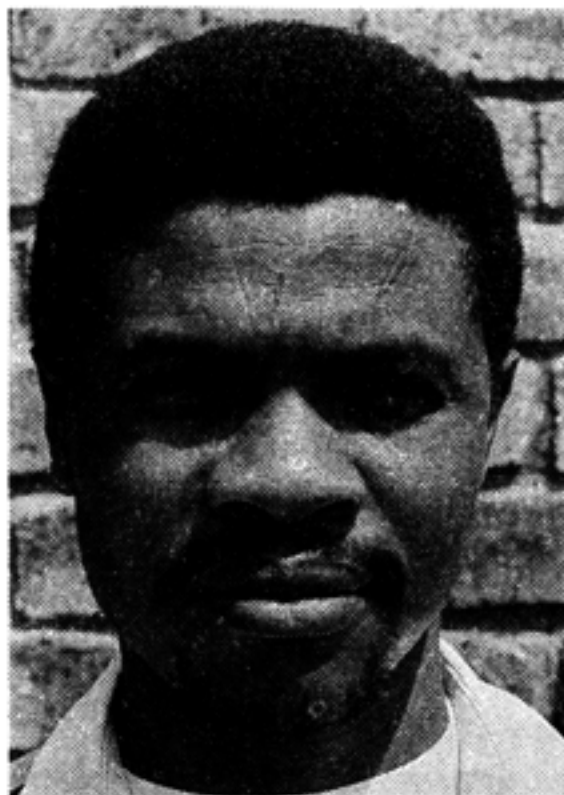
- As regards exchange programmes:
 - to ensure, when organising exchange programmes in areas where women predominate, that women be involved;
 - to ensure that all exchange programmes have a gender component.
- In relation to research:
 - to consider industries where women predominate;
 - to look at the impact political and economic restructuring in each country will have on women workers;
 - to check out issues of concern to women workers.
- In the field of communication:
 - to set up a network of organisations attending the conference;
 - to publish a newsletter twice a year containing issues from different countries (participating countries will feed into that publication);
 - to establish a network of women from the participating countries;
 - to establish a co-ordinating committee, on which at least one woman will sit – BUT NOT ONLY AS A TOKEN! ☆

Workers take control at Afcol plant

PPWAWU office bearer and Afcol Bedding shopsteward ALFRED HLOPE tells SNUKI ZIKALALA about the bid for worker control at an Afcol plant in Durban and its implications for the production process.

Afcol, a bedding company, has 26 plants throughout South Africa. The economic recession has sorely hit Afcol, resulting in mass retrenchments and lay-offs. However, workers at Afcol Bedding in Durban recently took the initiative and established what we could call 'worker control' in their plant.

Afcol Bedding in Durban employs 200 workers. Since 1989, we have had a series of disputes with management over retrenchments, dismissals and lay-offs.



PPWAWU's Alfred Hlope
Photo: William Matlala

Initially, management did not consult us about restructuring and the future of the company. We were told the company was not making a profit and therefore retrenchments and lay-offs were unavoidable.

The management selected workers to retrench and lay-off at random. This created an unhealthy atmosphere in the company. We were not very productive as we did not know who was next on the list.

We devised a very constructive strategy: we requested that the management should first consult the union and discuss the question of retrenchments and lay-offs with us. The

management continued to implement its plan without consulting us.

In February 1989, the management laid off eight workers. This infuriated us and we called for a work stoppage. This shook them a bit. We also took a very firm stand against workers who agreed to be laid off without proper consultation with the union. We forced those who had been told by management to work four times a week to take an extra day off so that they would lose two days of wages. Workers, realising they were playing into management's hands, accepted our proposal. They refused to be laid off without consultation with the union.

Forced to negotiate

Afcol's management was left with no other solution but to negotiate the terms of retrenchments and lay-offs with us. In February 1991, we met the management and had constructive discussions.

We proposed the following:

- The union should have access to the financial statement of the company.
- Workers should be fully informed about the production programme.
- Supervisors, management and staff should also be affected by the lay-offs and retrenchments.
- Sufficient information should be provided to workers in regard to

lay-offs.

- Lay-offs should not only affect a few individuals, and workers should rotate.

Initially, the management was very apprehensive, but after a lengthy debate they agreed to our proposal. They were not comfortable in principle with agreeing to our demands or that the union was calling the shots. But the time and space did not provide them with any other solution than ours. They realised mutual respect and more consultation at plant level would bring about positive results in the production process.

Since then, workers have been controlling the whole process at the plant. At one point we did refuse entry to a supervisor who was supposed to be laid off. We cannot accept their presence in the factory when there is no production. Their job is to supervise and control the production process. If there are no workers in the factory then laid-off supervisors

have no reason to be there. We should all be affected by this economic recession.

Changed industrial relations

We have changed the industrial relations at plant level. A personnel officer who had a very bad attitude towards the workers was forced to resign. He was very authoritarian and undermined workers.

Despite the lay-offs and the economic recession we are quite satisfied with what is happening at the plant. The management is now being forced to consult us on problems and the prospects of the plant. They now preach to us almost daily on how we should co-operate and make the best out of this recession.

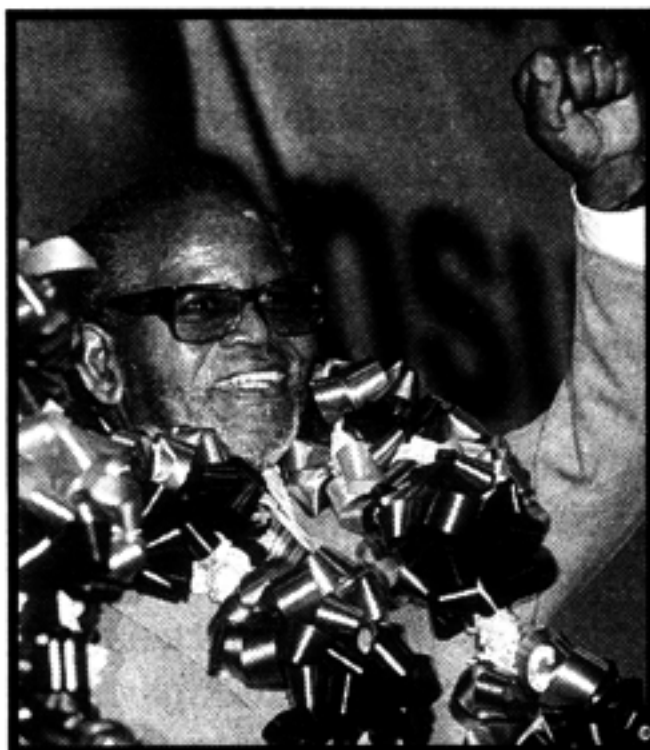
We are prepared to work very closely with management and are quite satisfied with what we have achieved. The management does make its financial statements available to us.

