

MAY DAY Edition

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Review · Natal Garment Workers

The November Stay-away
Labour Monitoring Group

Struggles on the Mines
Marcel Golding

Volume 10 Number 6 May 1985

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South African Bulletin

South African Labour Bulletin

Volume 10 Number 6 May 1985 1985

The South African Labour Bulletin

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Published since April 1974.

Eight issues yearly. Guidelines for contributors and subscription form on back page.

The South African Labour Bulletin is a refereed journal.

The views expressed in the contributions are not necessarily those of the editorial board.

The Internationale

Arise! You prisoners of starvation
Arise! You wretched of the earth
For justice thunders condemnation
A better world in birth

No more tradition's chains shall bind us
Arise! You slaves no more in thrall
The earth will rise on new foundations
We have been naught, we shall be all!

Chorus

So comrades come rally
and the last fight let us face
the Internationale unites the human race.
(repeat)

MAY DAY GREETINGS

Forward with the Workers' Struggle



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The International Week of Working Class Youth

The Young Christian Workers movement has planned various activities in parts of the country, to celebrate the "International Week". This will build up to the 1st of May, when YCW's will be joining other Worker Organisations to celebrate the Workers Day.

The celebration of the "International Week" is an attempt by the YCW to help young workers to understand and realise the importance of solidarity among workers internationally. Young workers will reflect on the necessity of action by workers to bring about change in their lives. For example, an action by young workers working for the same multinational company in Brazil and South Africa, is a concrete expression of International Worker Solidarity. There will also be an analysis of how the international economic and political systems are a common reality facing workers.

Workers gatherings will be organised, where there will be films on the struggles of workers in other countries. This will be followed by discussions in small groups. Trade unionists will also be invited to speak about present struggles being carried on by the workers. Sketches depicting workers realities in a factory will also be staged around the question of overtime and how workers have struggled against this.

The following activities have been arranged:

- * 27th April - Soweto, St Matthews School, 818 Moroka, (next to Regina Mundi); 1.30 p.m. Film: "One voice" - debate, songs; R1.00
- * 28th April - Catholic Church Kutsong; 2 p.m. Film: "Norma Rae" - debate, songs; R1.00
- * 1st May - Khotso House; Lunch time. All Workers Meeting.
- * 4th May - West Rand; with the unions- MAY DAY WORKERS RALLY

(YCW communique, April 1985)

The 1st of May is the Workers' Day

Nearly 130 years ago, in 1856, workers in Australia held a work stoppage on April 21 to fight for an eight hour day. Thereafter it was celebrated as a workers' holiday each year. This was the beginning of International Workers' Day. Thirty years later unions in the USA declared that as from 1 May 1886 the working day would be fixed at eight hours and that all workers should strive for this. Hundreds of thousands of workers took up the campaign and supported it with huge demonstrations, strikes, songs, boycotts and slogans. But not without cost. In Chicago, police fired on locked out workers killing six. The next day in what started as a peaceful protest in Haymarket Square, a bomb was thrown by an unknown person (thought to be a police agent). As a result four labour leaders were framed on conspiracy charges and hanged. That year gave Workers' Day its first martyrs and a lasting example of capitalist injustice.

By 1890 an International Workers' Congress had accepted 1 May as the international day of solidarity of all workers of the world. Meetings were held that year in Australia, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Britain and Portugal. Since then the 1st of May has continued to be celebrated as Workers' Day around the world. In some countries, for example Zambia, it is an official holiday. Workers' Day has symbolised the unity of interests of all workers and the fight for workers' rights and power.

Workers' Day comes to South Africa

In South Africa too, Workers' Day has a long history. It was first celebrated in 1904 when class conscious immigrant workers held a procession and a meeting in Market Square, Johannesburg. The workers carried red banners and wore badges and ribbons in red, the international colour of the workers' movement. Speakers said it was time to introduce the socialist movement to Johannesburg and condemned the Anglo-Boer war as the outcome of the conflict between two sections of the capitalist class. They urged the workers to organise politically and destroy the disastrous social conditions caused by capitalism. Another urged the workers to solve their problems

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by taking control of the mines and factories.

While still celebrated from time to time, Workers' Day in South Africa received its second boost from the workers' revolution in Russia in 1917. White workers' became more class conscious, less racist and for the first time the May Day meeting was addressed by a black worker. This was the start of Workers' Day for black workers who held their own meeting the following year and participated in demonstrations with white workers in 1919.

But black and white workers were already divided at work. After the white workers' revolt in 1922 was defeated, the bosses and the state granted privileges to white workers which made them less militant and divided South African workers even further. It took the effects of the depression in the early thirties to re-establish some unity.

Workers' Day 1931

The unions of white workers had developed a tradition of holding Workers' Day celebrations under the United May Day Committee (UMDC) which they formed each year. In early 1931 the UMDC rejected participation of "coloured" workers. This led socialists to establish the non-racial African May Day Committee (AMDC) as an alternative.

On the morning of 1 May, 1931, the AMDC began its activities by gathering its members, and black and white unemployed workers at Newtown Market Square in Johannesburg. In a show of solidarity never seen before, up to 3,000 Africans and 1,500 whites marched together as workers. Carrying banners which said "Down with British and Afrikaner Imperialism", and other slogans in African languages they marched to the City Hall. With loud booing they passed the Native Affairs Department, the police headquarters and Corner House, the headquarters of the mine owners.

The quiet and orderly meeting of the UMDC on the steps of the City Hall was startled when the AMDC procession swept up with singing, chanting and banners flying, and completely overwhelmed them. A suggestion from the UMDC meeting that the AMDC leaders should maybe be allowed to speak from the UMDC platform was drowned in the shouting and loud booing from the

mixed crowd of unemployed. They far outnumbered the UMDC meeting which was forced to move away. "Those people over there are traitors", shouted one of the AMDC leaders to cheers from the crowd. "We say long live the black and white unity of South Africa." "I am sure that the capitalist class of the world is trembling in its shoes at seeing the unity of the working class", another speaker added.

Issy Diamond, who had been very active earlier that year among white unemployed, drew cheers when he referred to the "black comrades" present. Diamond had recently organised unemployed white workers to march into the Carlton Hotel and demand food from the rich, until they were thrown out by the police. As the speeches ended a mixed crowd of over 1,000 formed into a procession and with Diamond in the lead, marched purposefully off to the Carlton Hotel singing the "Red Flag" and shouting "We want work, we want bread", and "Work or wages". A rush was made to get into the hotel but the police had anticipated their action and closed the doors before they could get in.

They then went off to the Rand Club to which all the big mine owners and other capitalists belonged. At the Club the crowd was swelled greatly by people from the shops and offices who were attracted to the noise and shouting. The leaders of the procession mounted the steps and found the outer doors open but guarded by several police. Two pages and the head porter rushed to close the inner doors. There was a scuffle and pushing which broke the glass in the door, to the excitement of the crowd. The rich mine and factory owners watched from the upper floors of the Club as the police and workers struggled below.

More policemen arrived and baton charged the crowd. Black and white workers fought back, repeatedly defending and inflicting "severe punishment on the thugs of Pirow", the Minister of Police. African banner bearers fought valiantly to hold onto the flags they were carrying, one being beaten unconscious by the police. After some struggling and pushing a number of men were forced down to the pavement by the police and arrested against the shouting and booing of the crowd.

A large party followed the police and their six white and two black captives on their way to Marshall Square. Among the

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prisoners was Issy Diamond. In Marshall Street there was more fighting as workers tried to free the prisoners. Two more white workers were arrested. By 2.30 p.m. that day the town was again quiet after Johannesburg's largest Workers' Day demonstration.

But the unity of the workers alarmed the ruling class. The capitalist press was concerned about their masters' interests and immediately began discrediting the workers. This is how the Rand Daily Mail described the march of the unemployed: "...a bedraggled procession in which dirty looking natives of the lowest class marched shoulder-to-shoulder with Europeans, many of them of obvious low mentality." Realising how important racial division between workers is to the bosses, the newspaper continued:

The breaking-down of the social barrier between black and white is a serious development which cannot be lightly regarded. The Communist movement is now largely directed towards the creation of a spirit of class consciousness amongst the native population. And the evil seed is falling upon peculiarly fertile ground...The white Bolshevik is bad enough. The black one is unthinkable.

The courts also played their role. Six whites and one African were charged. Two of the whites were sentenced to eighteen months hard labour each and Diamond to twelve months. The state also followed up this period with its "civilized labour" policy which gave white workers jobs before any other race so that they would not join black workers in action against the bosses.

The 1950 Workers' Day stay-away

By 1950 black workers had inherited the working class militancy which had belonged to white workers in the early part of the century. Large scale strikes and large scale squatter movements were part of the masses experience as they entered the 1950's and were ready for action.

As the 1 May approached the Communist Party, calling it Freedom Day, called for a stay-away to protest against repressive laws. The Transvaal ANC officially withdrew support for it and the Africanist ANC Youth League actively opposed it, fearing the spread of CP influence. Despite this dissension with-

in the black community the Government took it very seriously and sent loudspeaker vans into the townships throughout the Witwatersrand and Vereeniging, urging workers to go to work on Workers' Day.

Disregarding all this the stay-away proved to be 80% successful on the Rand. Street parades were also held in Cape Town, Durban, Bethal, and Bloemfontein. In Orlando shots were fired from the Orlando shelters at police escorting home those who had gone to work. Stone throwing and clashes also took place with the police at Alexandra, Moroka, Brakpan and Sophiatown in which 18 people were killed, adding their names to the list of workers of the world who have died in the struggle.

In 1961 the Government acted against Workers' Day enforcing its exclusion from wage determinations and industrial council agreements. By 1965 it was no longer celebrated by South African workers.

Once more the 1st of May is the Workers' Day

In 1982 and 1983 meetings were held once again on Workers' Day. In 1984 May 1st was observed by workers all over South Africa. At Athlone, Cape Town, 3,000 gathered to celebrate, with some coming from as far away as George and Tulbagh. Unity was the major theme of the rally. Said one speaker: "The foundations of the new federation are in the workers in the factories." Another stressed the internationalism of the workers struggle and said that "the workers' fight against apartheid was also a fight against capitalism".

In the Transvaal meetings were held by some of the FOSATU locals and a joint leaflet from CCAWUSA, GAWU, the Brush and Cleaners Workers Union, and CUSA stressed the solidarity of workers throughout the world. In Port Elizabeth, MACWUSA and GWUSA organised a meeting at which a speaker referred to the Freedom Day stay-away of 1950. In East London a meeting supported by GWU, AFCWU, SAAWU, NAAWU, the Domestic Workers Union, the UDF, and the National Womens Association was unable to be held as their attempts to find a venue were obstructed.

In Natal 4-500 shop stewards from the "unity" unions met in joint councils the day before to discuss the significance and history of Workers' Day, and for report backs on the Unity

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Talks. 30,000 pamphlets and stickers were distributed by the shop stewards who also organised factory meetings the next day.

The 1st of May is now back in the workers' struggle in South Africa. Unions in the metal and auto industries have demanded a paid holiday for Workers' Day. In 1984 Chemical Workers Industrial Union members at Pilkington Glass, Port Elizabeth, won a half-day paid holiday on May 1st. This year plans have been made to distribute leaflets and hold meetings all round the country. In the Transvaal unions have united to hold meetings in the Vaal, Pretoria, Benoni, Boksburg, Tembisa, Kwa Thema (Springs), Katlehong (Germiston), Kempton Park, Secunda and Johannesburg. Southern Natal meetings are scheduled for Pietermaritzburg, Estcourt, Ladysmith and in Durban the unions have applied for a permit to hold a rally at Curries Fountain, the historic site of earlier May Day meetings. The most recent news from Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage is that the unions are planning a number of shop steward meetings on the theme of May Day with a view to staging a rally. The Cape Town unions, building on the success of 1984, are planning a large rally. Meetings are also planned for northern Natal, East London and Bloemfontein.

Source material

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- 3 RDM 2.5.31
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- 5 TUCSA Papers, "May Day", Witwatersrand University
- 6 R K Cope, Comrade Bill, p320
- 7 Simons and Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950, p445
- 8 E Roux, S P Bunting, 1944, pp130-1
- 9 K French, "James Mpanza and the Sofasonke Party in the development of local politics in Soweto", MA thesis, Witwatersrand University, 1983, pp203-7

(K French, April 1985)

Appeal: We are trying to collect more details on the history of May Day in South Africa. If you remember the old celebrations before 1965 please write to us at: 1st May History Project, Ravan Press, P O Box 31134, Braamfontein 2017.

Magnificent Miners: The British Coal Strike

The workers' movement in all lands owes an immense debt to the mining communities of Britain who ended their year-long strike on March 5th. In conditions of mass-unemployment, and in virtual isolation, these communities - who constitute less than 2% of the organised working class in Britain - have defied the power of an advanced capitalist state for twelve months. They have devised and unleashed new forms of struggle, and provided an intellectual and moral critique of capitalist economics so strident and powerful that even the British Journal of Accountancy has been forced to declare Cortonwood - the pit whose closure sparked the strike - "economic". (1)

The mining communities have captured the imagination of workers everywhere. Never before has a single strike mobilised the solidarity of the international working class to such a degree. It is estimated that their supporters gave R120 million to the British mining communities. (2) More than half of this sum came from outside the UK. Ships laden with food and truckloads of gifts for strikers' children poured in from workers in Western and Eastern Europe. In Australia, workers refused to handle coal bound for Britain; in France, they emptied railway trucks of coal destined for Britain and dumped the coal on to the railway lines; in Poland, Solidarnosc criticised the Polish Government for selling coal to Thatcher and sent messages of solidarity to the British NUM. (3)

Whatever now happens in the pits, there is a sense in which the miners leave Thatcherism more vulnerable to a sustained worker-offensive than ever before. It was a weak capitalism which engineered the strike and it is a still weaker one which emerges from it.

The weakness of British capitalism

As Eric Hobsbawm has suggested, Britain's long-term decline as a capitalist economic power lies in the fact that it was the first country to industrialise. The second and third-wave industrialisers (Germany, the USA, Japan) set up industries on the most modern (contemporary) basis and proceeded from that point. For British capitalism it was different: the in-

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roduction of new processes of production meant writing off the considerable investments in the old and antagonising the vested interests around them. It was much more comfortable to continue in the old way, especially with a captive market in the Empire. (4) Coupled with this is the fact that Britain's early industrialisation created the world's oldest proletariat and, therefore, the world's first organised working class. Their long history of organisation and struggle makes British workers, industrially, the most powerful group of workers in any major capitalist state. So long as the transformation of labour processes has threatened them - as it inevitably has under capitalism - these workers have resisted and placed obstacles in the way of that transformation, slowing it up. Hence it is that Britain lags behind - and will continue to lag behind - its major competitors. Only a socialist reconstruction of its economy, eliminating the alienation of workers from production, will liberate Britain from these fundamental contradictions.

Prior to World War 2, the possession of the Empire - always crucial for defusing the economic crises within the metropole itself - prevented the contradictions of the British economy from assuming a more acute form. The liquidation of the Empire after the War set the stage for economic crisis. But the processes at work remained submerged beneath the full employment and unprecedented prosperity enjoyed by the advanced capitalist world during the "long boom" of the quarter-century after World War 2.

The crisis broke in the late-sixties and early-seventies when the capitalist economies entered their first major synchronised recession since the War. Britain's ruling class was now faced with a severe economic crisis but it no longer had the traditional (imperial) means to defuse it. A restructuring of economic relations at home was now its only option. A confrontation with the working class was inevitable but, because of the strides of the boom decades when union membership attained record levels, it was a working class industrially more powerful than ever before. These, then, are the historical reasons for the sudden upswing in the class struggle in Britain over the last decade and a half.

The first comprehensive attempt to curb the power of the organised working class was undertaken by the Heath Government

in the early-seventies. It met with failure. In the most successful industrial offensive in British history, the working class - with power workers and miners in the van, but with general solidarity action from other workers - rolled back Heath's attempts to restrict wage increases. The miners' strike of 1974, moreover, drove the Tories from power and the ultimate effect of the struggles of the early-seventies was to compel the withdrawal of Heath's Industrial Relations Act, which prefigured Thatcher's later legislation.

Labour's accession to power in 1974 resolved nothing. As a party committed to capitalism, it - like the Tories - saw the way out of the economic malaise in keeping wages down, especially in the state-controlled sectors. Consequently, it ran head on into the problems which despatched Heath. Nemesis arrived in 1978/9, the "winter of discontent", when public sector workers struck as never before, driving Labour from office.

The immediate origins of the strike

The workers' struggles of the seventies transformed the political map of Britain. They began a long-overdue, but still very partial, transformation of the Labour Party, which shed some of its most right-wing elements into a new Social Democratic Party. In the Tory Party, general panic followed the success of the industrial offensives of the early-seventies. Tories, generally began to re-align round their Thatcherite wing - the section of their Party which, because of its petit bourgeois origins, is made most insecure by worker-militancy and, therefore, most aggressive in dealing with it.

Exit Heath, enter Thatcher. And the history of post-1979 Britain is the history of a bourgeois counter-offensive, an attempt to roll back the gains of the '50s, '60s and '70s and decisively tilt the balance of forces against the working class. Hence the legislation to control strikes and prevent solidarity action by workers not directly involved in a dispute; hence the attack on the political funds of unions; hence the onslaught on the major industrial unions: first those of the car workers, then that of the steel workers, now the miners. The labour process in each of these industries has been subjected to - or is about to be subjected to - a qualitative change designed not only to reduce the size of the workforce and intensify exploitation, but to decrease the

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size of the union and subordinate it more to management. Pit closures are more about reducing the strategic importance of the miners, and the very size of their union, than they are about capitalist profitability. For, as the economist Andrew Glyn has shown in analyses of allegedly "loss-making" collieries, in a study conducted from the perspective of the finances of present-day (capitalist) Britain: if one sets against the costs of investments necessary to keep a pit open, the costs of closure (in redundancy and coal payments, lost taxes, lost coal production and the spin-off effects on other areas of the economy) then any pit producing any coal should be kept open. The miners' demand to work a pit until it is completely exhausted of coal is thus infinitely more rational than the Tory insistence on closing them long before. (5)

But, in the Tory schema, a defeat of the miners - historically the flagship of the British workers' movement and its most militant and class-conscious section - was central. The detailed (almost military) planning for the confrontation began within the Tory Party on the eve of its accession to power in 1979, when a secret report, prepared by Nicholas Ridley, circulated in Tory ranks. There followed six years of intensive preparations as the power of the state was harnessed in preparation for an onslaught on the mining communities.

By 1984, the objectives of the Ridley Report had been met. Coal stocks had been tripled to 55 million tonnes, half of them at the power stations; many of the latter had been provided with an oil-fired capacity thus reducing coal's importance in the event of a strike; a huge paramilitary police operation could be activated at short notice to prevent the movement of pickets; legislation had provided for the complete withdrawal of social security payments to single strikers, and for a weekly reduction of R30 from such payments to married strikers; a systematic campaign to recruit non-union lorry drivers had been successfully completed. MacGregor, the butcher of British Steel and British Leyland, was moved to the chair of the National Coal Board, a deliberately provocative action. Finally, the government timed its confrontation with the miners for the early spring of 1984 so that they would immediately be demoralised by having to fight for months without any prospect of power cuts.

The confrontation, therefore, has never been about pit clos-

ures. Very likely, that issue was chosen by the Tories for its divisive quality: the initial wave of closures, had it been implemented, would have affected only just over 10% of the Union's membership. The objective of the Government was to smash the Union, discredit its class politics and demoralise the militant mining communities. Had the government simply wished to close pits, it would have done so in the usual way: by not revealing the extent of the planned closures and by closing the marked pits one by one through the colliery review procedure which has operated in management's favour for years. (6) The deliberate flouting of established procedure in the closing of Cortonwood colliery - in the heart of militant Yorkshire, the largest coalfield and the one upon which a successful national strike depended - was undoubtedly a provocation. This came with the announcement that another twenty pits were to go as well. The strike had been engineered. But what the Government expected to be a brief struggle which would discredit the Left within the NUM, erupted into the longest, most bitter and most costly industrial conflict in British history.

Arthur Scargill and the rank and file

The brilliance of the NUM's initial strategy, formulated to a great degree by Scargill himself, is manifest. A ballot for strike action held before the rank and file militants had ensured a national work-stoppage may well have failed to produce a majority: in January 1984, a MORI poll revealed that 68% of miners felt that their union should not follow its overtime ban with a strike; by April, a month after the strike had begun, the same poll found the miners to be 68% in favour of a national strike. (7) Behind this transformation lay the democratic offensive of the rank and file.

In the early weeks of the strike, in the face of a universal crowing for a ballot in the media, Scargill showed enormous political courage in refusing one. The refusal was based on sound democratic principle: it was for the Union to decide which was the most appropriate strategy for prosecuting the strike; moreover, nobody ever balloted the miners whose jobs were under threat. Consequently, the best available strategy was to allow the strike to develop from the grassroots: ie. to release the democratic forces of the threatened communities and the rank and file who supported them, and to allow

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them to appeal to the solidarity of other communities. In the heat of the struggle, the issues and the enemy would become clear to the vast majority. This is in fact what happened. The overwhelming majority of miners did join the fight against pit closures and they did so vigorously: otherwise the strike would never have been sustained as long as it was.

From its earliest days, then, the strike took its tactics not from a union bureaucracy but from the rank and file. The guerilla-style attacks upon convoys of scab lorries, the audacious and destructive raids upon the property of bus and truck companies ferrying scabs and scab materials, the reach out to the socialists beyond the coalfields and the forging of new alliances, the mass picketing - all these bore the marks of a struggle organised by the communities themselves.

Why the strike was ended

In a word, the strike was ended because the might of a modern capitalist state was vindictively brought to bear upon the people in the mining communities, who numbered no more than half-a-million, and whose struggle remained isolated. It is now well-known how a massive deployment of police prevented the free movement of pickets; how brigade-size concentrations of police confronted the miners at Orgreave and elsewhere; how the picket lines were broken by cavalry charges; how dogs were let loose to pursue pickets across the open fields; how curfews were imposed on some mining communities; how 10,000 people were arrested, hundreds hospitalised, some killed, others driven to suicide, and how pitched battles developed between police and communities, as at Grimethorpe. Alongside these must also be set the Government's long preparation for the strike and the judicial theft of the NUM's assets: massive fines were levied, the union sequestrated and ultimately placed in receivership - something which had never happened in British trade union history. The Government had prepared for almost every contingency and was prepared to spend (and did spend) many times the sum it spent to defeat the Argentinian armed forces in 1982 to defeat the miners in 1984.

But the defeat of the miners owed as much to the state of the labour movement in Britain as it did to the coercive force mustered against the NUM: the mining communities - let us not forget it - withstood the state's barrage for a year and man-

aged to inflict some lasting wounds in the process. What defeated the miners in the end was their isolation: the strike had always been strongest when other workers' joined it as during the two national dock strikes of 1984 and, even more so, when the pit deputies' union (NACODS) threatened to join it in October.

But the chances of generalising the struggle were always slim. The onslaught on the miners followed attacks on steel and motor workers. Potential allies were thus weakened. The chances of solidarity action from steel workers were quashed by the weak state of their union after its confrontation with Macgregor, their corporatist leadership and the threat of further plant closures. The motor workers' unions of British Leyland had suffered a major defeat at the hands of Michael Edwardes and...Ian MacGregor. Like the steel workers, they had lost thousands of jobs and their shop stewards movement, one of the most militant in British history, was broken up. The results of this were particularly disastrous for the miners: a potential second front which opened when Leyland workers went on strike in late-1984 collapsed within three weeks. The Tories, moreover, were careful to avoid any action which would qualitatively change the situation: early in 1984, Thatcher instructed British Rail not to force major "rationalisation" for fear of provoking a rail strike.

In the end, only rail workers and seamen remained solid in refusing to handle coal. This cost the government dear - but it had an army of scab lorry-drivers held in reserve for just such an eventuality. The presence of mass unemployment no doubt did much to shake the resolve of many workers who might otherwise have taken risks in supporting the miners. But the conservative bureaucracies of many unions, of the TUC and of the Labour Party must bear a great portion of the blame for the miners' defeat: Kinnock, who opposed the strike from its inception and left the miners politically isolated, squashed the idea of a general strike when it was mooted by saying that it would not be supported by the rank and file. The NUM, in fact, most probably committed a tactical blunder in not demanding more from the TUC annual congress which met when the strike was still in the ascendant. In the end, except in isolated cases, scab coal was handled in the power stations and aid from the British trade union movement was neither resolute nor massive enough to be decisive. Some form of gen-

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eral strike action was necessary to ensure a victory.

The achievements of the strike: victory or defeat?

Any sober analysis of the strike must stare in the face the fact that its end signals the beginning of what may prove to be a qualitative change in the mining industry in Britain. The National Coal Board is set to decentralise its managerial structure: henceforth, the local colliery manager is to assume more and more power in decision-making. The manager will be offered special bonuses for reaching profit-targets. For the union, this means the beginning of an attempt by management to replace national bargaining and agreements with local ones, thereby splitting the union. The Coal Board has also announced its intention to make the face worker a "pit aristocrat" - the recipient of a higher wage and special bonuses - at the expense of other colliery workers, thus further dividing the miners.

In the aftermath of the strike, colliery managers are taking advantage of the (perhaps temporary) changed balance of power in the pits. Shift changes have already been imposed in some areas; many returning strikers have been given inferior jobs; whilst in some pits an onslaught on union militants is proceeding. Derek Law, the manager of Silverwood colliery in South Yorkshire, epitomises the brutality of the new industrial relations: "After the 1974 strike I made the basic mistake of not keeping a record of events. But now I've got a list of everyone that's committed misdemeanours in the dispute. If they can't explain themselves they won't go back to their original job...We've got a faction of about 30 to 40 real militants and this is an ideal time to sort these fellows out." (8) It is also intended to reduce the number of NUM officials effectively engaged in full-time union work.

