

**THE WORKERS' HANDBOOK No. 2**

**THE WORKERS'  
ORGANISATION**

**The Institute for Industrial Education**

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CHAPTER 1.ORGANISATION.

Special organisations for workers are quite a new thing. They are not only quite new in South Africa. Today there are millions of workers in every country in the world who belong to Trade Unions, but these trade unions have only grown up in the last 150 years, and in many countries only in the last 50 years.

Before that, through all the many thousands of years that there have been people in the world working, they did not think that they needed Trade Unions. Why, in the last 150 years, have people suddenly begun to decide that they want to have trade unions?

To answer the question we shall have to look at the history of the way in which the economy has changed over the past 200 years, both in South Africa and in other countries. We shall then be able to see that it is these changes in the economy which have made it necessary for workers to have organisations of their own.

We shall also see what special problems workers in all countries have had when they have tried to start workers' organisations. Workers in South Africa have the same problems, so if we see what these problems are in all countries, we will be able to see what will be the main things that workers in South Africa will need to know so that they can run their organisations well.

In all the countries in the world people used to live in small farming villages where they grew their own crops and made all the things which they needed in the village. This is called a *SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY*. It is an economy in which people grow and make only what they need for themselves. They do not grow things to sell to other people.

In this kind of economy the people would have certain kinds of problems, and they developed laws and customs and

ways of working together to solve those problems. There were laws and customs about the use of land and cattle, and about marriage, and about leadership in the community. These laws and customs made it easier for them to live together in a group without too much quarreling.

So, 500 years ago, if you went to Africa, or to France or England, or to India or China, or to Mexico or Peru, you would find most people living in small villages with a subsistence economy and the kind of laws and customs which they needed to regulate life in such a society.

In all of these countries you would find that there was some *TRADE*, because people could not always find all the things they needed near at hand. And in some of these countries there was more trade and in some there was less. But whether there was more trade or less trade, most of the people lived in the same sort of way. And because they lived in a small village in which every family had some right to use land, they did not need trade unions.

They had different organisations because they had different problems from factory workers.

You know today that most societies are very different. It is very difficult to say exactly why the change came about. People who study history are still arguing about why the economy and the society have changed so much in the last few hundred years. Here we will only give some of the main reasons.

In Europe there was a big improvement in the way in which ships were made, and in the way in which ships could find their way at sea (*NAVIGATION*). Because of these improvements, there was a big increase in *TRADE*. Also, the most powerful countries of Europe were able to send armies by ship to conquer other lands, and to take wealth from these conquered lands. This was called *IMPERIALISM*.

The increase in trade and in imperialism, meant an increase in the wealth of many people in these countries, and especially in England. Some of these rich people began to *INVEST* their money in finding new ways of making the goods which were needed for trade.

To make these goods in large quantities they needed *RAW MATERIALS* and they needed *WORKERS*. Because there was a big demand for raw materials the most powerful people began to find ways of pushing the subsistence farmers off the land, so that they could use the land for sheep which would produce wool which could be used in trade, and so that they could dig under the land for iron and coal.

What could these people who had been pushed off the land do? There was only one thing that they could do. They had to go and work in the new factories in the new towns, or they had to go and work in the new mines.

So because the trade increased:

1. There was an increased demand for raw materials, and the landlords pushed people off the land, and took land away from them, so as to be able to make money from producing those raw materials.
2. At the same time there was much money which could be invested in making goods out of the raw materials to be used in trade with other countries. This money could only be invested if workers were to be found to work in the new factories, and these new workers were the people who had been pushed off the land, and so could be made to work for very low wages, because they had no other way to live.
3. Because of the profit from trade, and because of the profits which could be made by paying the factory workers very low wages, there was even more money to invest. It could be invested in making bigger and better factories, and in developing new machines.
4. So the countries, like Britain, where this had

started, got even richer and stronger, and could control other countries even better. The new kind of economy was taken to these other countries, and the same thing happened there. The Cape was first occupied by Europeans in 1652, because it was on the trade route to India. But by about 1870 South Africa was becoming more important as a source of raw materials, and the new kind of economy came to South Africa, first with the mines and then later with factories.

What happened to these people who had to leave the land and go and become workers working for a *MONEY WAGE* in the new factories or the new mines? We have seen that when they lived in the villages in the subsistence economy they had their laws and customs and their social organisation. Why could they not take these laws and customs and social organisation into the mining towns and the factory towns?

The answer is that as wage workers they had new problems which they had not had when they were subsistence farmers. Of course not everything had changed, so they could still use some of their own customs and some of their old kinds of organisation. But many things had changed completely.

The unity of village life had been broken. In the village the family lived together and worked together, in co-operation with the other people living in the village. In the new towns people lived among strangers. They lived in one place and worked in another. Living conditions in the new towns were often terrible. People lived in overcrowded slums, and there was much sickness. In the village it was the family that protected you. But in the towns the family was no longer together. The family was no longer a social organisation which educated the children and looked after the old and the sick.

The biggest change, and the change that really caused all the other changes, was the change in the nature of work. In the village people had the right to some land. They worked for themselves and their families. But now they

had lost their land. In order to live, they had to work for other people. Because they no longer had land and tools of their own, they had to serve the wishes of those who did have land and factories. Because they had lost control over their work, they also lost control over the rest of their lives.

In the village subsistence economy *WORK WAS CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER PEOPLE*. You worked together with your family, and often together with your neighbours. The kind of work you did depended on yourself, and on the seasons. Some seasons, like harvest time and sowing time, you had to work very hard. At other times there was less work to do, and life was easier.

In the new economy, three things had changed:

1. You no longer had a guarantee of being able to work. Losing the right to the land, you had *LOST THE RIGHT TO WORK*. Without the right to work you did not have the right to live.

This means that insecurity had greatly increased. Even those workers who had found jobs had no guarantee of keeping them. Illness might deprive individual workers of their means of living. Economic conditions might deprive whole groups of workers of their jobs, by closing down factories or causing factories to work short time. New machinery might change the conditions of work so that the old skills of the workers could no longer help them to get jobs.

2. Once the workers had got jobs, they had no control over their jobs. *THEY HAD LOST THE RIGHT TO CONTROL THEIR WORK*.

The new factories and mines were not governed by seasons. There was no slack season, and the factories could be kept running all day and even all night throughout the year.

It was possible to make workers work for as many hours as they could keep standing up. And because the workers were no longer working for themselves, they did not

have the right to decide how long they were going to work for. The owners had the power to decide.

The workers also did not have the power to decide on the conditions in which they would work. It was the owners who had the power to decide how safe the machines would be, and how clean the factory would be.

As a result, these first industrial workers often had to work 13 or 16 hours a day for 6 days a week. They had no holidays, and no sick pay. The conditions were bad and led to many accidents and much illness.

3. Because they no longer owned the land and the tools, the workers no longer owned what they made with their work. *THEY HAD LOST CONTROL OVER THE PRODUCT OF THEIR WORK.* They no longer decided how to share out the product. The owner alone had this power. The owner could sell the product, and decide himself how much of the money to keep, and how much to pay out in wages. As a result wages were very low. They were just enough to keep the workers alive so that they could work again the next day. Profits were high, and the owners were able to reinvest these profits in new factories, or spend the profits to live comfortably. The gap between the rich and the poor grew wider.

So workers had:

*LOST THE RIGHT TO WORK*

*LOST THE RIGHT TO CONTROL THEIR WORK*

*LOST CONTROL OVER THE PRODUCT OF THEIR WORK.*

This meant insecurity, suffering, and poverty.

They could not ask the government to help, because the owners controlled the government. In Britain 150 years ago, only those who owned a lot of property were allowed to vote for parliament. They used parliament to make laws to protect property, not to protect workers.

So the workers had no alternative but to help themselves. They had to fight back in the factories. They had to build a new kind of organisation in the factories; an organisation which would replace the broken community of village life, and which would help them recover the rights that they had lost.

The goals of this new kind of organisation would be:

*TO INCREASE THEIR CONTROL OVER THEIR WORK  
AND THEIR CONDITIONS OF WORK.*

*TO BARGAIN WITH OWNERS TO GET A BIGGER  
SHARE OF THE PRODUCT OF THEIR WORK.*

This new organisation was the *TRADE UNION.*



CHAPTER 2.Struggle and Strength.

Before, work was something you did for yourself, and together with your family. Work was co-operation with other people. In the new factory towns work was competition and struggle. You had to compete with other workers in order to get jobs. You had to struggle with your employer for better conditions. The employers were not interested in the workers. They were interested in their profits. So they tried to pay as little as possible. They tried to make the workers do as much work as possible.

How could the employers control the workers, pay them low wages and make them work long hours? TO CONTROL EACH WORKER, THE EMPLOYER'S MAIN WEAPON IS THE OTHER WORKERS.

If a worker said "I want more money", the employer replied, "I don't need you. I have other workers who will work for less".

If a worker said, "I want more time to rest", the employer said, "Go to hell then. There are other workers waiting outside the gate who will work for longer hours than you".

While workers were competing with one another, the employer could exploit them. Through this struggle the workers learnt that the only way in which they could improve wages and conditions was through UNITY. While workers were competing with one another, THEY WERE WEAK BECAUSE THEY WERE MANY. But if they could work together instead of competing, they could make their numbers into a source of strength. THEY COULD BE STRONG BECAUSE THEY WERE MANY.

Each worker, through his difficulties and struggles in the factory, discovered that he needed the other workers. Starting from their individual struggles the workers had to build a unity which would give them the strength to

resist the employer. This is the aim of the Trade Union. THE TRADE UNION IS THE WORKERS BUILDING UNITY THROUGH THEIR STRUGGLES IN THE FACTORY.

The Workers' Tradition.

The Trade Union is not something foreign which was invented in Europe and which is not right for South African workers. The trade union is something new which workers in all countries have to create when they leave the land and become wage-workers. It is not the trade union which breaks the traditions of the people. It is the fact that they can no longer live on the land but must come to work in the factories. There they face new problems. They have to invent new organisations and new traditions. This new tradition is common to all workers. By looking at the problems which workers organisations have faced in other countries, and in South Africa in the past, we can learn much.

Early Struggle in Britain.

Britain was the first country in which industrial capitalism grew. So it was in Britain that workers were first faced with the problems that we have described, and it was in Britain that the first trade union movement developed. In fact, at the beginning of the 1800s, living conditions for workers in Britain were far worse than are conditions in South Africa today. People were being pushed off the land and there were many unemployed who could find no work at all. The employers were using new machines to increase productivity so that they could use fewer workers. Then, because there would be even more unemployed, they would be able to push wages down even further.

Workers were not struggling for higher wages. THEY WERE STRUGGLING TO STOP THEIR WAGES BEING LOWERED.

Because the new machines were taking away their jobs, many workers thought that the machines were their main enemies.

If a new machine could weave cotton ten times faster than a worker with an old machine, then one machine with one worker could do the work of ten workers. Nine workers would lose their jobs. So in some part of Britain workers called LUDDITES went around breaking up machines. But the government brought out the army to protect the machines. Many of the Luddites were caught and imprisoned or hanged. The Luddites' movement was rapidly destroyed.

At the same time, other workers had discovered another weapon. This weapon was the STRIKE. All the workers together in a factory would together stop working until their demands had been met. Striking was also dangerous. Until 1825 there were strict laws against striking, and even after the laws had been made a little easier police were still often used against strikers. In order to protect themselves the workers found that it was not enough just to come together for a strike. They had to form more permanent organisations which would be able to save money and also get support from other workers during a strike.

#### CRAFT UNIONS.

It was very difficult to form such permanent organisations. The first workers who were able to form trade unions were the skilled workers, called craftsmen. Because there were fewer skilled workers it was easier for them to combine. The employers needed their skills, and so could not sack them so easily. BUT THE CRAFT UNIONS HAD TWO ENEMIES. Their main enemy was the employer, and they struggled against the employer for improved wages and conditions. But their main weapon in this struggle was the fact that there were few of them. They had to keep their numbers small. To do this they had to stop unskilled workers from learning how to do their jobs. So their second enemy was the unskilled workers. They used the apprenticeship system to keep their numbers small. And they did not want to help the unskilled workers to become organised.

#### THE DIFFICULTIES OF ORGANISING.

The early craft unions were usually very small. There would be a different union in each town. These small unions did not need many full time officials to keep the organisation running. They collected high dues from the members so that they could pay unemployment benefits, sick benefits and strike benefits. But because the craftsmen were usually quite well educated, they could look after this money themselves without any complicated money system.

But for the unskilled workers it was more difficult. These workers had no scarce skills which they could use to bargain with. In order to bargain with the employers they needed to unite large numbers of workers. To do this they needed to build a big organisation to keep the workers together. But to build an organisation they needed money to pay expenses, and money to employ full-time organisers and secretaries. But they could only get money by collecting small amounts from many workers, and they could not collect all this money until they had a good organisation.

UNTIL THEY HAD A GOOD ORGANISATION THEY COULD NOT COLLECT MONEY.

UNTIL THEY HAD MONEY THEY COULD NOT BUILD A GOOD ORGANISATION.

Faced with a hostile government and hostile employers, and faced with the difficulties of organising, it was many years before the unskilled workers were able to build solid unions. Many of their early unions failed.

#### INDUSTRIAL UNIONS.

At first, union growth took place only among the craft unions of skilled workers. Even these unions had great difficulties, and often used to call long strikes. In 1859 the great building strike lasted for 6 months. The builders could only strike for so long because they were supported by fellow workers in other industries. The workers were learning that unity in the factory was

not enough. They needed unity and support from all workers.

It took many years before unity between skilled and unskilled workers was achieved. In 1889 unskilled workers began to organise in INDUSTRIAL UNIONS which united all the workers, skilled or unskilled, in the same industry. With support from other workers the industrial unions found that they too could win long strikes.

However the first unions in South Africa were started at about this time by skilled english craftsmen who came out to work on the new mines. These workers wanted to protect their jobs by stopping other workers from becoming skilled. So they kept out unskilled black workers. So it was not until many years later that unskilled black South African workers began to form unions.

These early white craft unions did not have an easy time. The governments of the time were opposed to all unions, black and white. There were long strikes and even some fighting before the South African government recognised any trade unions. But throughout these struggles, the craft unions treated unskilled black workers as their enemies. Skilled workers did not help unskilled black workers to organise. Black workers had to start from the beginning by themselves.