There are more comprehensive discussions on the financial situation of the company, and the production progress of the company. An input is always demanded from us.

Worker control in place

In this manner we feel we have achieved what we call worker control at the factory. Though we still have problems in understanding the financial statements of the company as they are very technical and detailed, the management has agreed they will train us to write and read financial reports.

It was not that easy to achieve all this and we are planning to have more consultations with the remaining 25 Afcol plants. Worker control at plant level has empowered us. We now have full authority over the production process and we are more responsible and innovative. ☆



Comrade O R Tambo



27 October 1917
24 April 1993



Hamba Kahle

a **weapon** *against* **trade unionism:** *the government's* **Charter of Rights**



PAUL BENJAMIN argues that the debate about a bill of rights holds too many dangers for it to be ignored by the trade union movement.

In the first part of this series published in SA LABOUR BULLETIN Vol 17 No 1, readers were introduced to the concepts of a constitution and a bill of rights. The author, Firoz Cachalia, posed the question of whether a bill of rights would protect democracy or privilege. In this article, we wish to take the debate forward by scrutinising one of the draft bills of rights currently in circulation – the Government's draft Charter of Rights.

We will look in particular at how this Charter of Rights (if it becomes law) would restrict the

ability of a future parliament and government as well as tripartite forums such as the NEF or the NMC to develop policies within the labour market and to regulate labour relations. Hopefully, we will show that debate about a bill of rights holds too many dangers for it to be ignored by the trade union movement.

The Charter primarily regulates legal relations between the state and its subjects. Its general thrust is therefore to regulate the future exercise of public or state power but not to regulate the exercise of private power. This has a number of effects. First, it entrenches current free enterprise ideologies. Second, it ignores the fact that many of the most powerful holders of power in our society are situated in the private sector. The failure to regulate relations between subjects will entrench the position of the powerful at the expense of the rest of society. And it will inhibit the power of future democratically elected parliaments to make laws aimed at achieving equality.

Employer and employee rights

The Charter contains nine employee rights and eight employer rights – an apparent attempt to be even-handed. This overlooks the subordinate position in society occupied by employees; their lack of social power, in terms of the employment relationship.

Property and labour

Before looking at the specific employer and employee rights, it is useful to comment on two other sections that will impact upon employment relations. Both show how the commitment of the Charter to free market ideologies will favour the interests of employers at the expense of employees. For instance, the Bill, in Clause 18, gives people the right to use the property they own. The property clause is designed to protect the position of current owners of property. It also curbs the ability of future governments to redistribute land by saying that if land is expropriated the owners must be compensated at its value. This means that historical claims to land cannot be taken into account in allowing the dispossessed to reclaim their land.

What is the significance of the property clause to labour? Certainly, it will strengthen the position of employers because one of the reasons for the inequality between bosses and workers is that it is the boss who owns the factory and the land on which it is built. The property clause may become a basis for employers arguing that any legislation designed to allow trade union officials rights of access to employers' property would be unconstitutional. Rights of access of this nature are an essential feature of trade union organisation, particularly where employees reside on the employers' premises such as in the mining industry and agriculture. It is likely that a future government would seriously consider introducing the right of access - but the government's charter would make this unconstitutional.

Minimum standards and the constitution

Another provision reflecting the free market bias of the Charter is section 15 which deals with participation in the economy. It gives all people the right "to offer and accept employment against remuneration". This clause could be used to attack the ability of a future government to legislate on minimum conditions of employment. This would be based on the argument that the clause entitles citizens to accept employment on any conditions they like. As minimum standards (such as those in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act or in a wage determination or industrial council agreement) restrict people to accepting employment on terms and conditions of employment that are at least good, these laws infringe the constitutional right to accept employment. If this argument were accepted, the whole of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Wage Act would be unconstitutional and the entire industrial council system would have to be dismantled. It would mean that many groups of employees, particularly the less skilled, would be subject to exploitation and exploitative conditions of employment against which these laws are designed to protect them.

Employee rights

The right not to associate

The first right of employees is to join and participate in employees' organisations as well as their right not to do so and not to associate with such organisations. The clear impact of this provision is to outlaw all legislation providing for the establishment of closed shops or other security arrangements. While the closed shop is a controversial subject, it is not appropriate for a charter to prevent all laws that would allow for the creation of these types of institutions. It also ignores the fact that closed shops have long been a feature of the statutory industrial relations system in South Africa and have been present in South African industrial relations for more than a century.

It is also not correct to say that a right not to associate in the trade union context is a basic and universally accepted legal norm. Many countries permit closed shops, agency shops and other union security arrangements while others prohibit them.

Individual bargaining

The next employee right establishes the right of employees to negotiate or bargain, both collectively or individually. The promotion of an individual right to negotiate is a deliberate attempt to undermine trade unionism and the development of orderly collective bargaining. There is no such right in our common law. Its inclusion in the Charter would outlaw any legislative system that would require trade unions to have a certain threshold level of membership before entering into negotiations with employers (such as in Canada and the USA) and would entrench the fragmentation of collective bargaining. It would also prevent the industrial court from using the unfair labour practice to develop sensible rules of collective bargaining such as those in the NUM v ERGO.

The origin of this provision is not internationally accepted norms. Its origins rather lie in the controversial 1988 amendments to the Labour Relations Act which provoked massive opposition and in 1991 were withdrawn and replaced by

legislation based on agreement between government, organised labour and organised capital.