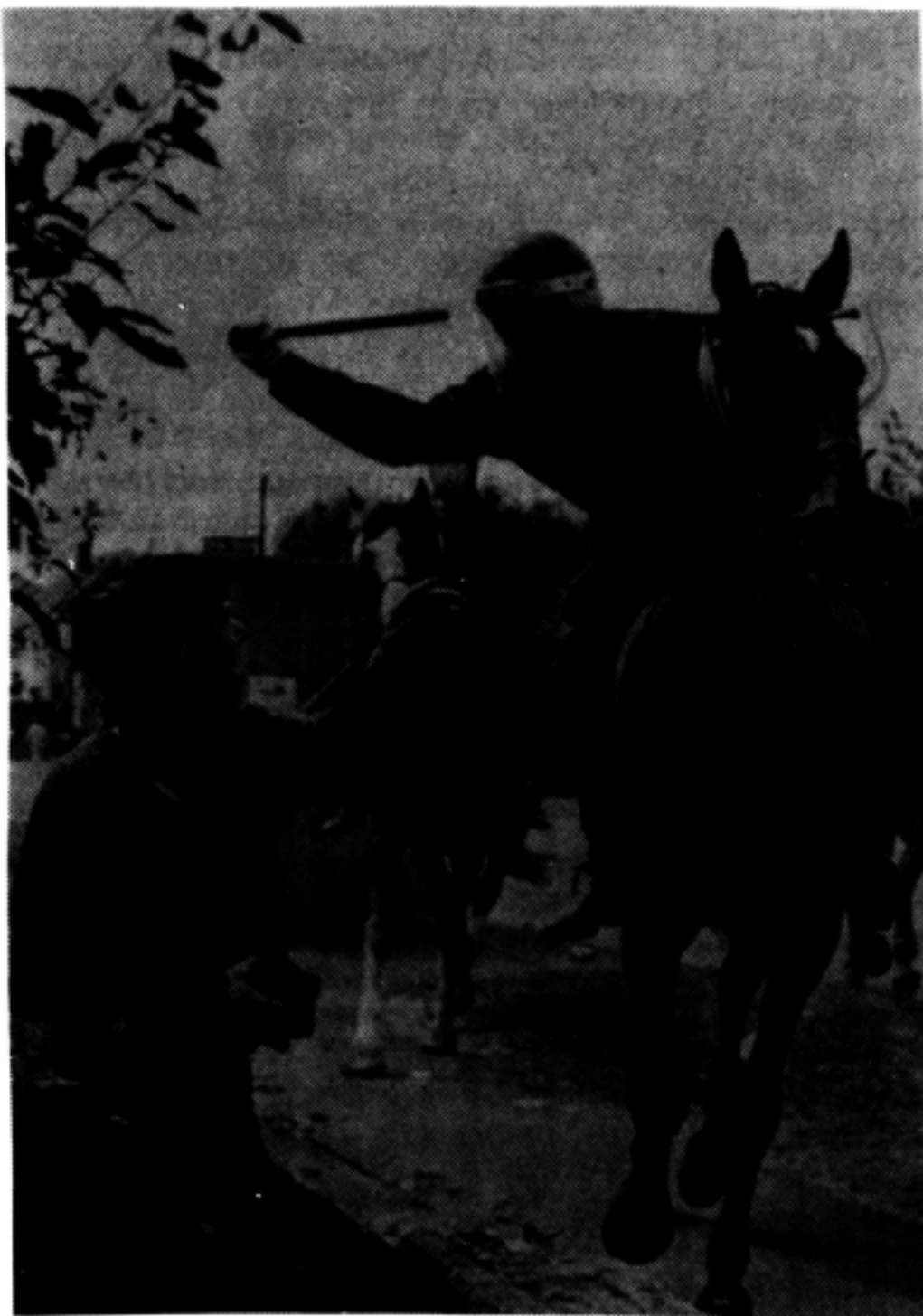
This is unquestionably a moment of peril for the mining communities. The NCB has instructed its area directors to axe as many as 40,000 jobs this year but to maintain existing production-targets. (9) If this occurs it will spell intensified labour and increased exploitation as well as pit closures.

At present the NUM is fighting a rearguard action. The recent decision to end the overtime ban and the refusal of most miners (54% against 46%) to support a fund for their sacked com-

rades points to their exhaustion and pressing need to rebuild their shattered family economies. Nevertheless, the strike has created some defences. Not only has the programme of pit closures been held up for a year, but the pit deputies have been shifted into opposing the Coal Board's plans to some degree. Even The Times concedes that under the NCB's agreement with NACODS, which directly arose out of the miners' strike, it will be more difficult to effect pit closures. (10) The Board's recent attempt to circumvent the NACODS agreement in its intended closure of the Bedwas and Frances collieries led the pit deputies to seek a High Court injunction preventing such closures. When this failed, NACODS accused MacGregor and Thatcher of deliberate falsehood and called an emergency executive meeting. It is now evident that NACODS members in many areas (eg. in Scotland, South Wales, Kent and Durham) favour a strike ballot on the issue. Whether or not some form of industrial action ultimately materialises out of this dispute, it is evident that MacGregor does not have the kind of free hand to close pits that he believed the defeat of the miners would bring him. (11)

The NUM, too, is certainly not a smashed union. The NCB's initial bravado in refusing to reinstate any of the sacked miners has been sapped considerably by the rash of localised strike action in their support. The NUM, in fact, has steadily whittled down the number of sacked miners: in the Northumberland area, for example, two-thirds of those dismissed have already been reinstated. (12) There can be no doubt, however, that the rank and file of the NUM will have to maintain the utmost vigilance and be prepared for further action if the changed balance of power in the pits is not to become permanent. Within the NUM itself, a stubborn and determined confrontation will be required to shift the Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and South Derbyshire areas to the left and bring them under the discipline of the national union. But it would be a mistake to believe that Thatcher's hope - that the NUM would fall into the hands of its right-wing - has been fulfilled by the defeat of the strike. The miners know where their class interests lie: at Lea Hall Colliery in Staffordshire where, by the end of the strike, 90% of the miners were working, Tony Morris (the branch chairperson and a leader of the scab National Working Miners' Committee) was voted out of office and replaced by Graham Warner, a striker. (13)

[photo: mounted police in action]



By and large, the mining communities remain behind the left-wing of the NUM: Scargill's unbending strength and refusal to compromise in the pursuit of the interests of his class is seen as a measure of his stature as a champion of the working class. The most recent MORI poll amongst miners reveals that over half of them remain solidly behind Scargill and that two-thirds of them favour further industrial action to prevent pit closures. (14) The original (unfulfilled) aims of the strike and the ongoing transformation of the labour process in the pits are likely to make miners feel yet more alienated. A significant shift on the

industrial front elsewhere as well as the promise of solidarity action from other workers could re-ignite the struggle at a future date.

It is, however, on a broader front that the strike has achieved so much. For it quickly burnt along to a confrontation not only with management and the state, but with capitalist economics itself. Not for nothing was there an endless conflict between the Coal Board and the NUM over the definition of "economic". Thatcher's complaints about the NUM's attempt to interfere with "management's right to manage" arose in this context. The miners' rejection of the "balance-sheet mentality" of Macgregor was combined with demands for production for community and national need, rather than capitalist profit. And the strike came indissolubly to be linked to the preservation of communities. Not since the battle to shorten

the working day in the nineteenth century has the political economy of the working class been so vigorously pitted against that of the bourgeoisie in Britain. The arguments and the theory will surface again and again as other sections of the working class are attacked.

The state's assault on the mining communities and the heroism with which it was resisted has exposed - not only to millions in Britain but, importantly, to workers outside it - the enormous coercive force and propaganda intrinsic to the maintenance of even the most advanced bourgeois state. The whole experience has also done much to discredit the "popular frontism" which was gaining ground on the Left before the strike: the naivete of those who bade farewell to the working class and favoured political alliances with non-socialists has been revealed. It is a much more realistic Left which emerges.

The strike too, generated its own political movement, creating support groups across the country. The British Left united to funnel millions of pounds and thousands of tonnes of food to the mining communities. The support committees organised mass picketing (providing many of the pickets themselves) and even days of strike action in support of the miners, thereby showing up the tardy response of the TUC. The support committees, coalitions of trade unionists, left groupings and independent socialists, are likely to remain in some form or other and to take part in other struggles: in Oxford, for example, the Miners' Support Committee took an active role in providing pickets during the Leyland strike last year and in helping to organise the occupation of the Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre, one of whose wards was threatened with closure.

On the broader political front, the impact of the strike has been immense and probably accounts for the Tories (seemingly permanent) drop in the opinion polls. There can be no doubt that the miners have opened a breach in the political consensus of Thatcherism: according to a recent poll, two-thirds of the British public now believe that Thatcher's policies are likely to lead to violent confrontations. Within the Labour Party, the Left is unlikely ever again to compromise with the Kinnockites. In Wales, the strike shifted Plyd Cymru (the Welsh nationalist party) to the left and swung the farmers behind the miners.

- British miners -

Just as the dispute has changed all those (outside of the NUM) who have been touched by it, so has it changed the miners. The forging of alliances with a wider socialist movement has made them sensitive to other struggles: the self-organisation of women in the pit villages, supported by feminists in the support committees and from Greenham, leaves the mining communities with their own women's movement. And the effects on the wider women's movement of the militancy of the women against pit closures are already being felt. It is, perhaps, no accident that one of the most determined struggles of women workers in recent British history at Ford (see SALB 10.4) should have taken place during the miners' strike; and at the recent TUC women's conference, delegates paid tribute to their sisters in the coal fields and saw the strike as a decisive break with a past of women's subordination to men during workers' struggles: "The strength of these women - we must take it with both hands!" (15) Within the mining communities themselves, the political transformation is best suggested by the fact that, at the last Labour Party conference, the NUM sponsored the resolutions on Ireland, gays, blacks and women. This extraordinary transformation of consciousness has been achieved, as one writer put it, not by "discursive ingenuity" but by "class-mobilisation in the crucible of struggle". (16)

The economic effects of the strike are massive. At the end of January - with a month more of costs still to be incurred - the cost of the dispute was estimated at more than ten billion rand. (17) Electricity prices are reported set to rise by as much as 6%, (18) something which may well force managements across the country to attempt to restrict wage-rises thus opening other struggles. Approximately half of the enormous costs of the strike has been directly footed by the government. And here is one of the key differences from 1926. Then it was the coal owners, very largely, who had to foot the bill. The draining of the government's revenue has severely restricted Thatcher's room for manoeuvre. Over the last year, because of the example and the pressure of the miners' strike, there was a significant increase in strike action and wage settlements tended to exceed the government's guidelines. At the same time, the need not to provoke other major strikes held back a number of onslaughts on other public sector workers in the post office, schools, civil service and on the railways. These will now proceed - all of them involve major

"rationalisations" and are therefore likely to lead to serious disputes involving strike action. In the case of the teachers and post office workers, this has already begun.

It is for these reasons that the aftermath of the strike might actually witness an upswing in worker militancy. Teachers are already engaged in a programme of escalating strike-action. On March 26th, there was a half-day general strike in post offices in the five largest cities in Britain; whilst over Easter, customs workers began a disruptive work-to-rule in support of the pay claim of the civil service unions; the rail unions, meanwhile, have been successful in forcing management to divorce productivity deals from wage negotiations. Hard-pressed for money, it will become increasingly difficult for the government successfully to see through the coming struggles, much less compromise with one set of workers whilst attacking another. The Tories inability to settle with the teachers reveals the shape of things to come. In the run up to the next election the Tories, still smarting from the financial haemorrhage inflicted upon them by the miners, will find it difficult to "buy votes" through wage settlements in the public sector. Thus the miners may well have turned the tide against Thatcherism.

On Tuesday, March 5th, the miners marched back to work. Across the British coalfields, the symbols of defiance and solidarity were everywhere. In South Wales, the miners of Maerdy colliery - whose grandparents Lenin had personally honoured with a banner - mustered at the Maerdy Hall. The churchbells rang out. The miners, joined by their women's committee, families and support groups (from Oxford and Aberystwyth) marched to the pit. As they neared the pit head, the miners formed up on both sides of the march and clapped thier supporters. The strikers, the women's committees, the pit communities, the support groups - the living forces of a great revolt against capital. They remain. It is, above all, in this sense that the fuse which was lit at Cortonwood, and which detonated the national strike, burns on.

Footnotes

- 1 See the relevant article in the January edition of the Journal. In late-1984 it was widely reported in the British media that the Coal Board had attempted to suppress

- British miners -

- the findings of the authors who submitted the article
- 2 The Guardian Weekly March 1985
 - 3 Socialist Organiser, Nos 219-220, March 1985
 - 4 One of the theses of Hobsbawn's Industry and Empire (Penguin)
 - 5 See A Glyn, The economic costs of pit closures (1984)
 - 6 In a debate on the strike organised by Marxism Today, and published in mid-1984, a NUM member made this point
 - 7 Financial Times 1.3.85, p29
 - 8 ibid, p9
 - 9 Financial Times 18.3.85, p1
 - 10 The Times 5.3.85, Leader: "Tommorrow's Coal"
 - 11 See the The Times 29.3.85, 30.3.85; Financial Times 26.3.85, 30.3.85
 - 12 The Times 23.3.85
 - 13 The Times 29.3.85
 - 14 Financial Times 11.3.85
 - 15 Financial Times 15.3.85
 - 16 New Left Review 148, 1984, Editorial
 - 17 The Guardian Weekly 24.2.85
 - 18 Financial Times 11.3.85

(Jeremy Krikler, March 1985)



The Empangeni Bus Boycott

On 14 January 1985 45,000 commuters from Empangeni's three townships began a boycott of the local bus service to protest against fare increases that were introduced in December 1984. They all live in KwaZulu and most commute to work in Richards Bay. This boycott is one of five that have taken place this year in South Africa. Others occurred in Secunda, Cape Town, Isithebe and, continuing from July 1983, in East London. Once again the boycotts reveal the fundamental contradictions that exist in South Africa's transport policy. Workers are not only forced to travel enormous distances between home and work due to South Africa's unique spatial organisation of production and reproduction. Capitalist transport monopolies and undemocratic, state-controlled transportation boards have absolute power over the quality and cost of transport services which are the umbilical cords between the community and workplace. (1) The Empangeni bus boycott, amongst others, reveals that the logical consequence of this is the politicisation of transport as commuters struggle to increase their control and power over their means of transportation. However, faced with a state, a bus company and reactionary employers who are prepared to use violence to break the boycott, the commuters demands for the democratisation of their bus service have, at this stage, not been realised.

At first the commuters had one drastic demand: the complete removal of the bus company, Empangeni Transport. (2) The severity of this demand which is shared by the East London commuters who have been boycotting their bus service for 18 months now, is a reflection of the bitterness the bus company has generated in the entire community. Although it was groups of workers who decided to organise the boycott during the first two weeks of January, the Commuters Committee (CC) that was

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- (1) See J J McCarthy and M Swilling, "Transport and political resistance", South African Review Two, Johannesburg, 1984.
- (2) Empangeni Transport is a subsidiary of United Transport which also owns: Greyhound (Krugersdorp); Highveld United (Witbank); Rustenburg Bus Service; Vaal Transport Corporation; Western Greyhound (Klerksdorp); and Millard United Transport (Vryheid).

elected on 13 January was made up of the local tribal chiefs, the townships' mayors and councillors, Kwazulu MP's, Prince Gideon Zulu and 2 unionists - Transport and General Workers Union's Ntombela and the President of Metal and Allied Workers Union, Velani. The prominent role played by the chiefs and councillors was due to the fact that they were angry with the bus company for fraudently claiming that they had approved of the fare increases. The two key actors in the whole drama were the chairperson of the CC, Mr Chonco, who is a Kwazulu MP and chief whip of Inkhata, and Velani.

The CC decided that the Department of Transport must be approached and brought into the negotiations from the start. The Minister, Hendrik Schoeman, was informed about the boycott and reasons were given for demanding the removal of Empangeni Transport. The CC appealed to him to intervene in order to find ways of establishing another bus company. In addition, the CC decided to meet the Kwazulu Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Industries to appeal to them not to dismiss workers who arrived late at work. The CC refused to negotiate directly with Empangeni Transport.

On the 29th and 30th January the CC met the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, 2 representatives from the Department of Transport (H Claasens and W Kempen), and Willie Heine, the National Party MP for Umfolozi. Chris Albertyn, the CC's attorney, submitted the following proposals:

- * that the Minister appoint a Commission of Inquiry to investigate Empangeni Transport;
- * that Empangeni Transport's transport permit be withdrawn;
- * that the Minister instruct the Local Road Transportation Board (LRTB) to issue transport permits to taxis and other bus companies pending the outcome of the investigation;
- * that those people who contravene the Road Transport Act (eg. taxis) not be prosecuted for taking people to work;
- * that Empangeni Transport suspend its services pending the outcome of the investigation;
- * that employers remain tolerant of workers who arrive late at work and continue to provide transport.

The Minister agreed to establish a two-man Committee of Enquiry which met on 11 February in Eskhaweni; one of Empangeni's townships. An angry crowd of 1,300 people turned up to the hearing and insisted that it be held outside and not in the

local magistrate's court - a demand which reflected their desire to control the negotiating process itself.

Prior to this meeting, the CC had decided to move away from the demand that Empangeni Transport be removed. The reason for this change in tactics was because the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the state officials had indicated that if the CC continued to insist on this demand, the police would be brought in to break the boycott with violence. The CC felt that this would have jeopardised all chances of making even limited gains. This shift was reflected in the proposals that the CC put forward to the Committee of Enquiry:

- 1 that a legally binding agreement be signed between the CC, the Minister of Transport and the LRTB, regulating all facets of passenger transport in the area;
- 2 that there be genuine and full competition in the area;
- 3 that taxis be permitted to transport people to Richards Bay instead of being restricted to the Empangeni townships;
- 4 that Empangeni Transport stop its provocative propaganda campaign designed to break the boycott;
- 5 that the status quo remains until the Committee completes its investigation, ie. the police are not brought in, the boycott continues, and illegal operators are not prosecuted.

The first proposal was accepted by the commuters who were at the meeting, but there were doubts about signing an agreement with the state. However, it was approved at mass meetings in all the townships after people realised that it was a way of transferring some of the LRTB's powers to the commuters.

The second proposal did not stipulate that Empangeni Transport should not be one of the competitors and it was therefore a way of introducing the idea that the demand for its total removal be dropped. It is significant that if this proposal had been accepted it would have benefitted three local black entrepreneurs who wanted to form their own bus companies.

On Thursday 21st the Minister sent a telex that rejected the CC's proposals to the Committee of Enquiry. He stated that the CC had to accept that Empangeni Transport had already made a number of concessions. These included the appointment of a PRO, the amendment of certain routes, an offer to sell some of the company's shares to black businessmen, and the reduction of fares on certain routes. Instead of a legal cont-

ract, the Minister proposed that a Joint Transport Liaison Committee be established with representatives from the Chambers of Commerce and Industries, the KwaZulu Government, the chiefs and councillors. The sting in the tail was that if the CC did not accept these concessions, the police would be sent in on Monday 25th.

By this stage it looked as if a violent confrontation was inevitable and there was even talk that workers would mount a general stay-away in response. It was in this context that the CC asked the Minister for an urgent meeting. Chonco, Ntombela and Albertyn met the Minister and senior officials on Monday 25th - a meeting that delayed the deployment of the police. The Minister criticised the monopolistic nature of Empangeni Transport and in a major departure from the principles of the Welgemoed Commission, suggested that the solution to all South Africa's transport problems was a free competition approach. He then appointed one of the officials, Mr Nicks, to reopen negotiations with the CC.

Nicks came to Empangeni on Thursday 28th, where he was met, much to his alarm, by 1,000 commuters. The CC's proposals were not substantially different from those given to the Committee of Enquiry. The basic principles of free competition, the right of the commuters to have a say in the regulation of transport services, that Empangeni Transport be allowed to be one of the competitors and that black entrepreneurs be given transport permits, remained.

The CC also demanded that the pre-December 1984 fares remain until June 1985 and that from July the bus companies could charge the higher fares that were originally the immediate cause of the boycott. These should last until July 1986 after which fare increases should rise according to 50% of the CPI on condition that the service provided did not deteriorate. Furthermore the CC also demanded that 4 senior Empangeni Transport officials be fired or transferred.

The unknown quantity in the whole question was Buthelezi's attitude because he was overseas at the time. When he returned on 4th February, the South African government immediately tried to elicit his support. However, Buthelezi agreed to remain neutral and gave his support to a negotiated settlement. At this stage, however, it was clear that the Department of

Transport was doing nothing to resolve the conflict. This prompted Heine, the NP MP, to set up a meeting with the Minister of Transport, senior officials, United Transport and, for the first time, the LRTB. This meeting agreed that the following proposals should be forwarded to the CC:

- 1 The Minister will instruct the National Transport Commission (NTC), the central co-ordinating body for all passenger transport, to review the Government's entire transport policy;
- 2 The possibility of establishing a railway system between Empangeni and Richards Bay will be investigated;
- 3 that taxis will be allowed to extend their operations;
- 4 that new applications for bus transportation permits will be considered by the LRTB;
- 5 that as far as Empangeni Transport is concerned:
 - a) it has agreed to lower its fares to the pre-boycott rate until June 1985 (despite the increased petrol price). After this the new higher fare will be charged for 6 months, fares being negotiable again later;
 - b) it failed to address the idea of linking fare increases to the CPI;
 - c) it is not prepared to commit itself to allowing free competition;
 - d) it agrees to remove two senior officials;
 - e) it is prepared to appoint a senior PRO;
 - f) it is prepared to run training courses for its drivers;
 - g) it is prepared to fulfil certain social obligations (which were left unspecified but which later revealed themselves to be a donation to the KwaZulu Drought Relief Fund).

It is clear that the original principles of the CC's demands had not been met. The CC, however, was undecided on whether to accept these conditions because it is obvious that if they did not the police would be called in to break the boycott.

It was in this context that at a meeting on Saturday 16th March between MP Heine, representatives of United Transport and the Commuters Committee reached a full legal agreement on the terms for ending the boycott. The essentials of this extensive agreement were similar to the proposals submitted earlier by Heine to the CC with one major exception. That is, the Commuters Committee agreed to encourage a stop to the

boycott only at the moment competition services were visibly evident in the townships. Empangeni Transport, in other words, was forced to come to terms with both government, smaller transport operators and commuters by conceding to the apparent merits of a greater degree of "free enterprise" in the provision of transport services.

At the time of writing, however, it was beginning to emerge that Empangeni Transport might be dishonouring the agreement, and might attempt to block the operation of competition services in the area. In response, the CC's Chonco has called upon Buthelezi to intervene by going to Minister Schoeman to demand enforcement of the March 16th agreement. Ranged against this, however, are signals of renewed militance against competition amongst South Africa's larger bus transport corporations. The April 5th Financial Mail, for example, quotes PUTCO's GM, Carleo, as complaining of steep declines in profits and attributing this, in turn, to what he calls the "free but not fair enterprise" practised by competitors.

Assessment

The lessons that can be inferred from the Empangeni experience are still not clear as the issue is yet to be finally resolved. CC's attorney, Chris Albertyn, points to the twin advantages of establishing unity amongst commuters and trade unions, and negotiating with the state so as not to invite police intervention and the enforcement of the Road Transportation Act (which currently favours transport monopolies). Trade unionists, however, are ambivalent about the "free enterprise" terms of settlement, even though they acknowledge the advantages of short-term gains to workers in terms of transport costs. It is clear that the state has totally rejected the idea of giving commuters any communal power over their bus service. Rather, it wishes to resolve workers reproductive grievances in general (housing, township services) through the principles of privatisation and the incubation of the interests of an emergent petty bourgeoisie. As the case of bus transportation reveals, however, it is faced with severe contradictions in attempting to realise this objective, not least of which are the often conflicting interests of monopoly capital and the emergent petty bourgeoisie.

It is clear, however, that if the National Transport Commiss-

ion does review the state's current transport policy (perhaps under the influence of Minister Schoeman who appears particularly behoven to "free enterprise transport" after a recent visit to the Far East) this will at least represent a recognition of the failure of past transportation practices. As such it will be one gain to come out of all the bitter struggles, suffering and deaths that have marked the history of bus boycotts over the last two years. The question that will need to be addressed by trade unions if, indeed, such a policy review is forthcoming, is how to best represent the interests of workers so as to influence the final outcome.

In many respects, however, the workers transport problem has deep roots: for example in the very exaggerated degree of separation between working and living presumed by Group Areas, Bantustan policy and the new emphasis on "commuterisation", and in the subjection of workers productive and reproductive needs to the laws of profitability. Thus, in the longer term, what the courage and unity of purpose of thousands of working class commuters must be telling us is that a democratic transport service that meets the needs of the people is only possible in the post-apartheid society based on new relations of production and reproduction.

(Jeff McCarthy and Mark Swilling, April 1985)



photo: boycotters find alternative transport

Report: Third Industrial Health Groups Annual Conference

At the beginning of February, a three day conference of industrial health groups was held in Cape Town. Those present were Health Information Centre (HIC), Industrial Aid Society (IAS) and Technical Advice Group (TAG) from Johannesburg; Industrial Health Research Group (IHRG) and Technical Assistance Project (TAP) from Cape Town; union doctors from the Food and Canning Workers' Union and the National Union of Textile Workers, an organiser from the National Union of Mineworkers; and a lawyer from Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Johannesburg.

1. Education and MOSA

The Machinery and Occupational Safety Act became effective last year, and regulations and standards under the Act are coming out. Because managements have tended to respond quickly, conservatively, and unilaterally in setting up the structures required by law, some unions have decided to boycott MOSA, insisting that health and safety issues must still be negotiated with the shop stewards committee. However, as the law is open to interpretation in many areas, some unions have decided to take it up to ensure that workers are represented in the structures and have access to the concessions granted in the Act, for example the right to inspect, and access to information.

Election of safety representatives could draw on extra worker leadership capacity in the factories as long as there were strong links between them and the shop stewards. One union felt that there might be problems in a total boycott where management has already involved workers by appointing union shop stewards as safety reps. Workers see health and safety as very important and may go along with management plans. There is a danger of management using these different stances to divide workers. On the other hand the way in which some managements have been resurrecting (health and safety) liaison committees could counteract this.

Other unions are boycotting the Act until they have fully assessed the situation.

The industrial health groups are preparing health and safety training courses for those that require them. Already some unions are negotiating five day courses on full pay on a national basis. This raised the question of co-ordination of educational materials.

Managements are requested to provide information about hazards in the workplace, including names of chemicals before the course begins. If the union can negotiate access, an inspection of the workplace accompanied by both the management and the shop stewards is useful. Photographs of the workplace are effective teaching aids.

The priority need for 1985 is to train the elected worker safety reps to use the law and to perform the functions of safety representatives. Safety representative training should be seen as only the beginning of health and safety training, as refresher courses could follow to cover other educational objectives later.