### I.C.U.

In 1914 - 1918 there was a big war in Europe. The countries fighting this war needed many raw materials from South Africa. Also, South Africa could not buy so many goods from Europe while there was a war there, so they had to start more factories in South Africa. During this time more and more African workers and Coloured workers came to work in factories, and it was then that they began to discover that they needed a new kind of organisation to protect themselves.

In about 1919 a number of small unions of African and Coloured workers began to appear. The most important of these was the INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL UNION, started by CLEMENTS KADALIE in Cape Town in 1919. Kadalie began by organising African and Coloured dock-workers in Cape Town. In their first strike they did not gain an increase, but when they threatened to strike again they gained a big increase. This made the ICU very popular.

Kadalie was a very strong leader, and he began to bring together the small unions which had already started in places like Port Elizabeth. From 1924 the ICU began to have branches all over the country. It grew very quickly, partly because that year a new Government came to power and this new government made a number of laws which hurt black South Africans.

In those days there were far fewer factory workers than there are today, but by 1925 the ICU had over 30,000 members, by 1926, 40,000 and by 1927 perhaps as many as 100,000 members.

But already the troubles were beginning. The first big trouble was that there was a lack of trained and honest men to run such a big organisation. In the story of his life, Kadalie says that there was much trouble with the money collected by the ICU. He wrote: "Most of our secretaries were drawn from the teaching profession. These men had never in their lives studied the trade union movement or even politics in general. They were attracted to the ICU, which offered them higher pay than they could earn as teachers. The morals of some of these young men were definitely not suited for public appointments".

Some of the money was stolen. Some of the secretaries did not know how to look after the money. It got mixed up with their own money, and much was lost.

The second big trouble was that the Union was very loosely organised. There were members from all industries and

and from many different factories, but there was no proper organisation in each industry and in each factory.

Instead of building up an organisation in each factory, the ICU began to do most of its work by complaining to the government about the Pass laws and about other laws which hurt the black people of South Africa. But because the organisation was not strong, they could only complain, they could not do anything about it.

The third problem was that there were arguments about politics in the ICU. Some of the leading African and Coloured members of the ICU were members of the Communist Party, which wanted a revolution to end capitalism in South Africa, like in Russia in 1917. At first Kadalie agreed with them, but then he began to think that it would be better to be very moderate, and hope that the Government and the employers would listen. So he was afraid that if there were too many Communists in the ICU then it would anger the government. He had some liberal advisers who wanted him to have a "respectable" union that the Government would listen to, and they pulled him in the opposite direction from the Communists.

In 1926 these troubles all joined together. The Secretary of the ICU, who was a Communist, wrote a report in which he complained about the stealing of money, and said that he thought that even Kadalie was not behaving properly with the money. He also said that Kadalie was beginning to be a dictator who never listened to anybody else, and ordered everybody around.

This made Kadalie very angry, and also angered others, and so Kadalie was able to expel all members of the Communist Party from the ICU.

This made the problem of getting good leaders even more difficult.

The ICU still continued to grow. In 1927 Kadalie went to

Europe to try to get support for South African workers. He made speeches all over Europe and was well received. He came back having decided that the ICU should be completely re-organised. But now the troubles were getting worse. Many of the local leaders were becoming jealous of Kadalie, and they wanted to break away so that they could be leaders of their own Unions. The biggest trouble was with the Natal branch, which was the strongest branch in the country and at one time had nearly 30,000 members. There was a lot of trouble about money in Natal, and Kadalie tried to sack Champion, the Natal leader. But most of the workers in Natal supported Champion, and he broke away.

Kadalie brought back an adviser from Britain, but the adviser did not help. There were more and more arguments about what should be done, and about who should be a leader. In 1929 Kadalie was dismissed by the ICU, and so he tried to start a new Union. Because of the splits, all the Unions got weaker, and by 1930 there were only a few very small unions in towns like East London, where Kadalie had his union, and Durban, where Champion had his union.

We can see from this that one of the reasons why the ICU failed was that there were too many people all wanting to be the leader, and there were too many people stealing the workers' money.

But we must also remember that the ICU faced very big difficulties. The Government and the employers would not recognise the union at all, and the ICU got no support from the unions of white workers. Union leaders were sometimes imprisoned or sent away from their areas, and sometimes gangs of white people attacked and burned ICU offices.

The workers kept joining the ICU at this time because they had many difficulties and wanted to act. Workers went on strike in many places. But the ICU was not really strong enough to support them. In fact, often

the ICU thought that if they did support the strikers they would get into too much trouble with the government, so they tried to stop the strikers.

If the ICU did too much, they knew that the Government would break them.

But if they did too little they knew that the workers would no longer support them.

So they found it very difficult to work out good ways of acting. Sometimes they tried to be like a political party and get the government to change many laws. Sometimes they tried to be like an ordinary trade union and organise workers in the factories. Sometimes they tried to collect money to buy land for farm workers who were being pushed off the farms. Trying to do all these different things, they could not do any of them properly. In the end they lost the support of the workers, and the Government also acted very strongly against them.

### PROBLEM, ORGANISATION, TACTICS.

We have now learnt a little bit about the history of the labour movement in Britain, and in South Africa. From this we can see that the labour movement came about because the people who had to come to the factories and the mines to work as wage labourers had to face a new kind of PROBLEM, and to help themselves they had to make a new kind of ORGANISATION with new AIMS, and new TACTICS.

The PROBLEM was that as workers with no land or tools of their own they had no protection against the employers, who could pay them low wages, make them work long hours, and sack them whenever they wanted to.

The ORGANISATION was the coming together of all the workers in the factory or in the industry, so that they could turn their great number into a source of strength. The organisation was the TRADE UNION.

The AIM of the organisation was to help the workers get some control over their lives. It was to make the employers negotiate with them over wages, and to make the government pass laws which would protect them.

The TACTIC was to say to the employer:

"If you will not make things better, then we will all stop working for you and you will not be able to make any money at all". The new tactic was the STRIKE.

But we have also seen that the workers' movement had to face many difficulties. It was difficult to build a new kind of organisation and to get what they wanted.

There were three main kinds of difficulty:

#### 1. DIFFICULTIES WITH THE LAW AND THE GOVERNMENT.

We saw that in Britain, and in the other European countries when industrialisation began, the government was on the side of the employers. There were laws against trade unions and laws against strikes. There were no laws protecting the workers. So the first trade unions were attacked by the government and the police. Many trade union leaders were put in prison and in some countries even killed. It was only after a long time that the government began to realise that there would be less trouble if the workers were allowed to organise.

#### 2. DIFFICULTIES WITH THE EMPLOYERS.

In the early days of industrialisation in Britain and Europe the employers were very hard. They wanted absolute control over their workers, and they wanted to pay them the lowest possible wages. They liked to employ women and children instead of men, because they could pay them less and control them easier. In Britain many women had to work down in the coal mines. Sometimes children were made to start working in factories when they were five years old.

Employers like these obviously would not be happy with

trade unions. They said that the English workers were lazy and stupid and that they would only work if they were punished. They said that they were not clever enough to have trade unions, and that if they did have trade unions they would not do any work.

So the employers fought against the unions. They sacked leaders and strikers. In some countries, especially the USA, the employers used to hire gangs of men to come and beat up and even kill trade unionists and workers who went on strike.

They tried to make all workers sign a document to say that they would not join a trade union. Again, it was only after a long time that employers began to learn that if they treated their workers badly, then they would do bad work. It was only after a long time that they began to realise that it was better to have a Trade Union and to negotiate with the workers instead of fighting with the workers all the time.

### 3. DIFFICULTIES INSIDE THE UNIONS.

Many unions have failed through bad organisation and lack of unity. The dangers inside the union must be understood by all workers. The union must be organised and run in such a way as to stop this happening. A strong well-organised union can overcome the obstacles put in its way by the government and the employers. But if the union is dismited it can do nothing even if the employers are weak.

## CHAPTER 3.

### THE TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE.

#### UNITY FOR ALL WORKERS.

Once workers had built unity through organisation in the factory, they began to discover that that was not enough. They began to discover that they needed to combine with workers in other factories. Why was this?

The first reason was that through unity striking workers could be helped by workers who were not on strike. In this way the strikers could be stronger, and could strike for longer. Also, if the union could organise all the workers in the district, then they could stop unemployed workers from taking the jobs of the strikers. ORGANISATION WAS NEEDED TO BUILD UP SOLIDARITY BETWEEN ALL WORKERS.

But once they had come together for this reason, workers found that there were other advantages from unity. The workers representatives in the factories needed training to be able to carry out their union jobs properly. This training could only come from a workers' organisation strong enough and rich enough to have its own offices and its own training staff. The workers representatives in the factories needed knowledge about the industry and about the economy. This knowledge could only come from a union office.

The employers in different factories often combined and helped one another against the workers. So the workers also needed to combine. They found that if they were strong they could negotiate agreements for the whole industry. And they found that if they were united they could also speak to the government and get laws made to protect workers. The workers united in one factory could do nothing about bad laws. But all the workers united in trade unions were able to get many improvements in the law.

So a union of the workers in many different factories provided these advantages:

It built a feeling of solidarity between all workers.

It could speak with one voice to all the employers.

It could speak to the government on behalf of the workers.

It could provide organisers who, without fear of victimisation, could help the workers in their struggle inside the factories.

It could provide training for workers.

It could get the information which the workers needed.

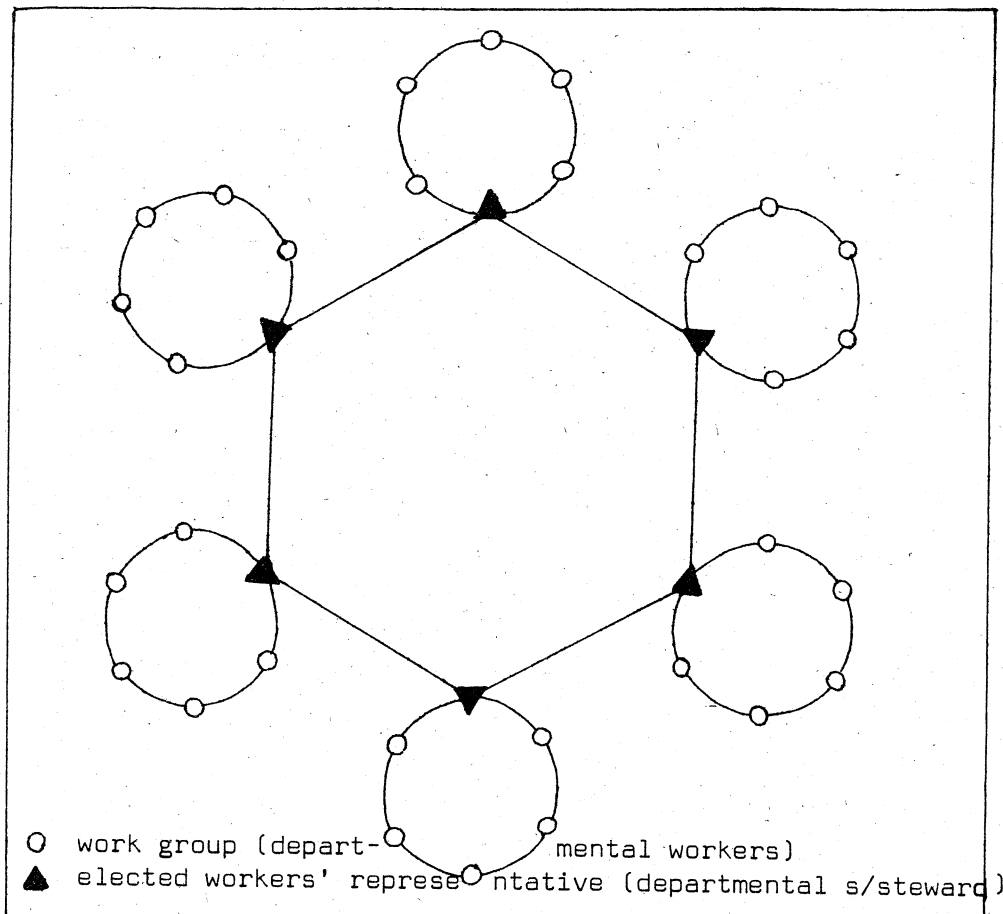
It could provide better benefits to workers.

The bigger the trade union became, the stronger it was. But also the bigger it gets the more difficult it is to organise. In this chapter we will describe the different parts of the whole organisation. In the next chapter we will show the difficulties that face any big organisation. And in the rest of the book we shall explain how the organisational system of the trade union works to overcome these difficulties.

Trade unions arise out of the struggle between workers and employers in the factory. In a factory of 20 workers, unity is easy to achieve. But when there are 3,000 workers it is not so easy. The workers do not all know one another. They cannot easily all come together to talk about their problems. Like a house which will fall into a pile of bricks if it has no foundations, worker unity needs a structure to hold it together.

The workers need to choose representatives. Each of these representatives has two jobs. The first job is to talk to the group of workers who have chosen him or her.

The second job is to talk to the representatives who have been chosen by the other workers. Through this system it is possible for all the workers to co-operate together.



ALL THE WORKERS IN THE FACTORY ARE JOINED TOGETHER THROUGH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES' (SHOP STEWARDS) COMMITTEE.

Worker unity is not direct and immediate. It is brought about through a system or a structure. The trade union is the workers united through a system of organisation.

But as soon as there is a system there can be problems. Unity is in the interest of all workers. But in all groups there are some who understand the need for unity more clearly. There are some who are more willing to work hard to achieve unity. There are some who will not give up so easily in the face of difficulties. It is these who will become the representatives and the leaders of the workers.