It would appear that the hand which drafted the controversial 1988 legislation has played a role in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The ideological basis of both of these provisions is the anti-union labour legislation used by the Thatcher government in the UK in the 1980s to break the power of organised labour. The Charter is not neutral on these issues but reflects a world view that is hostile to trade unions and collective bargaining.

Essential services

The third employee right is to take part in strikes. This is subject to the qualification that strikes may be prohibited in strategic industries and essential services or by persons in the service of the state. International standards do accept that employees in industries whose interruption would endanger the health and safety of the community and limited categories of central civil servants may be prohibited from striking. But they provide that in return these employees are entitled to refer unresolved disputes to an alternative form of dispute resolution such as compulsory arbitration. This is not reflected in the Charter.

Employers' rights

The first right given to employers is that of joining employers' associations.

Hiring and recruitment

The second provision gives employers the right to offer employment and engage employees "according to their needs and with due regard to the fitness, qualifications, level of training and competence of employees". This creates a right to hire which would undermine any legislative attempt at correcting the current imbalances in the workforce on the grounds of race or sex by affirmative action or other means. This would entrench the ability of employers to hire who they wish and would counter attempts to create equity and equality in the workplace.

The right to lock out

Employers are given the right to lock out labour. While the right to strike is universally accepted, the right to lock out is not. In some countries the right to lock out is seen as the equivalent of the right to strike. In others it is accepted that the right to strike is needed to correct the power imbalance between employers and employees, and that the right to lock out disturbs this balance. Therefore, in the constitutions of countries such as Italy, France and Portugal, the right to strike is protected but not the right to lock out.

Termination

The next provision allows employers to “terminate the services of an employee under the common law, a contract of employment with the employee or legislation, as the case may be.” It is not clear what this means. One possible interpretation is that as long as a dismissal is in compliance with either the common law, a contract of employment or legislation, it cannot be ruled. This would make the unfair labour practice jurisdiction of the industrial court unconstitutional. Employers will not be slow to raise this argument.

‘No work, no pay’

The Charter proclaims the ‘principle’ of ‘no work, no pay’. Most readers will recognise this as a phrase used by employers, particularly in stayaways. It is not a fundamental principle of our labour law. There are situations in which an employer must pay employees who have not worked but have tendered their services. These include an illegal lock-out or where some external circumstance (such a flooding) has made work impossible. Again, it is not a universal right.

The right to manage

The right that employers have to manage their business “with a view to its economic viability and continued existence” could make legislation aimed at requiring any form of worker participation (such as worker directors) in the running of a company unconstitutional.

Also, these are hardly internationally accepted norms – a large number of countries such as Germany and Sweden have legislation requiring some form of worker participation in the running of companies. Again the question we must ask is not whether we support policies of this type. It is whether a future government should be able to consider introducing these policies without their being ruled unconstitutional.

Alternative labour

Next, the employer is given the right to use alternative labour where necessary to maintain production or service. In some countries use of alternate labour during strikes is restricted or prohibited as a means of reducing conflict. For instance, some Canadian provinces prohibit the use of replacements; others prohibit professional strike-breakers.

Conclusion

If the government’s draft Charter of Rights is adopted, it is certain employers will bring these issues to court. It will be for the constitutional court to decide what a future government may or may not do. While constitutions are designed to achieve equality, in practice they can have the opposite effect as it is the powerful and the wealthy who have the greatest resources to use the courts to protect their interests.

This has not been an exhaustive look at the impact of the government’s draft Charter on the fabric of labour law. However, what it does show is that the Charter would have disastrous implications for our system of statutory labour law and severely undermine the capacity of future governments to develop labour policy. This could mean the unions would sit on a future NEF or NMC and find that they cannot develop appropriate policies because of the bill of rights.

The unions cannot afford to remain outside of this debate. They must protect their members by ensuring that our bill of rights and constitution promote equality, not inequality. ☆



POLITICS AND THE ACCORD

*By Peter Ewer, Ian Hampson,
Chris Lloyd, John Rainford,
Stephen Rix, Meg Smith
(Pluto Press, Sydney 1991)
Reviewed by Jane Barrett**

The Accord between the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Australian Labour Party was signed in 1983 as part of a pact leading to the election of the Labour Party as government (a position it has held every since). It was initially based on centralised wage and price fixing. The union movement's agenda was the hope of expanding its influence and control over the economy and over management.

Ewer et al have written a detailed 200 page analysis of the Accord, exploring the reasons why the union movement's objective has not been fulfilled. The book poses some interesting questions and issues for the trade union movement not only in Australia, but throughout the world. This is particularly true for SA, given that one of the authors, Chris Lloyd, is currently advising COSATU's metal affiliate, NUMSA. The underlying theme of the book is the search for a "redefinition and reawakening of the political purpose of unionism" (p99).

The Accord

At the heart of the Accord lay a policy aimed at regulating both prices and wages in an attempt to encourage economic growth and job creation in a non-inflationary environment. Wage strategies were linked with broader economic objectives.

In theory the Accord links wage policy, the social wage (in the form of limited extensions to the welfare system), and economic intervention (in the form of industry strategy). However, in practice, there have been strategic weaknesses within each of the three components.

INCOMES POLICY REDISTRIBUTES TO CAPITAL:

Whilst there was initially an impressive rise in employment, most of the jobs created were of a part time and/or low paid nature. No greater access to the higher paid, higher skilled job market was created for the marginalised categories of labour – women, migrants, and youth.

Whilst wage restraint was being exercised, profits for employers actually rose. A real fall in living standards for workers was the result. In the process, wage militancy has been surrendered, without any other viable form of activism being put in its place.

WEAK ECONOMIC INTERVENTION:

The authors argue that the framework for intervening in the economy, and in industry policy in particular, had the potential for preventing the incomes policy dimension from degenerating into wage restraint. However, it failed to do so partly because it proved to be extremely difficult to mobilise union membership around industry strategy initiatives, and partly because the government was perhaps never seriously committed to effective intervention in the economy. "ACTU's wage strategy of complementing the government's macro-economic strategy has therefore linked union wage policy to a derelict cause."

Government's lack of commitment to tripartite industry policy development was not counterbalanced by strong union intervention. The authors argue that formulating industry strategy is essentially a bureaucratic project, which does not provide obvious areas for direct union influence.