The course therefore would centre around the implementation of MOSA. Checklists and accident report forms are being devised and will probably be fairly uniform, with modifications for different industries. It was stressed that the forms could only be effective if workers had been trained to use them.

The report forms that were developed in the vernacular gave rise to the problem of reports to management which have to be in English or Afrikaans. Election of a safety scribe (one of the literate safety representatives) could solve this problem.

We discussed principles in training, which included participation, split sessions to get workers back to the factory for tasks, problem solving by workers, mutual input and learning, and maintaining interest by innovative methods. Visual aids, plays and role plays could be used where literacy is a problem.

Resource materials for trainers, and packages of short pamphlets for specific courses will be compiled. IAS trains interested organisations in workmen's compensation and UIF.

Workers could be trained to do industrial hygiene measurements themselves (e.g. heat, dust) where possible.

Health and safety agreements: Since the passage of the new regulation under MOSA in October last year (see SALB 10.5) there are many new health and safety rights for workers and safety representatives. Consequently, unless there is a serious work hazard which requires special measures, these agreements could be quite simple. The ability to negotiate a health and safety agreement depends crucially upon good shop floor organisation.

2. Handling government departments

The problem of dealing with government departments in connection with worker benefits and rights was a recurrent issue. Strategies were discussed as to how best to overcome the bureaucratic blockages and inefficiencies.

Workmen's Compensation: We discussed the discontinuation of the joint MBOD/NCOH panel for certification of pneumoconiosis for outside doctors (see SALB 10.4). The WCC's refusal to make his criteria for diagnosis of most occupational diseases public is very problematic. The struggle to make the WCC proceedings less secret is more a union struggle than a legal one. The WCC has vast powers but every decision taken by him without a hearing can be taken on appeal. There are a range of fora which provide possibilities for hearings - increased compensation, internal appeals/hearings (commissioners' court).

Bureaucratic problems in connection with UIF and WCA injury cases have continued through 1985. Compensation for loss of function as opposed to loss of limb is difficult. Duplicate information is often requested by clerks, and the WCC refuses to give reasons when cases are turned down. Inefficiency and corruption in the homeland governments was alledged, which leads to delays and diversion of workers' compensation money to public funds.

Accident enquiries: Accident enquiries are by law open to the public, but in practice it is often very difficult to get access to them.

The meeting resolved to take up the above issues generally over a period of time. Information should be compiled of cases and problems from those working in these areas. This

information would then be available for unions and interested parties to take up in a practical way.

The main feature of the occupational health and safety laws is that they are imprecise and that standards were left to administrative application. On the other hand the fact that there was little specific content to the laws meant that they were open to struggles.

Under the new appeal provisions of MOSA the final appeal is to the Industrial Court and not to the Minister. Appeals may be made to the Chief Inspector about any decision by any interested party. A problem may be that the inspector is not bound to make a decision in terms of a report, thereby making it difficult to use this right to appeal. An aggrieved person could ask an inspector to make a decision within a certain time period. If no decisions were made this could be used in court. The Industrial Court has shown itself to be sympathetic to workers' grievances, and is also cheap and quick (3 months as opposed to a year for the WCC's court). Under the new MOSA regulations, inspectors' decisions can be taken on appeal. The findings will become effective precedents.

3. Worker health

In this section, the main input was from surveys done in 1984:

- HIC - cold work
- shift work
- grain dust in mill workers
- IHRG - silicosis in foundry worker
- lead absorption in stevedores
- grain dust in mill workers
- survey of health services in industry in Cape Town
- pesticide survey in dried fruit workers
- NUTW - byssinosis in textile workers
- bladder cancer in textile workers (pilot survey)
- TAG - hearing loss in mine workers
- accidents involving mine workers

Industrial hygiene measurements: We discussed the possibility that industrial hygiene monitoring (i.e. measuring aspects of the work environment like dust or cold) could be more economical than biological monitoring (i.e. measuring disease in workers by means of Xrays, blood tests etc), especially

for diseases with a long time lag between exposure and development of symptoms. But it was argued that it is necessary to do both as without showing biological effects at the same time one would have to rely on external standards developed in different countries with different conditions. Where access to the plant is poor, only biological monitoring is possible. Also workers were often very anxious to be examined, and this had to be taken into account.

Prevention: It was stressed that a survey must not stop at the stage where individual workers found to have work-related disease are assisted with compensation. It is very important to provide recommendations regarding prevention of the hazard, so that they could be taken up in negotiations. The resources of a group need not be stretched to include designing safety engineering systems. That task can be done by management, with the group checking the design before implementation.

Monitoring of workers is another important area of prevention that should not be neglected where a group of workers has been shown to be at risk of developing an occupational disease.

4. Other developments

- (i) TAG provides computer software services to unions, and this area of their activity is increasing.
- (ii) There have been increasing requests from workers for second opinions by doctors and engineers about management biological and environmental monitoring data. These opinions relate to health status, the possible presence of disease and its work-relatedness, and the safety of the work environment. These activities are certain to increase in the future.
- (iii) NUM is holding their health and safety conference in Johannesburg at the end of March. Safety stewards and shaft stewards will meet the industrial health groups who will provide input about their educational and professional services. NUM will then elect a national health and safety committee under the NEC with a full-time safety officer.

(Dawn Garisch, February 1985)

Clothing Workers in Natal: A Reply to Gool

Dave Gool's article (SALB 10.4) presents us with an opportunity to reflect seriously on an industry which dominates the working lives of women in Natal, as much as it does in the Cape. The clothing industry here is also a "labour-intensive" sector, and it accounts for a large share of Durban's industrial life: it employs 35,296 workers in 348 factories according to the 1979 Manufacturing Census; 50,000 in Natal according to trade union sources. (1) In this respect, the garment industry is the largest employer here. Whereas the majority of garment workers in the Cape are "coloured" women, in Durban they are "Indian": 81.59% of workers are women, 70% of workers are Indian women. (2) The clothing industry both in the Cape and Natal are organised by TUCSA affiliates: the GWU in the Cape and the Garment Workers Industrial Union (GWIU) in Natal. These unions operate under the closed shop principle and therefore all garment workers are members. These similarities, we feel, allow for some comparative comments in the hope that the issues raised can be taken further.

We argue here that Gool overstates his case about the ability of either the nature of the clothing industry or the labour process, by themselves, to "atomise" workers. In Natal at least, "atomisation" finds its primary cause in the entry of Indian women into clothing jobs in the post 1950's period, after both the industrial relations system and the closed shop in the industry had been already consolidated. Due to this they never had to fight for, win recognition for, or strive for industry-wide unity and trade unionism. Rather they came to belong, automatically, to the kind of benefit unionism Gool alludes to. This, together with the women's location in a divided working class in Natal and their position as women in society, has allowed for the forging of their atomisation. In turn, the nature of the industry and the labour process enhanced this. Without considering these issues, we cannot grasp how difficult it is to democratise such unions - a slogan that Gool uses, but never explains.

Gool's argument

Gool's piece is refreshing in that it challenges received

orthodoxies about "quiescence" in the garment industry of the Western Cape. Coloured women, he argues, are not passive actors who lack militancy or the will to struggle. They do struggle, but this conflict is: (a) atomised and (b) uncoordinated. Atomised, because the nature of the clothing industry fragments experience. But furthermore, the labour process itself, inside the factories, functions in unique ways to atomise workers. Uncoordinated, because the GWU, as a bureaucratic union provides no coordination to break this atomisation. Gool attributes the behaviour of workers in the industry to the way production is organised and not to the fact that these are women workers.

His focus on the labour process of the clothing industry, as the site of atomisation, but also the site of informal resistance and discontent, is novel. We can rely on no systematic studies to even begin to address his insights, a fact which is bound to stimulate research projects here. It is important though to address, even on an impressionistic basis, some of his evidence of militancy: due to atomisation, worker resistance takes the form of absenteeism, organised go-slows, go-slows to maintain low targets, demonstration strikes and finally sabotage. To quote: "the fightback appears as an individual war to earn a higher wage or an unsystematic group strategy..."(3) On this, he bases his broader statement: "[the] inability of garment workers to mount an industry-wide strike against low wages and exploitation does not mean that class conflict and class struggle is absent from this industry."(4)

We feel that the evidence he brings to bear on his argument thus far is either superficial or uncritical. Firstly, we have a problem with his usage of statistical tables: he does not specify clearly which tables refer to the Cape (save in one instance) and which to national figures of the clothing industry (5). Secondly, Natal's industry is equally fragmented: each factory, as an average, would employ about 100 workers. Yet, the 11 big clothing factories here employ a third of the labour force. Both the average employment figure in the former case, and the concentration of employees in the latter, would be higher than in the metal industry. Furthermore, his definition of "militancy" is unclear. "Absenteeism", for example, is not always an act of individual dissatisfaction. It is also in many cases, at least in Natal, an action which is governed by family concerns and constraints. Many

women, if their children are sick, or if their childcare facilities collapse, absent themselves from work, by necessity. Also an "organised go-slow" is one of the most sophisticated forms of factory action, presupposing a remarkable degree of coordination and organisation. This surely, is not an example of an "uncoordinated group strategy".

Some criticisms

Overall, we feel we have to disagree with Gool about the emphasis he ascribes to the labour process in explaining "atomisation". It is overstated. Atomisation, as he describes it, is a common feature of many labour processes in manufacturing. Although, clothing's labour processes could provide an extreme example of detail labour, they are by no means unique. The fact that each worker does a fragment of the total product, the incidence of piece rates and production targets, bonus systems etc. is common. They have also generated collective resistance which galvanised into factory based and industry based action. A closer example to what is being discussed here would be the clothing industry of the Rand in the '30s. White women, mostly detail labourers, generated both militancy and unionisation. They were after all, the backbone and the impetus of what Jon Lewis has termed the growth of "radical industrial unionism" in South Africa. (6) Atomisation then, cannot be seen only as the result of labour processes.

Furthermore, Gool's argument is based on a rather frozen picture of the present: he looks at an established trade union and the way it reinforces atomisation, without attempting to unravel the historical links that forged its relationship to the rank and file. The atomisation and "relative quiescence" of Indian clothing workers in Natal is part of a gradual historical process spanning the last two or three decades. The employment of Indian women in clothing jobs - as a cheaper labour force - occurred after the Group Areas Act and the destruction of market gardening as a meaningful source of subsistence for many Indian working class families. Propelled into the labour market by a crisis in family budgets, they entered the industry after both the patterns of bureaucratic unionism, and the closed shop, were well entrenched. For their part, they had to collectively struggle for nothing: they were neither recruited nor organised in the ways we understand this today; they neither fought for recog-

dition, nor were they asked to participate in shaping union affairs. The trade union, after a concerted campaign to eliminate "sweated labour", (7) succeeded in winning, in 1936, a closed shop.

It then became content with the status quo: workers, by taking on a job, automatically became members of the trade union. The women, organised in the "abstract" came to lack any "models" of industrial action or democratic practice - a situation, which, with rare exceptions (see below), has remained the norm. Many women in a recent Institute of Black Research study, showed no real sense of belonging to a trade union; some did not even know its proper name, and certainly the majority did not attend any meetings. Although the constitution of the trade union provides for elections of executive members in the union, women showed a remarkable apathy about them. Yet, before any hard and fast conclusions can be drawn, it is important to outline some of the findings of contemporary studies.

Women workers in Natal's garment industry

Most studies of the clothing industry in Natal lend support to the kind of arguments Gool castigates. The consensus seems to be that Indian women in the clothing industry are a "quiescent" labour force, and that they lack any traditions of militancy. This has been explained in two ways:

- (a) by the existence of a trade union, the GWIU, which is primarily concerned with benefits and harmonious relations with employers. One of the studies assesses this harshly: "it is obvious that the union does nothing to involve workers in the collective bargaining process and to arouse some form of worker consciousness. All they want is a large membership on paper which they have achieved through a closed shop". (8)
- (b) by the condition of women workers in industry qua women: the position of women in society, of Indian women in the community and the family, shapes their consciousness into obedience. In many cases the "patriarchal" and "hierarchical" relations of the family are reproduced in the workplace. Indian women although dissatisfied with their jobs, acquiesce in authority and find more meaning in community associations, informal church-related and other religious activities, childcare and the family. (9)

Their sense of dignity, self-worth and care, furthermore their energy, concerns the "home", whilst work is seen instrumentally - an area which saps their energy and resources for a pittance.

For example, one single-factory study concludes that women, "...do not identify themselves as a working class, playing a distinctive role with other workers in the production process". (10) At best, a woman there, "is aware of her position in society, that is, a consciousness of being at the bottom of the pile. But this awareness ends with her accepting, maybe fatalistically, her inferior position in society. It does not lead to action." (11) Work for most of the women is a necessary burden: "they cope with the monotony by daydreaming or talking. If they are sleepy they go to the toilet and have a wash. If they are tired while on the machine, they stop and pretend that something is wrong with the machines. This allows them to fiddle around and rethread it, which gives them the break they need." (12) A shop steward complained even of her status: "it is extra work we don't need." (13) Although this study provides one with stark evidence for the arguments of "quiescence", and despite the fact that it could get further corroboration from many comparative responses from the Institute of Black Research's study on black women in industry, (14) it cannot be easily generalised. Although women accept their fate as lowly paid adjuncts to machine processes, many are dissatisfied with their jobs.

This dissatisfaction culminates in individual acts of protest. Most women in the IBR study complained about the "score system" and its implications, for example: "I told him [the boss] to get off my back. I can't work", asserted one woman and she added: "I even told my foremistress that if my machine wasn't so heavy I'll hit you with it." (15) Sometimes, this protest, spills over into more active protests by individual women; but, we would be "off the mark" if we saw these attempts by individuals or groups as a sign of militancy as opposed to action aimed at coping with an impossible situation. "Militancy" should be reserved, rather, for active challenges to managerial authority which aim at changing a situation: to win an increase in wages, to reduce "scores", to change supervisory practices etc. Here too, in the period of the late 1960's and early 1970's the women were activated and led by the union to confront management. There was also

- debate -

a one-day strike in 1967 over wages when the general secretary, Harriet Bolton, attempted to reactivate the union at grassroots level. But such examples are far too few to even compare with the practices of Coloured women in the Cape, as Gool outlines them. Whereas in the Cape, women's discontent is uncoordinated, in Natal, women's "disgruntles" about their jobs are rarely expressed.

The question of organisation and democratisation

Gool finally addresses himself to the organisational issues confronting the clothing industry in the Cape. He argues against CLOWU's approach in mobilising the garment workers from the "outside", without a position of strength in the industry. He calls CLOWU's approach "experimental" unionism lacking in organisational experience. He then proposes that the only way out would be to "democratise" the GWU. Crucial to his argument here is the issue of "benefits" for working class budgets, which become essential supports for working class survival in times of recession and hardship. In these times, we understand him to be saying, workers become more reliant on the unions, even if the trade unions do not break their atomisation. This reliance has serious implications for attempts to galvanise clothing workers as an industrial power in the Cape. Despite CLOWU's progressive ideas about democracy and struggle, workers will not break ranks with the GWU. Rather than attempting to compete without a base in the industry, it would be more rational to begin the slow process of linking up the atomised struggles of garment workers in order to democratise the existing union. What CLOWU has achieved through its high profile approach is simply to activate the union's bureaucratic apparatus.

Of course Natal has, broadly speaking, parallel experiences in proving the longevity of GWIU's type of unionism, and its resilience despite attempts to change it, from within and without. In the 1940's, an attempt was made to capture the leadership of the union from within and steer it away from economistic and conservative trade union practices. The campaign failed: the expulsion of the "rebels" due to the closed shop was also an "exit permit" from the industry. In the 1950's, an attempt was made again, this time from the "outside": SACTU militants (CLOWU-style but with a stronger base) tried to win over the clothing workers. Although some factor-

ies were won over, in Hammarsdale and Pinetown, again the campaign came to an end with the general crackdown of the state on SACTU. Of late, the NUTW has been "encroaching" on the periphery of the clothing industry which again activated a significant "counter-attack" from the GWIU. Through a popular display of strength - one of the largest worker rallies in Natal, attended by 15,000-30,000 people - the GWIU sought to assert its strength and unity in the industry. Despite these parallel experiences in Natal, Gool's juxtaposition of "democratisation" against "unionisation from the outside" lacks a fundamental ingredient which prohibits assessment of strategies: what does he understand by "democratisation"?

At its loosest definitional level, if he means that the task would be to make the union bureaucracy more accountable to the rank and file, then the issue of gender, of women and their role in industry becomes a serious but not insurmountable obstacle. Here there will be variations in women workers' experiences: age and the type of family arrangements (nuclear/extended) would create differential responses. Women workers find it difficult due to their "double burden" to participate actively even in unions which treasure such participation. In the case of clothing workers where very little of such a tradition exists, the difficulty would be even greater. We find therefore that Gool is wrong to downplay the issues of gender relations in society.

Furthermore, Gool presents us with an "either/or", and jumps too quickly to a choice of strategy. All approaches are quite plausible: an approach which operates from the "outside" like CLOWU's, provided it has political legitimacy in the women's perceptions, could work. Such political unionism, from the Left and from the Right broke asunder the old Trades and Labour Council. It could also have unintentional effects: the pressures it brings to bear on a union, the activation of union bureaucrats might have the unforeseen effect of democratising the existing unions. Democratisation from within is also plausible: competition from other unions, the nature of the current recession, (new technology, relocation of industry in border areas, mass retrenchments) might create the climate necessary for the breaking-off of harmonious relations with employers, and responding to rank and file dissatisfaction from below. Finally the NUTW here could provide a third way out: by having securely entrenched in an adjacent

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industry; by having some clothing workers in its ranks, it could, through providing examples of union practice, win over the workers or create "imitation-effects" which echo and proliferate within the GWIU, accelerating change. The issue is not the plausibility of approaches, but rather, the vision of trade union democracy which each approach embraces. Unless one addresses that, choices of approach remain abstract, and so does their criticism.

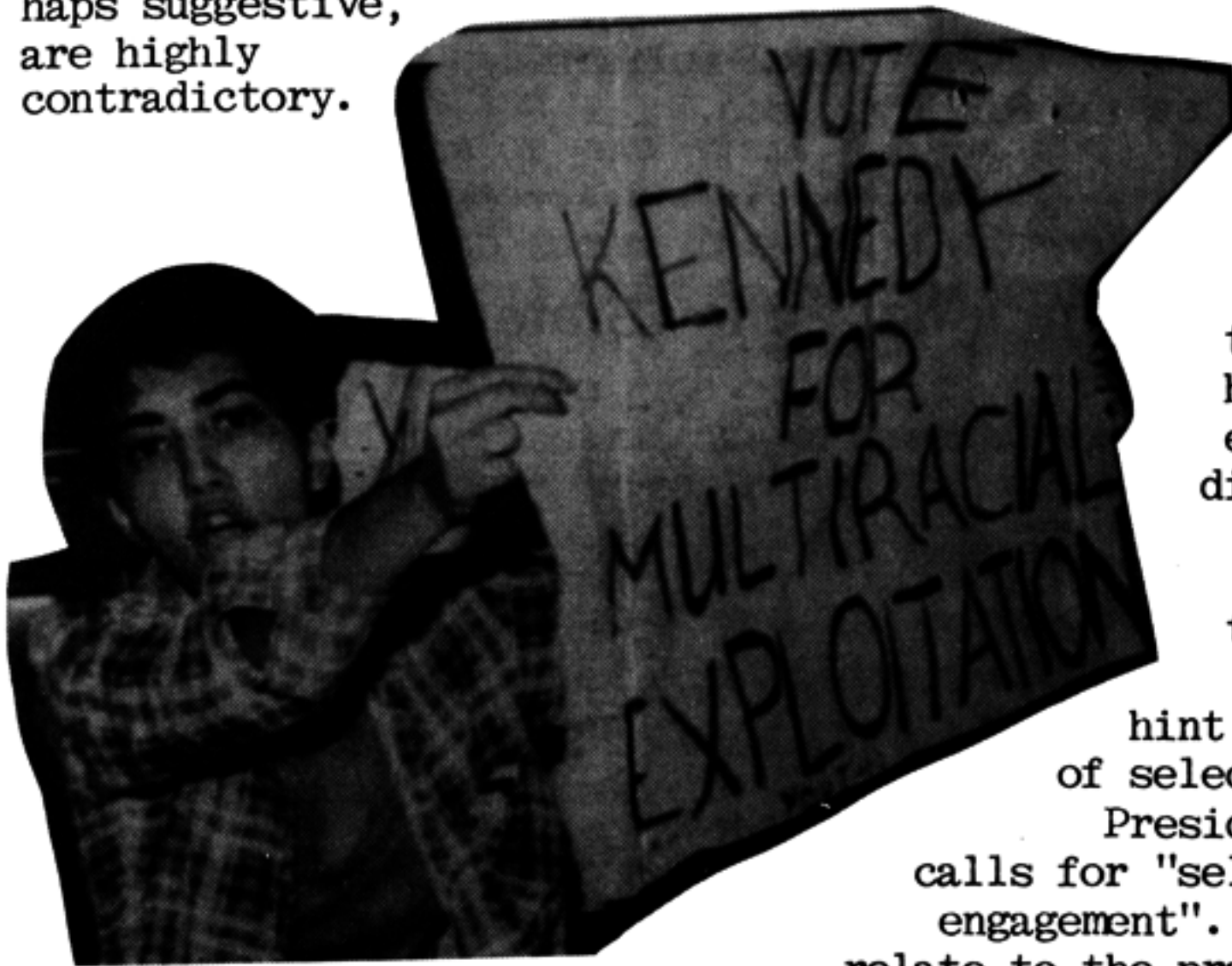
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- 2 T D Chetty, "Satisfaction of Indian married women in the clothing industry in Durban", MA Thesis University of Durban-Westville, 1982
- 3 D Gool, "The struggle for trade union democracy", SALB 10.4, p56
- 4 Ibid, p53
- 5 Ibid, p52
- 6 J Lewis, Industrialisation and trade union organisation in South Africa, Cambridge University Press, 1984
- 7 GWIU, Golden Jubilee; A Sitas et al, "Trade unions, monopoly power and poverty in Natal", mimeo, 1984
- 8 A Mehta, "Black women in wage labour: a factory study into levels of class consciousness", Honours Dissertation, University of Natal, 1984, p59
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- 10 Mehta, "Black women in wage labour", p58
- 11 Ibid, p59
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(Labour Study Group, University of Natal)

Workers and the Disinvestment Campaign

The issues raised by the disinvestment campaign are complex. Moreover they are obscured by a number of prevailing myths and assumptions, some of which claim "scientific" status. In this section the findings of the Schlemmer Report - that South African workers oppose disinvestment and political strikes - are critically evaluated. It is argued that these conclusions are premature and that the findings, while perhaps suggestive, are highly contradictory.



The major trade unions have clearly endorsed the disinvestment campaign, although their policy statements hint at a degree of selectivity. The President of CUSA calls for "selective disengagement". The reasons relate to the practicalities of trade union work inside

the country. Also, for the trade unions, their main concern is with consolidating permanent organisation in order to protect their members over the long-term.

Gelb addresses the commonly-held assumption that disinvestment equals job loss and shows that this is too simplistic an equation. He points out that if capital and the state are so concerned about black unemployment they could start by looking at their own monetarist policies which have destroyed thousands of jobs. He argues that any debate around jobs needs to address wider questions of economic policy, owner-

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ship and control of all investment. This prompts further questions about the goals of the disinvestment strategy, its relation to change, and the very nature of the change.

The exact role of outside pressure on South Africa for internal change was starkly raised by the recent visit of Senator Kennedy. For groups opposing the tour, this visitor represented liberalism, capitalism and US imperialism. Moreover his presence was seen as an attempt to present the South African struggle as a "civil rights" issue, rather than a critique of the social system itself. It is important that these questions are debated. But none of the above is meant to undervalue the role of international solidarity: exemplified by the dockworkers of San Francisco.

FOSATU International Policy Statement, April 1984

EXTRACT:

4. International pressure on South Africa:

FOSATU has continually stated its implacable opposition to South Africa's racist regime and, therefore, fully supports international pressure on South Africa to bring about social justice and a truly democratic society.

4.3 FOSATU as a trade union organisation which is concerned with the jobs and livelihood of its members has to give careful consideration to the question of disinvestment. However, it is FOSATU's considered view that the pressure for disinvestment has had a positive effect and should therefore not be lessened. FOSATU is definitely opposed to foreign investment that accepts the conditions of oppression maintained by this regime.

FOSATU is, however, also clear that its own focus of attention must be the building of a strong worker movement in South Africa that can set the terms of foreign investment and ultimately ensure that the factories, machines and buildings presently in South Africa will be retained in South Africa to the ultimate benefit of all.

CUSA Statement on the Kennedy Visit

Introductory remarks by James Mndaweni, President of CUSA at the meeting with Senator Kennedy:

In agreeing to meet with you we experience certain pressures and see clearly certain opportunities to advance the cause of liberation in our country, of the working class.

It is our firm belief that in meeting with you today we wish to put the point of view of our federation concerning:

1. our aspirations and
2. our expectations of your visit.

Our aspiration is to ensure that all the people in our country have the political right to vote and determine their future. We wish to enjoy the franchise in an undivided non-racial country free from race or ethnic discrimination. We desire that all the instruments of apartheid - legislative, racial and otherwise - be destroyed. We seek the elimination of apartheid. Not the amelioration of apartheid. We therefore expect that influx control be eliminated; that the migrant labour system be phased out. We want immediate equal education and training and university entrance based on merit and not quotas. We seek an end to race classification and the prohibition of mixed marriages. We seek an end to the Group Areas Act and the end to race ghettos. Nor do we see room in such a society for the undemocratic security legislation which exists presently. We want the withdrawal of the army from our townships and an end to the homeland system.

We desire that this transition be brought about as quickly as possible as painlessly as possible, without violence and loss of life of our brothers and sisters.

We know as a reality that this transition cannot be achieved unless and until all those organisations representing the political aspirations of the people are able to communicate their desires and aims, within the country in a free and open way. Our expectations of your visit are quite clear as well. We wish you to see and hear for yourself the plight of the black majority of South Africa. But more than that we expect

- disinvestment -

that you will commit yourself to our aspirations and go back to your country and work unwaveringly for the cause of a free South Africa.

We meet with you as both an owner of capital and a legislator in the United States federal government.