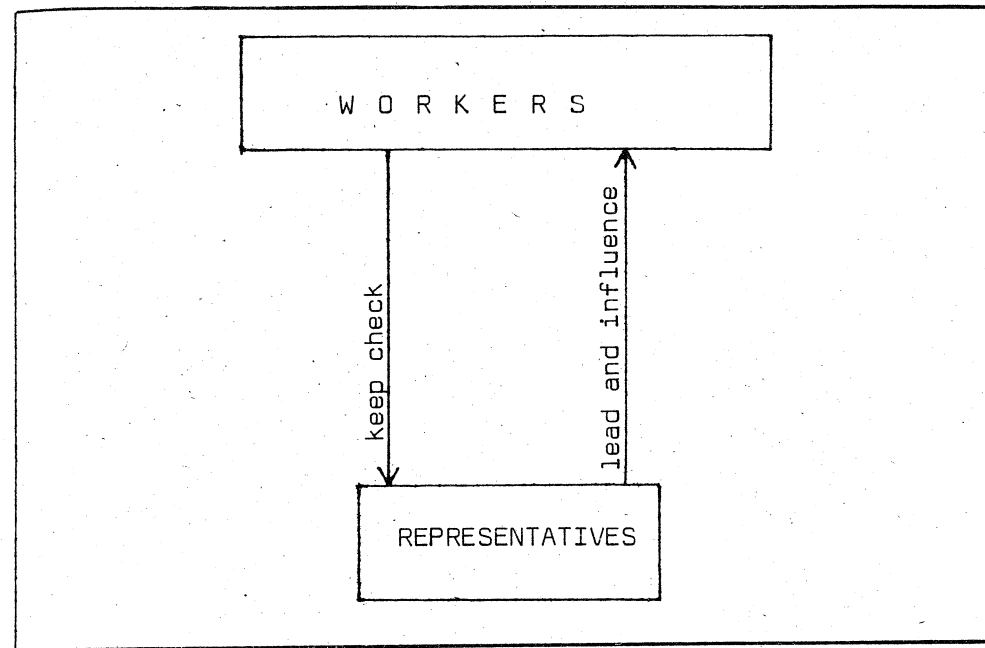
But the others, those who do not understand so well, and who are not so willing to work for unity, will not just follow the representatives automatically. The representatives will have to earn their trust. They will have to show them that only through unity can they solve their own individual problems.

But at the same time the representatives may lose touch with the workers. They may begin to feel that they are very important and do not need to listen to the workers anymore. They may begin to look after their own interests, and neglect the interests of the workers.

So the organisational system has to do two things. It has to allow for the representatives to lead and influence the workers. And it has to allow for the workers to keep a check on their representatives. (See diagram on next page)

The trade union organisation includes:

1. A structure uniting the workers in each factory.
2. A structure uniting the workers in the different factories.
3. A group of union officials who are employed by the workers.



This means that the workers elect:

1. Representatives in the factory. These are the SHOP STEWARDS.
2. Representatives to the BRANCH EXECUTIVE which brings together all the factories in a particular area.
3. Representatives to the UNION EXECUTIVE which unites all the factories in the Union.

The Branch Executive Committee (BEC) and the Union Executive Committee appoint officials to carry out the policies decided on by the union.

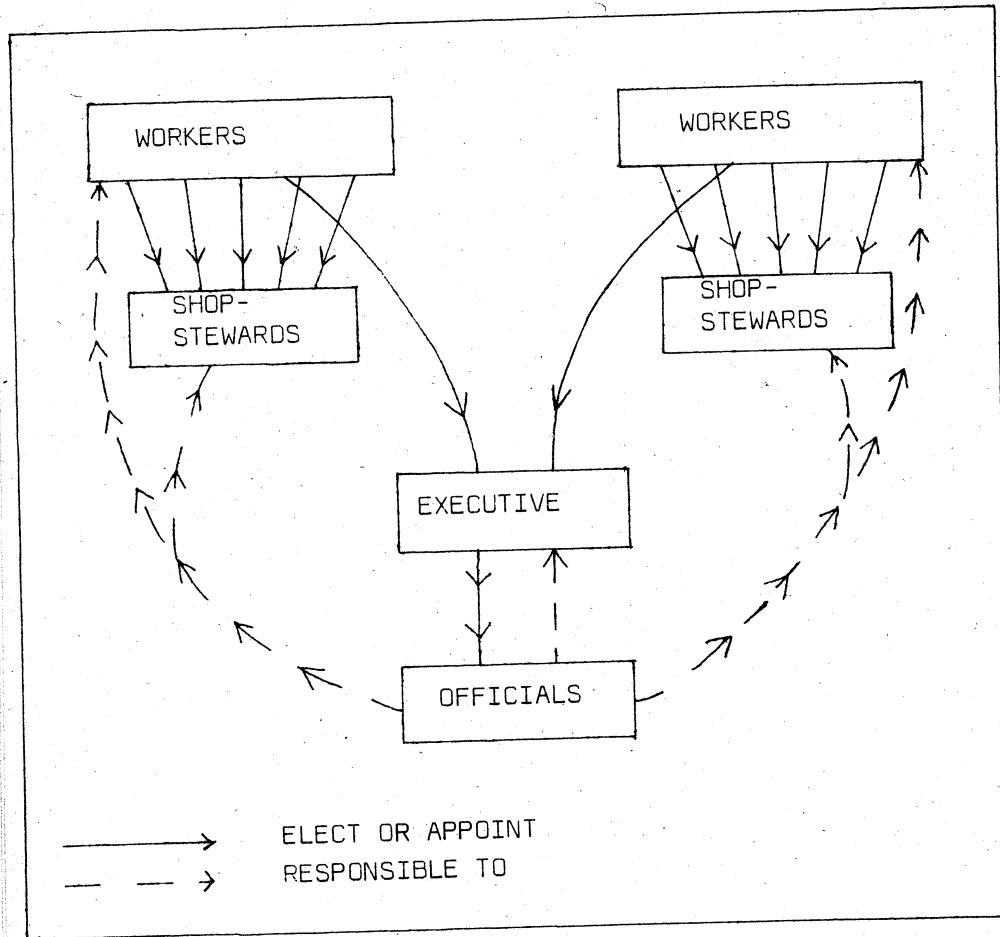
These officials are:

The Secretary  
The Organisers  
The Office Staff.

The officials are responsible to the BEC and the workers.



The BEC and UEC members are responsible to the workers. The shop stewards are responsible to the workers. We can put them all in the following diagram.



CHAPTER 4.

OBSTACLES TO UNITY.

The four biggest obstacles to unity are:

1. *INEFFICIENCY.*

To keep the workers together the organisation system has to work well. Workers' representatives must advertise meetings properly and hold the meetings at the right time. They must keep records of workers complaints, and of which complaints have been solved. They must not lose any money which they collect from the workers for the affairs of the union. To defeat inefficiency, we must see how best the union can make itself EFFICIENT.

2. *BUREAUCRACY.*

A "bureau" is an office. The trade union is not in an office. It is in the factories. When a trade union becomes a group of officials in an office, then it is a "Bureaucracy". There is the "good" bureaucracy which helps individual workers to solve complaints. And there is the "bad" bureaucracy where the officials treat the workers as though they are a nuisance. BUT IN FACT BOTH KINDS OF BUREAUCRACY ARE BAD. Both destroy the unity of the workers. To defeat bureaucracy, we have to see how the union can make itself DEMOCRATIC.

3. *CORRUPTION.*

To keep the organisational system working money will be needed. This money has to be collected from the workers. CORRUPTION is when union members or officials use this money for themselves. To defeat corruption, the union must have a careful system for collecting, keeping and using money. It must have properly organised FINANCES.

4. *LEADERSHIP CONFLICT.*

Unity requires an organisational system, and this system needs people to act as workers' representatives. Sometimes some of these workers' representatives decide that they want to be leaders over the workers. They start fighting among themselves for power. To prevent leadership conflicts we have to see how the union can make itself DEMOCRATIC.

BUREAUCRACY.

In a bureaucratic union, the union moves out of the factory and into an office. Two things happen.

1. The union is run by the full time officials, and not by the workers. These officials can begin to think that the workers are only there to pay the officials' salaries. They get bored filling in complaints forms, and begin to treat the workers as a nuisance. They stop visiting the factories. Instead they sit comfortably in their offices reading the newspaper.
2. The workers no longer solve their own problems through the strength that comes from unity. Everything is left up to the officials. All negotiations with management are done only by the officials. - But soon the officials are spending more time having tea with management than talking to the workers. If there is any real trouble the officials are more interested in keeping everything quiet than in helping the workers to push their case.

Preventing Bureaucracy: 1) Democracy.

The union belongs to the workers. The union officials are the servants of the workers. The workers must be able to control the officials. They must be able to dismiss them if they do not serve the workers well. This means that the union must have rules. It must have rules about:

1. How representatives and officials are to be chosen.
2. How union policy is to be made.
3. How workers can check that the policy is being carried out properly.
4. How workers can dismiss officials and representatives who are not serving them properly.

All these rules are called the CONSTITUTION of the union. The Constitution must be democratic, so that the workers can keep control of their union. And every worker must know the constitution, so that he or she can make sure that it is obeyed. Every union member has a duty to see that the constitution is obeyed. A representative or an official or a worker who disobeys the union constitution weakens the solidarity of all workers.

Preventing Bureaucracy: 2) Organising.

It is the duty of the workers to see that the constitution is obeyed and that the union stays democratic. It is the duty of the organisers and other officials to make sure that the union stays in the factory, and not in the office. They must remember that it is their job to organise. Everything that they do is part of their job of organising the workers into a bigger and stronger union.

1. The organisers must not do things for the workers. They must help the workers to do things for themselves.
2. The organisers must remember that the workers can only help themselves through greater solidarity. They must handle complaints in such a way as to build solidarity. Workers can only act if they understand the situation. ORGANISERS MUST ALSO BE EDUCATORS. They must use every problem and every complaint to educate the workers about the law,

about the factory, and about the union.

3. The job of the representatives and the organiser is to join workers together. If they treat workers badly, and leave them angry and dissatisfied, then they cut those workers off from the other workers.

### CORRUPTION.

CORRUPTION IS THE WORST THING THAT CAN HAPPEN TO A WORKERS' ORGANISATION. But it often does happen.

It often happens because workers are poor, and union officials are poor. If the worker who is collecting union subscriptions at the factory one week has a sick wife he might think:

"With this money I could buy my wife some good food. The union has a lot of money and it will not miss this. Anyway, I will pay it back out of my wage as soon as my wife is better".

But of course he will not be able to pay it back, and once he has done it once he may think it is so easy, and will be tempted to do it again.

The union official is poor, but he often has to meet and mix with wealthy managers and factory owners. He sees the way they dress and the way they live, and begins to want the same things himself. Perhaps he goes to the races and thinks:

"I am only borrowing the Union Funds. As soon as I have my big win I will be able to pay it back". But of course he does not have a big win, and even if he does, he does not pay it back.

A CORRUPT TRADE UNIONIST IS NOT JUST A THIEF. HE OR SHE IS THE BIGGEST HELP THAT THE EMPLOYERS CAN HAVE IN BREAKING THE TRADE UNION. The employers always tell workers, "those trade unionists just want your money". As soon as the workers begin to think that this is true the union will die.

### TWO KINDS OF CORRUPTION.

There are two kinds of corruption. There is the big corruption of stealing the workers' money from the union. This is the worst kind of corruption. But there is another kind.

The other kind of corruption is when you begin to forget that the union is to serve the workers, and begin to think that the things that the union owns belong to the officials, not to the workers.

You begin to use the Union's car for your own private business, and not to serve the workers.

You begin to spend the workers' money on decorating your office, not on providing services for the workers.

If you are a member of the union executive you begin to vote to pay a big meeting allowance to yourself for every time you come to an executive meeting.

You begin to waste the workers' money by going to conferences that are not necessary. You begin to feel that if you go to a conference in another town the workers must pay for you to stay in an expensive hotel.

After a while you travel in the union's car, and fly off to conferences, and work in a comfortable office, and forget that it is all done with the workers' money. You forget that the workers work all day in uncomfortable factories and travel home at night in overcrowded trains. You forget what it is like to be a worker. And perhaps, like the employers you begin to think: "What are they always complaining about? Life isn't so bad really".

If you are a union official you do not have to make yourself uncomfortable on purpose.

But you must always remember to ask yourself: "This is the workers' money I am using. Is it really necessary to

spend it in this way?"

Even if the money is not money which has been paid by the workers in subscriptions, but is money which has been given to the union, you must still remind yourself that *it has been given to be used for the workers, and not for your personal convenience.*

Of course, bad working conditions cause low productivity. This is also true for union officials. If they have to work in a small, hot and overcrowded office without the proper equipment, then they will not be able to do their work efficiently and well.

If members of the executive are not given money to pay their fares to come to meetings, then they may not be able to come at all.

So one must always ask: "Is this necessary for the efficient working of the Union? Is this necessary to serve the workers better?"

The danger of this second form of corruption is that it happens so slowly and quietly, without anyone noticing, and without anybody intending to be corrupt. But slowly the workers begin to feel that the Union is to give good jobs to the officials, and not to help the workers. They begin to distrust the union, and it lies slowly without anyone understanding why.

#### CORRUPTION AND INEFFICIENCY.

When the Union is inefficient, it is much easier for corruption to happen.

The funds of a Trade Union usually come from many small amounts collected each week from each factory. Unless there is a very efficient system of collecting the money and keeping the records, then it is very easy for the money to get lost or to be stolen.

Also, corruption happens accidentally. The people who

are collecting and keeping the money begin to get it mixed up with their own money, without meaning to steal it at all.

FINANCIAL EFFICIENCY IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS FOR ANY WORKERS' ORGANISATION.

Therefore any workers' representative or workers' leader must understand the problems of union finances.

1. There must be a very careful way of collecting and entering the money.

2. Careful records must be kept of all the money, and these records must be easy to understand and must be checked regularly by an Accountant.

3. The financial records must be made available to all the workers, so that they can see that the money is being used properly.

#### LEADERSHIP.

There are two different kinds of difficulties with leadership.

The first is AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP. An AUTOCRAT is somebody who is always telling other people what to do, and will never listen to criticism from other people. So an autocratic leader will always think that he knows best, and can learn nothing from the workers or anybody else. Such a leader will want to tell the workers what to do but will never listen to their ideas or complaints.

The second difficulty is with LEADERSHIP DISPUTES.

Workers are usually ordered around at work and ordered around where they live. They never have the chance to be leaders, except in the trade union.

Because of this, there might be many people who see the union not as a chance to help their fellow workers, but as a chance to become leaders. If there are two or three people like this in a union, they might spend all their time fighting to see who will be the leader. And often the one who loses leaves the union with his

supporters and forms a rival Union. Two weak unions take the place of one strong union, and often these two unions then spend more time fighting with one another than with the employers.

Sometimes leadership disputes also get mixed up with political disputes, about whether the workers' organisation should support one or other particular party.

### AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP.

I am sure that when you read what we said about Autocratic Leadership on page 33 you said to yourself, "I am not like that. I am not an Autocrat".