The lack of experience on the part of the unions in industry policy matters compounded the problem, and resulted in failed efforts at reforming parts of the state economic advisory bureaucracy. For example, the tripartite Economic Advisory Council "was easily colonised by the older bureaucracies and serves now only as a shop front for economic rationalism."

* Jane Barrett is a national organiser at TGWU.

NARROWED SELECTIVE WELFARE SYSTEM: Not only did the Accord not commit the parties to the implementation of a full welfare system, but in practice increasing numbers of people have been excluded from the system.

A progressive alternative

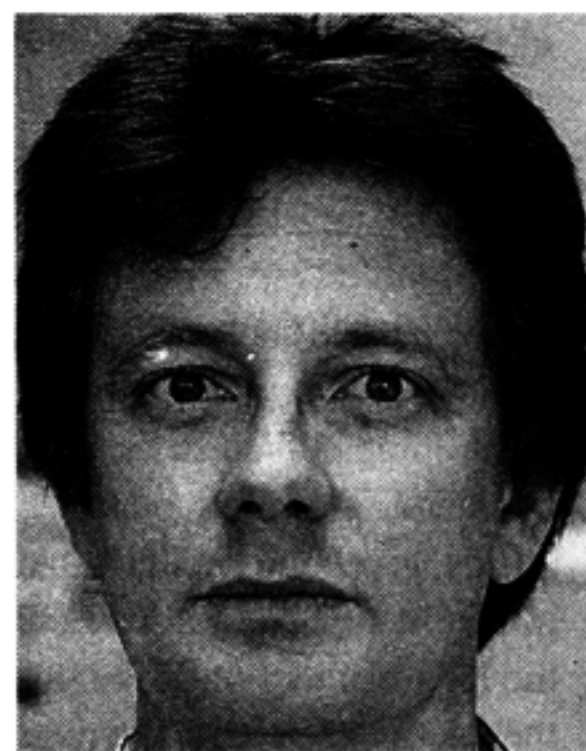
The authors argue that whilst the Accord has failed in its objectives of economic growth, full employment, and income redistribution, the framework itself does not have to be completely abandoned. They suggest that a progressive alternative is to be found in changing the wages policy component. They also suggest that there is a need to move away from an all-encompassing social contract, and to negotiate sectoral agreements instead.

The seeds of such a progressive alternative, the authors suggest, are to be found in the 1989 Accord, which recognised the need to raise minimum wages, reduce skills grades, and introduce clear career pathing. They argue forcibly that these three elements of wage policy could be combined to "erode managerial prerogative and empower workers hitherto denied control over their own work and skills". If the union movement wishes to maintain an opposition to a market economy dominated by capital, it will have to start at the workplace and build out. "Workers must want to defend regulation of the workplace". Such a defence should be based on a fight for a direct say in skill formation, in work organisation, and in working time arrangements.

The authors argue that this strategy has an economic and a political motivation. The economic motivation is that the "future of high value-added manufacturing and service industries depends on the ability to devise modern skill formation processes which are capable of efficiently reallocating displaced labour", whilst the political objective is "empowering workers to respond to industry restructuring and technological change".

The authors argue that the union movement has failed to mount the ideological case for such a new approach. Instead, employers have developed workplace flexibility approaches which are designed to provide short term boosts to

productivity by crippling the union movement's ability to influence the labour market. The move away from centralised bargaining to enterprise bargaining based on productivity is part of the same employer project of short term gain. Employer-led 'participative work' is "not industrial democracy but coercion" the authors argue. It provides no challenge to the power of management to organise the production process, and emphasises the need to minimise labour costs in order to maximise output.



Chris Lloyd, one of the authors of the book

Photo: William Matlala

There must be more

The central argument is that a new approach to skills

formation could result not only in a more successful influence and control over industry strategy for the trade union movement, but could also result in a new politics embracing a much wider social base - a more distinctly class politics.

Whilst the authors put up a pretty convincing argument for a new approach to skills formation *contributing* to a new union politics and practice, the reader is left feeling that there must be more to the argument. For example, they pay no attention to the struggle for a legislative framework which provides for full disclosure of information, the reinvestment of profits, or the extension of trade union rights - particularly in the area of strike action.

On the question of widening the social base, again the authors could have spent more time in exploring the wider political context. There is almost a suggestion that a progressive political consciousness will grow automatically out of a new approach at the workplace. But if in the

course of wage bargaining part of the wage should be directed towards social benefits provided by the employer, as the authors suggest, won't this in fact reinforce the divide between employed and unemployed, trade unions and other organisations? Surely the commitment to full social security will not grow simply out of sectoral and workplace struggles around skills formation? Surely there is a national political dimension to the struggle for social security?

Lessons

The book nevertheless suggests some very important lessons. Firstly, if the union movement is to see itself intervening in the economy it has to assert its ideological objective - that of intervening in the market against the domination of capital. This is all the more important in South Africa, given the explicit attack of the government's Normative Economic Model on the legitimacy of trade unions precisely because they do interfere with the market.

Secondly, to sacrifice wage militancy as a means of mobilising worker unity without an alternative unifying and mobilising project could be disastrous. Furthermore, industry strategy in isolation does not provide such a mobilising tool, as it is too bureaucratic in nature. If the struggle around skill formation provides a possible alternative, then the workers must own that struggle and believe in it. Given the long entrenched and relatively unchallenged philosophy of 'managerial prerogatives' in SA, considerable effort would be required to build up the confidence of workers to tackle the issue. For example, to what extent do the rank and file of NUMSA understand and believe sufficiently in the most recent proposals to SEIFSA on skills formation to really fight in support of their demands?

Thirdly, it is important to develop the skills and experience of trade unionists so that when they engage in industry policy development they are not "colonised" (as the authors put it) by the existing bureaucracy.

At the macroeconomic level, perhaps the most salient lesson of the book is that industry development programmes have to be supported by appropriate macroeconomic policies - unfettered

deregulation of the money market and privatisation and/or commercialisation of the public sector being singularly inappropriate policies. In South Africa it is clear that the union movement will have to develop far sharper answers to the debates on these two issues. In relation to the public sector, for example, it is not enough simply to assert an opposition to privatisation because of the potential job losses. The union movement (and its allies) has to develop a coherent political and economic argument in favour of the public sector.