We request therefore that you use your personal capital to divest from companies which:

- do not adhere to just and equitable labour practices
- do not endorse that all South Africans should enjoy all the freedoms that United States investors enjoy
- do not commit themselves to working towards a just and free and undivided South Africa.

We expect also that on your return to the United States you will press immediately and urgently, and achieve before the end of this year federal legislation which will clearly:

- stop new investment in South Africa, whilst apartheid still exists in South Africa
- restrict the sale of Kruger rands
- withdraw all investment which supports the apartheid system
- terminate United States involvement in so-called homelands
- cease all supplies of whatever nature which assist the apartheid machinery.

we expect also that you will pursue a vigorous campaign of constructive disengagement and ensure that nuclear, computer and defence technology is not sold, or licensed or franchised in South Africa.

Eighteen years ago when Robert Kennedy visited South Africa hopes were born. In that memory we urge you to press for political, economic and social justice not only amongst the citizens of the United States, not only for the deprived and the dispossessed in South Africa, but for all humankind wherever there is suffering and oppression.

We call for an end to United States imperialism in South America, in Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa.

We urge that you accept the third world and its people, whatever their political persuasion as equals and work towards world peace.

Disinvestment and Black Workers: A Critique of the Schlemmer Report

The domestic debate in the USA over policy towards the white minority regime in South Africa has intensified as the foes of apartheid have embraced new and increasingly successful strategies of opposition. The recent acts of civil disobedience outside the South African embassy in Washington, D C represent only the most visible aspect of an anti-apartheid movement bolstered by successful efforts to withdraw funds from companies doing business in South Africa. It is hardly surprising that the Reagan administration would respond to such rising criticism of its policy of "constructive engagement", and last September, it introduced a bombshell into the debate, when it released the results of a State Department funded survey which claimed that most black production workers opposed disinvestment, supported the "free enterprise system", and were unwilling to engage in political strikes.

The survey, conducted by South African sociologist Lawrence Schlemmer,* found that fully 75% of those sampled opposed disinvestment. But a close reading of the report raises many questions about Schlemmer's research methods, casting doubt on whether his findings reliably reflect attitudes among black workers. At best, the report ought to be seen as a tentative rather than a final statement on the subject and under no circumstances should it become the basis for policy, either in the administration or in Congress.

Schlemmer's findings received wide publicity as newspapers in the US and abroad eagerly and uncritically reported the results. The state-owned South African Broadcasting Company claimed that the report "has now invalidated the most basic and only remaining argument of the anti-South Africa pressure groups", and the (South African) Sunday Times wrote that "[disinvestment groups] should cease their destructive agitation for boycotts and withdrawal of the capital this country and all its people so badly need." In this country, the New

* L Schlemmer, Black worker attitudes. Political options, capitalism and investment in South Africa, Indicator Project, Durban September 1984.

York Times printed the findings of the survey without raising substantial criticisms of the results or presenting alternative viewpoints.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State, Chester Crocker ignored the report's problems when he labelled the Schlemmer findings "authoritative". Drawing on the results, he condemned the "Orwellian perversity" of groups supporting disinvestment and other measures "in the name of liberal and humanitarian goals" while the people in whose name they speak reject their strategies. The South African ambassador to the United States similarly cited the findings on an ABC News interview program in December. Thus the report offered both governments the opportunity to criticise the anti-apartheid movement while bestowing the patina of scientific respectability to their attempts to capture the hearts and minds of Americans for the policy of "constructive engagement".

Unfortunately for both regimes, the Schlemmer report provides a very weak foundation for their claims. Thus far, however, public criticisms of the report have avoided dealing with the substance of Schlemmer's research, focusing instead on its objectivity and on the problems of investigating black attitudes on the subject of divestment. While such points are valid, they do not go far enough: one must cope with the main content of the report to reveal its shortcomings on its own terms. It is therefore necessary to consider at some length the details of the document to set the ground for pointing out the problems which render its findings questionable.

The Report's findings

In interviews with 551 black production workers, Schlemmer investigated a battery of attitudes on a wide range of issues. 6 out of 10 workers reported that they were unhappy or angry about life in general, while 84% felt that life was either staying the same or getting worse. Furthermore, fully half of those who saw life as getting worse cited political conditions as the cause of the deterioration.

As far as political consciousness is concerned, 42% of the sample overall and 54% of the union members interviewed felt that most blacks would secretly aid the African National Con-

gress, the banned liberation movement, if it were to organise in their area. The result is extremely interesting, not only as a measure of support for the ANC, but also because public espousal of support for the group is a serious criminal offense in South Africa.

But while 72% felt that political problems could only be solved by worker action, when asked what unions can do for blacks 80% cited "either improving wages or protecting against dismissals and disciplinary action". Schlemmer finds that "trade unions are conceived as having an industrial and not a political role." When he finds that 36% of the workers would be willing to support a 2 week political strike, 19% would support a shorter strike, and 45% would not support either, he states that most blacks are not orientated towards using their labour power for the destruction of the South African economy.

Furthermore he finds that black workers are not opposed to the "free enterprise system", since 60% agree that factories or shops ought to be "owned by anyone who can be successful in business". Finally, 74% felt that disinvestment is a bad thing, because it will bring fewer jobs and harm blacks.

Schlemmer's conclusions fall neatly into place. While black workers show high levels of what he calls "political" discontent, they realise that the system of industrial production "spells survival for the black proletariat". Though supporting banned organisations, "they want their employment and material opportunities protected". Therefore, they do not see trade unions as political instruments: "only a minority have attitudes which would imply a full commitment to the use of labour action in a political context." "They appear," writes Schlemmer, "not to see it as functional for unions and labour organisation to become involved in a political campaign."

The primary target of the research at last appears in the final paragraph. "Some people," Schlemmer writes, criticise the tendency among blacks "to give priority to short-term survival and security..." But such a stance, he writes, "can only be taken by well-educated middle class activists...for whom survival and security is not an issue." Since programs of change must work "within the priorities and possibilities of the black working classes", the disinvestment strategy,

and presumably those who endorse it, "cannot claim to be a campaign for the black rank-and-file people of South Africa."

In spite of problems in Schlemmer's methods, the research should not be rejected, because at least he attempts to sort out the complex attitudes of black workers in South Africa. Little serious academic work has been done in the area, and Schlemmer is one of the first to make up for the shortcoming. But to proclaim, as Schlemmer does, that "ample" evidence exists to support his findings and that his conclusions "will not be altered by subsequent analysis" are assertions so bold that sociologists in well-researched fields would hesitate before making them. Recognition of the importance of the research does not, however, obligate one to accept its conclusions. Such acceptance stands or falls on the rigor of the research methods and on the plausibility of the conclusions when judged in the light of other types of evidence. It is here where Schlemmer's neat conclusions begin to break down.

The research method

First of all, there are two main types of survey research: scientific random sampling and quota methods. In the academic community the former are seen as legitimate scientific methods which allow for application of inferential statistics to survey data. Without such rigorous methods one can make no reliable estimates about the likelihood that one's sample accurately reflects the attitudes of the larger population. While quota methods are widely used in non-academic sampling, Schlemmer does not satisfy even these less rigorous standards. Schlemmer does mention that his subjects were selected by quota methods, but he provides only sketchy information about his criteria for selection. A reader cannot judge whether the breakdown of the respondents corresponds to the real breakdown of the population: the sample might accurately reflect the population, but then again it might represent nothing more than the opinions of the 551 people interviewed. Even given the limitations of quota sampling, careful readers ought to hesitate in accepting Schlemmer's results without more information.

In addition, the size of the sample presents some very important problems. At many points Schlemmer offers the results for workers employed by US companies, as when he reports that

those working in US and foreign-owned companies "have a significantly lower sense of grievances" than other workers. But any conclusions reported for workers in US companies come from interviews with only 55 workers, 40 of whom come from one city, Port Elizabeth. The selection thus heavily biases one area, which is also the base of General Motors and the Ford Motor Company (at the time of the research), two foreign companies which have accepted far-reaching accords with their workers. One has reason to doubt the reliability of the findings then for representing conditions for workers in all US companies nation-wide.

Contradictory results and simplistic conclusions

Furthermore, the report contains contradictory results which might reflect a truly contradictory situation, but which also might grow out of a flawed research design. The primary focus of the study, divestment, yielded results which show 75% of all workers supporting continued investment. Yet workers in Schlemmer's words, "have very firm political views and very substantial proportions are inclined to express support for the very agencies who are pursuing the objectives of disengagement abroad", most importantly, the African National Congress. Continued support among workers for organisations whose policies adversely affect workers' short-term interests is a surprising conclusion, and ought to be further explored by Schlemmer. Perhaps the divestment question is not so central to workers' overall support for groups such as the ANC, or their attitudes about divestment are more complicated than the survey questions were designed to capture. Whatever the explanation, there is something curious about the conclusions which should have led Schlemmer to redefine the questionnaire, conduct further research before announcing his results, or at least qualify his findings.

The poor wording of some questions makes the results impossible to interpret. In one important item, Schlemmer reports that "the free enterprise system is dominantly the preferred alternative", indicating that workers are "accommodating of capitalism." The conclusion comes from a question which asks respondents to "Think of a country ruled by blacks like Zambia or Kenya. What is best in such a country?" The reader gets three choices:

- 1) "factories and shops owned by a black government",

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- 2) "factories and shops owned by black businessmen",
- 3) "factories and shops owned by anyone who can be successful in business, not only black people."

Overall, more than 60% chose the last as the best alternative, while only 18% chose the first. While the question might have offered interesting insights into black commitments to non-racialism, Schlemmer reads the data as indicating support for the "free enterprise system", hence, capitalism.

The point might appear trivial, but in fact the assertion of black support for capitalism plays a pivotal role in Schlemmer's argument that black workers value personal security and material well-being above their commitment to changing the contours of the economic system. But the question is too poorly worded to elucidate black attitudes on capitalism. Ownership "by anyone who can be successful in business" hardly specifies capitalism, while state ownership does not define socialism. Quite a few individuals own their own businesses in socialist China, Hungary, or Yugoslavia, while capitalist South Africa boasts of government-owned corporations.

The problems extend to Schlemmer's interpretation of the results. When he finds that 36% would support a two-week political strike, 19% would join a shorter action, and 45% would support neither, he concludes that despite their high levels of political awareness, "no more than just over one-third of workers seem to have attitudes which would imply a full commitment to the use of labour action in a political context".

In some respects his interpretation might seem to be a case of whether the glass is half full or half empty. But it is indeed startling that fully 55% of workers would be committed to some form of political strike, and that more than one-third would openly support so serious an action as a two-week political strike. Schlemmer never pursues the implications of his own research, which contradict his overall thesis about the tentativeness with which workers would be willing to jeopardise their short-term livelihoods in pursuit of long-term structural change.

These problems merge in the final section of the survey, focusing on divestment. In two of the three questions, Schlemmer links continued investment to jobs for blacks while connect-

ing divestment to pressuring the government for change. When given a choice between supporting divestment "to frighten the South African government into getting rid of Apartheid" and supporting investment "because it makes jobs for all people in South Africa", it is not entirely surprising that most respondents agreed with the latter option.

The problem is not so much that blacks are not in favour of divestment, rather that they are certainly opposed to divestment as Schlemmer portrays it in his questions: he has created a divestment straw-man. To be sure of his conclusions, he should have added a question which casts the divestment movement as it is seen by many of its proponents: as part of an overall strategy for change which supplements domestic pressures for change with external pressures, such as cultural and athletic boycotts and supplying material support for blacks through foreign governments, churches, and trade unions. Without including such a question Schlemmer has no way of probing the full range of possible responses on the issue.

As the foregoing critique makes clear, Schlemmer's conclusions are open to question on their own terms. But one should not limit the critique to a consideration of methodology. One must also judge the plausibility of the results in the light of other types of evidence. Here too Schlemmer's conclusions are undermined, as black South African workers themselves repudiated his assessment of their political commitment: last November nearly one million Transvaal workers staged an historic two-day strike in broad protest against the apartheid system. The strike received essential support and leadership from the two largest union federations, the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) and the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). Finally, in contrast to Schlemmer's portrayal of worker hostility to divestment, both FOSATU and CUSA have endorsed the divestment campaign.

The battle over South Africa has been engaged on a scale and with a sophistication rarely seen before in the USA. The Reagan administration's effort to discredit the leadership of that opposition is a misguided strategy, especially when based on evidence as weak as the Schlemmer report.

(New York correspondent, February 1985)

Unemployment and the Disinvestment Debate

Almost all participants in this discussion, on both sides of the issue, appear to accept as a basic assumption, an equation between disinvestment and rising unemployment in the SA economy, affecting black workers most severely. For this reason, argue those in business and government here and overseas, disinvestment can only harm those whom it is intended to help. Also, neighbouring countries dependent on the South African economy would be badly affected. Support for disinvestment, according to its opponents, is not merely unrealistic, but is pursued by those with political aims unrelated to the welfare of the black population. As the Star (22.3.85) reported the views of Lou Wilking, managing director of General Motors (SA): "an emotional tone typified arguments in favour of disinvestment which were based on abstract moral values that failed to take into account the harm it would bring to blacks who would be the first to lose their jobs."

Recently, at least two opinion surveys of black workers (funded by the US State Department and the Human Sciences Research Council) have concluded that they are overwhelmingly opposed to disinvestment, precisely because of the perceived effect on their livelihoods. These results have now been absorbed as gospel by supporters of "constructive engagement". (See, for example the Economist 30.3.85). The scientific claims of the Schlemmer survey are criticised in detail elsewhere in this issue of SALB. But it is worth noting here that the questions defined foreign investment simply as "sending money into SA to build factories and make jobs", with disinvestment, therefore involving not making jobs.

The same underlying premise is accepted on the other side of the debate - blacks, especially workers, will be hurt severely. However it is argued that the generalised disruption of the South African economy as a result of disinvestment will hasten fundamental social change. For this reason, the black population, already oppressed and exploited by apartheid, are prepared to pay the marginal extra cost in suffering that disinvestment might involve: short-term pain for the sake of long-term gain. For example, Bishop Tutu, calling for disinvestment if certain conditions were not fulfilled within 18-

24 months, cited last year's two-day stayaway "as evidence of black willingness to suffer for political objectives."
(Rand Daily Mail 3.1.85)

The South African working class faces a situation at present where a high level of structural unemployment is daily being added to by retrenchments associated with the recession. It is therefore important to examine carefully a political strategy which advocates and opponents agree, would likely add to the jobless total. In this article, I analyse the relationship between investment, disinvestment and jobs, and assess the circumstances in which disinvestment might in fact lead to substantial job loss. The purpose is to demystify the supposed "truth" of the simplistic "disinvestment equals unemployment" assumption.

Investment and job creation

It is important to examine investment as well as disinvestment, because of the implication in the "pro-engagement" argument that money coming into this country "builds factories" and so creates jobs. However, like disinvestment, investment can in principle occur in a variety of forms, with differing effects on employment. Broadly speaking, investment can be divided between purchases of physical assets - machinery, equipment and factory buildings - which are productive when combined with workers; and purchases of financial assets, such as shares in the Stock Exchange, bank loans and other types of credit.

(a) physical assets: Investment capital can be used to build new factories and install new machinery in them. Similarly, the existing capacity of a factory can be expanded, using the same production process as before; for example, potential output can be doubled by adding a second assembly line. In both instances, jobs are created and employment expanded, together with growth in the economy's total output.

However, such economic growth can also occur together with a loss of jobs. Most often, companies will expand their capacity by introducing new types of machinery and production techniques. The purpose of doing so is to raise productivity (output per worker), which usually accompanies an increase in the amount of machinery per worker (higher capital intens-

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ity). Thus, total output can be increased, while fewer (or the same number) of workers are employed. The goal of such modernisation is usually to reduce the firm's total wage bill, by cutting down its workforce.

General Motors (SA) recently provided an excellent example of the investment/technology/employment relation, and the gap between the words and deeds of foreign companies around disinvestment. On the same day as its managing director attacked the disinvestment campaign for its lack of concern with black workers jobs, his company made two announcements. The first was that it would spend R40 million on retooling an assembly line in GM's Port Elizabeth plant, to bring a new model onto the market. It is almost certain that this money will come from profits earned by GM (SA), rather than representing a new capital flow into South Africa. Business Day (22.2.85) reported that a "major part of the investment is for a robot which automatically fits a completed dashboard while the car is on the assembly line." This expenditure will not create a single new job in the factory though, it was pointed out, none had been lost either. But in the other statement (see Star 22.2.85), GM announced that poor market conditions necessitated an 8-week layoff of 465 workers, more than 10% of the company's workforce, with permanent retrenchment a distinct possibility. This was only 3 months after 320 GM workers had been retrenched.

As the introduction of a robot in this example suggests, whether expanding capacity in existing factories or building new ones, foreign corporations in South Africa are likely to introduce relatively up-to-date technology being used elsewhere in the parent company. This technology may often be only "second-best" in international terms, the most advanced being installed first in the parent's home market and operations in other advanced economies. Nevertheless, it advances the "state of the art" in the South African industry, forcing other firms operating locally to operate in similar fashion so as to remain competitive.

Two negative outcomes have resulted from this investment pattern. Firstly, foreign corporations' easy access to technology via their parent companies, has limited research and development spending by all South African corporations, and also slowed the growth of a local infrastructure to support

technical innovation. (There are a few exceptions, especially in some aspects of mining.) Most companies, local or foreign, are content to bring in technology from outside, in many cases by obtaining patents or licences from foreign companies to produce the latter's product locally. While this is not foreign investment per se, it is a substantial and crucial form of economic link between Western countries and South Africa. The situation is more broadly reflected in the make-up of imports, in which machinery and equipment predominate. As a result, expansionary phases of the economy have been accompanied by rapidly rising imports, as companies move to raise capacity, with consequent balance of payments difficulties. The second problem in this regard has been that long-term growth of total employment has been much slower than that of the overall labour force. Structural unemployment (see SALB 10.1) has developed on the order of 20-25%. This permanent unemployment of millions is a basic feature of the economy, rather than being related to cyclical recessions, though these do of course make the problem worse.

(b) financial assets: One form of financial investment is the purchase by foreigners of shares in a South African company. If these shares are being issued for the first time, this foreign investment is part of the capital required to operate the company, and so contributes to the jobs created. However, the far more frequent scenario is that of the purchase of shares long since issued, from either their South African owners or other foreigners. This is then a purely financial transaction - a change in that part of ownership the shares represent. No job creation follows (except perhaps a few clerks' posts at the Stock Exchange).

At present, large sums of money are flowing into South Africa, especially from the US, to buy shares in the gold mines; One estimate is R900 million in 1985 alone (RDM 13.4.85). Mining profits are high, because the price of gold is high, in terms of the Rand. This is related to the dollar's strength in international currency markets, pushing down the gold price, in dollar terms, and also the Rand. Thus, while gold shares are doing relatively well when expressed in Rands, their dollar prices are low, so that they are an attractive investment for Americans. But none of this money is helping to improve the unemployment situation in South Africa.

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Foreign capital also flows into South Africa in the form of foreign bank loans of different kinds. Only some of these contribute to job creation. The SA Reserve Bank periodically receives loans to help it finance the balance of payments deficit. Over the past 3 years two such loans have been obtained from the IMF, and other funds from private foreign banks. Such loans make no direct contribution to jobs in the economy, and are often part of a package involving the "tightening" of economic conditions (inducing recession) so as to turn the foreign deficit around. Such "tightening", of course, leads to unemployment increases.

Other loans may be made to the central government, parastatal corporations such as ESCOM, and large private companies, to finance large projects, or in the latter case, working capital or expansion. State-linked projects may be for development or "strategic" purposes - urban township electrification or nuclear power plants, for example. In such cases, construction and engineering jobs will be created, for at least some time, together with (a smaller number of) permanent jobs.

Finally, there are loans made to finance trade. Since ongoing trade is clearly necessary to keep the economy going, an indirect contribution to employment is made.

To summarise this section, then, it is clearly a gross generalisation to argue that "foreign investment creates jobs" - many forms of foreign investment do not create any jobs or make only a marginal or indirect contribution. Investment often reduces employment.

Disinvestment and job loss

The possibilities for disinvestment are similarly complex, with varying implications for workers. A basic distinction should first be made, between divestment and disinvestment.

Divestment attempts to put pressure on a range of institutional investors (churches, universities, pension funds) to sell (divest) their shares in companies which maintain economic ties with South Africa. This has no economic effect on the companies concerned - there is simply a series of financial transactions involving share sales to less scrupulous, or less susceptible, investors. The aim is to raise the cost

to the corporation, in terms of negative publicity, of its South African investment, to the point where it feels compelled to withdraw.

Divestment is thus part of the broader campaign for disinvestment, which involves also putting pressure on companies by means of, for example, consumer boycotts, withdrawal of public sector contracts, and ultimately legislation.

Disinvestment: the delegitimation of the South African government in the eyes of the population and legislators in Western countries is the key to the disinvestment campaign. Such delegitimation can, and does, also directly put pressure on the South African government in relation to particular policies. To date, the results on this latter score have been much more significant than any economic effects, in terms of successfully pressuring both the state and some foreign corporations into acceding to demands of workers and popular forces.

Greater success for the disinvestment campaign in reducing South Africa's economic ties with the West could take a number of forms of varying significance and feasibility:

(i) The first possibility is trade sanctions affecting only certain commodities. In fact, international (UN) sanctions are already in place on oil and armaments sales to South Africa. These illustrate the problems of enforcement.

South Africa is still able to obtain oil illegally on the free market, even though the cost is much higher than the ruling world price. Similarly, many items of potential military use are exported to South Africa, together with assurances that they are for peaceful purposes only. In addition, both the armaments and energy industries in South Africa have diversified and grown tremendously over the past decade, as the state has directed resources to them in order to overcome the effects of the sanctions. The Rhodesian economy was similarly stimulated in the context of total sanctions imposed on the Smith regime.

The oil and arms sanctions have contributed to certain of South Africa's economic problems: the fiscal crisis and balance of payments difficulties. But they have arguably not yet weakened the state in any significant degree. And in fact thousands of jobs have been created as an indirect consequ-

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ence - SASOL alone employs over 15,000 people at Secunda.

Bans could also be imposed on purchases of South African exports abroad. If successful this would have a devastating effect on the mining industry, which exports almost all of its output and employs around 10% of the labour force.

However, there is little chance that this form of sanctions could be successfully implemented. South Africa is too important a supplier of too many minerals to Western countries, for their governments to adopt such a strategy. The dependence of the West on South African mines can be overstated, and often is. But the development of new sources of supply, a prerequisite for sanctions on South Africa, will be a long and costly process. Disinvestment pressure would have to be sustained at a very intense level over a long period to force the West along such a path.

(ii) Next, disinvestment could mean simply preventing new capital coming into the South African economy for productive investment. A law along these lines has been in force in Sweden since 1979. But Swedish companies circumvented it, by "leasing" equipment to their South African subsidiaries, leading to a recent tightening of the law, banning leasing together with the sale of patents. But in any event, actual inflows of new foreign capital for productive investment are very small. Most new investment by foreign companies in South Africa is financed with profits earned in the country.

(iii) A third possibility is ending new financial investment - no further bank loans. Several North American banks, most recently Citibank, have announced they will no longer lend to the government or public sector corporations. There are also hints of cutbacks by some institutions in their lending to private South African capital. But other financial institutions, notably in Germany and Switzerland, have simply stepped in to fill the gap, and funds continue to come in at very reasonable interest rates. This highlights a crucial feature of the disinvestment strategy - economic pressure needs to be uniformly implemented, as well as effectively monitored. The latter is particularly difficult in the case of financial flows, given the complexity and secretive nature of international finance markets.

(iv) Another option is to stop new technologies reaching South Africa by banning patent agreements, manufacturing licences, and leasing arrangements (as in the Swedish case).

(v) Action could be taken against investment by South African corporations outside the country, to affect existing operations or to halt their expansion. This would impact upon the few major monopoly corporations with sizable overseas operations, but it is hard to see what effect it would have on the South African economy or state. Unless it were combined with the withdrawal of foreign corporations from South Africa, retaliatory action would be very simple.

(vi) Finally, there is the possibility that companies could be forced to completely withdraw from South Africa. This could involve the actual closure of factories and shipping of machinery back to the country of origin. If this occurred on a wide scale, job loss would undoubtedly be severe, though not necessarily reaching the disaster levels implied by critics of disinvestment. Estimates of actual employment by foreign corporations in South Africa vary widely. Recent figures quoted in the press for US companies range from 70,000 to 150,000. The total appears to be on the order of 2-3% of the labour force.

But far more likely than widespread closure would be the sale of subsidiaries to local firms, or to subsidiaries of other foreign corporations more prepared to resist disinvestment pressure. A purely financial transaction would be involved, with no necessary implications for unemployment. However, mergers and takeovers of this sort are usually used as opportunities for rationalisation, which invariably involves the loss of some jobs; for example at least 2000 jobs will be lost when Ford's Neave plant closes as a result of its recent merger with Amcar.

It should be clear, then, that the efforts of any significant "wave" of disinvestment would be far more complex than the simplistic and apocalyptic vision put forward by many on both sides of the issue. There might well be considerable benefit for South African capital, through opportunities for expansion of assets and market shares. A more general positive side-effect could be the enforced development of local technological expertise.

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As for job loss, not all of the different possibilities would actually lead to substantial loss of existing jobs, though some rise in unemployment seems a likely outcome. On the other hand, such factors as slower technological change may actually protect jobs for some time, if at a cost in terms of productivity. Furthermore, it could be argued that just as the presence of foreign capital gives a greater boost to the growth of output and profits than to employment, so its withdrawal may well slow growth and cut into general profitability more than it reduces employment.

The economic context

The complexities of any actual disinvestment process make it hard to maintain simple-minded notions about job loss effects. Yet the durability of this premise rests also on the abstract level on which the debate is conducted: "anything could happen...thousands of jobs could be lost." As the Rand Daily Mail put it, "much of what would happen...belongs in the realm of guesswork." (22.3.85).

What is necessary is to locate the process more firmly in the real world context in which it might occur. The key issue here is the state of the economy, and the direction of its movement, at the time disinvestment occurs. The impact will differ greatly, depending on whether the economy is on a path of rapid growth and expansion (including of jobs), or a path of slow growth, tending towards shrinkage.