But it is very easy to become an Autocrat without noticing. The biggest difficulty is to be able to admit that you have made a mistake. If you think about it for a minute you will see that being a workers' representative in South Africa is very difficult. There are so many things that you need to know, and so many different mistakes that you can make. So you will almost certainly make many mistakes.

But it is very difficult to admit when you have made a mistake, especially, say, if you are a man and a woman is telling you that you have made a mistake, or if you are old and a younger person is criticising you.

You must think of the people with whom you are working as a group who are learning together. If you make a mistake and you admit it, then you have learnt something. If you do not admit it, then you will make the same mistake again. It is very important that you should feel free to criticise the people with whom you are working, and that they should feel free to criticise you.

If somebody says, "You have made a mistake", you must learn not to feel that they are saying that you are a bad person. If you feel that everytime somebody says you have made a mistake then they are attacking you and saying that you are a bad person, then you will not listen to what they say. You will just get angry.

If somebody says that you have made a mistake they are not attacking you. *They are attacking your mistake*, and there is no reason to get angry about that.

Even if you are absolutely certain that you are right you must still listen carefully to anybody who disagrees with you. PERHAPS you are wrong. And if you are not wrong, then you must be able to understand the other persons's argument so that you can help him to see that he is wrong.

If you are a Manager you can order people around. A *trade unionist is not a manager*. She or he must always PERSUADE people, never ORDER people. To order people, you do not have to listen to them, but you can only persuade people if you listen to them first.

Remember also that arguments often go on because the two people are talking about different things, and not listening to one another. If you listen to the person with whom you are arguing, you may find that you really agree with one another.

In a democratic organisation there are many ways to stop people turning into autocrats. The main way is by voting them out. But by the time you have voted out an autocratic leader half the members may have got tired of it and left the union.

The other main way is to MAKE HIM LISTEN. So you have special rules at meetings to make sure that everyone can talk and say what they want to say.

You make sure that when important decisions have to be made, all the members are allowed to discuss them and to vote.

And you have an emergency method for throwing out unpopular leader by having a special mass meeting. We will learn about all these rules in a later chapter. But it is also very important for the organisation to have special

training for people who are going to be in leadership positions, in order to show them how to stop becoming Autocrats.

### LEADERSHIP DISPUTES.

After corruption, this is perhaps the biggest problem in new workers' organisations. There are two main reasons for leadership disputes and splits in a workers' organisation.

1. There can be splits over PERSONALITIES.
2. There can be splits over POLICIES.

A split over personalities happens when there are two people in the Union who both want to be the Leader. Instead of talking about what will be the best for the workers, each says nasty things about the other, and at the end the Union is divided into two groups fighting one another.

How can this be stopped? Once it has started it is very difficult to stop. The main thing to do is to remember that the most important thing is UNITY among the workers, and that any leader or would-be-leader who threatens that unity without very good reason is a bad leader.

But if the workers' organisation is really democratic, with many people, not just one or two, participating in running it, then this kind of personality split will not easily occur.

It only happens when there are just one or two people at the top telling the others what to do. Then people might fight to see who will be right at the top. But if it is a democratic organisation with many people working together for the good of the organisation, then there is nobody at the top telling everybody what to do, and so there is nothing to fight about.

### POLICY DISPUTES.

If there is a dispute in a workers' organisation it is not always about who is to be at the top. Often everybody has the same AIM, but they disagree about the BEST WAY of getting what they want. The argument is about WHAT TO DO, and one group says one thing, and another group says another.

There are two rules to help to solve this problem.

1. THERE MUST BE FULL AND FREE DISCUSSION BEFORE A DECISION IS FINALLY TAKEN. Both sides must be *allowed to put their arguments*, and all the workers must be allowed to listen to both sides. In this way everybody may be able to come to a common agreement about which is the best policy.

2. UNITY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING. Often at the end of the argument not everyone will agree. There will be a vote, and there will be a MAJORITY on one side, and a MINORITY on the other side. What must the minority who disagree with the decision do? THEY MUST ACCEPT THE DECISION OF THE MAJORITY. Otherwise the unity of the organisation will be broken, and everybody will suffer. The minority can perhaps still try to persuade the others that they made the wrong decision, but unless they can persuade them that they made a mistake, they must help to carry out the decision.

There should never be a split over ways of doing things. It is only if two groups have completely different aims that they cannot work together.

Quite often political parties split, because different groups in them decide that they really have different aims. So one group leaves or is pushed out and starts another political party with new aims.

But a Workers' Organisation is not a political party. It can have only one aim: improving the conditions of the workers. Arguments can only be about the best ways

of doing that. So if you think that the majority of the workers in an organisation are doing things the wrong way, you must not leave the organisation. Instead you must try to show them that there is a better way of getting what they want.

If there is already a workers' organisation and you think that it is not doing things the right way, then it is not your job to start another organisation. Instead, you should join the one that is already there, and work within it to show them what they are doing wrong.

*Otherwise all that you will do is to destroy the unity of the workers and cause trouble. The only people who will gain are the employers.*

Of course you can only work for a change of policy within an organisation if it is democratic. You can only work for a change of policy if you are allowed to talk freely at meetings and to explain why you think that your policy is better. If there are Autocratic Leaders who will not let people with different policies talk, then the union will almost certainly split into different groups. ONLY DEMOCRACY CAN PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE WORKERS.

### DEMOCRACY.

In fact, the only way in which the workers can fight all of these difficulties is through DEMOCRACY. Democracy means that all the members of an organisation must have a say in what happens. There are not some leaders who make all the decisions, and followers who must do what they are told. Everybody in the organisation must know what is happening, and must be asked when an important decision has to be taken.

Two things are needed for proper democracy.

1. The workers must know what is happening in the union. They must know how the money is being collected and how

it is being used. They must know what the officials are doing all the time.

So if there is democracy it is difficult for there to be corruption, and it is difficult for there to be inefficiency.

2. The workers must often be asked what they want the leaders and the officials to do. If there is a negotiation going on, then they must be consulted.

They must be able to sack officials and leaders if they do not think that they are serving the interests of the workers, and they must be able to choose new leaders when they want new leaders.

So if there is democracy it is difficult for there to be bureaucracy. It is difficult for there to be leadership conflicts. The workers will soon throw out leaders who only want to be important and are not really interested in the workers.

### DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION.

Democracy is only possible with knowledge. If the workers do not understand how the Union works, they cannot control what happens in it.

If they do not understand how the factory works then they cannot make sure that their representatives are negotiating properly and looking after their interests. If the workers are not democratically controlling their representatives, then the representatives will always be in a weak position with the employers.

So if the workers representatives want a strong organisation they must do everything in such a way as to educate the workers and to educate themselves.

Everytime that an organiser handles a complaint from a worker he or she must use it to educate the worker about

the factory and the workers' rights in the factory.

Every time that the workers' representatives have a meeting together they must use that meeting to educate themselves and one another.

They must look for mistakes they have made in order to learn from those mistakes.

They must keep the workers fully informed about what is happening and why.

Only by this process of continuous education can they build a strong and democratic workers' organisation.

## CHAPTER 5.

### BUILDING THE FACTORY ORGANISATION.

How do you go about actually building up the workers organisation in the factory? This is obviously the most difficult task. We cannot give any one method which could be used in all factories. What you will have to do will depend on the needs of the workers in your factory, and it will also depend on how the management reacts to the growth of the workers' organisation. But we can say that there will be three main stages in the growth of any trade union in a factory, and there will be certain problems common to all factories in each stage.:

*Stage 1.* THE RECRUITMENT STAGE in which the task is to get workers to join the union.

*Stage 2.* The stage in which many workers have joined, and the problem is to get recognition from management.

*Stage 3.* The stage after recognition, when the problem is to negotiate and then administer new agreements.

It is obvious that the second stage is the most difficult, so we will spend most time talking about that.

#### 1. THE RECRUITMENT STAGE.

Somebody has to start the union in the factory. Somebody has to spread the idea that the workers should organise together. It may be an organiser from a trade union office, who comes to the factory and who stands outside the gates. Or it may be somebody within the factory. How should this person go about getting the other workers to join the organisation?

All the workers have problems. But there are two different kinds of problems. There are problems which only one worker has. These are INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS. And there are problems which are shared with many of the other workers in the factory. These are COLLECTIVE PROBLEMS. Let us take an example. Say a worker is dismissed. Is



this a collective problem or an individual problem?

It depends on the factory. If it is very unusual for a worker to be dismissed, and if there is a very good reason for this dismissal, then we will not say that it is a collective problem in this factory. It is not a problem that worries all the workers in the factory. But if we find that people are often dismissed for little or no reason, then we still say that in this factory dismissal is a collective problem. All the workers are likely to be worried about the possibility of dismissal.

A collective problem can only be solved by collective actions, by the action of all the workers. So the first thing to do in building up an organisation is to find out what are the main collective problems of the workers in that factory.

The second thing is TO GET THE WORKERS TO SEE THAT THOSE ARE COLLECTIVE PROBLEMS. If each worker thinks that only he or she has that problem, then he or she will not think about taking collective action to solve the problem.

That is, the organiser must do two things:

1. DISCOVER THE COLLECTIVE PROBLEMS.
2. SHOW THE NECESSITY FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION.

In fact, of course, these two things will be done together. You can only discover the collective problems by talking to workers in all parts of the factory, and by bringing workers together from all department of the factory. You must never think that you already know what the other workers feel. Conditions are different in each department of the factory. Workers from all departments of the factory must be got together to draw up their grievances. In coming together, either in small groups or at a big meeting, they will begin to see the possibility of acting together.

But it is important that the workers should not be given the impression that once they have formed a union

everything will be easy. The union cannot solve all their problems at once. In fact, it may be a long time before it can solve any of their problems. It must be made clear to the workers that forming a union in the factory is only the beginning of a long struggle. It is a struggle that they must carry on themselves, not something that "the union" will do for them.

The beginnings of organisation in the factory will come out of the discussions between workers from different parts of the factory. The next thing to do is to turn this into a formal organisation. All workers will be happy to benefit, but will all workers want to share in the difficulties of the struggle? Workers must commit themselves by formally joining the organisation. When enough workers from each department have actually joined, the time has come to give the organisation a structure, by electing workers representatives from each department.

The Union members in the department vote to choose one or more representatives. It is the job of these representatives to meet together with representatives from other departments, so that all the workers can act together.

It is important not to hold these elections too soon. If you hold elections in a department where there are only a few members in the union, this might cut the union from the other workers. The person elected might not have the confidence of the other workers, and they might not be willing to join.

## 2. GETTING MANAGEMENT RECOGNITION.

Once you have members in the factory, and have workers' representatives elected from each department, the time has come to approach management. If the union is a registered union, that is, if it has White, Coloured and Indian members only, then the management is legally obliged to recognise it once 50% (half) of the workers in the factory have joined. But a union with African members has no legal right to be recognised by

management. So it is often difficult for such unions to get recognition.

Some employers may begin by refusing to recognise the union at all. Others may not be willing to recognise it fully, but will nevertheless be willing to work with it in certain ways. We can say that there are four main ways in which management can react to the union:

1. They may refuse to recognise it in any way.
2. Employers may refuse to recognise the union as such, but still be willing to accept that the elected union representatives in the factory are the workers' representatives. They may then be willing to discuss particular grievances with these elected representatives.
3. Employers may be willing to recognise the union informally, and to deal with the union factory committee and with the union officials, but might still refuse to negotiate a full agreement.
4. They may agree to enter into a full agreement with the union. In this case a formal DISPUTES PROCEDURE may be set up, and the job of the workers representatives (shop stewards) will be to use the disputes procedure in order to defend members' interests.

It is obvious that the actual tasks of shop stewards in any particular factory will depend on the type of recognition in the factory. You must remember this in reading the next chapters of this book.

Union recognition will depend on two things:

- a. the skill and organisation of the workers.
- b. the understanding and the attitudes of employers.

There are in fact good arguments why employers should agree to recognise trade unions. These arguments are set out in the chapter "Negotiating for Recognition" in the

Negotiation Handbook. You should know these arguments and be able to use them. But still, not all employers understand these arguments, straight away. So it is very important to use the correct tactics when approaching the employers.

There are two different ways of approaching the employers. The first is for the Trade Union Secretary or local organiser to approach the employers from outside, in order to discuss with them the importance of trade unions. The second is for the workers' representatives inside the factory to make the first approach.

In fact, these two approaches should usually be used together. Workers tend to be suspicious of anyone who talks to management. If the union secretary has private meetings with management, the workers may think that he or she is going to sell them out. Therefore, if possible the union secretary should always be accompanied by workers' representatives from inside the factory when meeting with management. But still, the union secretary can play an important part in getting recognition, by explaining fully to the employers what the union is for and how it works in other factories.

The workers and their representatives inside the factory know the employers best. So they must decide what will be the best way of dealing with them. In many cases the workers in a factory decide to organise after there has been a strike in that factory. So the strike itself may already have led to negotiations with the employers, and these negotiations can include discussions about trade union recognition.

But in other cases the workers will have to decide whether they should start straight away by negotiating over recognition, or whether they should first begin to deal with problems on an informal basis. For example, they may decide that it will be best to start by sending the workers' representatives to discuss particular problems with the employers. For example, often workers do not fully understand how the pension

scheme works, or how overtime is calculated. The workers' representatives could approach management to discuss problems like these.

That is, the workers' representatives can start by trying to find out exactly what their existing rights are, in terms of the Industrial Council agreement, or other agreement, which governs the factory. Here they can get help from the union office, to check that the employers are not telling lies, and at the same time they can begin to deal directly with the employers in a way in which it is difficult for the employers to refuse.

Whenever the workers' representatives decide to approach management, it must always be after full discussions with the workers. Right from the beginning all members of the union in the factory should participate in drawing up demands and in working out the plan of action for the organisation. After meetings with employers, the representatives must also report back fully to the workers. The workers must know exactly what is going on, or else they will distrust the representatives.

This question of keeping the trust of the workers is very important. The main weapon of management is division among the workers. They will do everything that they can to divide the representatives from the workers. They will spread rumours, and they will try to pretend that the representatives have sold out. They will also try to use the representatives for their own ends. They will use them to give orders to the workers, and try to turn them into a new kind of induna. To prevent this happening the workers must keep in close contact with their representatives all the time.

1. THE WORKERS IN EACH FACTORY MUST DRAW UP A PLAN OF HOW TO WORK FOR FULL RECOGNITION OF THEIR UNION.

2. ALL THE MEMBERS MUST TAKE PART IN PREPARING AND CARRYING OUT THIS PLAN.

Achieving recognition is not likely to be easy. Only through a long struggle can the workers hope to succeed.