Finally, the book does show quite clearly that there is a way out of the passivity and frustration caused by worker participation and job flexibility programmes imposed by management - that, through a struggle around skill formation, it is impossible to challenge in a fundamental way, the notion of managerial prerogative. Whether such a challenge will in *itself* result in the assertion of a more progressive and class based politics is questionable, but that it would certainly *contribute* to the same is irrefutable. ☆

Industrial Council Digest review: author responds *Shane Godfrey*

The first point about Jane Barrett's review of the INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL DIGEST (SA LABOUR BULLETIN Vol 17 No 1) is that it is a critique rather than a review. She does not do the book justice because she focuses almost exclusively on what the book does not contain rather than on what it does. So the review fails to show how the book does make a substantial contribution to understanding of industrial councils as institutions for centralised bargaining.

The aim of the DIGEST was to provide systematic and detailed information on all industrial councils and the industrial council 'system' as a whole, something which has never been done before. I believed that systematic research of this kind would inform the debate on industrial councils and any strategy that might result from that debate. The aim of the book was not to intervene in the debate but rather to contribute to the debate. Accordingly, it

provides background information which unions can use to develop their own strategies.

The DIGEST starts by identifying the main features and history of the legislative framework for councils contained in the LRA. This section shows that the original intention of the legislation was to create national, industry-wide centralised bargaining forums, but that its relatively limited nature, and the low levels of organisation of trade unions and employers, as well as other factors, led to the development of the diverse and irregular 'system' of industrial councils that exists today.

The major section of the book then follows, namely a study of all the industrial councils that existed in 1979 and any that have been set up since that date. This covers the parties to each council, how it is structured, whether there is sectoral or regional differentiation in the Main Agreement of the council, and finally whether there were any changes to these features in the period after 1979. This section therefore examines the diversity of industrial councils in detail and provides interesting examples of the way that the parties to councils have catered for differing interests. For example, the National Leather Council is shown to have four separate sectoral bargaining forums within its overall structures, whereas many other councils have created only one bargaining forum but have separate regional wage tables.

The reasons for any changes are also discussed particularly if they resulted from the participation or attempted participation of one of the COSATU or NACTU trade unions. The research shows that the engagement of these trade unions with various industrial councils does not always follow the same course or have the same result. For example, for the first few years of its participation on the Iron and Steel Council, MAWU successfully used the tactic of refusing to sign the Council's Main Agreement as a way of attracting workers to the union. However, when in 1989 BCAWU refused to sign the Main Agreement of the Transvaal Building Council and withdrew from the Council, those categories of work represented by BCAWU, namely the unskilled categories primarily filled by black workers, were excluded from the Agreement. These workers then lost the protection of a minimum wage and other

minimum conditions.

The differing experiences of unions engaging with existing councils does not therefore lend itself to easy analysis and neat generalisation. So it was decided to try to cover all of these struggles and rather identify the major themes and trends emerging from this process. The book therefore does not come up with any specific solutions for the reform of industrial councils, but then this was not its objective. However, it does provide systematic information that can be used by the parties for looking at each industrial council and assessing its problems and potential, and looking at the diversity and irregularity of the 'system' as a whole to assess how it can be reformed.

It also provides, contrary to what the reviewer argues, many pointers as to how trade unions and employers are dealing with the restructuring of industrial councils. But the lessons of engagement and some of the trends that emerge are regrettably not highlighted and often not made explicit enough.

To respond directly to some criticisms in the review, it is the case that there are some omissions and errors in the book. This is inevitable given the enormity of the field that the book covers, but it must be stressed that the major bulk of the information is reliable and the coverage comprehensive. It is, however, unfortunate that there are inaccuracies about the book in the review. I do not have the space to go into each of these and will therefore address the main criticisms that the reviewer had, namely that the book is "based entirely on secondary resources" and that "not a single interview appears to have been conducted for the purposes of the book". Firstly, the core of the book is based on primary resources (ie the gazetted agreements of the industrial councils), and secondly, although interviews did not constitute a major part of the research method, there were a number of interviews done for the purposes of the book and these are footnoted.

In summary, readers of the DIGEST should find considerable information to help them understand the history and nature of industrial councils. Such knowledge can also be used in developing a strategy towards an industrial council or for reforming the 'system'. ☆

changes *in* *the* law



Paul Benjamin, Centre for Applied Legal Studies

In September 1990, the Government, unions and business agreed that labour legislation must be extended to the three “cinderella” sectors: the public sector, agriculture and domestic workers. In the minute of 6 November 1992, further deadlines were laid down for this process. In this article, we look at the progress that has been made.

Public Sector

A Public Service Labour Relations Bill was published for comment in December last year. It is the product of negotiations between the Commission for Administration (CFA) who are responsible for public sector labour relations and the staff associations of public servants.

Agreement was reached on some but not all aspects of the Bill. Its principle features are:

- it establishes a public sector bargaining council;
- the jurisdiction of the Industrial Court and the unfair labour practice are extended to the public sector;
- the Act creates dispute resolution procedures and strike procedures;

- striking is forbidden in essential services but these employees can refer their disputes to compulsory arbitration.

So far so good. But a closer look at the Bill shows that it will not achieve effective labour relations and dispute resolution in the public sector. Let us look at a few examples. First, the Bill creates a number of different categories of disputes – different types of disputes are referred to different forums – some go to conciliation boards, others to industrial councils. This will create many problems and lead to technical objections about whether a dispute has been correctly classified.

A single dispute such as a retrenchment which combines rights and interests issues could give rise to four or five different types of dispute meetings and procedures.

Many features of the Act favour the interests of employers over employees. For instance, a union must give 20 days’ notice of a strike but the employer can interdict it on two days’ notice. After 30 days of a legal strike, the Act authorises the employer to dismiss or penalise workers. Workers can also be dismissed before this if the strike is conducted in an “unreasonable” manner. The pre-strike procedures are as complex as those in the LRA.

The definition of essential



Farmworkers: soon to be covered by legislation

Photo: Santu Mofokeng

services in which striking is prohibited is extremely wide, going beyond the ILO recommendation of only services whose interruption would threaten the health and safety of the community. The results of compulsory arbitration in disputes with financial implications are not binding on the Government.