Looking at the economic context is important for a second reason. Barring some dramatic political change in the West, it seems unlikely that these governments will pass legislation forcing multinational companies operating in South Africa to withdraw. Any actual withdrawal will consequently depend on decisions by those companies themselves, based on the relative costs (to image and markets elsewhere) and benefits (in terms of future profitability of the South African operation) of remaining in this country. The economic context - the prospects for overall economic growth and market expansion in SA - would loom especially large in such a calculation. The present economic context can be examined at two levels:

(i) The global crisis - The past 15 years have seen a major slowdown of economic activity in the capitalist world with

growth rates falling by half on some estimates, profit rates declining and unemployment returning to 1930s levels. (One source of details is "Slowdown or Crisis? Restructuring in the 1980s", IDS Bulletin 16(1), January 1985.)

Beyond pressing for broad changes in economy and society which might shift the balance of forces in favour of capital, individual corporations, faced with shrinking markets and intensified competition, have responded to their immediate situation in 3 central ways: by introducing new technology, especially micro-electronics; by relocating production to cheap labour areas; and by attempting new methods of labour control on the shopfloor. (See SALB 10.4, 1985)

For multinationals, such responses - on the first two counts especially - have involved the development of global strategies for rearranging the production and distribution relation amongst subsidiaries. The car industry is a good example. The concept of "a world car" has arisen whereby cars are assembled by a subsidiary in one country, using components manufactured by subsidiaries in a number of other countries. The assembled cars are then re-exported to the countries where the components were produced.

Through the presence of multinationals, the South African economy is incorporated into this global restructuring process. Decisions on the future of their South African subsidiaries are subject to the constraints of multinationals' global strategies. For example, the Ford-Amcar merger was partly motivated by Ford's rationalisation of its international operations, which takes into account its 25% ownership of the Japanese company producing Mazdas. Amcar holds the Mazda franchise for South Africa.

Pressure for disinvestment from South Africa becomes, for these transnationals, one factor feeding into their global decision-making processes. Whether or not it is successful then depends on the importance of the South African operation within the broader strategy, or more accurately the cost of making it dispensable.

(ii) South Africa's economic crisis - The global economic situation has been reflected in South Africa with similar drops in growth and profitability and rising unemployment

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over the past decade. Socio-economic restructuring in the context of the state's "reform" strategy has occurred in a variety of ways, as part of the attempt to restore economic growth and political control.

Within the economy, the state's response to crisis, strongly supported by capital, has been to adopt monetarist policies. Implemented in the midst of economic decline, these policies have been a central factor in the depth and duration of the present recession, and accompanying widespread retrenchments. The burden of these policies is being carried overwhelmingly by workers and the poor in general, in terms of rising unemployment and the cost of living. (See, on retrenchments, SALB 10.1, 1984; for analysis and critique of the economic situation and monetarism, see S Gelb & D Innes, "SA's economic crisis", WIP 36, April 1985)

The state's view is that these policies will ultimately restore high growth conditions. However, capital perceives current prospects for profitability to be very limited. This is suggested by the rash of takeovers and mergers by South African companies. These involved over R1,1 billion in 1984 alone - investment in financial assets rather than in production and economic growth. In addition, many South African companies are directing their attention overseas, expanding their operations there while cutting back locally. In one recent case, the engineering firm, Abercom, closed down some of its South African plant, sold off others, and at the same time bought a large industrial fan manufacturer in the US.

With South African companies disinvesting because of poor economic conditions, it is hardly surprising to find foreign companies doing likewise, and for similar reasons. During 1984, Coca Cola sold a major stake in its South African holdings to South African Breweries, on the grounds that the drop in the exchange rate of the Rand had halved the (dollar) value of its assets. Clearly, however, such a deal must have been planned over a longer period, and been motivated by more general economic conditions.

Several British companies, such as Associated British Foods and ICL, took the opening represented by changes in the exchange rate regulations in 1983, and sold out to South African companies. According to the Economist (30.3.85), more than

30 US companies have moved out of South Africa since 1980.

The very high profit rates available during the 1950s and 1960s, which attracted foreign capital to South Africa, are clearly a thing of the past, in the view of many of these companies. Little is to be gained by retaining operations in this country, especially in view of mounting pressures for disinvestment. Departing companies invariably insist that the reasons for their departure are "purely economic", and have no connections with the campaigns in their home countries. However, there can be little doubt that the latter, posing potential consumer boycotts, shareholder pressure and other embarrassing publicity, are a factor in any "financial" calculation. Of course, continuing political opposition in South Africa and state repression against it boosts disinvestment efforts considerably. They also contribute directly to corporate insecurities over the safety of their investment.

As on the one hand the economic crisis and political instability in South Africa continue and profits fail to recover, and, on the other, overseas political pressure mounts, the balance of foreign investors' decisions about their relations with South African can be expected to tilt more and more towards withdrawal.

Local capital is beginning to realise that economic conditions are the Achilles heel of its anti-disinvestment strategy. A recent meeting of the South African Foundation (a local capitalist lobby group) made much of the decline in South Africa's "attractiveness" to foreign investors, for both political and economic reasons. (Rand Daily Mail 15.3.85.)

Not only is disinvestment more likely to occur in such negative economic circumstances but it is also more likely to involve significant job loss, if it occurs in such circumstances. With rates of capacity utilisation already at historically low levels, any rationalisation process resulting from takeovers of assets of foreign corporations would probably be far-reaching, with substantial retrenchment. But the extent of any job loss for reasons of disinvestment must be seen in the context of unemployment rising as a direct result of continuing economic crisis and state policy. Thus the 2,000 jobs which will be lost because of the Ford-Amcar merger can be set against more than 6,000 lost during 1984 in the auto ind-

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ustry alone (excluding components manufacturing), as vehicle sales dropped through the floor.

The apparent concern on the part of local state and business actors for disinvestment-related unemployment seems hard to understand, when these same elements are implementing and supporting policies which are daily destroying jobs. Furthermore, unemployment which may result from foreign capital's withdrawal is due as much to the poor state of the economy, as to overseas political campaigns.

Finally, some issues remain for South African critics of multinationals, who are concerned also with the question of employment and other interests of workers. The implication of the above argument is not that disinvestment will lead to economic decline (thereby weakening the state and local capital), but rather that economic decline produces disinvestment (and may even strengthen the hand of South African capital). Therefore the use of disinvestment as an economic weapon may actually be misconceived. Other means of controlling multinationals in South Africa, in the interests of workers and the wider population, could perhaps be found. The issue might be usefully situated in a broader discussion of generalised control over production and investment.

Secondly, the question of job loss is far more closely connected with general economic conditions than with the withdrawal of foreign capital. The prominence of the "disinvestment debate" may well have obstructed full discussion of current state economic policies. Even if monetarism does "work" in terms of re-establishing economic growth (and this seems unlikely at present), it is a very blunt instrument for the job, given the havoc it wreaks in the economy. Alternative paths back to economic growth, on terms more favourable to workers, seems to be a greater priority than an exclusive focus on the issue of foreign capital.

(Stephen Gelb, April 1985)

San Francisco Dockworkers Fight Apartheid

For 11 days in late 1984 San Francisco dockworkers belonging to the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) successfully resisted unloading South African cargo from a ship. Although the action, and similar future action, was forbidden by court order, it had significant effects on the anti-apartheid movement in the Bay Area of San Francisco. The action served as a rallying point for a broad-based movement, but also raised the question: where to go from here?

An outline of events: November 1984 - January 1985

Local 10, the Bay Area branch of the ILWU, like the union as a whole, has a history of militancy and support for progressive causes. In October 1984, prompted by the uprising and repression in South Africa, members of Local 10 planned action against unloading cargoes arriving from South Africa. Organising this was the Local's Southern African Liberation Support Committee (SALSC).

On Friday 23 November the NedLloyd Shipping Company's vessel "Kimberley" was due at San Francisco's pier 80. Some 250 people gathered at 6 p.m. to show their support for a refusal to unload South African goods and to urge the longshore workers not to handle the cargo on the "Kimberley". The ship did not dock as scheduled. It later transpired from conversations with Dutch officers on the ship that they had been notified of the planned action.

During the night the ship docked, and the demonstrators returned to pier 80 at 7 a.m. on the following day. The gang assigned to the ship refused to work the cargo and were dismissed from the shift. At the evening shift change a gang went through, but unloaded only the Australian cargo. They refused to work the South African goods - which included safety glass, steel, wine and apple concentrate - and were greeted with applause from supporters waiting at the gates. ILWU members were encouraged in their action when a letter of support arrived from a Durban trade unionist.

Members of the union explained the reason for their refusal

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to work apartheid cargo. According to the chairperson of the SALSC of Local 10:

We want to call to the attention of the American people that the so-called constructive engagement (with the South African regime) of the Reagan administration is a sham and really intended to aid and abet the South African system - economically, politically and socially. We see our action as an expression of solidarity with the rebellion.

Thus a pattern was established that continued until 4 December: at each shift change the 25 to 30 workers assigned to the "Kimberley" would go on board the vessel, but refuse to touch the South African cargo. They would then be dismissed from the shift. And at each shift change, often in bitterly cold weather, anywhere between 30 and 150 members of the community would gather at the pier gates to show solidarity.

Support for the boycott grew steadily. On 26 November the San Francisco Central Labor Council, representing 150,000 members of the local branches of the AFL-CIO unions, unanimously endorsed a letter of support for the ILWU members. People in the community rallied to give organisational support, and committees were established to reach church, labour and community groups, and to contact the media. Longshore unions at other ports were alerted in case the ship was moved.

The action extended on Wednesday 28 November to the Oakland regional offices of the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) where a picket was held. The PMA is the agent for the 120-odd shipping companies operating on the west coast of the United States, and represents them in negotiations with the ILWU. Under the PMA/ILWU labour contract longshore workers receive a weekly pay guarantee. Thus the workers who refused to handle the cargo were sacrificing this guarantee as well as the wages for each shift from which they were dismissed. By this date almost 300 workers had refused to touch the cargo.

On 30 November an arbitration decision was announced in favour of the PMA by which Local 10 members lost their pay guarantee and the union faced prohibitively expensive fines and court actions for refusing to handle the "Kimberley's" cargo.

On Saturday 1 December a rally was held at 7.30 a.m. at pier

80. Over 600 people heard black and white religious and labour leaders, and anti-apartheid activists, pledge support for the longshore workers. Simultaneously the "Kimberley" was surrounded by boats from the "peace navy" - a tactic similar to that used several months previously when a US vessel bound for central America was encircled and forced to turn back. Later in the day a small group of protesters initiated a campaign to expel the South African Airways from San Francisco.

On Monday 3 December the boycott wound to a close: a federal district court judge handed out a restraining order against the union, ordering that the cargo be unloaded. That evening a majority of the Local 10 executive committee voted that the boycott should stop because the penalties against the union were overwhelming. As the union secretary said: "We agreed with a gun to our head."

The following day small gangs of longshore workers began reluctantly to unload the cargo. One of them described it as "the end of this particular chapter". The focus of resistance and protest now moved to the doorstep of the PMA offices in Oakland. Since that date, into February, there has been daily picketing and demonstrating at the offices by between 30 and 200 people - young and old, black and white, gay and straight, workers and students, the poor and well-off. The PMA action was organised by an ad hoc committee which held sit-ins and demonstrations. Five hundred people attended the demonstration on Saturday 22 December, and, after encircling the entire PMA building, marched through downtown Oakland to a rally outside the City Hall. In January 1985, apart from the regular demonstrations at PMA there were protests and arrests at the South African Airways offices, the Federal building and the Port Commission offices.

In the weeks that followed the conclusion of the longshore workers action two significant trends emerged. Firstly, the ad hoc committee started to consolidate its community support and set up organisational structures beyond those of the picket line. In January it was constituted as the Bay Area Free South Africa Movement (BAFSAM), affiliated to the national movement. Contact was made with church groups in the Netherlands to put pressure on NedLloyd Shipping Company at its head office. On 21 January, 22 religious leaders were arrested in a civil disobedience action at the PMA offices.

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Plans were made to halt the sale of Kruger Rands in the Bay Area, and several local outlets have been picketed.

Secondly, the Oakland City Council - at the time considering a city divestment motion - entered the fray. On 18 December the Council made a unanimous recommendation that the Port Commission investigate means of blocking all South African cargo. Early in January the Port Commission resolved that South African trade was "repugnant", but explained that because international commerce is controlled by federal law and is contracted by private agents, there was little more that it could do. Later, on 22 January, legal counsel informed the Commissioners that they were nevertheless empowered to refuse to do any business with contractors, banks or financial institutions with South African links. It is not known what, if any, action the Port Commissioners will take.

A history of struggle: ILWU and Local 10

The determined action by the longshore workers and their supporters was not an isolated event, but coincided with and contributed to a much broader resurgence of public opposition to apartheid. It also reflected a long history of militancy and internationalism amongst dockers.

The ILWU was at the forefront of the 1934 San Francisco general strike. "Bloody Thursday" is still commemorated every 5 July. On that day in 1934 a longshoreman and a cook were killed by police, sparking off a strike that was eventually supported by over 100,000 workers in the city, and lasted for over 100 days. Led by an inspired unionist, Harry Bridges, Local 10 has had strong ties with the Communist Party of the USA.

In the seventies Local 10 members participated in the anti-Vietnam war movement, and opposed US intervention in Chile. For instance, in May 1978 a shipping clerk in Local 34, the ILWU shipping clerks' union in San Francisco spotted military equipment intended for export to Chile - in violation of a 1976 Congressional arms embargo. The union decided not to handle the cargo, and frustrated the various attempts made by the authorities to dispatch the goods. Eventually the State Department was forced to withdraw the shipment. In late 1980 Local 10, supported by religious, civic and labour leaders, refused to handle military goods destined for El Salvador.

Action against cargoes from racist regimes in Southern Africa began in the East Coast ports of the USA. In 1972 members of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) - the East Coast equivalent of the ILWU - in New Orleans and Davant, Louisiana, refused to unload chrome from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Although the chrome was eventually unloaded, considerable delay was caused. As a result, shipping companies used Baltimore rather than southern ports for Rhodesian chrome. But a picket was set up in Baltimore, and the shippers moved on to Philadelphia. In December 1973 a ship was turned back to Mozambique, still under colonial rule, where the cargo had been loaded. By then boycotts of Rhodesian products had spread to New York, Boston and Norfolk, Virginia. In 1974 the boycott on the east coast was extended to South African coal.

Action was taken by the ILWU on the west coast in 1976 and, following the invasion of Angola by South African troops, Local 10 voted to ship relief supplies to Angola. In June the Soweto uprising began, and the Local 10 Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee (SALSC) was formed. The SALSC's first activities included:

- * a collection of clothes for Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique - thirty-two tons of clothes were sent.
- * union education on apartheid and the liberation movements.
- * participation in the boycott of the Bank of America, because of that institution's investments in and loans to South Africa.
- * organising to boycott South African and Rhodesian cargoes. A resolution calling for a boycott was put forward in July 1976 to the International Executive Board of the ILWU. The Board agreed in principle, but decided not to do anything until all of the constituent Locals had been polled. When, after many months, a majority of the Locals had not responded, the issue faded away.

Because of the failure of the Executive Board to take any action the SALSC started to organise Local 10 members not to handle SA cargoes. As one member explained:

With the growing understanding of apartheid and the ILWU's connection with it, we felt that this was a good time to call attention to the fact that we are handling these cargoes even though many longshoremen oppose this.

Thus on Easter Sunday 1977 over 500 people gathered at pier

- US dockers -

27 in San Francisco to protest the arrival of the NedLloyd "Kingston" from South Africa. Only a handful of workers went on the ship, but a gang was eventually mustered and the goods were unloaded. Although the boycott failed, it provoked considerable discussion within the union, and anti-apartheid committees were formed within other Locals. An attempt was made to get Locals to re-negotiate their contracts with shipping companies defining that there must be no handling of South African goods, but this was watered-down by the Executive Board. Since that date, until 1984, the SALSC concentrated on collecting material for refugees in Southern Africa and on internal education about apartheid.

Underlying the progressive positions and actions taken by Local 10 is the high percentage of black and minority groups in the union. At present over 60% of the 1500 members of Local 10 are black Americans. (Nevertheless, the boycott was supported by both black and white longshore workers, and was endorsed by other ILWU Locals that have predominantly white memberships.) Furthermore, the nature of longshore work - organised in groups, working cooperatively - reinforces worker solidarity and facilitates strong organisation. The contact that workers have with sailors from all parts of the globe encourages a broad internationalist perspective. And the crucial commercial and financial significance of the job gives workers an immediate sense of the muscle they can flex.

It must, however, be noted, that these characteristics of longshore work are being undermined and changed. Containerisation and mechanisation have meant that the cooperative nature of the work has been eroded, and ships are now in port for much shorter lengths of time. The commercial shipping slump has caused a serious loss of jobs and a diminution of employment security. And the weekly pay guarantee system has placed workers and the union at the mercy of employers, especially if a work stoppage is declared illegal. It has therefore become increasingly difficult for ILWU Locals to maintain progressive and militant stances on issues other than those directly related to the workplace.

Immediate issues facing Bay Area anti-apartheid organisation

The refusal by members of the Local 10 to work South African cargo initiated a wave of energy and enthusiasm for anti-

apartheid action that soon dwarfed the small pre-existing anti-apartheid groups in the area. Once the boycott was halted and the ship had been unloaded, the movement became dominated by people from the broad community rather than by the longshore workers and SALSC. The relationship between the ad hoc PMA committee/BAFSAM and Local 10 remains undefined and uncertain. Similarly, although constituted as part of the national Free South Africa Movement, the BAFSAM - to a much greater extent than the national embassy-centred movement - is a grassroots movement centred on local issues and politics.

This is in part due to the origin of the BAFSAM being in a local labour action, rather than in a strategically-coordinated campaign by a Congressional lobbying group (TransAfrica). The fact that there is no South African consulate in the Bay Area is another cause. (The consulate was kicked out of San Francisco some years ago. Now the SAA runs a suspiciously large and busy office in the city - especially considering that SAA does not fly to any west coast airports.)

BAFSAM is now facing a range of organisational issues, of which some could become problems if not skillfully addressed:

- * How to sustain the energies of the movement through what will obviously be a long and difficult struggle.
- * How to establish democratic structures that would make co-operation between local politicians, political groups, labour unions and church members possible, but would prevent the predominance of any one group or individual, and the "hijacking" of the movement.
- * How to establish organisational structures that do not stifle the spontaneity of the picket line.
- * How to maintain direction and focus when there are so many specific projects that could be undertaken.

Such are some of the challenges that face the anti-apartheid movement in the Bay Area in early 1985. In a short time much has been achieved. People and groups that have never worked together before are now united against apartheid. New constituencies have been reached. The relationship between South Africa and the USA has been spelt out more clearly and more immediately to people in the Bay Area, ten thousand miles from South Africa.

(San Francisco, February 1985)

Report: The November Stay-away

Labour Monitoring Group*

The successful 2-day stay-away of black workers in the Transvaal on November 5-6 is not simply the re-emergence of past forms of opposition. It marks a new phase in the history of protest against apartheid; the beginnings of united action among organised labour, students and community groups - with unions taking a leading role.

In comparison with past stay-aways this was one of the largest. Precise calculations are extremely difficult. Adopting the figure of an average 60% stay-away in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal area (this being the consensus figure of employers and the media) then anything up to 800,000, and certainly not less than 300,000, participated. (1) The numbers involved are considerably more when one includes the approximately 400,000 students who stayed away from school.

The significance of this stay-away in comparison with the student-led stay-aways of 1976 was the active involvement and leading role of organised labour. Most unions over the last 10 years have been preoccupied with building organisation on the shop floor and have eschewed overt involvement in issues beyond the factory. It is a measure of the extent of the crisis in the townships that these unions responded so rapidly to the student call for support.

I ORIGINS OF THE NOVEMBER STAY-AWAY

Three localised stay-aways had already taken place in the Transvaal since September. During this period the beginnings

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of a working relationship between community and student organisations and the trade unions had been formed in the Vaal and East Rand townships. The elements of this relationship first came together during the Simba Quix boycott campaign launched from Tembisa in August. (2)

On September 3 a successful one-day stay-away was mounted in the Vaal to protest against proposed rent increases of R5,90. The Vaal township authorities charge the highest rents in the country. The lowest rents in Sebokeng, R50 per month, are higher than the highest rents in Soweto which are R48. More than 50% of the households were in arrears on their rents by April - again the highest number in the country. Protest meetings were held in all the Vaal townships during August. Although these meetings were addressed by leading members of the UDF, AZAPO, Federation of South African Women, Soweto Civic Association, and COSAS, the main organisational forces were the Vaal Civic Association and local shop stewards. At the final meetings in the Vaal townships on Sunday, September 2, it was decided that residents should refuse to pay their rents. In Sharpeville, the meeting decided to call a stay-away for the following day. That Monday ended in violence, with 31 deaths, as demonstrators clashed with the police on the streets. (3) It is estimated that at least 60% of the workers in Sharpeville stayed away. The police reacted in a particularly violent manner which set the tone for the next 2 months as unrest spread throughout the Vaal and the East Rand townships. "Heavy-handed police action", in the words of the PFP leader, Van Zyl Slabbert - after which the the Minister of Law and Order requested an investigation - also led to escalating violence on the East Rand. (4)

Two weeks later the Release Mandela Committee (RMC) called a stay-away in Soweto to express solidarity with the Vaal residents, and to protest against police action in the townships. This stay-away generated considerable confusion as the pamphlets originally distributed by the RMC did not stipulate how long the stay-away should last. Only later did the RMC and UDF make it clear that the stay-away was to last only 1 day. Estimates of the numbers who stayed away range from 35% to 65%. Three youths died during clashes with the police, this being the first major clash between Soweto residents and the police since the 1976-77 crisis.

- stay-away -

The third stay-away took place over a month later in Kwa Thema, Springs and lasted one day. Unlike the Soweto stay-away, however, it was extremely well-organised, had a clear purpose, and ended successfully. The Kwa Thema stay-away is analysed at greater length below.

The November stay-away was the culmination of three different but inextricably linked processes: in the townships, the factories, and the education system.

1 The crisis in township government

The present township crisis is caused by a popular reaction to the bankruptcy of the government's urban policy. After the November 1976 student-led township revolt that left the ineffectual Urban Bantu Councils in ruins, the state established the Community Councils with slightly wider decision-making powers. As part of its constitutional reform package the Botha government sought to give greater autonomy to black local authorities as a prelude to drawing them into a new regionalised "multi-racial", second tier level of government. This was the aim of the Black Local Authorities Act (Act 102 of 1982) which came into operation in August 1983. The elections for the new town councils were held in November with only a 15-25% poll.(5). Less than a year later, they were to become the target of mass resistance that has reached levels unprecedented in South Africa's history.

The Black Local Authorities Act was more the product of a constitutional conjuring act than of a real understanding of the material needs of the townships. Firstly, the town councils were given a limited autonomy but no viable fiscal base. The stated objective is that they should be self-financing and the government has drastically reduced its contributions to town council budgets. The townships, however, are little more than dormitory towns that have no taxable industrial enterprises. Furthermore, the predominantly working class residents, many of whom are unemployed, do not earn enough to provide a viable tax base. Consequently most of the councils are in debt. The Soweto Council, for example, is budgeting for a R30 million deficit in 1985, which it hopes to reduce by R10 million by increasing rents and service charges, in some cases by 100%. The proposed Vaal rent increases were in response to similar fiscal difficulties.

Secondly, whereas the state insisted that the town councils were adequate, democratically elected, representative structures, they were not linked up to central state representation, and hence were no substitute for full political rights. This lack of legitimacy was reflected in the low polls at the elections, the criticism of the system from councillors themselves, and eventually in the direct attacks on their property and personnel that was to be a central feature of the recent unrest. A large number of councillors have now resigned, some in protest over the unviability of these institutions, and others because the state could not guarantee protection of life and property. As one councillor expressed it:

I am virtually in hibernation in the board offices since my home was burnt down. If I just resign I will have two enemies - the board on the one side and the people on the other. I am pleading that I be accepted back into the community. (6)

Many of the councils were rendered inoperative and it was to address this crisis of legitimacy that a special Cabinet subcommittee was established.

The financial and political crisis of the town councils helps explain the present wave of resistance. It has also given rise to new oppositional organisations - the civic associations - that constitute an alternative source of legitimacy to the discredited creations of state policy. It is significant that employers' organisations are calling on the state to negotiate with these bodies over the real problems in the townships - instead of simply detaining their leaders. However, given that all the main civic associations and community organisations in the Transvaal are affiliated to the UDF, no resolution of the township crisis is possible which does not address the fundamentals of the apartheid state. Nor has the extensive use of military force, which has only raised the level of violence, proved successful in undermining the resilience and new-found power of the civic organisations. It was this failure to negotiate, together with the limitations of state repression, that resulted in the stay-away which was in effect a bid decisively to alter the balance of forces in the townships.

2 Trade union organisation and worker militancy

Recent years have witnessed a phenomenal increase in trade

- stay-away -

union membership amongst black workers. (see Table I) It was this growth in trade union organisation which made possible the successful November stay-away. What is particularly striking is the continuing growth since 1980, despite the fact of recession and heavy retrenchments. (7) Nor has re-

Table I: Trade Union Membership 1969-83
(in '000s)

	registered unions				unregi- stered unions (African mostly)	Grand Total
	African	Coloured /Asian	White	Total		
1969	-	182	405	587	16	603
1980	57	304	447	808	166	975
1983	469	330	474	1274	272	1546

Source: SALDRU, Directory of South African Trade Unions

cession and the threat of unemployment dampened the militancy of these newly-organised workers - as shown by the stay-away itself. If one looks purely at work-related stoppages, the number of strikes which took place in the first 10 months of 1984, is 14% higher than for the same period the previous year: 309 as compared with 270 strikes in 1983. (8) However the number of workers involved has doubled from 53,998 to 119,029. These global figures obviously mask important sectoral and regional variations and further research might indicate a shift towards more defensive actions. Even so the major employers' organisations have been alarmed by the rise in the strike rate. One personnel manager, in a curiously prophetic vein, stated in September: "We will be lucky if by the end of the year we only have a labour relations problem". (9) This, together with the pressures of recession may explain the increasing use of mass dismissals during 1984 by employers in response to plant-based strikes. But to reiterate, these tactics and the threat of dismissal have not prevented continued trade union militancy.

There have been a number of qualitative changes within the

South African labour movement in the recent past. At a "macro" level, the successful moves towards unity seem likely to result in the establishment of a new trade union federation in 1985. This federation will be the most representative working class body to have been formed in South Africa's history.