It may be that the struggle for recognition will last for several years. But in the meanwhile, even if the employers refuse to recognise the union, you still have to defend the workers' interests. There are many ways in which this can be done even without recognition from management.

1. The employers cannot ignore the combined action of the workers. It is the job of the union to discuss and work out the most effective ways for the workers to act so as to force the employers to recognise their grievances.

2. The workers must be taught their legal rights, and those rights must be defended, if necessary by taking the employers to court if they break the law. For this to be done, it is not necessary that the employers recognise the union.

3. In some factories there are committees of various kinds which the union might be able to use. For example, in a later chapter we explain the working of the works committee and liaison committee system. The union can consider the possibility of taking over and using such committees in the interests of the workers.

### 3. *THE UNION IN ACTION.*

Once the employers agree to recognise the union, there are still two further problems.

The first problem is to negotiate a full agreement regarding wages and working conditions in the factory. We discuss the problem of negotiation fully in the NEGOTIATION HANDBOOK.

The second problem is to have a system through which the workers and their representatives can make sure that the employers keep to the agreement. This means that the union and its representatives must be given certain

rights in the factory. The shop stewards must be free to take up the workers' complaints, and there must be a recognised DISPUTES PROCEDURE for dealing with these complaints. In later chapters we describe:

- a. How a proper disputes procedure should work.
- b. What rights the union Factory Committee should have inside the factory in order to protect the members fully.

But in all this we must remember that in each factory conditions are different, so it is important that those workers who are members of the union discuss their factory thoroughly with the union secretary and out of these discussions will come a plan of action.

## CHAPTER 6.

### UNITY IN THE FACTORY.

The union is the workers united in the factory. But like a house which will fall into a pile of bricks if it has no foundation, worker unity needs a structure to hold it together. THE TRADE UNION IS THE WORKERS UNITED THROUGH AN ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE.

In no factory are the workers completely disunited. Even when there is no Union the workers come together and help one another in various ways. There are always workers who are treated as leaders by the others. The other workers will ask them for advice, and will sometimes expect them to speak for all the workers in the department. The task of the union is to make this organisation stronger and more permanent. Also, if the factory is big, then there may be organisation and leadership in each department, but no links between the different departments. So the union has to bring together the whole factory in a strong and permanent organisation. How can this be done?

The union is all the workers, and this means that the first and most important thing in the union is the mass meeting of all the workers. At such a mass meeting they can talk together and make decisions together. But they cannot call a mass meeting of all workers every time that there is a complaint. And at the end of the meeting the workers become separate again. The problem is to maintain the unity of the workers between mass meetings. This can only be done by a system of representatives. The workers in each department have to elect a representative whose job it is to keep links with the representatives of the other departments. This representative is the SHOP STEWARD.

In order to keep the workers united, the shop steward has to do two things:

1. The shop steward has to keep in close contact with

every member of the group of workers whom he or she represents.

2. The shop steward has to meet regularly with the other shop stewards from the other departments in order to learn what is happening elsewhere in the factory.

If each shop steward represents too many workers, contact with them will be lost. If each shop steward represents too few workers, there will be too many shop stewards, and every shop stewards' meeting will be like a mass meeting. It is probably best for there to be one shop steward for every 40 or 50 workers. In the rest of this chapter we will explain the main duties of a shop steward.

The purpose of keeping the workers united is to enable them to stand up to the employers and get improved wages and conditions. This means that the shop steward has a double role:

#### *UNITING THE WORKERS*

#### *REPRESENTING THE WORKERS.*

These two roles are joined. The better the shop steward represents the workers in negotiating with management and in getting complaints solved, the better he or she can unite the workers.

#### *UNITING THE WORKERS.*

The shop steward is the link between the workers in each part of the factory. The shop steward is the link between the workers and the union office.

1. The shop steward must keep the workers informed about what is happening in other parts of the factory. In any factory there will be workers doing different jobs. These workers must understand each other's problems if unity is to be achieved.

2. The shop steward must make sure that all workers are kept informed about anything important that happens in the factory. The unity of the workers and the strength of the shop steward depend on their knowledge. THE WORKERS MUST KNOW ALL THE LAWS AND AGREEMENTS THAT REGULATE WORK IN THE FACTORY. It is the shop steward's job to make sure that they all know this. If the workers do not know the laws and the agreements, then they do not know when the employers are breaking the them. If they do not know their rights, they cannot defend those rights.

3. The shop steward must also keep the members informed about general union affairs, and about union policy. So the shop stewards themselves must know this policy well.

4. The shop steward is only a REPRESENTATIVE of the workers. He or she cannot always make decisions and take action in the place of the workers. There should be regular meetings of all the workers, and also special meetings if necessary. It is the task of the shop stewards to help organise these meetings, to make sure that all the workers know about them, and to encourage all workers to attend. The workers must be told clearly what the meeting is about, so that they can prepare for it.

5. It is the shop stewards' job to get all the workers in his or her department to join the union. It is wrong that some workers should benefit from the activities of the union without taking any part. Each time a new worker comes into the department, the shop steward should approach him or her to join the union. To do this, it is necessary to explain:

the problems and struggles which the workers have had in the department;

how the union works;

what benefits can be gained from union membership.

6. The shop steward must also make sure that all the workers are paying their dues to the union. Often the shop steward will also be the collector who is responsible for collecting the money which the workers need for their organisation. (See Chapter 12).

So to build a strong union the shop steward should:

- make the department 100 per cent members of the union.
- attend all meetings and urge all members to attend.
- keep the workers informed on all union activities.
- make sure that everyone pays the subscriptions.
- work together with other union officials.

#### REPRESENTING THE WORKERS.

Some problems are so serious that they can only be solved by all the workers acting together. But many grievances can be more simply dealt with. It is the task of the shop steward to deal with these grievances.

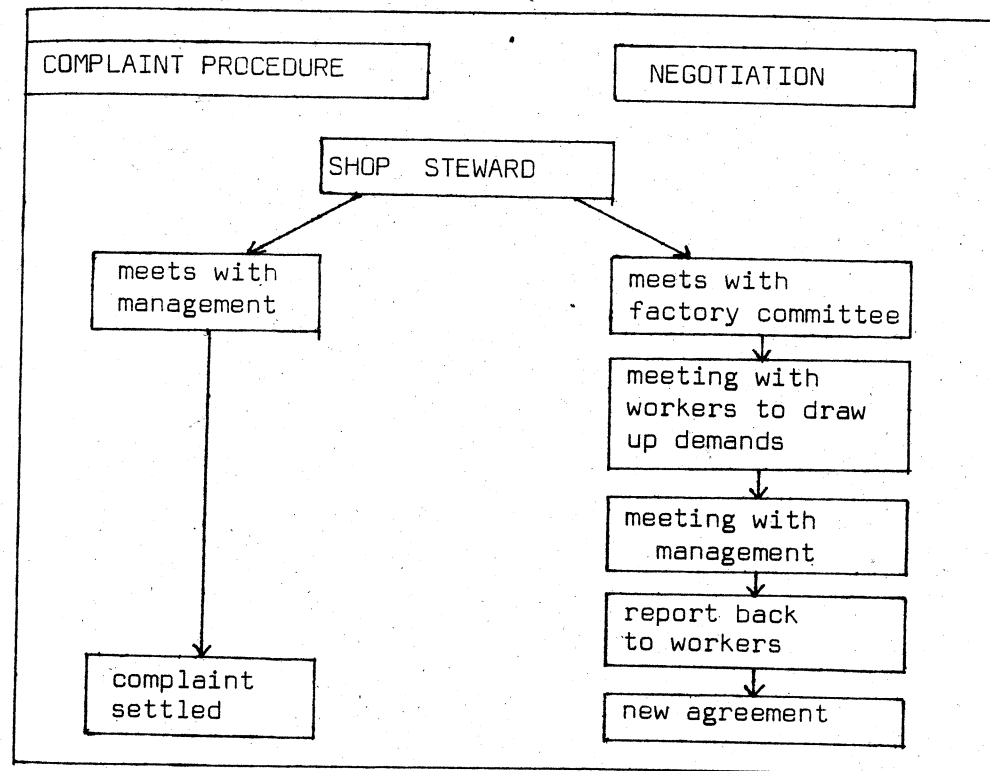
There are two kinds of complaints:

1. Complaints about matters covered by an agreement or a law. Here it is the task of the union to make the employer obey the law or stand by the agreement.
2. Complaints about matters not covered by a law or an agreement. Here the task of the union is to get the employers to agree to a new improvement in working conditions.

In the first case, it is usually possible for the shop stewards to handle the matter by themselves. To do this they will use a COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE. Sometimes, of course, if the employers constantly ignore the law, it may be necessary for the workers as a body to meet and to decide

what action they should take, but this is not usual.

In the second case it may be much more difficult. It will be necessary to NEGOTIATE with management in order to reach a new agreement which satisfies the workers. In the case of negotiation, it may be necessary for the shop stewards as a group to meet with management. They will also have to have a meeting with workers, and if necessary they may call in help from the union office. (Negotiation is dealt with more fully in a separate book). We can explain the difference in the following diagram:



REPRESENTING AND UNITING.

Whether negotiating, or taking a complain through complaints procedure, the shop stewards must always be concerned with uniting the workers.

They must try to solve individual complaints in such a way as to give the members confidence in the union. Even when a complaint cannot be solved they must show the workers that everything possible has been done. They must use common complaints to mobilise the workers and to get them to act together.

The shop stewards' job is to use the settling of complaints to build unity, and to use that unity in order to negotiate a better agreement with management.

WHAT DOES A SHOP STEWARD NEED TO KNOW?

What do shop stewards need to know in order to carry out their duties as representatives of the workers? They must:

- KNOW THE AGREEMENT
- KNOW THE DEPARTMENT
- KNOW THE WORKERS
- KNOW THE MANAGEMENT.

1. KNOW THE AGREEMENT.

Minimum wages and working condition in factories are set in various ways:

- by the Factory Act
- by Industrial Council Agreement
- by Wage Board Determination
- by an Agreement negotiated by the Union.

Shop stewards must know which laws apply to their factory. They must know the agreement for the factory. It should be read carefully and discussed with union officials until

every detail is understood. The law and the agreement are the basis for taking up a complaint. SHOP STEWARDS CANNOT DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS UNLESS THEY KNOW WHAT THOSE RIGHTS ARE.

2. KNOW THE DEPARTMENT.

Shop stewards must know all the jobs in the department. They must know the proper wage for each job, and they must check regularly that the proper wage is being paid. They must also know the piece rates, overtime rates and shift rates which apply to each job in the department. ONLY THROUGH A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEPARTMENT CAN THE SHOP STEWARD KNOW WHETHER EACH WORKER IS BEING TREATED FAIRLY.

3. KNOW THE WORKERS.

Shop stewards must know the people that they work with. They must know which other workers they can depend on for help and advice. They must know which workers always tell the truth, and which workers sometimes exaggerate when reporting grievances.

They must know which workers have bad tempers and which workers have good tempers. The shop steward must also remember that he or she is the representative of ALL the workers in the department. That means that he or she must make a special effort to help workers who are not friends or whom he or she does not like personally.

PERSONAL ARGUMENTS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO STOP SHOP STEWARDS FROM DOING THEIR DUTY TO ALL WORKERS.

4. KNOW THE MANAGERS.

It is important to remember that not all managers are alike. Some managers are honest and are willing to be fair to the workers. Watch carefully to see which of the managers you can trust.

But remember also that not all the members of management have the same amount of power. It is no use taking grievances to a trustworthy personnel manager if he in fact does not have the power to solve the matter. So you must get a good idea of who is powerful and who is not, of who makes the decisions and who does not. You should keep your relations with management polite and businesslike, but not too friendly. The workers are likely to mistrust a shop steward who is too friendly with management. If you are too friendly, it might prevent you from pressing your case hard enough.

This is not all that the shop steward needs to know. In order to unite the workers, shop stewards also need to:

KNOW THE FACTORY  
KNOW THE UNION.

### 1. KNOW THE FACTORY.

Firstly you must know what the other departments in the factory are and what they do.

Secondly you must know what problems are faced by the workers in those departments. You must know when they need your support, and when they will be willing to support you.

KEEP IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH YOUR FELLOW SHOP STEWARDS. Otherwise the different departments may be pushing in different directions. They could end up fighting one another.

### 2. KNOW YOUR UNION.

In order to keep the workers in your department informed about what is happening to other workers in other factories, you must keep in close touch with your union office. You must know and understand union policy. You must also understand how the union works, how policy is made, and how the executive members are elected. Especially if you are also the unions' collector in your department, you must know what the union needs money for, and what happens to the money.

If the workers in your department are dissatisfied with union policy, or with any action taken by the union, you must be able to tell them what they should do about it. You must be able to explain to them how they can use the union constitution to have a say in union policy (see chapter 7).

### HOW TO SETTLE COMPLAINTS.

Dealing with complaints is the most important job of the shop steward, and the second main task. Workers always have day to day problems and it is the union's duty to help to solve problems.

The first thing to learn is how to interview a member with a complaint. A shop steward should always watch his manner and keep a notebook handy to record the facts. The way you speak to the worker is as important as what you say.

The members will want to feel that the shop stewards are genuinely concerned about their troubles, and that the shop stewards are capable of taking up cases fairly and completely.

#### *Step 1: Get the Facts.*

- a. Get those facts directly bearing on the case; correct details like name and number of worker, dates, times, machines, etc.
- b. Study the rules or the part of the agreement involved. A complaint may involve the factory rules, union rules, the agreement, or even industrial laws. Study the agreement and find out what section covers the complaint. When a legal question comes up the shop steward might have to get the advice from the branch office.

#### *Step 2: Check the Facts.*

Check the facts for accuracy and completeness. Workers often feel they are justified and the facts are not so important. Check names, dates, times, and places



carefully. Don't be put off with half the story, even if it sounds true.

- a. Question the member tactfully to make sure that the story is consistent and complete.
- b. Check the facts with witnesses, if there are any.
- c. Check the agreement or other industrial laws: see Legal Handbook.

### *Step 3: Is the Complaint a real Complaint?*

Check if the member has a case, and if so, how much of one? The shop steward should ask the following questions:

- Has the agreement been broken?
- Has any industrial law been broken?
- Have the factory or union rules been broken?
- Has the company acted unfairly?
- Has the worker's safety or health been affected?