The Government was keen to push the law through early this year. For this reason, it published it for comment in mid-December and required parties to make their comments before the end of the year. In February, COSATU gave evidence before a Parliamentary Committee who, surprisingly, put a spoke in the Government's wheel and ordered further consultations over the Bill. Hopefully, this

will mean that an improved Act is passed later this year.

Farm workers

The NMC investigation into the extension of labour law to farm workers began in 1989. Its first fruit was the extension of the Unemployment Insurance Act to agriculture on 1 January 1993. The Government has also promised to extend the Basic Conditions of Employment Act on 1 April – a major step forward for farm workers and unions.

In December, two further Bills to extend labour law to farm workers were published for comment. These will extend the LRA and the Wage Act to agriculture.

Both Bills are controversial. The LRA Bill would severely restrict the

ability of farm workers to bargain collectively by restricting their right to strike:

- The Industrial Court could declare strikes by farm workers, even if legal, to be unacceptable. This could be done if the strike was accompanied by acts or threats of violence or if the court believes that it is not "functional" to collective bargaining.
- Farmers could enter into annual no strike/no lock-out agreements with their workers. These workers would not be able to strike nor could they go to arbitration over their disputes.

The ban on "unacceptable" strikes is similar to the provision that allowed the Industrial Court to interdict strikes as unfair labour

practices in the 1988 Act.

The Act proposes that a special labour court be created for farm workers. The court would only deal with individual cases and parties could not have representation. The court would be inquisitorial – the presiding officer would ask questions. The Bill proposes that the court should not have the power to reinstate workers dismissed unfairly - merely to award financial compensation of two weeks' wages per year of service up to a maximum of 30 weeks' wages.

This feature has been severely criticised. Although farm workers could still take their cases to the ordinary Industrial Court, many will not be able to do so because of distance and resources and they will be prevented from fighting for their reinstatement.

The Bill also proposes that the National Manpower Commission establish codes of fair labour practice for farm workers. This is seen as a forerunner of more general codes from the NMC. More controversially, it proposes that farmers and their employees (or trade unions) should be able to negotiate labour codes for submission to the minister for promulgation. This type of labour code for a particular sector is unacceptable - it could lead to employers, for instance, pressurising their workers to give up the right to a hearing.

The Wage Amendment Bill hardly "extends" the Wage Act to agriculture. While the Wage Board can presently set

minimum wages and conditions of employment for other workers, the Bill proposes that the Board can only set guidelines in agriculture. These would not be legally enforceable and the failure to comply with them would not be an offence. The desirability of minimum wages in a sector such as agriculture is very controversial. This proposal ends the debate between those who favour minimum wages and those who oppose them, in favour of those who oppose them. The Wage Board could be an important forum for investigating the conditions in agriculture and for parties to put forward their arguments as to what the effect of minimum wages would be.

The South African Agricultural Union, the biggest farmers' organisation, wants separate labour laws for farm workers. It has therefore drafted a Farm Workers' Act that would include the LRA and the BCEA. If no agreement can be reached, the Government will have to decide whether the Acts are extended through the present legislation or through a separate agriculture Act. Whatever the Government decides, it has committed itself to extend these last two labour laws to agriculture this year.

Domestic Workers

A Bill to amend the BCEA to cover domestic workers was also published in December. The Government's

commitment is to get the law through Parliament this year and bring it into effect in the second half of 1993.

This would extend most of the BCEA to domestic workers including a 46 hour ordinary working week, 14 hours maximum overtime, paid annual leave and paid sick leave. This will be the first time that the conditions of domestic workers have been regulated by statute. At the same time, committees are meeting to investigate the extension of other labour laws to domestic workers. These committees will investigate an appropriate structure for the Industrial Court to deal with domestic worker cases and the problems raised by extending social security legislation like the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act to domestic workers.

The extension of basic rights has been a principle aspect of COSATU's initial participation on the National Manpower Commission. The process has not been easy and the attitude of the Government has often been obstinate, but a combination of patience and pressure is beginning to show dividends. However, laws alone will not improve the position of farm workers and domestic workers who are poorly organised and difficult to organise. It is therefore important for the unions to use the extension of labour laws to these three sectors as a spring-board for stronger organisation. ☆

“Unions in South Africa should play the kind of role that unions play in the social democratic or welfare states. Both parties have to get together and be part of a programme of economic reconstruction.”

THAVARAJOO (Slade) PILLAY, president of the Durban Integrated Municipal Employers Society, talks to IMRAAN VALODIA

Early days

I was born in Durban in October 1957 and spent my childhood in Chatsworth, a working-class Indian area south of Durban, in a two-roomed house. Both my parents worked. My dad was a labourer and my mother a machinist in a clothing factory.

I have three brothers. One's a lawyer, another runs his own steel business and my youngest brother is a teacher. I matriculated at the Chatsworth Secondary School.

At an early age my parents taught us the value of education. I studied at the University of Durban Westville (UDW) and completed a diploma in library science in 1979. At university I engaged in student politics. Music was a special interest and we held concerts regularly to raise money for community programmes.

Working as a librarian

After completing my diploma, I worked as a teacher librarian. In late 1980, I was employed

as a librarian by the Durban municipal library.

We experienced exploitation and discrimination at every level. While the library claimed to be an equal opportunity employer, no deeds actively supported or lent credence to this.

Fortunately I worked with UDW graduates whom I knew from my student days. We tackled these problems together, as a small group of concerned workers. We soon realised we needed a powerful and strong trade union. We were all members of the Durban Integrated Municipal Employees Society (DIMES) through the closed shop.

We pressurised the union to take a new direction and to adopt a more militant stand against the injustices perpetrated by management.

Union activity

In 1985, I was elected as a shopsteward. At this time the union was extremely weak, both organisationally and structurally. Workers felt

little loyalty and commitment to the union. Among the shopstewards there were about three of us who were labelled radicals and militants and were seen as having political goals, rather than taking up the cudgels on behalf of the workers.

Nevertheless we started raising political questions in the various union structures. In 1987, attempts were made to oust us from the union under the pretext of our being in violation of the constitution. This resulted in a Supreme Court case and we were reinstated. Subsequently the general secretary resigned and we began to transform the union organisationally. This was a very traumatic period in the union's history.