At shop floor level, the new unions are characterised by a high degree of worker control through mass participation, strict accountability, and the need for leaders to obtain mandates from rank and file members. These developments have been accompanied by the establishment of an effective shop steward system. So far these new unions have successfully resisted attempts to co-opt them through the industrial conciliation bureaucracy. Where unions have taken up places on industrial councils, it has been on the basis of continued worker control over representatives, and the freedom to pursue their interests at local plant level - as in the case of MAWU at Highveld Steel. (10) Some unions, after considerable debate, have sought to turn certain aspects of the post-Wiehahn labour dispensation to their own advantage: registration, participation in industrial councils (11), recognition and stop orders, and the Industrial Court, which is empowered to rule on unfair labour practices. Of late the Industrial Court's rulings have been much less favourable to the unions, and there are signs that the honeymoon period is now over.

Beyond the basic struggle for recognition and decent wages, the emerging unions have challenged management on a number of issues: arbitrary dismissals, retrenchments, health and safety, and the very organisation and running of the production process. (12) In this way the frontiers of management control have been rolled back. There have been a number of responses to this. The state has sought to depoliticise at least one potential area of conflict - health and safety - through its Machinery and Occupational Safety Act. (13) Employers have sought to reassert areas of "management prerogative" as part of a continuing ideological battle to sell the free enterprise system to black workers (14) and at a practical level, in their conduct of shop floor relations. (15)

With growing politicisation in the townships particularly since the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum Committee (NFC) in 1983, unions have been under pressure to take up political positions. There have

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been a number of different responses: the development of political/community unionism, the growth of black consciousness unions, (16) whilst CUSA has dealt with the issue by affiliating to both UDF and NFC.

In the recent past trade unions have taken protest action, such as the half-hour strike involving 100,000 workers after the death of Neil Aggett in police detention in February 1982. Now, ironically, the very process of reform by the state has obliged unions to adopt a direct political stance. Thus FOSATU's active support for the boycott of the elections earlier this year was the result of pressure from its Indian and Coloured members. The point must also be emphasised that those trade unions which had followed a "survivalist" policy of concentrating on factory issues were under intense pressure to abandon this approach.

FOSATU's approach, spelt out by Joe Foster, was critical of non-worker controlled political action labelling it as "populist". (17) However, despite extensive discussions at leadership and shop steward level this highly significant attempt to define a distinct working class politics was not sufficiently followed through - creating a political vacuum. With growing polarisation in the townships, unions have been under pressure to give a political direction to their members. The split inside MAWU in mid-1984 brought these tensions to the fore, albeit in a confused way. (18) Unable to resist this pressure, intensified in the Transvaal with the entry of the Defence Force into the townships, these unions were catapulted into a central role in the stay-away. Thus when these trade unions were finally to move beyond the factory floor it was to be on terrain not fundamentally different from that criticised by Foster as non-worker controlled. However, the demand for action was seen to come from working class communities. Because these unions were now strongly established, they felt able to give support and direction to the action proposed. The question remains as to whether Foster's original criticisms of this kind of action have been answered.

3 COSAS and the crisis in education

The Congress of South African Students (COSAS) was established in 1979 to represent the interests of black school students on a national basis. Its principal aims include alerting

students and the wider community to the repressive nature of schooling in South Africa, and to participate in drawing up an educational charter for a future non-racial democratic education system. Although rooted in the educational sphere, COSAS views the struggle in the schools as part of a much larger struggle against oppression and exploitation, and is an active affiliate of the UDF. Furthermore, COSAS has promoted the establishment of youth organisations to serve the interests of young workers and unemployed.

Since the Soweto uprising of 1976, black educational institutions have become sites of struggle as increasingly politicised students challenge the state's authority and contest discriminatory education. By October this year, some 200,000 students, primarily in the PWV region, were boycotting classes and many of them had been out for most of the year. That student struggle goes beyond the narrowly educational sphere was demonstrated again recently by student opposition to the Coloured and Indian elections, and by the role students have played in the turbulent protests which erupted in the Vaal.

Throughout the year, COSAS took the fight to the Department of Education and Training via a series of concrete demands which include the establishment of democratically elected SRCs; abolition of the age limit; abolition of corporal punishment; and an end to sexual abuse of female students by male teachers.

The initiative towards what became the November stay-away came from students. There was a slowing down in the momentum of student protest by the beginning of October due to three main reasons: firstly, the failure of the state to respond adequately to students demands; secondly, students as a whole and particularly COSAS activists were subject to detention - 556 in all in 1984 - and in some cases have been killed (19) - leading to a weakening of organisation; thirdly, end of year examinations were approaching and school principals and particularly the town councillors were attempting to mount a campaign to entice students back to school. Large numbers of boycotting students would return to school unless the terrain of struggle could be shifted and the support of broader social forces enlisted.

Consequently, a call was made by the students for parent

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solidarity, and meetings were arranged in a number of townships with a view to establishing local parent-student committees. At the same time, an approach for assistance was made to other organisations within the UDF and a meeting was arranged for October 10. At this meeting it was argued that the student struggle would be advanced only if the trade union movement as a whole was willing to act in solidarity. Accordingly, COSAS at a later date invited the trade unions to join them and community organisations in the stay-away.

In the meantime a highly significant meeting attended by 4,000 people was taking place in Kwa Thema on October 14. This led to the establishment of a Kwa Thema parent-student committee consisting of 10 students and 10 parents. Many of the parents were active trade unionists and included MAWU and UMMAWSA shop stewards, as well as Chris Dlamini, President of FOSATU. This committee was mandated to send telexes to the Minister of Cooperation and Development and Education, Viljoen, as well as to the Minister of Law and Order, LeGrange, listing the following student demands: scrapping of age limit regulations; election of democratic SRCs; withdrawal of white teachers (usually members of the Defence Force); removal of security forces from the townships; release of all detained students; the resignation of all community councillors; and calling on students to boycott school until an appropriate response was received from the Department of Education and Training. If these demands were refused by the Ministers concerned, then parents would take action in solidarity with students. (20)

No response was forthcoming and at a lengthy follow-up meeting the next Saturday, which was punctuated by shouts of "Azikwelwa" ("we shall not ride" - the traditional boycott slogan), it was decided to call a local stay-away for Monday, October 22, and if this failed to produce the necessary response, a further stay-away would occur on the 29th.

The stay-away on the 22nd was highly successful due to strong organisation and clear purpose. Press reports indicate that over 80% of workers stayed home. The stay-away involved violent clashes between youths, who set up barricades in the streets, and the police. The setting up of barricades, however, was a tactic that was not approved by the student-parent committee. It was the success of this stay-away which,

according to Chris Dlamini, guaranteed support for the later call for a Transvaal regional stay-away in November.

4 The stay-away committee

The momentum built up in the Kwa Thema stay-away prepared the way for a larger regional action. On 27 October, a broadly based and very important meeting took place in Johannesburg in response to the original COSAS appeal for worker support. (The pamphlet containing the COSAS appeal is appended.) The meeting was attended by 37 organisations, including representatives of FOSATU and CUSA unions, together with other unions and representatives of youth congresses, community organisations, and the RMC. COSAS called on unions to show solidarity with the specific student demands articulated earlier.

All organisations came prepared to take concrete action. In the case of FOSATU representatives, the process by which they reached this decision is illuminating. As mentioned above, FOSATU officials were already involved in the Kwa Thema campaign, and there is no question that there was a groundswell of shop floor support for the students' demands - due in part to student solidarity with unions during the Simba Quix boycott. Chris Dlamini, at a public meeting in Johannesburg on 7 November, explained how the dividing lines between student and worker struggles were increasingly becoming blurred; how SRCs were similar to shop stewards councils; how age restrictions on students would force them onto the labour market during a period of high unemployment. Furthermore, workers are parents and they have to finance their children's education from their own pockets, Dlamini argued.

In terms of its deliberations, the Central Committee of FOSATU met on 19-21 October. Following reports from Transvaal locals on the crisis in the townships, all Transvaal representatives on the Committee, irrespective of political affiliation, felt some action was necessary. A sub-committee, made up of Transvaal members of the Central Committee, was established and given wide powers to both monitor the situation and to take appropriate action where necessary. Chris Dlamini was chairman of the committee, and Bangi Solo the information officer. Both were detained after the stay-away. Meetings were held with students and student-parent committees. Thus FOSATU representatives arrived at the October 27 meeting with

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concrete proposals and empowered to take action. As far as can be ascertained, a debate over the length of the stay-away resulted in a compromise on two days. It was also agreed that the stay-away be broadened to encompass the demands of trade unions and community organisations. The representatives of the 37 organisations present formed a general committee (the Transvaal Regional Stay-away Committee as it was to be dubbed by the press), and a four-member co-ordinating group was elected to handle practical preparations. This core co-ordinating committee consisted of Moses Mayekiso (of FOSATU and MAWU), Themba Nontlane (of MAGWUSA), Oupa Monareng (of SOYCO and RMC), and Thami Mali (of RMC) - ie. two union organisers, one unemployed worker from SOYCO, and one ex-detainee out on bail. UDF was not formally represented because it did not initiate the stay-away itself, and since some organisations involved were not affiliates. Also since UDF affiliates were present there was no need for the UDF to be formally represented. It was also felt that it was not possible for the UDF to assume leadership because the struggle was seen as specific to the working class African townships of the Transvaal.

Two days after the meeting of the 27th, FOSATU convened a meeting of all the Transvaal unions to co-ordinate action for the stay-away. This was followed by a series of meetings of unions, locals, and shop stewards to report back to members on the proposed demonstration. The decisions taken by the sub-committee were ratified by the full Central Committee when it met after the stay-away on November 10. This meeting reiterated the central demands of the stay-away: the clear removal of age limits; democratically constituted SRCs; withdrawal of the army from the townships and an end to police harassment; and a suspension of rent and bus fare increases.(21)

The initial pamphlet calling for a stay-away for November 5 and 6 issued the following demands: democratically elected SRCs; the abolition of any age limit on secondary education; the abolition of corporal punishment; an end to sexual harassment in schools; the withdrawal of security forces from the townships; the release of all detainees; no increase in rents, bus fares, or service charges; reinstatement of workers dismissed by Simba Quix. The last demand, a workplace demand, shows the continuity with previous campaigns. In the event, the Simba workers achieved their goal before the stay-away began.

The object of the stay-away was to articulate student, worker, and civic grievances, and to put pressure on the state to redress these. The entire community faced severe problems during the current recession. Also it was felt that the education issue could not be divorced from workers' problems - they could not be comfortable at work when their children were dying in the streets; and whilst jobless parents were unable to afford an education for their children. On the question of reaching non-unionised workers on the shop floor, each organisation was given specific tasks in this regard. In particular, hostel dwellers who in the past have been ignored, were a main target. In contrast to 1976 many hostel dwellers, particularly on the East Rand, were now unionised. In addition, 400,000 pamphlets were printed for distribution. However, there was little activity on the West Rand and in rural areas. Finally, COSAS specifically addressed its student constituency to ensure the stay-away in the schools whilst the unions undertook to ensure the stay-away from work.

II MONITORING THE STAY-AWAY

1 The stay-away from work

In our attempts to monitor the stay-away we sought to investigate the relationship of trade union organisation to the size of the stay-away. Thus our sample of factories consisted exclusively of establishments organised by trade unions. Using the SALDRU Directory of Trade Unions as our data base, we phoned every firm in the PWV area which had a recognition agreement with an independent union. We spoke to 71 of these, with only 6 refusing to talk to us. Our findings were:

1. Unionised factories gave overwhelming support to the stay-away. 70% of our sample had a stay-away rate of over 80% (Table II).

2. These unionised factories were concentrated on the East Rand and the Vaal - the areas where the stay-away rates (as also indicated by management bodies) were highest. All surveyed establishments in the Vaal and far East Rand had over 80% participation, with 60% of the near East Rand and 91% of Kempton Park/Isando also showing 80%+ participation. (Table II) The poor showing in Pretoria reflects the limitations of

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our sample group. We know from other sources that the stay-away in Atteridgeville was almost total. However commuters from the neighbouring "homeland" came to work in Pretoria as normal. A similar situation occurred in Brits with location dwellers supporting the stay-away and commuters working normally.

3. There was no weakening of the stay-away on day two as had been anticipated by some observers : 56% of establishments maintained the same level of stay-away for 2 days, 20% weakened, and 24% actually intensified on day 2 (Table III). In the past extended stay-aways have failed, such as the call for a five day stay-away in November 1976 which simply petered out.

Table II: Stay-away Participation Rates by Area

% Part- icipa- tion	Vaal	Near East Rand	Far East Rand	Kempton Park, Isando	Pre- toria	Jo- burg	West Rand	PWV Total
90-100	70% (7)	48% (13)	100% (11)	82% (10)	-	20% (1)	-	59% (42)
80- 89	30% (3)	12% (3)	-	9% (1)	-	20% (1)	-	11% (8)
70- 79	-	7% (2)	-	-	-	-	-	3% (2)
60- 69	-	7% (2)	-	9% (1)	-	20% (1)	-	6% (4)
50- 59	-	7% (2)	-	-	25% (1)	-	-	4% (3)
>50	-	19% (5)	-	-	75% (3)	40% (2)	100% (2)	17% (12)
Total no establi- ments	14% (10)	38% (27)	15% (11)	17% (12)	6% (4)	7% (5)	3% (2)	100% (71)

Table III: Stay-away Participation Rates
on Day 1 and Day 2

Stay-away intensified on Day 2	17 (24%)
Stay-away weakened on Day 2	14 (20%)*
Number remaining the same	40 (56%)
Total	71 (100%)

* Of the 20% that weakened, half of these began weakly on Day 1 with less than 60% staying away.

Table IV : Stay-away Participation Rates by Sector

% Part- icipa-	Metal	Chem- ical	Food	Auto, Build- & Transport	Retail	All sectors
90-100	50% (12)	67% (8)	70% (14)	43% (3)	63% (5)	59% (42)
80- 89	4% (1)	17% (2)	-	29% (2)	37% (3)	11% (8)
70- 79	4% (1)	8% (1)	-	-	-	3% (2)
60- 69	4% (1)	8% (1)	5% (1)	14% (1)	-	6% (4)
50- 59	8% (2)	-	-	14% (1)	-	4% (3)
>50	26% (7)	-	25% (5)	-	-	17% (12)
Total no establi- ments	34% (24)	17% (12)	28% (20)	10% (7)	11% (8)	100% (71)

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4. All sectors where unions were present were equally affected. Mining was an exception where lack of participation was probably due to their isolation from the townships and the aftermath of their own recent strike. (Table IV)

5. There seems to have been no significant difference in the participation of migrants and township dwellers. In 9 of the 71 establishments surveyed migrants were a significant proportion of the workforce. In 5 of these there was a 90%+ participation in the stay-away (Table V). Secondary evidence later confirmed these findings.

6. None of the employers interviewed envisaged disciplinary action. The most common response was to deduct wages for the 2 days absence. Some employers treated it as paid leave; others, more sympathetic, accepted employees accounts of "intimidation" and paid wages in full. There is later evidence of dismissals in smaller and unorganised factories.

7. Many employers commented that Coloured and Asian staff worked normally.

Table V: Stay-away Participation Rates for Migrants

% Participation	Proportion of migrants in the workforce*		
	1/4 to 1/2	1/2 to 3/4	3/4 to all
90-100	1	2	2
50- 89	-	-	-
>50	1	2	1

*In only 9 of the 71 establishments surveyed were migrants a significant proportion of the workforce.

2 The stay-away from school

According to press reports some 400,000 students observed the stay-away. In the Transvaal some 300 schools were completely

closed. The Minister of Law and Order put the number of boycotting students at 396,000.

In terms of regions the overwhelming majority of schools in the Vaal Triangle, East Rand and Atteridgeville were deserted. The Department of Education and Training claimed that in Soweto attendance ranged from 30% to 90%. However, our investigation indicates a much lower attendance level - although most matric students did write their exams on November 6 and 7.

In addition, students at the University of the North observed the boycott.

III RESPONSES TO THE STAY-AWAY

1 The state and the stay-away

State response to the stay-away needs to be assessed from several perspectives. During the stay-away itself response was relatively restrained: no serious effort was made to actually force strikers back to work. It was only after the conclusion of the stay-away that the state moved sharply towards a counter-attack that began with the Sasol dismissals and brought on a wave of detentions apparently linked to a conspiracy view of events. The state's delayed response makes sense when the broader context of the stay-away is considered.

Economic grievances and student unrest came together during the winter of 1984 in Transvaal and Orange Free State townships in a mounting wave of attacks on state authority and symbols of South African capitalism (eg. with the destruction of banks and building societies).

The stay-away was marked by township revolts in which at least 23 died, (22) with Tembisa being the most seriously affected community. The South African Police were so stretched that the South African Defence Force was put at its disposal. Already by October, the Minister of Law and Order, LeGrange, was justifying the use of the army in this way in a speech to the Transvaal Annual Conference of the National Party at Alberton. The state is clearly anxious about the possibility that township youths may try to develop no-go areas where police and army can appear only in force. Thus

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however menacing the withdrawal of labour may have seemed at the time to officials, the security forces were too thinly spread to make possible a physical suppression of the stay-away. Direct interference was largely limited to pamphlets mainly aimed at Soweto which called upon workers to unite against the strike. No sign was found of an effective attempt, on the lines of 1976, to create an anti-strike force among migrant workers; the hostility of Inkatha to the stay-away had a negligible effect.

During the 5 years before the stay-away, a broad disparity developed in South Africa between the terrain of activity tolerated for workplace and trade union organisation among Africans, and that for African politics which remains harshly constrained. Such a disparity is inherently unstable in the long term. The stay-away appears to represent the culmination of a movement away from acceptance of the fissure between community and workplace, and a return, particularly on the part of CUSA and FOSATU, to a more political trade unionism as defined by the state.

The first sign of a counter-blow by the state came in the form of mass dismissals of some 5-6,000 production workers at the Sasol 2 and 3 plants in Secunda, virtually the entire African workforce. Although management insisted that it took this action as a private sector employer, Sasol is a parastatal of great strategic significance and, one might speculate, requiring state consultation and assistance to bridge over the dismissal of such a huge labour force. The contrast to the "no work no pay" stance of most large private sector employers was very marked. Police with dogs and hippos were quick to move in and patrol the streets of the Secunda township, eMbalenhle, to assure the compliant removal of workers from hostels to the various bantustans. This was followed by a series of arrests and detentions, some 30, in connection with the stay-away, including trade unionists and student leaders.

One can only speculate as to the purpose of the detentions. For the Minister of Manpower, Pietie du Plessis, the stay-away can apparently be explained only in terms of sinister intimidatory forces using this "lowest, most undemocratic, and unchristian tactic". While business feared that the state was putting the post-Wiehahn labour dispensation at risk by

its high-handed actions and conspiracy theory, the government apparently was more concerned about the near disintegration of its political reform strategies. The black local government structures for many parts of the Rand are in ruins, under threat, or entirely discredited; no alternative to force, as witness the massive house to house raids in Sebokeng and Tembisa, appears to exist for regaining control of the townships. The state's immediate response was to wave the big stick for display, partly to warn unions and partly to reassure a white electorate which is feeling the pinch of recession, inclined to blame concessions to the blacks as the cause of their problems, and tempted increasingly, especially in less affluent Rand constituencies, to opt for the anti-reform Conservative Party. Van Zyl Slabbert of the PFP certainly saw the detentions as an attempt to win support in the Primrose by-election. (23) However, press reports indicate certain reservations over this hardline policy on the part of senior government officials and some cabinet ministers. (24)

2 Capital and the stay-away

The first response of employer organisations was to play down the stay-away and so defuse its effects:

Not to over-react, not to vent a white back-lash which in turn causes a black backlash and so fuels an ever-increasing cycle of action and reaction, must be the watchword. (25)

Most employers were taken by surprise by the extent of the stay-away, and were unsympathetic to what they saw as a political strike unrelated to the workplace. As Leon Bartel, President of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, expressed it:

The responsible employer should seek to divorce politics from labour relations. The stay-away is clearly a political matter and the employers should make it clear that political demonstrations will not be countenanced. (26)

Any future stay-aways are likely to be met by a harsher management response. Already some employers are calling for a trimming down of the workforce, and could well use stay-aways as a pretext for retrenchments. "Enlightened" employers, however, would baulk at any direct attack on trade unions, and are keen to maintain the fragile relations established with unions in the post-Wiehahn period.

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This was clearly demonstrated when the three major employer associations, ASSOCOM, AHI, and the FCI sent a joint telex to the Minister of Law and Order after the detention of CUSA leader, Piroshaw Camay, warning that the wave of detentions were exacerbating a very delicate labour situation. LeGrange responded aggressively, questioning their support among employers.

These different responses to the stay-away reflect different experiences and pressures. Employers readily saw in the stay-away a threat to industrial relations in the workplace, and quickly commenced talks with FOSATU and CUSA. In particular, employers were worried about the effects of further stay-aways. What seems to have triggered the joint statement to the Minister was the detention of Camay. This was confirmed by Dr Johan van Zyl of the FCI, and Tony Bloom of the Premier Group, who in separate interviews with the Sunday Express stated that they thought they were making "good progress" in their negotiations with Camay when he was suddenly detained. (27) A further pressure on employers was the need to "reconfirm their credibility" with FOSATU and CUSA by publicly declaring their opposition to the detentions. (28) The general crisis is forcing employers, like labour, to adopt a higher political profile. As Ackerman of Pick and Pay - arguing for greater political involvement by employers - expressed it: "the South African businessman has a crucial role to play in influencing internal change".(29)

The state, on the other hand, saw the stay-away as the work of a small group of agitators bent on using the trade unions for political ends. A number of reporters were subpoenaed as part of an investigation by the state for a possible offence under the Internal Security Act on the part of the stay-away organisers. Following massive international condemnation, those detained in connection with the stay-away were released.*

Employers feared that the state's initial reaction would curtail even the current limited reform programme - and the working relationship established with the state since 1979 to

*The four members of the co-ordinating committee were allowed out on bail pending charged under the Internal Security Act; three went into hiding and charges were finally dropped against the remaining member, Moses Mayekiso, in April 1985.

implement the reforms. Beyond this, capital's response to the stay-away and the general crisis includes a call for further and accelerated structural reform - particularly over influx control - in order to head off any challenge to the social system itself. The subsequent conference convened by the United States/South Africa Leadership Exchange Programme, which brought together representatives of capital and potentially sympathetic black leaders, called for: co-operative schemes in the workplace; consultation and community involvement; recognition from government of socially responsible investment as tax deductible; a programme of job creation and the development of skills; investment of pension funds in black urban areas; improved communication between the races. (30)

Beyond immediate reforms the two key financial journals responded to the stay-away by suggesting a dialogue with the ANC. Both drew on Tony Bloom's timely speech to the Wits Business School:

It is difficult to establish just how great the support for the ANC is among blacks in South Africa, but I venture to suggest that it is very substantial. There is an inherent inevitability about talking to the ANC. It is not a question of if, but rather when. (31)

Capital's reform proposals still stop short of one-person-one-vote - as Ackerman made clear.(32) However in the long-term, sections of capital may even be pushed to contemplate non-racial democracy, if the free enterprise system itself is threatened by the continuing crisis.

IV CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

1. The stay-aways crystallised the central contradiction of state policy - the "liberalisation" of the industrial relations system without meaningful political and social change. Hitherto the major trade unions have focussed on factory floor issues avoiding involvement in more overtly political issues. The state's failure to adequately respond to the educational demands of the students and the growing crisis in the townships have propelled the trade unions beyond the factory floor. In spite of recession workers were willing to risk their jobs by taking part in the stay-away - even when faced by management threats, as at Sasol. The state's resp-

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onse - the detentions and the sackings at Sasol - forced the trade unions to take further action, such as the call for a "Black Christmas" - leading to further politicisation. According to a recent FOSATU statement: "the long-term implications of the stay-away could include more involvement of the unions in political affairs." The government's failure to resolve the crises in education and in the townships now threatens to undermine its own reform initiatives, particularly as regards the industrial relations structures created in the post-Wiehahn period.

2. The stay-away brought together the major opposition forces to apartheid in the Transvaal; groups which had not previously worked together. They share certain distinctive features: they are mass based organisations drawing predominantly from the working class: unions, student organisations - overwhelmingly from the children of workers, and youth organisations representing young workers and unemployed. In the end the stay-away was successful because it rested upon democratic grassroots support and organisation. It was because of the trade unions' deep roots in working class communities that they responded so rapidly to the requests of the students, and it was their highly organised and democratic structures which made it possible to mobilise at such short-notice for the stay-away. One important implication of these new forms of trade union organisation is that any policy of repression, of attempting to "behead" these organisations by detaining leaders, is much less likely to be successful.

3. This new alignment has involved a further polarisation of extra-parliamentary oppositional politics. Buthelezi's vocal opposition to the stay-away call distances him even further from the mainstream of opposition in South Africa. His interference in the Sasol dispute and his advice to workers to go back on management's terms will not endear him to the trade unions. (33) The high level of involvement of contract workers in the stay-away suggests a critical weakening of Inkatha influence amongst organised workers on the Rand. Forced to choose between loyalty to Inkatha and to their unions many supported the stay-away. Indeed it appears that migrants were systematically mobilised in support of the stay-away by student and community organisations and the trade unions. The hostel dwellers were to play no small part in advocating the stay-away. Nevertheless Inkatha's conservative influence

remains strong particularly in Natal - which underlines the regionally specific nature of the stay-away. This also has important implications for those unions attempting to build up nation-wide organisation. There is already evidence of an attempt on the part of Buthelezi to reestablish his presence on the Reef in alliance with other conservative township groups - such as the Sofasonke Party. (34)

4. Where strong trade union organisation and community[®]student organisation coincided the stay-away was most successful. It may be that the relatively weaker response in Soweto reflects the fact that there is less correspondence between working class and community organisation and the class profile of the area is more varied. Similarly the non-participation of commuters in Brits and Pretoria indicates the absence of community organisation amongst commuters. Bearing in mind current decentralisation strategies this indicates a critical area for organisation in the future.

Where the stay-away was most intense - the Vaal, East Rand and Atteridgeville - school attendance was also negligible and student organisation was strong. As Dlamini put it, workers readily identified the demands of the students for democratic SRCs with their own struggles for independent representation in the factories.