Tell the worker honestly but tactfully what you think, based on the evidence you have collected. If you feel you cannot judge the issues before you and do not have sufficient evidence, tell the member so and explain how you propose to get it. If you have any doubt about the truth of the complaint, speak to the other shop stewards about it.

### *Step 4: Proposed Action.*

After you have looked at all the aspects of the case, decide on a way to deal with it. Explain it to the worker concerned, and if he does not agree, try to come to some arrangement. Remember that a worker has the right to decide what you do with his case.

### *Step 5: Fill in a complaint form.*

If the case can be easily and quickly settled with the foreman, it is not necessary for you to fill in the complaint form which should be provided by the trade union. But if it is a serious complaint, or one which will take some time to settle, then it is best that you fill in

the form for the information of the officials of the union. Put a number on each form so that you can work out later how many were successfully handled.

### PREPARE TO MEET MANAGEMENT.

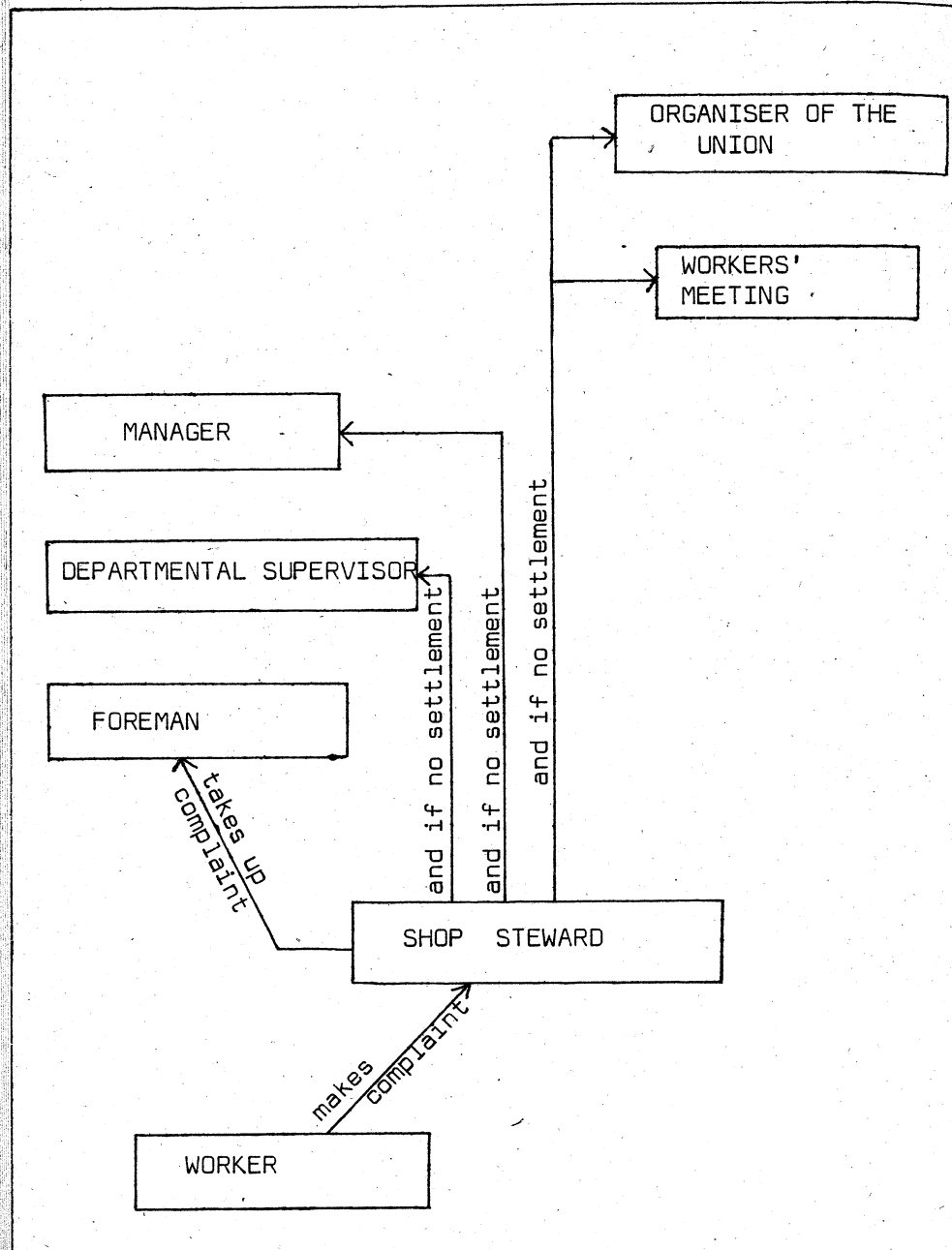
Even when the shop steward is convinced he/she is right and the issue is obvious, he/she should prepare herself/himself before seeing management.

- The shop steward should decide what he/she wants and the reason why he/she wants it.
- The shop steward should decide the minimum terms he/she is prepared to accept. Remember that the management often offers some compromise. As far as you can, decide in advance what are the minimum terms you are prepared to accept. In some cases there may be no compromise possible.
- Decide what action you will take if the management refuses to agree to your minimum terms. Without committing yourself to any specific course of action you can point out to management that you are not prepared to accept their decision as it stands, and that you are proposing to raise the issue with the Union.

### *The Complaints Procedure.*

The first step of a complaint is to take up the matter with the foreman, and to try to get an answer from him right away. If the foreman is unwilling or unable to settle the problem, the shop steward then moves up to the departmental supervisor. And if he is unwilling or unable to settle the complaint the shop steward must see the manager of the factory. If there is no settlement at this stage then the complaint goes to the organiser. The diagram will illustrate the procedure. (See diagram on page 58)

As you can see from the diagram the whole process can take some time and it is up to the shop steward to try to set dates when he can expect a reply, otherwise the complaint will just be lost.



### *How to interview Management.*

- The shop steward must be both courageous and firm in dealing with management. If you have treated the management with respect you can in turn demand a respectful hearing of your case and proper freedom to exercise your rights as a union representative. You must be 1) courteous, 2) firm and 3) honest.

- Tell the management simply and clearly what you want, and very briefly why you want it.

- Get the management talking, and try to get them to explain their side of the case first.

- Defend your case in argument by using the facts you have got from the worker and by reading the section of the agreement where necessary. But do not talk for the sake of a discussion; keep things short.

- Come to a decision as soon as possible and make sure that both you and manager know exactly what has been decided.

- Make definite arrangements to carry out the decision. Wherever possible fix exact times, dates, places, rates of pay and conditions of work.

- Write down the facts of the decision. You will find this useful for later use.

### EXPLAIN THE OUTCOME TO THE MEMBER.

This is necessary even if the member attended this interview with management.

- Make the member feel that, win or lose, you had a genuine interest in his case.

- Explain what happened and make sure that the member knows why it happened.

- Tell him about the next steps if the complaint was not settled, and the reason why. If he/she is not satisfied with the outcome of your approaches arrange for him to see the senior shop steward or the organiser for further advice.

- If further action has to be taken make firm and definite arrangements with the member, where he has to be, time and date, and what action he has to take.

- Keep the record of the case and remember the number.

#### REPORT TO THE MEMBERS AND THE UNION.

Establish the practice of reporting regularly about your activity as shop steward to the local meetings and to the organisers. In this way you will be able to inform the union of what you have done and get official support for good decisions. Keep the members in the department fully informed so they can know how wages and working conditions are being improved. Follow through with your cases. After they have been settled make sure that any decisions are properly applied. There may be some backsliding. Check the progress of any case taken out of your hands and carried on by the branch officials. If you can keep your member informed he will not feel as if the union has forgotten him if things take time.

#### THE SHOP STEWARD AND THE UNION OFFICIALS.

If you are a shop steward there are two dangers which you have to guard against.

The first danger is to rely too much on yourself. If you can handle a complaint by yourself, do so. But if you cannot then you must always be ready to take it up with your fellow shop stewards or with the union organisers.

THE OFFICIALS ARE THERE TO HELP YOU WHEN YOU NEED IT.

The second danger is to rely too much on the union officials and the union office. The union is the workers organised in the factory. This means that as many problems as possible have to be solved by the workers and the shop stewards in the factory. As soon as too much reliance is placed on the officials the union begins to die in the factory.

A complaint solved by the workers and their shop steward helps to build unity. A complaint solved by the organisers in their office does not necessarily help to build unity. In fact, if the workers think that the union office can solve all their problems for them, then they will stop struggling in the factory. THE OFFICIALS ARE THERE TO HELP YOU. BUT THEY ARE NOT THERE TO DO YOUR JOB FOR YOU.

The union officials have three duties towards the shop stewards:

1. They must help to train them to carry out their duties.
2. They must provide them with information about the factory, and about union policy.
3. As a last resort, they must help them with those complaints which cannot be handled by the shop steward themselves.

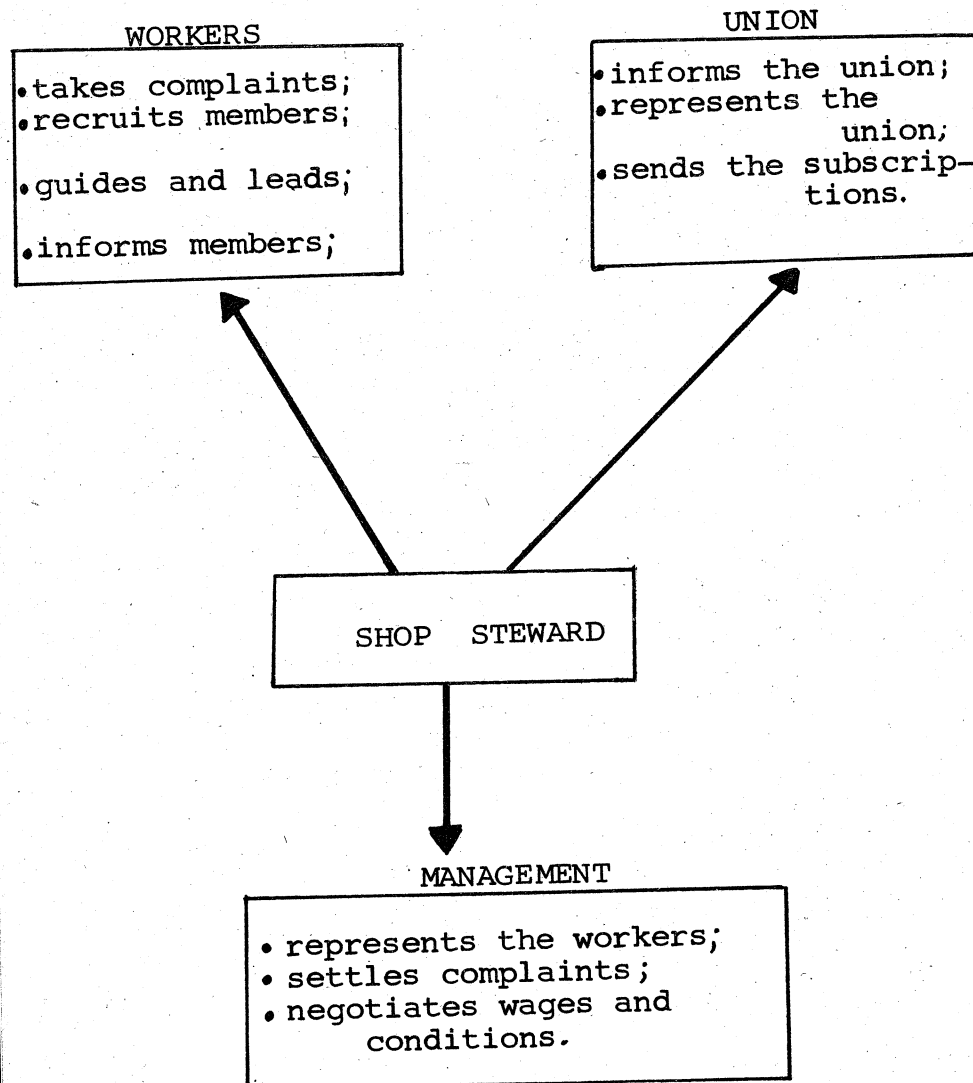
(See diagram on page 62)

As this diagram shows, the shop steward is the centre of union activity in the factory.

#### CHOOSING A SHOP STEWARD.

Because the shop steward is such an important person in the workers' organisation, the workers should take great care in choosing a shop steward.

The shop steward must speak FOR workers, so it is not a good idea to choose somebody, like a foreman or a



supervisor, whose job it is to speak for management. A foreman, induna or supervisor should only be chosen if they are strongly on the workers side, and if they are very good at the shop stewards' job. BUT NORMALLY A SHOP STEWARD SHOULD BE AN ORDINARY WORKER,

These are the qualities which a shop steward should have. He or she should be:

Efficient and trustworthy  
 Fair to everybody  
 Quick to understand facts, and able to use them  
 A good leader who will unite the workers  
 A good representative who will work hard for the union and carry out the workers' wishes  
 Brave enough to stand up to management  
 Brave enough also to tell a worker when the worker is in the wrong.

As you can see, shop stewards need many good qualities. And they also need to be willing to learn, and willing to admit to their own mistakes when they make mistakes.

#### THE GOOD SHOP STEWARD.

Here are six points on how to be a good shop steward.

1. Involve the workers in your work, and constantly ask their advice.
2. Report regularly to the workers about
  - the complaints
  - information about the factory
  - information about the union.
3. Report all important matters to the factory committee, organiser, and secretary as soon as possible.
4. Involve yourself actively in the affairs of the union.

5. Take a firm and honest stand in front of management, representing the workers always and never yourself.
6. Be consistent, considerate, and clear in all your dealings.

## CHAPTER 7.

### THE FACTORY COMMITTEE.

In order to build unity between all the workers in the factory the shop stewards from each department should meet together regularly. They form what we shall call the FACTORY COMMITTEE. The job of the factory committee is to co-ordinate the activities of the workers in the different departments, and to speak for the workers as a whole.

How the factory committee works will depend on its relations with the employers. If it is recognised by the employer it will be able to get certain rights, like the right to meet at the factory, and the right to hold regular report-back meetings of all workers.

But if the employers refuse to recognise the shop stewards and the factory committee, then it will work differently. It will have to meet outside the factory. It will be more difficult to organise meetings of all the workers.

So one of the first demands of the organised workers must be that management should recognise and deal with the Factory Committee of workers representatives.