We introduced a shopsteward council and executive committee in keeping with the progressive trade union movement. We were then involved in numerous legal battles with the city council, our prime objective being to eradicate past and present injustices. To this end we were very successful.

The union was the prime mover and initiator in demanding beaches be opened to all races. This campaign gained a momentum of its own and we came into contact with progressive organisations both nationally and internationally. Our joint efforts resulted in the mayor Mr Watterson's expulsion from the Mayors' Conference in Paris in the late 1980s. This and other media publicity catapulted the union to national prominence.

In September 1989, I was elected president of the union.

Merger talks with SAMWU

We sought affiliation to COSATU in 1989. We were told we had to merge with the COSATU affiliate - South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU). We initiated talks with SAMWU with the merger process high on the agenda. Initially these talks bore fruit but eventually started floundering.

Unfortunately we were faced with numerous problems. The merger was based on principles rather than taking the process into account. Our unions' approach to the merger process was fraught with weaknesses

and problems that emanated directly from inadequate consultation and inadequate mandates from our general membership, which appeared to be divided over the merger issue. We did not sufficiently debate the issue in our structures and as a consequence, members were confused.

A more pragmatic approach to the merger would have facilitated the process. As Comrade Jay Naidoo from COSATU stated at our national congress this year, equal blame could be apportioned to both unions.

The merger has to be prefaced with an appropriate educational process. There has to be a commitment from both sides for the merger to succeed. The main thrust of this education programme should be total transformation of workers' perception. The diversity of our membership both in occupation and political affiliations poses enormous challenges and problems. We have accountants, doctors, lawyers, clerks, and labourers among our membership. At this juncture, the merger process has been suspended. We have embarked on an education programme to educate our members on why the leadership feels the merger is imperative. It's no use our going forward without our members. We need to tread very carefully.

Given COSATU's muscle and the power it can wield in the present and the future, our goal has to be to affiliate to COSATU.

Political beliefs

As an office bearer, I cannot hold any official position in a political party or organisation. Because of the political diversity of our membership, politics becomes a sensitive issue and our tasks as leaders must be to unite rather than alienate or divide workers.

I am a social democrat. I am a strong adherent of the social policies that exist in countries like Sweden and Finland, which are essentially market based and can weather severe economic crises. They have a high growth performance. It is a market-based system allowing intervention by the state, which I think would simultaneously attain the

goals of redistribution and economic growth. Economic growth has to be aligned to an improvement in skills, education and obviously trade unions. In social democracies or welfare states a social security system makes provision for the disadvantaged. The rapprochement between management and trade unions in Sweden since 1937 is a lesson that needs to be learnt and adopted in a new democratic South Africa if our intentions are to reconstruct and build a strong economy and have a fair distribution of wealth.

The union and the state must be seen as equal partners and not as adversaries. Working with the state does not mean the union movement's losing its independence.

The union must be independent but work with the state on issues common to both. The current political climate forces the union to be involved in political issues. Perhaps once a political solution is reached which is supported by the majority, the unions will no longer adopt a high political profile.

The tripartite alliance should be seen in its proper context. This alliance is for the strengthening of progressive forces. When a new popular government is elected, we as workers have to ensure workers' rights are not violated. That is why the Workers' Charter should be part of the constitution. Once political freedom is attained and we have a popular democratic government, the alliance will obviously not be necessary.

Unions in the future

Unions have to adopt a more professional attitude and become sophisticated in their approach. There is a serious lack of discipline and this problem can ultimately lead to a deepening crises within the union. Union personnel have the wrong perception that any rules and regulations are bureaucratic in themselves. This obviously leads to unnecessary friction and animosity.

Comrades must realise the unions must run efficiently and must not misconstrue appropriate discipline as being an appendage of the capitalistic system. Union officials must realise they are workers too and have to face