5. In previous stay-aways a central tactic of the authorities has been to try and undermine the action by forcing workers out of their homes and back to work. That this did not happen on this occasion probably reflects two important developments: the scale and geographical spread of the action and the heightened forms of physical resistance adopted in the townships - barricades, attacks on state institutions, attacks on councillors and others who are viewed as collaborators. The security forces were thus thinly spread and had to concentrate their resources on sealing off the most affected areas in order to contain the situation. It should also be borne in mind that the earlier house to house search associated with Operation Palmiet was singularly unsuccessful in capturing "subversives" and certainly does not seem to have intimidated people from taking further stay-away action.

6. Sasol's hardline approach revealed the vulnerability of workers to reprisals after a stay-away. Even so, organised

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workers were in many cases able to secure undertakings in advance from employers that there would be no dismissals. It is perhaps necessary to stress the limitations of stay-aways; workers do not have the large resources to sustain a long general strike. Moreover an action which is township-based can be easily sealed off by the security forces. By staying at home the workers surrender the initiative and are cut off from fellow workers in other townships.

7. One feature of the stay-away was the absence from the scene of the black consciousness organisations. Whilst they did not oppose the stay-away, they offered no organisational support. A spokesperson from Azapo criticised aspects of the stay-away: "its lack of political content - it was ridiculous for students to approach workers; it would be more correct the other way around. Its positive aspect was to force the unions into political activity." It was also felt by Azapo that little consideration was given to the possibility of reprisals by the state. Also of concern to this critic was what appeared to be an "Africanisation" of the protest. While this may be one view, in fact this point implicitly underlines the working class nature of the stay-away - since the composition of the working class in the Transvaal is overwhelmingly African. This was also reflected in the dominance of the African affiliates of the UDF during the stay-away.

8. The decision to resort to stay-aways reflects the absence of political rights for blacks - the vote, freedom of speech and association. So long as blacks are refused access to political power, the stay-away will re-emerge as a weapon. However given the recession, the degree of organisation and the limitations of the tactic, the major unions have stated clearly that there will be no more stay-aways in the immediate future.

Stay-aways remain essentially non-violent demonstrations of power - and not an organised challenge to the state. (The large number of deaths during the stay-away - 23 in all - were not a result of the tactic itself, but were part of the ongoing township unrest which has claimed 161 lives since January and resulted in over 1,000 detentions). (35) In the past the state has responded to such demonstrations of power in a repressive manner with the result that legitimate protest has been forced underground or into exile. A similar

response in the present situation would further deepen the internal crisis - and has already led to international condemnation. The demonstrations outside the South African Embassy and Consulates in the USA have achieved considerable publicity. More important was the response of the international trade union movement and particularly the International Metal Workers Federation - which earlier in 1984 pledged support to the struggle of black workers for trade union and political rights. (36)

A number of specific questions are raised by this particular stay-away. Did the speed with which the decision was taken curtail normal democratic procedures? Perhaps this is inevitable in a crisis situation - and the success of the stay-away may actually be a measure of the harmony and common purpose of union leadership and rank-and-file. Were unions drawn into an essentially "populist" protest that was not of their making and not in their interest? Did they have a choice - given the pressures from the community? Was the state's response underestimated - and will it have its intended effect of again confining the unions to the factory-floor? How successful can co-optive strategies be, and how significant is the difference in response between capital and the state? Can capital persuade the state to take more meaningful risks to bring about reform - or are government options constrained by the need to maintain wider political support amongst whites? The stay-away represents a new alignment of forces against apartheid. The question is, if it endures, what form will it take: a return to the tactics of the 1950's or the extension of working-class politics?

Footnotes:

- 1 The conservative figure of 300,000 is obtained by multiplying the total number of blacks employed in private industry in the PWV area (374,313) by 60% and then making allowance for retail and services. The figure of 800,000 is obtained by multiplying by 60% the total number of blacks in paid employment in the PWV area (1,485,000) minus the number of mineworkers (+/-150,000)
- 2 South African Labour Bulletin 10.2, October-November 1984
- 3 Sunday Tribune 9.9.84
- 4 Rand Daily Mail 3.9.84
- 5 J Grest and H Hughes, "The state strategy and popular

- stay-away -

- response at the local level", in South African Review, volume II, Ravan Press, 1984
- 6 Star 21.11.84
 - 7 South African Labour Bulletin 10.1, August-September 1984
 - 8 Star 16.11.84
 - 9 Sunday Tribune 9.9.84
 - 10 see Work in Progress 34, 1984
 - 11 South African Labour Bulletin 8.5, April 1983
 - 12 E Webster, "A new frontier of control? Changing forms of job protection in South African industrial relations", 2nd Carnegie Commission, paper no. 111, Cape Town, 1984
 - 13 South African Labour Bulletin 9.7, June 1984
 - 14 see Paul Johnson in Financial Mail 23.11.84
 - 15 see South African Labour Bulletin 10.2, October-November 1984 for an unsuccessful example of this at Simba Quix.
 - 16 Ibid
 - 17 Ibid 7.8, July 1982
 - 18 Ibid 10.1, August-September 1984
 - 19 eg Benjamin Khumalo, Soweto Branch Secretary of COSAS; see SASPU Focus 3.2, November 1984. All figures on deaths and detentions supplied by SAIRR.
 - 20 Sowetan 19.10.84
 - 21 Details from official FOSATU press statements, and statements from Alec Erwin, Acting General Secretary of FOSATU at the time.
 - 22 Figures supplied by SAIRR
 - 23 Rand Daily Mail 17.11.84
 - 24 Sunday Express 18.11.84
 - 25 Finance Week 15-21 November 1984
 - 26 Ibid
 - 27 Sunday Express 18.11.84
 - 28 Rand Daily Mail 17.11.84
 - 29 Ibid 23.11.84
 - 30 Star 21.11.84
 - 31 Finance Week 15-21 November 1984; Financial Mail 15-19 November 1984
 - 32 Rand Daily Mail 23.11.84
 - 33 Rand Daily Mail 27.11.84
 - 34 Ibid 26.11.84
 - 35 Figures supplied by the SAIRR
 - 36 South African Labour Bulletin 9.6, May 1984

Appendix:

WORKERS, WORKERS, BUILD SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENTS STRUGGLE
IN THE SCHOOLS

For many months 1000's and 1000's of us have struggled in the schools. We students united in massive boycotts to FIGHT FOR OUR DEMANDS:

- * STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS (SRCs) IN EVERY SCHOOL
- * AN END TO ALL AGE RESTRICTIONS
- * FOR THE REINSTATEMENT OF EVERY SINGLE EXPELLED STUDENT
- * FOR FREE BOOKS AND SCHOOLING
- * FOR AN END TO ALL CORPORAL PUNISHMENT
- * IN PROTEST AGAINST THE NEW CONSTITUTION WHICH EXCLUDES THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IS RACIST AND ANTI-WORKER.

- LIKE YOU WORKERS: we want democratic committees under our control (SRC's) to fight for our needs.
- LIKE YOU WORKERS: we students are prepared to fight all and every dismissal from our schools.
- LIKE YOU WORKERS: we defend older students from being thrown out of our schools, just like you defend old workers from being thrown out of the factories.
- LIKE YOU WORKERS: demand free overalls and boots so we students demand free books and schooling. And students don't pay for books and schools IT IS THE WORKERS WHO PAY.
- JUST AS THE WORKERS: fight assaults against the workers in the factory so we students fight against the beatings we get at school.

From Cradock to Pietersburg, from Paarl and Capetown to Ver-
eeniging, from Tembisa, Saulsville, Atteridgeville, Alexandra,
Wattville, Katlehong we have come out in our 1000's in mass
boycott action.

WORKERS, YOU ARE FATHERS AND MOTHERS, YOU ARE OUR BROTHERS
AND SISTERS. OUR STRUGGLE IN THE SCHOOLS IS YOUR STRUGGLE IN
THE FACTORIES. WE FIGHT THE SAME BOSSES GOVERNMENT, WE FIGHT
THE SAME ENEMY.

Today the bosses government has closed many of our schools.
OUR BOYCOTT WEAPON IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH AGAINST OUR COMMON
ENEMY, THE BOSSES AND THEIR GOVERNMENT.

- stay-away -

WORKERS, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND STRENGTH IN THE TRADE UNIONS.

WE STUDENTS WILL NEVER WIN OUR STRUGGLE WITHOUT THE STRENGTH AND SUPPORT FROM THE WORKERS MOVEMENT.

** PREPARE FOR A JOINT MEETING OF STUDENTS AND WORKERS TO DISCUSS CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENTS STRUGGLE. **
Workers, we students are ready to help your struggle against the bosses in any way we can. But today we need your support.

Issued by Cosas Transvaal Region

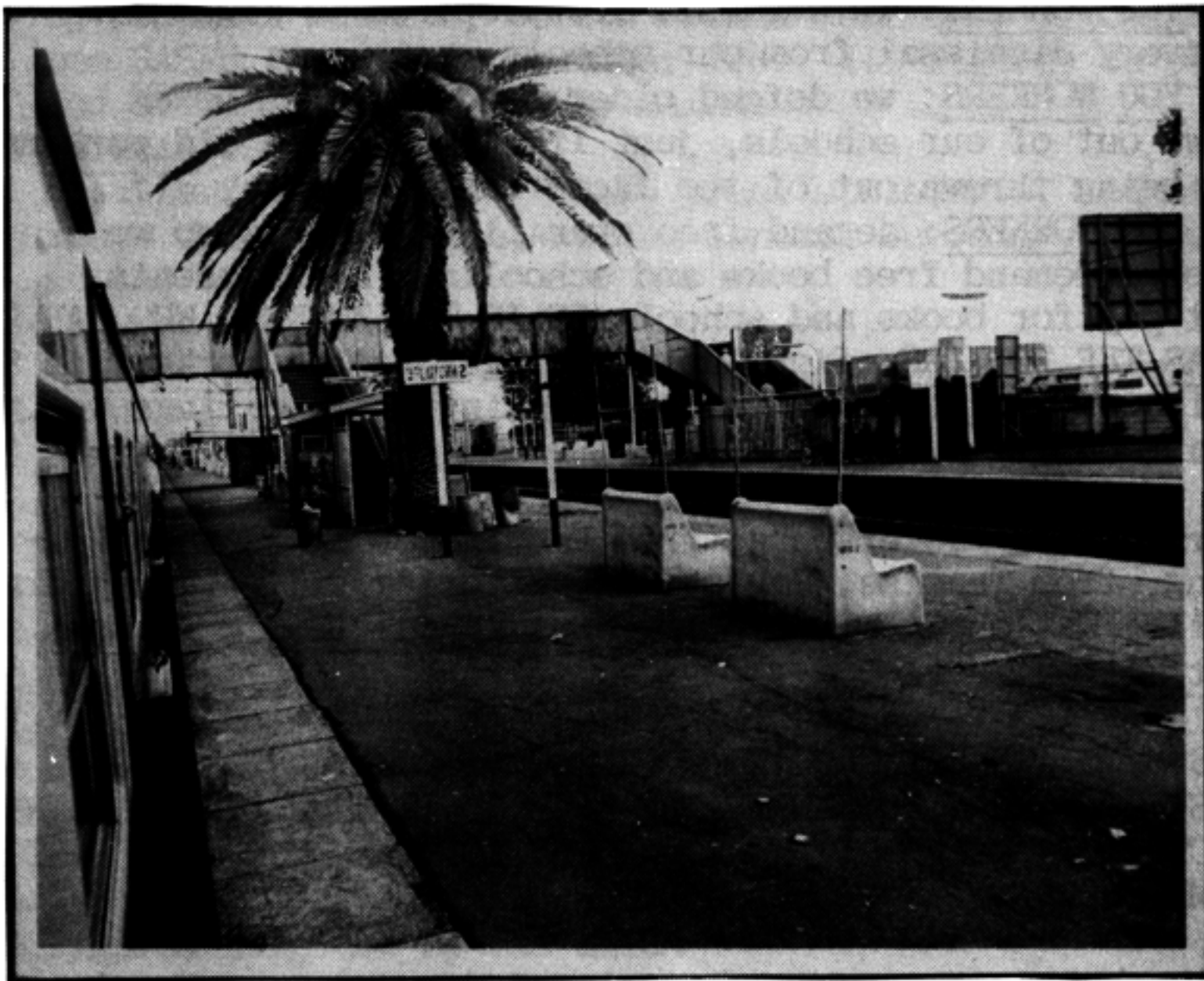


photo: rush-hour on the East Rand, 5.11.84

Mass Struggles on the Mines

Marcel Golding*

In the first 3 months of this year over 80,000 mineworkers have taken strike action. (1) Spearheading these struggles has been the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), a CUSA affiliate and South Africa's biggest trade union, with a membership of 130,000. Preceding and sometimes accompanying the strikes have been mass consumer boycotts of concession stores, by mineworkers, which have served to consolidate union organisation on the mines. Other forms of action by mineworkers in the recent past include liquor and taxi boycotts at Hartebeesfontein, a taxi boycott at Stilfontein, and elsewhere boycotts of mines sports facilities.

In its short existence over 3 years, the NUM has made an indelible imprint on labour relations in the country. The mining industry, bedrock of South African capitalism and a bastion of conservatism has, to an extent, been successfully penetrated, although an arduous task still remains to organise the rest of the mineworkers - some 500,000 in all. The successful legal strike by the NUM in September last year was a major boost to the union's profile with hundreds of workers streaming in to union offices to join up. (2)

This article focuses on 3 strikes: Rietspruit Coal Colliery strike involving 800-1,000 miners during February; East Driefontein Gold Mine strike involving 11,000-13,000 miners and Kloof Gold Mine where 13,000 engaged in strike action. Also analysed are the mass boycotts waged by the Kloof and East Driefontein miners against local concession stores; workers grievances, organisation, discipline and mass support reveal that strikes at the workplace are but one aspect of the totality of mine workers' struggles.

* My sincere thanks are due to the workers, shaft stewards, branch and regional chairmen, I spoke to, for their co-operation. Without the arrangements made by Manoko Nchwe and Thabo Mndebele this article would not have been possible.

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The recession, it seems, has had little impact on the growth of unionisation on the mines. It is a dramatic manifestation of the effects of unionisation in the industry, which has brought with it confidence, militancy and a growing consciousness among miners of their power. To break this power we have seen well orchestrated management strategies which include: co-optive measures, eg. better facilities for certain categories of workers, privileges for sportsmen etc.; ideological attacks on the union; victimisation of shaft stewards and above all force. The last aspect involves systematic police and security violence against mineworkers which has left many, in the strikes examined, badly injured. Mineworkers remain determined to extend the union, consolidate the gains they have made over the last 2 years, and increasingly challenge areas of management prerogative. (3)

Aspects of mining life: accommodation

Adequate reportage of conditions of mining life is difficult given the tight security at mines and the half-truths which emanate from management. The mining industry, virtually from its inception, required large supplies of cheap migrant labour recruited from all parts of Southern Africa. This still remains the dominant feature. However certain mining groups such as Rand Mines are developing a settled labour force - a major shift from the general employment pattern of the industry, housing workers in both married and single quarters. Part of the strategy is to encourage the ethos of a "career miner", committed to the industry, and to attempt to co-opt certain sections (eg: team leaders and clerks). However this is the exception. The majority of workers are migrants - who have to return annually or when their contract expires to their places of origin - and are housed in single sex compounds; institutions well known for control and coercion. (4) The conditions are notoriously bad. It is not uncommon to have 20 workers in a room, sleeping on triple steel bunks often with poor ventilation. At Kloof Mine, owned by Goldfields of South Africa, workers complain that no ceilings exist in the rooms making them extremely cold in winter and very hot in summer. Washing facilities are often just "big halls with showers and toilets which are terrible", said one worker. There is no privacy, and after work there is very little to do. At Rietspruit mine recreational and residential facilities are reasonably good. At most mines workers are

"encouraged" to play sport which, in itself, has sometimes divisive effects. Some, for example, who excel, are given special privileges dividing them off from the rest of the workers; they become reluctant to attend union meetings and, it seems, form part of the strategy to divide workers.

Workers are housed along ethnic/tribal lines and the induna system remains an institutional feature of the industry. One worker said sarcastically of the indunas: "Their function is to police the workers, discourage mixing with other workers and disorganise us. They are management's puppets and watchdogs." Assisting them are the "tribal representatives", a euphemism for mine police. They control the gates and patrol around in their khaki uniforms armed with a stick. Together they frequently engage in raids of workers' lockers undermining what little privacy workers have. (5) The century old induna system is a source of immense dissatisfaction and many struggles are fought around the powers of the indunas. For mineworkers it is a system which must be abolished. During periods of unrest, tribal police and the indunas are important targets for the mineworkers because they are symbols of management domination.

Food

Food is a major source of grievance and has recently been successfully used to mobilise miners. One worker remarked about the quality of the food: "We often have to eat raw porridge, fish with scales and vegetables that are not properly cooked". At another mine, a shaft steward described a typical mealtime:

We all have to queue. You start by the biggest pot with pap. It is dished up with a small spade they call a spoon. The pap is never properly done, either very stiff or very watery. You get a lump placed on the plate. Next the dirty vegetables...a spoonful. Next, the beans, which are full of small stones and wood particles are added. To the meat pot next...a piece the size of a matchbox and that includes the bone. You end off with a spoon of tasteless gravy... You are forced to eat everything because the tribal representatives patrol while you eat. They are there to make sure you don't leave the stones and the wood pieces on the table!

Because of bad food the majority of workers cook their own

- mines struggles -

food in their rooms. But this is both costly and dangerous. Workers generally have two meals a day - breakfast and supper. Underground there is no food. Most mines operate on a 3-shift system - a morning, afternoon and evening shift. At some mines workers have struggled successfully to have food improved but the general situation is still appalling, as mine bosses try to keep costs low.

Working conditions: wages

The strikes in September last year were over wages. Wages and mine safety remain the two issues mineworkers are most readily prepared to strike over. But issues such as racial abuse, assaults and hostel conditions are also the focus of militant action by workers. Wages on the whole are generally low, for a rockface worker as low as R53 per week. The following figures were given by a worker from East Driefontein Gold Mine: locomotive drivers, winch drivers, machine operators and loaders all earn R64 per week; a general team leader earns R78 per week, while special team leaders and construction team leaders earn R113 per week; section team leaders with 1 star earn R121 per week and section team leaders with 2 stars earn R134 per week.

In the mining industry wages are uneven: gold miners will earn different rates from coal or platinum miners, while different mining houses also pay different rates. Some pay the minimum prescribed by the Chamber of Mines while others, particularly Anglo American, pay more. Uneven wages have often sparked off strikes, for example the 1982 mine strikes, and recently when only certain mine employees received increases at Vaal Reefs, owned by Anglo American.

For the majority of workers money has to be sent to Bantustans where family and dependents reside. Inflation has constantly eroded workers wages. With the union they are more confident that wages will improve. Another feature is that workers are often paid well below the rates their job description demands. For example, a male nurse interviewed was doing nursing work but was classified as a "dresser" and earned R242 per month after 17 years' service. If he worked overtime (that includes every Sunday) this increased to R329 per month. The same applies to artisan's assistants (all blacks) who very often do the work of the artisans (all whites).

The many mineworkers who do work well beyond their job descriptions are beginning to realise their power. The 1979 strike by white mineworkers had no drastic effect on production. Mine management know this, and are increasing the number of black team leaders, in the long term to reduce the wage bill, given the statutory protection of white miners and their artificially high wages, and also possibly to assist in driving a wedge between supervisory black miners and the general workforce. At Western Areas Gold Mine, for example, team leaders have fairly good quarters, TVs and somewhat better facilities. Although co-option is possible, it is an area which will be contested, especially where team leaders are active in the union. Economic improvements will not be sufficient to co-opt when the majority of blacks are denied political rights and when institutionalised racism remains all-pervasive in the mining industry.

Relationship with white miners

Maltreatment of black mineworkers by white miners is common. Assaults and verbal abuse often characterise instructions: "kaffir or boy are our names", was the way one worker put it, "this is how the whites address us". When workers elaborate there is bitterness in their voices, reflecting the years of hardship and abuse they have had to endure. Antagonisms have been exacerbated over the recent period as white miners realise that they are replaceable. In addition workers are increasingly challenging the abuse and, through the union and their unity, they have grown more confident. As workers organise and threaten militant action, mine bosses are likely to put pressure on their "labour lieutenants" (the white miners) because strikes and the destruction of mine property would be too high a price to pay for continued tolerance of racist bigotry. Relations with white miners were summarised by one worker from Kloof Mine, to the approval of his colleagues:

When we start the 3 a.m. shift we are up well before 2 a.m. When we go down we are tightly packed like sardines in the cage. The whites come down in the last cage but leave with the first. Many of them bring their newspapers along and sit reading while we work. When our shift is over we have to wait hours for the cage, while they are gone. Often we work well over 10 hours.

Work hazards

Hazardous working conditions remains an area of dissatisfaction and struggle. When speaking to mineworkers their impressions are clear: they are often sent to work in dangerous and unsafe areas, while the white miner sits in safety. Increasingly this is being challenged. Struggles against unsafe working conditions are reflected in various ways. At West Driefontein in September 1983 workers refused to work in conditions they believed to be hazardous. At Rietspruit Colliery miners requested a 2 hour break to attend the memorial service of a colleague; a demonstrative act against unsafe working conditions - it was the second death to occur on the mine in the space of a year. (7)

Injuries on duty are rife. The stories by a male nurse at Randfontein Estate Gold Mine and a dresser at a first aid depot at one of the shafts are revealing. They talk of bad lacerations, amputations, eye problems and hearing problems which workers complain about. Very often, they say, when workers are referred for more intensive medical treatment, some of the white miners and engineers refuse permission. Workers are accused of obtaining these injuries at the hostel or some other place. Adequate medical attention for black mineworkers is denied. The powers of white miners seem immense and the nurses have very little power. To disobey white miners is considered "insubordination" and workers can lose their jobs.

Underground humidity is excessive and conditions claustrophobic with noise making communication virtually impossible. When asked whether they had any break, many retorted: "what breaks...you must work when you are down there!"

Unionisation

Unionisation has been sharply resisted on the mines for decades. (8) Even with the access agreements enjoyed by mine unions, (eg. by NUM and the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union) security remains tight and many controls are exercised (for example management must be informed when the organiser visits). Organising conditions differ from mine to mine. But what is becoming increasingly prevalent is the self-organisation of mine workers themselves. Although they

realise that unionisation is legal, management remains hostile. Victimisation and harrassment of union activists is meant to disorganise and demoralise workers. Besides the threats of dismissal, one favoured form of victimisation is to send surface workers underground.

For years the induna system was used to "settle" grievances, and later the works committee, but both have been decisively rejected by mineworkers. Unionisation has filled the gap.

There are several reasons for NUM's rapid growth:

- * the success rate of strike action by the union
- * the immense publicity it has received, which workers have read about
- * participation of workers as recruiters and organisers
- * general awareness amongst mineworkers
- * the general political climate.

Many of the recently unionised are young workers - militant, articulate and extremely confident - who understand the value of organisation. Although the leadership of the union is predominantly surface employees (eg. clerks) - sections which management often attempts to co-opt - this has not inhibited the militancy of the union. The structures of branch, region and national executives, combined with rank and file shaft steward committees have ensured democracy, participation and accountability at all levels. And the union is still young.

Severe criticism from senior industry spokesmen of "irresponsibility" is to be expected. (9) Mine unionisation has unleashed a social force which is seriously challenging management's domination in some areas, although the balance of forces remains in management's favour.

THE RIETSPRUIT STRIKE

The Rietspruit open cast coal colliery employs about 1,900 miners and is owned by Rand Mines Group (RMG). It is one of the 3 RMG mines where the NUM is recognised; the others being Duvha and Douglas collieries. It forms part of the Witbank Region of approximately 23,000 miners, predominantly coal-miners, of which the NUM has organised roughly half. Rietspruit Colliery is a Rand Mines showpiece - it has a largely settled labour force housed in accomodation reputed to be

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amongst the best, and which has delighted overseas visitors and investors. Since the NUM organised the workers there in 1983, Rietspruit has been in the forefront of labour disputes. It has certainly undermined management co-optive strategies. In 1984 alone, 3 strikes took place at Rietspruit - in January, September and December. The Witbank collieries supply low-grade coal to the giant power stations near Witbank, Sasolburg and Kriel. (10)

Organisation

Whilst physical conditions may be better, the controls exercised over workers have not been reduced. Organisation of Rietspruit miners was initially extremely difficult. After all, why was a union necessary when management was providing everything they needed? Racial abuse was common with workers being called "kaffir and outa (old baboon)" by even senior personnel. Harassment of union members and shaft stewards, according to workers, was part of a campaign to disorganise the NUM; in particular: the constant undermining of shaft stewards' rights to represent workers; the refusal to accept authentic medical certificates for sick workers; giving workers warnings for insignificant and minor offences; and virtually ignoring grievance and disciplinary procedures in dealing with cases. To enforce managerial decisions workers were often threatened with dismissals.

Rietspruit has a shaft steward structure of 14 - coming from the plant department; loss control department (staff safety); planning department; administration department (including records and recruiting) and training department. The shaft stewards committee is well supported and plays an active role in the Witbank region of the NUM.

Background to the strike

On Thursday 7 February this year, a union member was crushed to death by a 992 front-end loader. The driver, according to reports, did not have a licence to operate the machine but was forced by management to do the work. The death of the worker caused widespread dissatisfaction amongst rank and file workers because it was the second death to have occurred in 12 months. At the time of the accident the majority of the shaft stewards committee were at the union's head office in

Johannesburg. Only 2 shaft stewards were informed of the accident. They immediately requested 2 hours to permit workers to attend a memorial meeting. Initially the request was made to the assistant general manager, Mr John Seems, who appeared ready to grant workers the request. "All he said was that the general manager had to be informed", said a shaft steward.

Later that afternoon when workers saw him - approximately 6.30 p.m. - he suggested they sit down and discuss the matter. His attitude was different, more hardline, and he was reluctant to grant their request. "He told us that our request was a bit abnormal. That in neither the West nor the East would a prayer meeting be granted to workers...Even if the Prime Minister died", said a worker. This change in attitude shocked the workers and they, understandably, became agitated with him. They had come to get a reply and not an elaborate explanation or ethical lecture. They considered the discussion irrelevant and insensitive.