(See Negotiations Handbook Ch.2).

Even without recognition, the Factory Committee has an important part to play. It can still help to keep all the workers together. But it will not be able to speak to management on behalf of the workers. The shop stewards as individuals will have to speak to management in order to solve complaints.

In this chapter we will talk about how the Factory Committee should work when it is recognised by management. In most countries there are laws which give legal rights to Factory Committees. In South Africa there is law about special committees for African workers. We shall discuss this law and these committees in the next chapter.

For a Factory Committee to work properly, three things are necessary:

1. The Committee must be able to decide who can attend their meetings. They must be able to meet free from the employer or the employer's representatives if they want to. They must be able to talk freely and to decide in private what they want to say to the employer when they do meet him.
2. The Committee must be able to meet freely with the workers whom it represents. This means that the Committee as a whole must be able to meet regularly with all the workers at a mass meeting in the factory. It also means that individual members of the Committee must be able to meet workers and to listen to their grievances whenever they have grievances.
3. The Committee must be able to get help from people outside the factory whenever it needs help. The Committee will need advice from lawyers, and perhaps money to pay for a lawyer. The Committee will need information about the industry and the economy when it negotiates for higher wages. The Committee will need to co-operate with workers in other factories on some issues. For these and other things, the Committee must be able to co-operate with the Trade Union.

#### MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE.

The Committee must be able to decide who can attend the meetings. This means that if the Committee wants to, it can also invite management to send a representative to the Committee to listen to or discuss the workers problems. But if representatives of management do attend Committee meetings, at the Committee invitation, then they can only speak when the Committee lets them speak. They must leave the meeting when the Committee asks them to leave.

Apart from management, it is a good idea to let workers

know that they can attend Committee meetings if they wish to do so. In this way closer contact can be kept with the workers. Workers who attend the meetings of the Committee should be given the right to speak if they want to, and if there is time. But they cannot vote.

The Factory Committee should meet regularly, usually once every two weeks. It is better if it usually meets at the same time and on the same day, although this is difficult if workers work on shift.

#### THE FACTORY COMMITTEE AND THE WORKERS.

The job of the Factory Committee is to represent the workers. To do this it must keep in close contact with the workers.

THE WORKERS USUALLY DISTRUST ANYBODY WHO TALKS WITH MANAGEMENT. To keep the trust of the workers, the Factory Committee should make sure that the workers always know what is happening. There must never be secret meetings and discussions between the Committee and management.

To make sure that there is a good relation between the workers and the Committee three things should be done.

1. There must be regular elections, so that workers can get rid of representatives who they think are not doing their jobs properly.

It is a good idea for elections to be held at least once a year. A mass meeting of workers should be able to dismiss a representative by passing a vote of no-confidence.

2. There should be monthly meetings of the Factory Committee with all the workers. These meetings should be held in the factory, so that all the workers can attend. BUT THESE MEETINGS MUST BE PRIVATE. Representatives of management should only be able to attend at the workers' invitation or with the workers' permission.

3. The Factory Committee should report to the workers on everything it does. It should have a special notice board somewhere in the factory where minutes of decisions taken at meetings can be put, and where other information can be given to the workers. There should be full reports of the Factory Committee's activities during each month.

#### THE RIGHTS OF THE SHOP STEWARD:

It is no good having a meeting with all the workers once a month if you cannot help them in between. When a worker has a problem, it must be possible to see to it straight away.

This means that it must be possible for the workers to speak to the shop steward during work time.

The shop steward must have the right to take action on the complaint during work time, without losing any pay.

It is also important that the shop steward should have the right to move around the factory to make sure that agreements are being kept. There may not be parts of the factory which are out of bounds to the shop steward.

#### OUTSIDE HELP FOR THE FACTORY COMMITTEE.

As we have seen, there will often be things which one shop steward or the Factory Committee cannot do by themselves. They will often need help from outside. This means that:

1. They must have the right to co-operate with workers from other factories in Trade Unions or other worker organisations. They must be able to collect subscriptions for such organisations.
2. They must have the right to call in outside people to help them. This means that Trade Union officials must be allowed into the factory.

#### THE FACTORY COMMITTEE AND MANAGEMENT.

1. The members of the Factory Committee must be protected from victimisation by management.
2. There must be a recognised way in which the Factory Committee can communicate with management.

#### 1. VICTIMISATION.

Management does not seem to like active workers' representatives. Everywhere, managers try to keep workers' representatives quiet. If they "make too much noise", they try to get rid of them. It is usually very easy to find an excuse for dismissing a worker, unless there is strong protection. This means that any agreement recognising a workers' organisation must include protection of workers' representatives and Factory Committee members against victimisation.

This means that the employer must agree not to dismiss any worker because of his or her activities as a member of the Factory Committee. But agreement or a promise is not enough. There must also be a method to make sure that victimisation does not happen. This can be done by making sure:

- a. that if a Factory Committee member is fired for any reason connected with his or her job in the factory, then the reasons for firing must be stated clearly and written down.
- b. There should be a special arbitrator or committee, agreed to by both management and the Factory Committee, whose job it would be to consider the management's case for the dismissal of any Factory Committee member. No dismissal should be final unless this arbitrator or committee agrees.
- c. It must not be possible for management to use a

reduction in the work force in order to get rid of Factory Committee members. Often it happens that a Factory has to cut back on production for a time. Workers are laid off. Many employers have used this as an excuse to get rid of workers' representatives, by making sure that they are included among the workers who are laid off. There is only one way to prevent this happening. Management must agree that elected workers' representatives must be the last to be fired if the number of workers is reduced.

THIS IS NOT A PRIVILEGE FOR THE WORKERS REPRESENTATIVES, It is an important way of protecting all the workers against an attack on their solidarity.

In South African law, members of Works Committee and Liaison Committees are legally protected against victimisation. However, this legal protection itself is not enough, if the Committee members are not also protected inside the factory by these methods. The reason for this is that it is very difficult for the Department of Labour to deal with cases of victimisation. Also, such cases take a long time to come to Court.

#### MEETINGS WITH MANAGEMENT.

Once the Factory Committee has met and reached a decision, it must take this decision to management. This can be done in one or two ways:

1. Personal meetings
2. Joint meetings of the Factory Committee with representatives from Management.

#### 1. PERSONAL MEETINGS:

It might be decided that the chairman should meet with the manager regularly, or else to discuss particular problems. Also, it might be necessary for one member of the Factory Committee to meet with the Personnel Manager, or Departmental Manager to talk about a special problem.

There is one rule for these meetings:

NO WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD EVER MEET ALONE WITH MANAGEMENT.

If ever a workers' representative has to meet any representative of management, he or she should take another worker along. THIS SHOULD BE WRITTEN INTO YOUR FACTORY COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION, and agreed to by management.

There are two reasons for this:

- a. Workers distrust management, and so they distrust people who meet privately with management. They want to know what really happened at the meeting. So it is important that there be a second person as a witness who can tell the workers what happened.
- b. Management might make a promise, but then say later that they had not made the promise. So it is important that there be at least two workers' witnesses to hear what the management promised. (it is also important to get agreement in writing, even if it is a small matter).

So for Joint Consultation to work:

1. The Workers Factory Committee must be able to have its own private meetings.
2. The Factory Committee must be able to hold regular meetings with the workers in the factory.
3. The Factory Committee must be protected by the dismissal procedure.
4. The Factory Committee must be able to bring Trade Union representatives or other outside advisors to the Joint Meetings.

The Factory Committee members must always give a full report on all meetings with management to all the workers



in the factory.

We have seen what rights a Factory Committee should have if it is to be able to do its work properly. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) represents workers, employers and governments from all over the world. One of its jobs is to make recommendations about the proper conditions for workers and workers' organisations. It has drawn up a special set of rules about what rights factory committees should have (Workers' Representatives Recommendation No. 143.)

These are the rules:

- The factory committees are not allowed to be used to undermine trade unions.
- Workers' representatives should be properly protected against victimisation:
  - a. The reasons for firing must be written down;
  - b. A special independent committee must be consulted before the dismissal becomes final;
  - c. Representatives who have been unjustly dismissed must be reinstated in their job, get unpaid wages, and all the rights they had before.

The same procedure must also operate for those representatives who have been downgraded, and the representatives should be the last to be fired if the number of workers is reduced.

- Workers' representatives must be given time off from work without losing wages to carry out their work.
- Workers' representatives must be given time off from work without loss in wages to attend trade union meetings, training courses, seminars, congresses, and conferences.
- Workers' representatives must be allowed to visit all

parts of the factory.

- Workers' representatives must be allowed to collect union subscriptions regularly in the factory, and to put up trade union notices.
- Workers' representatives must be allowed to distribute trade union information in the factory: news sheets, pamphlets, publications, etc.
- Management must give the workers' representatives the facilities and information they need.
- Trade union official must be allowed into the factory.

## CHAPTER 8.

### WORKS COMMITTEE AND LIAISON COMMITTEE.

In South Africa Coloured, Indian and White workers have full trade union rights. Their trade unions are REGISTERED by the state, and have certain legal rights. If 50% of the workers belong to a registered trade union in a factory, then the owners are forced by law to recognise that union.

BUT THE LAW IS DIFFERENT FOR AFRICAN WORKERS. There is no law which says that they cannot have trade unions. But there is no law which protects African trade unions. There is no law which gives them the right to force the employers to recognise them.

Instead, there is a separate law, which applies only to African workers. This law is called the BANTU LABOUR RELATIONS REGULATION AMENDMENT ACT. This law sets up a system of WORKS COMMITTEES or LIAISON COMMITTEES for African workers. In this chapter we shall look at this law, and see whether Works Committees or Liaison Committees can be proper Factory Committees. But you must remember two things when talking about these committees:

South Africa is the only country in the world which has different laws for workers of different "races".

By giving some workers Trade Unions, and other workers something different, THESE LAWS DIVIDE THE WORKERS. We have seen that the workers strength lies in their unity. If all workers cannot belong to the same organisation, then they are all weaker.

The various laws about worker organisations are explained fully in "The Workers' Legal Handbook". In this chapter we shall explain what powers these committees

have, and what powers they can get. First you must understand the difference between the WORKS Committee and the LIAISON Committee.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORKS COMMITTEE AND LIAISON COMMITTEE.

	WORKS COMMITTEE	LIAISON COMM.
1. How Formed	By request from the majority of the workers (or by the employer if workers did not ask for it) -provided there is no liaison committee and more than 20 workers in that work place or section.	By joint decision of the workers and employers. In other words, the workers can refuse.
2. How Representatives are Elected.	All the representatives are elected by the workers at a meeting called by the employer. Only at this meeting does the employer act as Chairman. If a meeting cannot be called, another means of election is arranged.	At least half the representatives are elected by workers. The other half are people appointed by the employer to represent him.

	WORKS COMMITTEE	LIAISON COMMITTEE
3. Number on Committee	Not less than three or more than twenty for the whole factory or shop or department of that establishment. But the number on a Committee must be less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of all the workers in an establishment. For every representative, one alternate is elected.	To be decided by agreement between the employer and his workers. Check this against the Act.
4. Period of Office	Not less than one or not more than two years. Vacancies filled by alternates.	As decided upon by agreement between the employer and workers.
5. Chairman - How Elected.	At the first meeting of the Works Committee, that Committee shall elect a Chairman and Secretary from amongst themselves.	Either the employer appoints a Chairman or the members of the Committee elect a Chairman.

	WORKS COMMITTEE	LIAISON COMMITTEE
6. Functions.	<p>i) To communicate the wishes and aspirations of the workers in a factory to the employer.</p> <p>ii) To represent the workers in negotiations with the employer. These negotiations shall deal with conditions of employment and other interests of the workers in the work place.</p>	Consider matters of mutual interest to the employer and workers. And to make recommendations to the employer on conditions of employment or other matters affecting the interests of workers.
7. How is the Employer advised of Decisions of the Committee?	<p>i) The Committee can call the employer into a meeting. This requirement can be laid down in the rules.</p> <p>ii) The Chairman of the Committee can act as the go-between. The rules can say the Chairman and two others.</p>	The Act only states that the Committee shall make recommendations to the employer. Presumably the people appointed by the employer will convey to him what happens on the Committee.

	WORKS COMMITTEE	LIAISON COMM.
8. Registration	The employer must, within 30 days of the Committee having been established advise the local office of the Department of Labour. If the employer does not do this, he can be fined.	Same as for Works Committee.
9. Rules	The rules made by the Committee shall at least contain:- a) When meetings are called, where and how often. b) The number of people to be present to form a quorum. c) Admitting to a meeting other workers and employers. d) Other matters which fall within the functions of the committee i.e. what it can do. This is a wide provision and gives newly formed committees considerable scope to discuss at length what to include in the rules.	The Committee can adopt rules. As half the members are appointed by the employer, they will have a big influence on what the rules say. However, if the elected worker representatives do not accept them they cannot be passed.

	WORKS COMMITTEE	LIAISON
10. Co-ordinating Committee	Yes - Where there is more than one section works committee in a place of work, a committee co-ordinating activities of these section works committees can be formed. This co-ordinating committee consists of the secretary and chairman of the different section works committees. It has the same functions as a works committees, but acts for the whole factory and can adopt similar rules as works committee.	NO

From this Chart you can see that there are some big differences and some small differences.

1. The workers' representatives on both kinds of committee MUST BE ELECTED BY THE WORKERS. But the Liaison Committee also has representatives of Management. The Liaison Committee can have as many as half its

members nominated by management as management representatives.

2. This means that the Works Committee meets privately without management, while there are always management representatives at a Liaison Committee meeting. The Works Committee can decide who else can attend the meeting. It can invite management to attend, or it can refuse to let them attend.

3. The law says that there must be an election for Works Committee members at least once every two years, but no more than once a year. It says nothing about how often there should be an election for the Liaison Committee. The Liaison Committee itself must decide.

4. Both Works Committees and Liaison Committees can discuss anything to do with wages or conditions of employment in the factory. The Liaison Committee, made up half of workers and half of management, can make recommendations to the employers. The employers do not have to follow these recommendations. The Works Committee can meet with management to negotiate about wages and conditions.

#### 4. Victimisation.

Members of both kinds of Committees are protected by law against victimisation. If the employer victimises a worker who has taken part in the election or the activities of a Liaison or Works Committee, the employer can be sent to prison for up to 2 years, or fined up to R600.