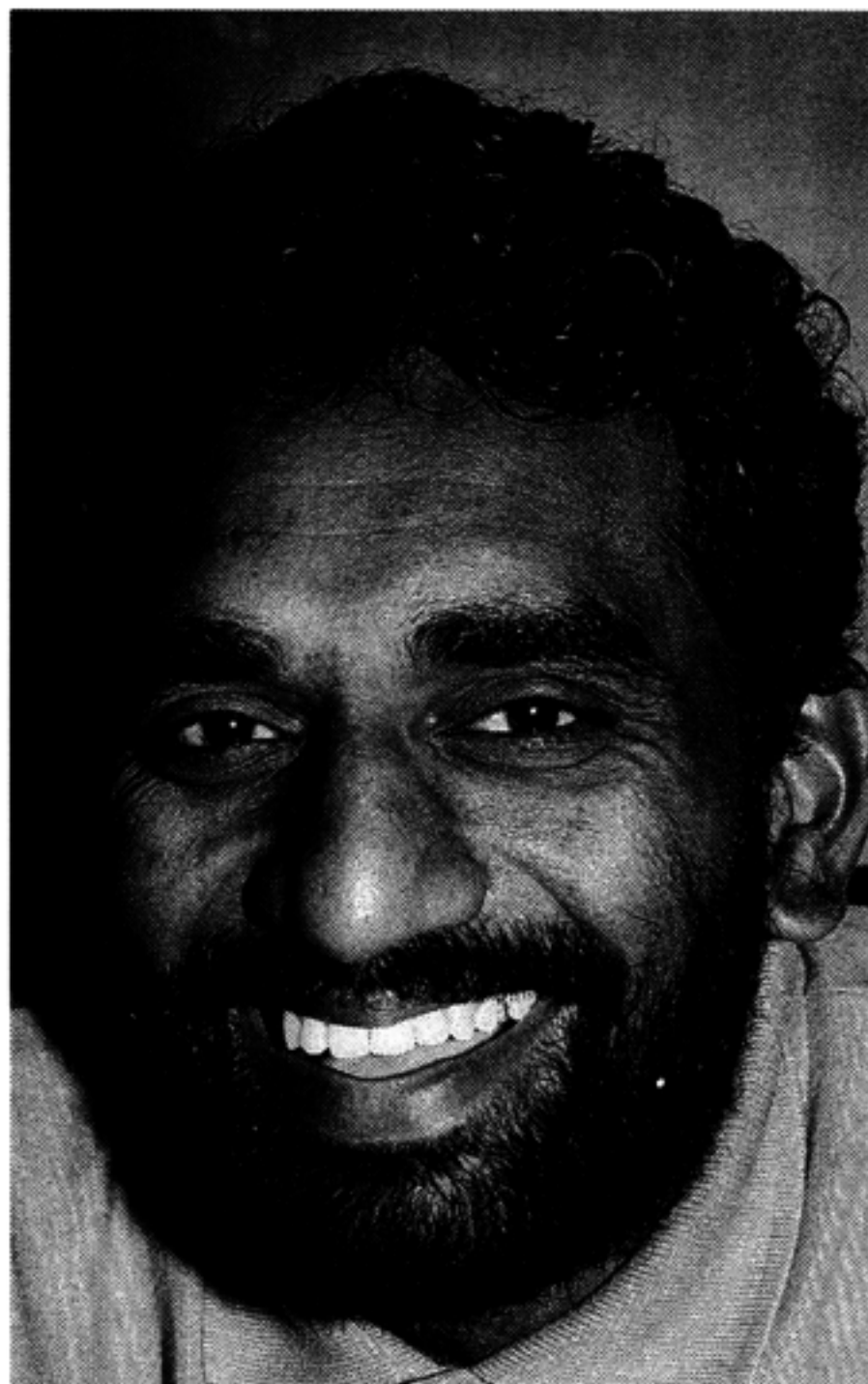


Photo: Morice

the same discipline as others. Administratively, the unions have to be run as a professional organisation.

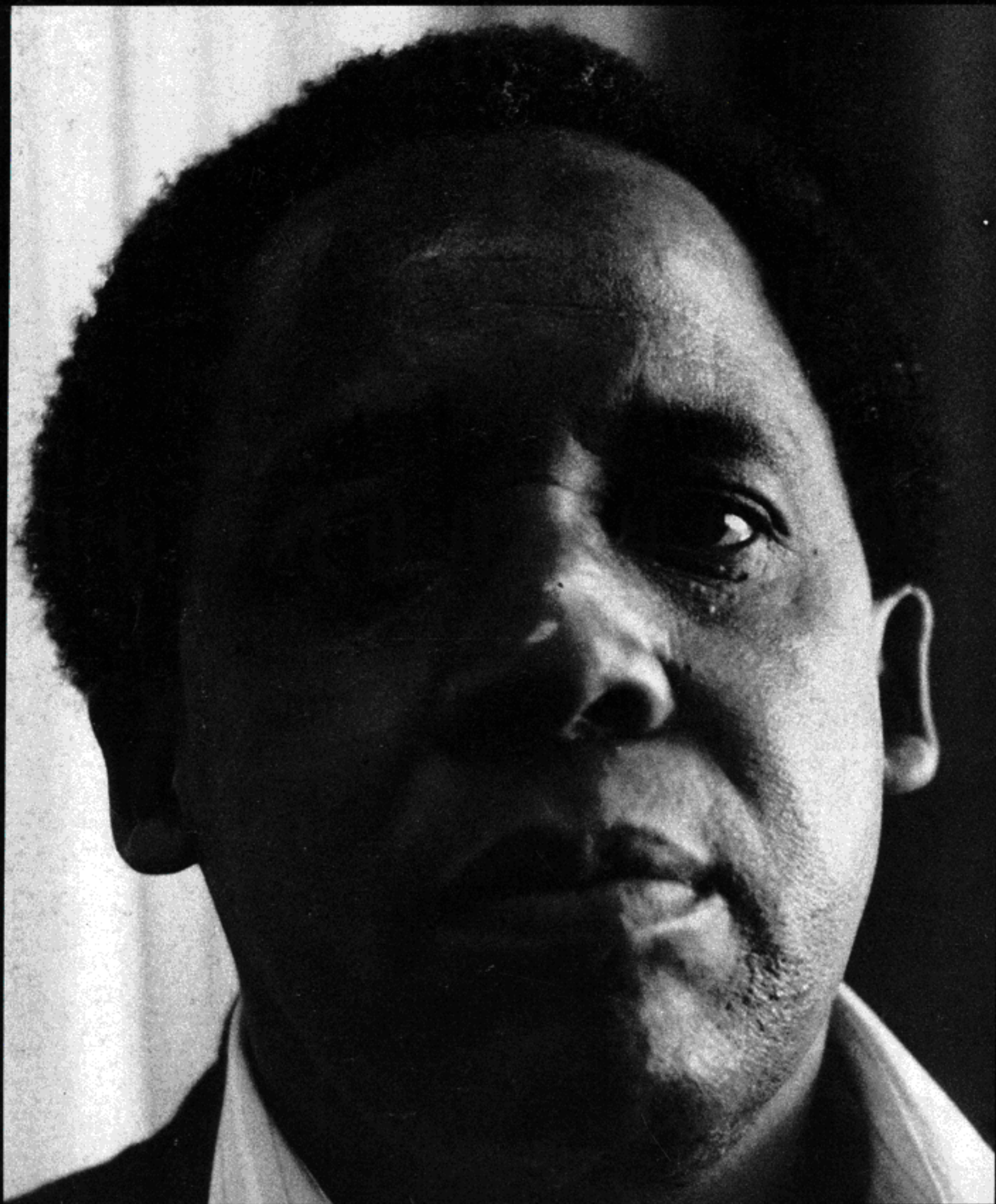
It is extremely important to concentrate on administration and appropriate discipline within the union so that we can tackle our problems, including management, more effectively. Hiding behind slogans does not eradicate our daily problems.

Private life

I play cricket, soccer and a little table tennis. As a librarian, I obviously read a lot. I have been married for 11 years and my wife is a primary school teacher. I have three daughters.

Union activities take up a lot of my time. In the beginning my time spent away from home on union business led to friction – but now my wife understands and accepts my commitment. I do a lot of housework, although my wife might disagree. I believe I do my share of the housework and child care. ☆

Hamba Kahle Chris Hani



Fighter for the working
people of South Africa

COSATU – ANC – SACP