Despite constant appeals by management to "discuss" the matter (ie. accept the management's line), they instead decided to report back to the workers. The rank and file were incensed. But exactly what was to be done, in the light of management's insensitivity and intolerance, was unclear.

Over the weekend the shaft-stewards attended a union course and the matter was left in abeyance. On Tuesday 12 February, when the shaft stewards held a mass meeting to report back on their weekend training, workers refused to listen to them. Instead they insisted they wanted to have a prayer meeting at the deceased's house, as was initially contemplated. When workers were informed that management's attitude had not changed, they became infuriated. Shaft stewards' attempts to cool workers proved useless.

In 1983 a similar incident had occurred when two workers were killed when a pylon, on which they were instructed to work by the shift boss, collapsed. On that occasion workers stopped work and marched to the homes of the bereaved to express their sympathies. (11) This precedent workers were determined to follow and to hold their memorial service.

The next day, 13 February, some of the shaft stewards were told to report to the general manager in the conference room.

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But because only 8 shaft stewards were present and because there was no quorum, they refused to proceed with the meeting. The shaft stewards present were, however, instructed by management to stop the prayer meeting from proceeding. They insisted they were accountable to the workers and were bound by the mass decision that workers had taken. Management then threatened them with arrest for inciting workers to go on an illegal strike. In addition they warned that disciplinary action would be taken against all those who attended the meeting.

At that stage, still early in the morning, a strong contingent of South African Police, as well as mine security, were present. By 9.40 a.m., all the workers gathered and started walking quietly to the home of the deceased's family. On the way they were threatened by the shift bosses to return to work, but ignored them. By 11.15 a.m., when the prayer meeting was completed, workers returned to work, with everyone back by 11.50 a.m.

Then at 12.30 p.m., the chairman of the shaft stewards committee and 3 other shaft stewards were informed of their suspension, with full pay, and that disciplinary action would be taken against them, the following day. The charges brought against them included: absent without permission, insubordination, breaking of their service contract, insulting behaviour, and breach of agreement. The following day, Thursday 14 February, management, suspecting that trouble was likely to break out, after their arbitrary action against the worker leadership, called in reinforcements of the South African Police who were now all over the mine. One worker described the scene:

I went to buy a newspaper at the recreational club. There were workers all over...standing in small groups. No-one had gone to work because of the suspension of our shaft stewards...The police and mine security were patrolling, taking photographs and intimidating workers to go to work...The workers said that if they suspend 4 shaft stewards they should suspend them all!

This attitude has become a general feature of labour activity. The victimisation of worker representatives is generally viewed as a direct attack on the workers as a whole. To permit harassment and victimisation to go unchallenged undermines the workers' power and confidence and consolidates manage-

ment's arbitrary powers.

When the chairman of the shaft stewards committee, Barney Mashego, went to the disciplinary hearing at 10 a.m., workers waited anxiously for the outcome. He successfully defended the charges brought against him. Mashego:

I squashed all the charges except the one that I was absent without permission. But I insisted that they examine the daily time sheet which indicated that I was present (at work). They then decided to bring another action..."slack time keeping", but I protested.

Mashego's astute handling of the situation made management realise that they were on shaky ground. Instead of making fools of themselves, they informed him that he would receive the verdict at 2.15 p.m. - an ironic situation when there were no tangible and substantiated charges! But no answer was given when the time came. They kept him in suspense and, consequently, also the workers. "They (management) continued to play games...Trying to break the morale of the workers", was how one worker described management's tactics. Meanwhile the SAP and mine security continued to watch - performing the odd drill to intimidate workers.

On Friday 15 February, 2 workers were given letters of dismissal and 2 were given final warnings. "McDonald, the general manager of Rietspruit, said he no longer recognised us as shaft stewards", said one of the dismissed stewards. These letters were accompanied by a demonstration of police force as they, together with the mine security, started arresting and beating workers; as one put it: "arresting us at gun point, dog point and baton point". At that stage it was unclear how many workers were arrested or injured. The NUM regional officials arrived to attempt to resolve the strike but the mine management remained intransigent.

When workers attended the funeral on Saturday, no mine buses were allowed to be used, demonstrating openly management's hostility. Contributions had to be hurriedly collected to hire taxis and cover petrol expenses to Witbank. According to workers there was no management representative at the funeral. As workers were on their way to the funeral, white security guards, extremely insensitive to the occasion were, from reports, sounding their car hooters, and shouting abuse.

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On Sunday 17th some of the shaft stewards went to the police station to give the 3 arrested workers food. On their return, at approximately 7.15 p.m., they were surrounded by mine security and brutally searched and manhandled. The sequence of events was described by shaft stewards as follows:

They handled us extremely rough and called us "swart donners". Because they could find nothing on us, we were thrown into the police van and taken to the mine security barracks where we were held from Sunday evening till Monday 4 p.m...This attack on the workers took place throughout Sunday night.

10 workers were "arrested", many viciously assaulted, others teargassed, while some were shot with rubber bullets. Throughout this ordeal injured workers were denied medical treatment. In addition food, blankets and washing facilities were withheld. The general manager visited those workers held in "custody". Addressing an active NUM member David Mabuza, he remarked: "Jy gaan kak (you're going to shit!) and that he was pleased to see him...(injured). He teased him...asking where his cleverness was now", said a detained worker.

On Monday 18th, Mashego was escorted at gun point to the general manager's office for an appeal hearing. But their decision to fire him was not rescinded. Instead he was taken to his house to pack his things. Because his family was not around he was returned to the security barracks. Although workers demanded to be released and protested at their detention - it went unheeded. Management, it seems, hoped that by getting the active union members out of the way they could drive the rest of the workforce back to work. Later that afternoon, Mashego and his family were escorted off the mine, still at gun point, and told not to return. He was informed that he should phone if he wanted his furniture removed and then given "30 minutes to clear out of sight".

Meanwhile management had issued a final ultimatum:

...We have urged you to return to work on a number of occasions and now you have forced us to take strong action.

Every employee irrespective of the shift he should be working, shall report to his section tomorrow, Tuesday February 19th at 6 a.m. Any employee who does not report shall be summarily dismissed for remaining on strike...

We urge you to seriously consider returning to work be-

cause unemployment in the country is high. If you do not report at 6 a.m. and are dismissed then you will be placing the future of your wives and children and their schooling at risk. (12)

To facilitate matters management also issued a curfew order which was signed by the hostel manager, J Ellis, and general manager, K McDonald:

Due to the large scale intimidation of employees it is hereby ordered that no employee shall loiter or walk around the streets or public areas in Lehlaka village between the hours 6 p.m. Monday 18 February and 8 a.m. Tuesday 19 February...Every employee shall remain within his single quarter block, house or garden during these hours.

Any employee who disobeys this order shall be taken into custody by security. (13)

Throughout the night security guards and police patrolled the village enforcing the curfew. Workers seen walking around were beaten back to their rooms or houses.

On Tuesday 19 February buses were driving around the village picking up workers. But they refused to go to work. Security guards then started hounding workers - forcing them out of their homes into the buses. Although workers resisted it was futile because as many as 10 guards escorted 1 worker into the bus. Management succeeded in getting the majority to work and paid off approximately 120 workers - many of them shaft stewards and union activists, characterised by Mr Allen Cook, deputy head of Rand Mines Coal, Division as "hard-core trade union Turks - people whose hearts and minds we could never win - and we're glad to see the last of them". (14)

If anything this was an admission that Rand Mines co-option programme was certainly not succeeding. He dismissed allegations of "force" as absolute nonsense. (15) He insisted, instead, that 86 workers had elected to be discharged. In the face of the facts - the injuries and the scars of workers - management remained determined to present a liberal image.

In sympathy with Rietspruit Colliery more than 500 workers at Rand Mines Duvha Colliery, near Witbank, went on strike for a day, but returned after threats of dismissal. (16) More solidarity action by other collieries was pending but the union canvassed caution. Solidarity strikes have become a common

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feature of industrial action and have continued in spite of the recession. Although management succeeded in forcing workers back, they have certainly not broken the NUM, nor the spirit of the coal miners. It only sets the stage for more struggles to come.

Co-option resisted

Why has Rietspruit been hit by so many strikes when clearly its material conditions are much better than other mines? It has fewer migrant workers, better housing, education and schooling and recreational facilities, and even higher wages. The answer must be sought in the general politics of the mining industry and the political climate as a whole. The mere economic improvement of workers lives has not reduced the controls, racial abuse, discrimination, assaults and repression which workers have to endure. Management's use of the SAP as part of their industrial relations machinery to deal with disputes clearly identifies management with the state and widens the scope of mine struggles. The struggle against arbitrary controls at the workplace is part and parcel of the struggle for working class democracy in society at large.

EAST DRIEFONTEIN GOLDMINE STRIKE AND BOYCOTT

East Driefontein goldmine, part of Gold Fields of South Africa (GFSA), is said to contain some of the richest ore deposits in the world. Working and living conditions are bad, which made unionisation relatively easy. The rapid expansion during 1984 resulted in the establishment of a shaft steward structure comprising 38 stewards, although recognition was obtained only for surface workers. As usual management was hostile, and threatened and victimised those who joined; but workers were determined to build the union. One active shaft steward explained:

Despite problems we called meetings, spoke to workers individually, explained patiently about the union structure, its policies and why mine workers should be organised...the response was good.

The union was able to recruit the majority of the 11,300 mineworkers at East Driefontein. There were two issues which contributed to the rapid growth and consolidation of the

union. Firstly, when 17 workers at West Driefontein refused to work underground in September 1983 because of unsafe working conditions, this defiance encouraged workers to join because "they realised the importance of unity". Secondly the mass boycotts of concession stores in December 1984 sustained the organisation of workers.

Whilst the above issues were important in strengthening the NUM in different phases of organising, East Driefontein mine-workers had a tradition of militancy. During the 1982 strike wave affecting many of Gold Fields of South Africa mines - West Driefontein, Kloof and Venterspost gold mines - East Driefontein was in the forefront of the struggle.

Boycotts: December 1984

Because of bad food workers are obliged to buy food from the local concession stores, the only alternative source of food. But the commodities are often bad and the attitude of local shopowners leaves much to be desired. After consultation with the general membership, the shaft stewards committee initiated a boycott of all the shops in an effort to improve the service and the quality of commodities sold. The boycott was characterised by discipline, tight organisation and mass support. It was a clear demonstration of the determination of mineworkers to take up non-workplace issues which directly affected them. The major grievances of workers were:

- * overcharging - workers were taxed on foodstuff which were exempted
- * ill-treatment of workers - they were, for example, subjected to body searches in an abusive manner
- * the selling of rotten food - for example meat and milk
- * dirty eating places
- * prices of commodities changed. On Sunday, for instance, bread was sold for R1.

To mobilise workers regular mass meetings were called where boycott calls were endorsed. In addition workers emphasised that these grievances should be brought to the attention of mine management. At first management's attitude was nonchalant and it was only when the full extent and impact of the boycott was visible that they took serious notice. From December 1 to 18, workers boycotted all the stores and instead made arrangements to have commodities brought in from Johann-

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esburg. Alternatively they walked approximately 3 km to other shops or used the shop at the white married quarters.

The impact of the boycott was immense, and the losses for the shopowners colossal. Pressure on management and in turn on the shopkeepers resulted in some improvements. The shaft stewards committee checked to see if the improvements were satisfactory before they called off the boycott. One shaft steward explained the improvements:

Conditions have changed. The food is better, the shops are cleaner and the prices more stable. The shopkeepers are also more civil. We check regularly to see that the conditions do not revert back to how they were. They know our determination and our power.

The boycotts as a whole have raised worker consciousness concerning the range of issues they have to confront as workers. It reinforced confidence in their power as a class. In addition mobilisation through the boycott served to strengthen the union and its leadership. The success of the campaign reinforced the view that unity and organisation can bring change. It was an important "schooling" for workers and steeled those who were originally sceptical of the union. This was the immediate background to the strike that took place 2 months later.

Strike at East Driefontein

The strike by about 11,300 East Driefontein mineworkers on Thursday February 14 this year, which resulted in 813 dismissals and 19 shaft stewards arrested, was the culmination of a protracted battle between the NUM and GFSA over recognition and shaft steward representation. The strike was marked by police and mine security violence which left well over 145 people injured. Repression of its workforce is a hallmark of the industry. Very often mine unrest is attributed to "tribal conflicts", agitators, and of late to the NUM. But what has been ignored is the way management fails to deal with legitimate worker grievances. Very often the grievances, when aired through the appropriate channels, are ignored. When workers struggle to have them redressed - by demonstrative acts - they are violently repressed.

In November last year workers held a demonstration and mand-

ated the shaft stewards committee to bring their well-known grievances to the attention of management. Included in these were: the channels of appeal which were inadequate when they were victimised, assaulted or insulted by white racist mine overseers; and the practice of giving warnings for very minor offences. Although discussions took place very little improvement was evident.

Again workers decided to petition management and this time a more detailed list of grievances was added:

- * the induna system which workers rejected
- * the "early return bonus system" which forces workers to return to work
- * the ill-treatment and assault of black workers by whites
- * the quality of hostel food
- * representation of shaft stewards at disciplinary hearings of mineworkers
- * the removal of the chief hostel manager who would not negotiate grievances with workers (eg. food).

The general secretary of the NUM, Cyril Ramaphosa, wrote to management requesting that they attend to the grievances or respond within 30 days. After the 30 day period another 7 days was given, but again no improvement was forthcoming.

On Thursday 14 November, at 4.30 p.m., workers held a mass meeting to discuss what to do. "It was clear that management was ignoring us and preferred to continue with their abusive practices. We were tired of this. It was then decided not to go to work", said one shaft steward. East Driefontein has a 3 shift-system. The night shift workers decided not to go to work and instead decided to lead the workers in a procession to the main gate, inside the compound, at 5.30 p.m. Workers sat there the whole night singing and chanting. When the other workers came off duty they joined their comrades and all remained within the compound area. Spirits were clearly high. "We were happy at the display of unity and solidarity. No-one broke ranks. We were peaceful", was one worker's view.

The following morning, 15 February at 9 a.m., workers saw a large contingent of police arrive, dressed in camouflage uniforms and armed with guns, dogs, teargas and batons. Lurking in the background were a few armoured vehicles. It was a provocative tactic by management. "All we wanted to do was negotiate with management over long standing grievances of the

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workers, which they were ignoring", was the comment of a shaft steward. The police and mine security examined the logistics, and at 9.30 a.m. opened fire on the workers. One worker described the scene:

There were hundreds of them...all over. They threatened to shoot us if we did not disperse. The more they said this the more difficult it became to control the workers. When they moved closer we stopped singing. We all sat still. Then they opened fire...live bullets, rubber bullets and teargas. Chaos broke out. Workers were running in all directions. There was smoke all over. It was like a war. Workers ran to the hostels but the majority went in the direction of the mountains and started gathering stones...regrouping to fight back.

15 workers were arrested and over 145 were injured, some seriously wounded. On Saturday 16, another 7 were arrested which included the regional chairman of the Carletonville region of the NUM, Manyala Mothibeli, and branch chairman of East Driefontein, Percy Dyonase. For 2 days the strike continued with police and mine security hounding workers on the ground and from the air with helicopters. This was class warfare. A worker who slept in the veld for the duration of the strike explained: "They chased us up the mountains. We had to hide behind big rocks when they came with search lights. They shot at us. Some were dragged back, injured, to the hostels. A few of my comrades ended up in hospital." Another worker who was injured and went to see a doctor was told: "Hamba job [go back to work]...there is nothing wrong." He was consequently arrested.

On the 16 and 17 February, management began firing workers - over 800 and drove the rest back to work. (17) With repression they succeeded in breaking up the strike. On the 18 February, 19 shaft stewards and workers appeared in Carletonville court. The case was postponed and they were granted bail of R500 each. In addition they were banned from the Carletonville area. Although the strike was smashed, it did not totally crush organisation on the mine. At worst it is a temporary setback, with the union already rebuilding their shaft steward structures.

KLOOF GOLD MINE STRIKE AND BOYCOTT

Kloof Gold Mine, owned by Gold Fields of South Africa, was the scene of widespread boycotts and a strike by 13,000 workers during February this year. Kloof mineworkers have been involved in a number of strikes, including the July 1982 pay strikes. Support for the union waned after the 1984 strike and until the launch of the boycott. Since then, Kloof mineworkers have organised themselves into an NUM stronghold. Union shaft steward structures have been rebuilt and confidence restored. The strike on Sunday 10 February was the culmination of months of reorganising and mobilising.

Boycott of concession stores

Like the East Driefontein workers, over 13,000 workers boycotted their local concession stores from 17 February. The boycott continues. The reasons were:

- * harassment of customers - workers could not enquire about prices of goods and would be chased away. "Wena muntu kalo mine, hamba nkompani", (you are a labourer go back to the compound, you don't know anything of the prices), workers are told
- * selling of old goods (eg. milk and meat)
- * dirty shops where workers were expected to have meals
- * high prices.

Workers held a mass meeting on 16 January where their grievances were discussed and the decision taken to launch the boycott. They also informed the nearby farm workers of their decision, and they also supported the boycott. From reports, the shops have lost thousands of rands and are constantly watched - day and night - by workers to ensure that no-one purchases any goods. Shopowners have become extremely desperate as one worker explained: "The shopowners have tried to speak to us and have attempted to bribe shaft stewards. But they have not been successful."

Their support from all sections of the workforce - even the workers from the married quarters - is a setback for management's attempts to divide them and weaken resistance. There is regular discussion, and assessment of the campaign. The organisation of the boycott - the constant communication and the discipline - has instilled confidence amongst workers.

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When workers decided to stage a 1 day strike in February over long standing grievances, it did not take alot to convince the rank and file.

A meeting was held on Saturday 9 February where about 10,000 workers attended. Their grievances included:

- * The early return bonuses which workers refer to as "Tshetsa buya" (don't stay too long with your family come back quickly). Workers wanted this changed to "leave bonus" because the other system favoured management
- * The removal of the "A" compound manager who was victimising workers and also running a taxi service which he forced workers to use.

It was decided that the 6 p.m. shift on Sunday night should not go to work. Everybody was informed to stay in their rooms. A worker explained what happened: "There were only a few, about 10, who wanted to go to work but were told that it was a day off. The majority just stayed in their rooms. Some of us gathered at the gate and sang our songs...We shall never be conquered. The power is ours."

Hostel and mine management's attempts to negotiate with workers were ignored. Instead they insisted that their union representatives and regional organisers be present before any agreement was reached. It clearly demonstrates workers' suspicions of management's intentions and sincerity in attending to their grievances. The strike was peaceful, only the powerful chants and songs echoed through the night.

On Monday 11 February Cyril Ramaphosa held discussions with management after workers presented their grievances. After lengthy negotiations management agreed that:

- * no-one will be victimised
- * their grievance concerning the hostel manager would be investigated (although workers wanted him dismissed)
- * the "early return bonus system" would be scrapped by 1 April.

They returned to work on 11 February starting with the night-shift workers. In spite of management promises victimisation has continued. Mass meetings have been banned and none of the grievances attended to. Money was deducted for striking. "No work, no pay", said the advice slip accompanying workers' wages. This made workers extremely angry and has contributed

to a tense situation on the mine. At the time of writing it was obvious that conditions on the mine were unlikely to change and that workers might very well be forced to take further action.

Although one worker was dismissed for alleged "intimidation" he was re-instated after pressure from workers. For Kloof workers, management's attitude is not unexpected. Management prerogatives will increasingly have to be challenged if workers are to defend the few organisational gains they have made.

Conclusion

The strikes and boycotts reveal clearly the depth of workers' dissatisfaction and anger on a whole range of issues. Their willingness to strike is indicative of the groundswell of militancy which prevails. But strikes are now well organised. Contrary to management claims of union "irresponsibility" strikes are often the last measure workers resort to. The use of formal channels of communication is often prolonged with very little effect at all, leaving workers very little alternative. Often the strikes start off as demonstrative stoppages which turn into full-scale and protracted struggles, mainly because of management intransigence.

In dealing with strikes, management have relied on police and mine security. The systematic repression - in the case of East Driefontein and Rietspruit - is designed not only to smash the union but also psychologically destroy the mineworkers' spirit for struggle. But this has not succeeded, nor is it likely to. Instead it has served as a hard school for mineworkers - one in which many have been injured and some have lost their lives in recent years. But the NUM has challenged this with the first mass civil action against the Minister of Law and Order - for damages estimated at close to R2 million. This action arose out of the legal strike last year when mineworkers were assaulted and injured.

In addition to strike action, boycotts of concession stores (18) have become a major feature of mine struggles. On the whole they are well co-ordinated, disciplined and effective. They have served to mobilise and consolidate the NUM at specific mines and also politicised the workers. These boycotts have 3 important characteristics:

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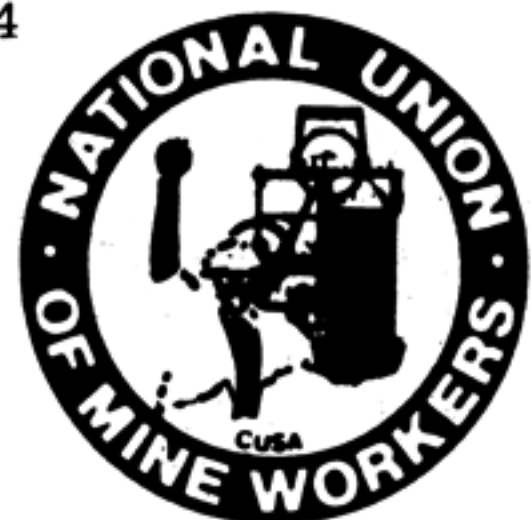
- * worker control and accountability which featured regular report backs
- * a developing alliance with local farm workers and communities near Kloof Mine
- * sophisticated discussion around forms of action; the limits and possibilities of different tactics.

The losses incurred by shopowners have been large and have forced them to make improvements. For workers this was a major gain.

Although the NUM has suffered some setbacks: the arrests and dismissals of shaft stewards and workers and the break-up of shaft steward committees, the workers are not demoralised or in anyway defeated. On the contrary they remain determined to rebuild structures and consolidate the union.

Footnotes

- 1 The strikes include Tweefontein Colliery's 1,600 workers on 3 January; Rietspruit Colliery's 1,000 workers on 14 February; Duvha Colliery's 500 workers on 19 January; East Driefontein's 13,000 workers on 14 February; Kloof Mine's 13,000 on 11 February and Vaal Reef's 40,000
- 2 For details refer SALB 10.4, Oct-Nov 1984, pp11-20
- 3 This is clear by the range of issues which mineworkers are taking up
- 4 Refer SALB 1.7, Nov-Dec 1974
- 5 Refer SALB 2.8, April 1976
- 6 C Thompson, "Black trade unions on the mines", in South African Review Two, Johannesburg, 1984, p162
- 7 Ibid p164
- 8 Refer SALB 8.5, April 1983, p27
- 9 Financial Mail 29.3.85
- 10 Izwilethu: Official newsletter of the Council of Unions of South Africa, December 1984
- 11 C Thompson, "Black trade unions", p164
- 12 Management circular, 18 February 1985
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Rand Daily Mail 20.2.85
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Ibid
- 17 National Union of Mineworkers press release 19.2.85
- 18 Rand Daily Mail 13.2.85



REVIEW: Solidarity of Labour – The Story of International Worker Organisations

[Workers of the World Series No 4, International Labour Research and Information Group, UCT, 1984. 68 pages; 30c workers and unions/R2 salaried individuals]

It is possible to identify two broad traditions in worker education in South Africa; the one liberal, the other radical. The liberal tradition is essentially concerned with promoting the idea of class co-operation and class harmony through joint management-union approaches. The radical tradition, on the other hand, has always been rooted inside working class organisation and has been broadly transformative in its aims. (1) During the 1970's the radical tradition was to be enriched by the growth of radical thought on the campuses. Initially based among a small group of activist-academics at the University of Natal centred around the Institute for Industrial Education, interest in worker education was to spread rapidly to Cape Town and Johannesburg. (2) Solidarity of Labour produced by ILRIG at the University of Cape Town, is an excellent example of this radical approach to worker education.

The fourth in a series on Workers of the World (the others are on Botswana, Bolivia and Brazil), Solidarity of Labour is an analysis and guide to international worker organisation. Part 1, begins with international worker organisation today. Three types are identified: international confederations which bring together trade union federations from different countries (eg. ICFTU); international trade secretariats which bring together unions in the same industry from different countries (eg. IMF); and the international work of the national trade union federations (eg. AALC linked to the AFL-CIO). Many South African unions have links with the second type (the ITS's) and it would be helpful in future editions if these were to be listed.

(1) A Bird, "The adult night school movements for blacks on the Witwatersrand 1920-1980", in P Kallaway, Apartheid and Education, Ravan, 1984.

(2) J Maree, "The Institute for Industrial Education and worker education", SALB 9.8, July 1984.

Part 2 traces, briefly, the emergence of the First, Second and Third Internationals. The authors have chosen not to deal with the complex debates in and around these Internationals, or to discuss the emergence of the Fourth International. The section on the origins of the Cold War is vital to an understanding of the formation of the ICFTU and the activities of the AFL-CIO in the Third World. Part 2 concludes with a brief description of the changing international division of labour and worker responses to multinationals.

The section on South Africa (Part 3) is disappointing and reflects the fact that very little research has been done on the influence of international issues on South African labour. Unfortunately, Murphy's interesting article on international labour policies towards South Africa was only published after Solidarity of Labour had gone to press.* We need to know more about the influence of international issues on the early socialists, as well as the contribution the Cold War made to the right-wing shift among trade unionists in the late 1940's and early 1950's. It is interesting, for example, that it was Lucy Mvubelo, the general secretary of the conservative National Union of Clothing Workers, that proposed that SACTU affiliate to the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions.

Part 4 contains a most valuable discussion on the problems facing democratic unions when dealing with international trade union organisations. They argue that international worker organisations are an important weapon in the hands of democratic trade unions, but that they are no substitute for the self-organisation of workers themselves. They show, for example, that the emergent black trade unions in the metal industry played a decisive role in shaping the IMF's policy towards South Africa (pp66-7). They conclude the book with a quote from a trade unionist: "Workers must make sure that their organisations work for them. They must make sure that their organisations do what their members want them to do." (p67)

(Eddie Webster, February 1985)

* Mike Murphy, "Some problems of international labour policies towards South Africa", in Black trade unions in South Africa - Core of a new democratic opposition movement?, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn, 1984, pp93-112.

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