The employer can also be ordered to pay compensation to the worker. However, it is very difficult to prove victimisation. The law does not say anything about methods for dealing with the problems of victimisation in the factory. This means that it is left to the Department of Labour.

### LIAISON COMMITTEES.

We will look first at the powers given the committees by law, and then at what other powers could be given them.

1. Can the workers meet privately, and decide who will be able to attend their meetings?

ANSWER: NO. The Liaison Committee is always a joint committee of workers and management. There is no provision in the law for any separate workers meeting.

2. Can the workers' representatives on the Liaison Committee meet freely with the workers they present?

ANSWER: The law makes no provision for meetings with the workers.

3. Do workers' representatives on the Liaison Committee have full rights of free movement and consultation with workers during work time?

ANSWER: The law makes no provision for this.

4. Are workers' representatives on the Liaison Committee protected against victimisation?

ANSWER: YES, BUT the law does not provide for any means of dealing with disputes about victimisation within the factory.

5. Can workers' representatives bring outside advisers to the Liaison Committee meetings?

ANSWER: The law does not give the the right to bring outside advisers.

### WORKS COMMITTEES.

1. Can the workers meet privately, and decide who will be able to attend their meetings?

ANSWER: YES. The Works Committee, which is made up only of elected workers' representatives, itself decides who may attend the meetings.

2. Can the workers' representatives on the Works

Committee meet freely with the workers they represent?  
ANSWER: The law makes no provisions for meetings with workers.

3. Do workers' representatives on the Works Committee have full rights of free movement and consultation with workers during work time?

ANSWER: The law makes no provision for this.

4. Are workers on Works Committee protected against victimisation?

ANSWER: YES, But the law does not provide ways in which the workers in the factory can themselves take action about victimisation.

5. Can the Works Committee invite outside advisor to Works Committee meetings, and meet management with these advisers?

ANSWER: The law does not give them the right to bring in outside advisers.

From this we can see that the Liaison Committee has only one proper thing about it. This is protection against victimisation, but even this protection is not enough.

The Liaison Committee is not even a workers' committee, since half its members can be appointed by management.

So we can see that a Liaison Committee cannot be a proper Factory Committee.

The Works Committee is a bit better. The works committee is a proper committee, elected by the workers themselves. It can meet privately, and decide who may attend. But the law does not provide for proper relations between the works committee and the workers, and between the works committee and outside worker organisations.

BUT THE LAW ALSO DOES NOT SAY THAT THE WORKS COMMITTEE CANNOT HAVE PROPER RELATIONS WITH THE WORKERS AND WITH OUTSIDE WORKER ORGANISATIONS.

So, if workers decide that they want a works committee, they must make sure that the employers accept:

1. Regular mass meetings of workers.
2. The right of workers' representatives to carry out their duties to workers during work time if it is necessary.
3. The rights of the Works Committee to have help from workers' organisations or other people from outside the factory if they want to.
4. A proper anti-victimisation dismissal procedure to protect workers' representatives.

These things must be put in a written agreement with employers, and included in the Constitution of the Works Committee.

But even if you can get the employers to agree to all these things, it is a good idea to have a Works Committee?

We have already seen the advantages of a Trade Union:

1. The Trade Union brings together all the workers in one industry.
2. The Trade Union can collect subscriptions from all the members in the industry, so that it will have money to pay organisers and lawyers to help the workers, and to have training programmes which will teach the workers how to defend their rights.
3. The Trade Union is not dependent on the employer, and does not have to fear victimisation.

Certainly in all countries where workers have had a free choice, they have chosen trade unions.

Now the difficulty is that in South Africa many employers try to use the Works Committee system to stop the workers

having trade unions.

A Works Committee which had proper rights and which could work with the Trade Union would be a proper Factory Committee.

But when employers try to use the Works Committee against the Trade Union, then of course, the workers will distrust the Works Committee.

REMEMBER, THE EMPLOYERS CANNOT FORCE THE WORKERS TO HAVE A LIAISON COMMITTEE OR A WORKS COMMITTEE.

If the workers do not want a committee, then the employers cannot make them have one.

If the workers want a Works Committee, then the law says that the employer has to let them have it. It is up to the workers to decide.

If you do decide to have a Works Committee at your factory, then you must make sure that it really does serve the workers.

We have already shown the main things that should go into the Constitution to make sure that the Works Committee keeps close to the workers.

The Works Committee is just like any other committee, and must follow the same meeting procedure to make sure that it is democratic (see The Chapter 10.)

The members of the Works Committee must understand the Agreement for their factory, and all the laws dealing with factories and workers.

The individual members of the Works Committee must act in some ways like shop stewards. They must deal with the grievances of the workers in their departments, and keep the workers informed about what the Works Committee is doing.

It is very important that the elections for the Works Committee be held regularly once a year. All the workers must take part, and must be free to vote for whoever they want. The act says that the employer must

be Chairman of the meeting at which the first Works Committee is elected. But at later elections the Chairman of the Works Committee will be in charge of the elections, and there is no reason for the employer to be there.

The act says that it is the job of the Chairman of the Works Committee to take the decisions of the Works Committee to management.

But remember that it is not a good thing for one workers' representative alone to do this. You should make sure that your Constitution says that the Chairman should always take another representative with him to meet management.

#### WORKS COMMITTEE DISPUTE PROCEDURE.

The Law lays down a special procedure for disputes between a Works Committee and management. To try to settle such a dispute there is:

1. The Bantu Labour Officer.
2. The Regional Bantu Labour Committee.
3. The Wage Board.
4. The Minister of Labour.

If the dispute is about something which is covered by an Industrial Council Agreement, or by a Wage Determination or Wage Order which is less than one year old, then the Works Committee cannot legally do anything if the employers will not agree to its demands.

But if the matter is not covered by any agreement, or only by an old wage determination or wage order, then the Works Committee can make a complaint to the Bantu Labour Officer.

The Bantu Labour Officer can refer the complaint to the Regional Committee. The law says that this committee should be made up of workers chosen by the Minister from among the Works Committees. The law also says that when the Regional Committee is considering a dispute in a factory, it should get a member of the Works Committee

at that factory to join the Committee.

It is the job of the Regional Committee to try to solve the dispute. But if it cannot solve it, then the Bantu Labour Officer may refer the dispute to the Minister of Labour. He may then ask the Wage Board to make a decision on the matter.

IF THE WAGE BOARD MAKES A DETERMINATION, THEN IT BECOMES LAW.

But IF the Bantu Labour Officer does nothing about the dispute, or IF the Minister does not refer it to the Wage Board, then the Works Committee has the right to call a strike to make the employers accept its demands.

A strike is always a very serious thing for the workers. In South Africa, where most strikes are against the law, it is even more serious. If your Works Committee has a dispute with management, and has gone through the whole procedure, then before striking you should always consult with a trade union and with a lawyer.

YOU MUST WAIT FOR AT LEAST 30 DAYS AFTER YOUR COMPLAINT HAS GONE TO THE BANTU LABOUR OFFICER BEFORE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE.

One very important thing which is usually not covered by agreements is the question of DISMISSALS. It is very important for workers that they should feel safe in their jobs. They must feel that they will only be dismissed if they have really done something bad. But in South Africa workers too often are dismissed for little things, or even when the foreman or the manager think they have done something which they have not done at all.

A very important job for a Works Committee or any Factory Committee is to fight to make sure that there is a proper dismissal procedure in the factory.

## CHAPTER 9.

### TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY.

In the last chapters we have looked at the workers' organisation inside the factory. This must always be the basis of the trade union. But the trade union also has to bring together the workers in different factories. This is because the workers need:

A feeling of solidarity between all workers.

A United voice with which to talk to employers' association and the government.

Officials who will provide training, information and help.

The benefits which only a big organisation can provide.

The workers in different factories can only be brought together by a system of representatives. The workers in each factory choose a representative whose job it is to co-operate with the representatives of the workers in the other factories.

There will always be some workers who understand better than others the need for a trade union.

There will always be some workers who are more willing to work to bring about worker unity.

These workers will become leaders among the other workers. It is these leaders who will be chosen by the other workers as their representatives.

So they will be both the LEADERS WHO GO AHEAD OF THE WORKERS, and REPRESENTATIVES WHO MUST FOLLOW THE WISHES OF THE WORKERS. The problem of union democracy is to keep a balance between these two things.

The union must be organised in such a way that the representatives are responsible to the workers, and the workers can participate as much as possible in the organisational structure of the union. The union must



be a combination of REPRESENTATION & PARTICIPATION.

Any organisation has a set of rules which says how it should work. This set of rules is the CONSTITUTION. The Constitution of your union will say:

*What the aims of the union organisation are.*

*How the members choose representatives to run the union.*

*How decisions about union policy can be made.*

*What powers the members will have and what powers the representatives will have.*

*How often meetings and elections should be held.*

*How any money belonging to the union will be kept.*

All the activities of your union are governed by the constitution. THIS MEANS THAT EVERY WORKER MUST KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE UNION CONSTITUTION. Unless you do so, you will not know how to take part fully in the running of the union.

In this chapter we cannot tell you about the constitution of your union. You will have to get it and read it for yourself. We will give the main things that are in any democratic union constitution.

You must:

See that your union constitution is democratic.  
SEE THAT IT IS OBEYED.

A Constitution is a legal document. This means that the workers representatives are bound by law to obey the constitution. If they refuse to obey it, the members can take them to court.

The constitution is also the principle of unity within the organisation. Without the constitution there can be no unity, because there can be no way in which

decisions can be made by all the members together. So all members of the union have an absolute duty to obey and protect the union constitution.

### THE BRANCH.

Some Unions are small enough for all their members to meet together once a year. Other Unions are too big for this. Perhaps it is because they have too many members. Perhaps it is because they represent workers who live far apart, and so cannot come together. Such unions are divided into BRANCHES. (In the rest of this lesson we shall assume that we are talking about a big union. You can think of a small union as a union with one Branch).

But even a Branch will have many members, and they cannot meet together all the time to carry out the tasks of the union. So the Branch is usually organised like this:

1. There is a regular BRANCH MEETING of all members of the Union. This meeting has two main jobs:
  - a. To elect a BRANCH EXECUTIVE to carry on the work of the Union between the big meetings.
  - b. To give the views of the members on all matters affecting the Union.
2. The BRANCH EXECUTIVE must carry out what has been decided at the Branch Meeting. It must also look after any new difficulties which arise between the Branch Meetings.
3. Members of the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) are workers who do their union work only part-time. Any Union also needs full-time staff to run the Union Office and to help the workers. These UNION OFFICIALS are appointed either by the BEC or by the Branch Meeting.

BRANCH MEETING.

The Branch Meeting is the most important part of the organisation of the Union. The Branch Meeting ensures PARTICIPATION, because at the Branch Meeting the workers themselves decide what they want the Union to do.

The BEC has to give the Branch Meeting a Report of what it has done since the last meeting. The members can ask questions about this report, and can say whether or not they think that the BEC has been doing its job properly.

The BEC must also give the Branch Meeting a STATEMENT of Income and Expenditure, so that the members can see what is happening to their money.

Once the Branch Meeting has learnt what the BEC has done, they must then decide what should be done in the future. The BEC can make suggestions, but it is the members who must decide what will be done.

The BEC must put forward a BUDGET saying how they think that the workers' subscriptions should be spent. The BEC must put forward suggestions about policy.

The members must talk about these suggestions. If they disagree, then they can make their own suggestions about union policy and the way in which the money should be used.

The whole meeting must then decide which suggestions are best. The meeting decides what the policy should be. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE BEC TO CARRY OUT THE POLICY LAID DOWN BY THE BRANCH MEETING.

THE BRANCH MEETING: REPRESENTATION.

It is also the job of the Branch Meeting to vote to

choose the members of the BEC. In this way they can make sure that there are good people running the Union. Elections must be held regularly, so that any BEC member who stops doing the job properly can be replaced. Elections for members of the BEC should be held once every two years.

An election usually happens as follows:

1. The Chairman of the meeting asks for NOMINATIONS. To nominate is to say that you think that that person would be a good person for the job. Usually, to make sure that there are not too many people nominated, there is a rule that a person must be nominated by at least two people. The first person who makes the nomination is called the PROPOSER, and the second person is called the SECONDER.
2. If you are electing members to a committee there will usually be quite a few people nominated. Then there has to be an ELECTION, to decide which of the people who have been nominated will actually be chosen for the Committee.
3. There are two different ways of holding an election. The first way is by a SHOW OF HANDS. People vote for a person by putting up their hands, and the number of hands are counted. Sometimes people are afraid to vote for the person they really think is best if other people are watching. For example, at an election for Works Committee members a worker may be frightened to vote for somebody that the employer does not like. So it is probably better to vote by SECRET BALLOT.

THE BRANCH MEETING: SECRET BALLOT.

In a secret ballot each person who can vote is given a BALLOT PAPER. On the Ballot paper the voter must write down the name of the person he or she wants to be elected. Then all the Ballot papers are collected and the votes are counted. The Ballot is secret, because

nobody knows whose ballot paper is which.

The main advantage of the secret ballot is that it makes it difficult to intimidate a voter to make her or him vote for somebody. But there are also difficulties with the secret ballot. It is important to make sure that there is no cheating in the counting of the votes.

1. You must make sure that only the proper ballots get counted. One of the main ways of cheating in elections is to make extra ballot papers and to use them to vote many times for one candidate, instead of only once. Corrupt union officials have often used this method to stay in office.

2. You must make sure that the ballot papers get counted properly. They should always be counted by several different people. They should always be kept for some time after the election, so that if anybody complains they can be checked.

The Union's Constitution will usually say that if it is thought necessary an election may be conducted by a SCRUTINEER. A scrutineer is a special person from outside the Union who can be brought in to make sure that nobody cheats in the election.

#### THE BRANCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The members of the BEC are elected either at the Branch Meeting, or else at meetings in each factory. The job of the BEC is to carry out the policy which has been laid down by the workers at the Branch Meeting.

The BEC should meet at least once a month. It should also be possible to hold an emergency BEC meeting whenever the union is faced with a serious problem. At its regular monthly meeting it should receive a report from the full-time secretary of the union, so that it can make sure that the officials are carrying out their duties properly.

But the responsibility of BEC members goes beyond just

attending a meeting once a month:

1. They have to keep in close contact with the members in their factories. They must always be available when members have complaints about anything that is happening in the union. Often, dissatisfied members will just drop out of the union if they have nobody to complain about the union to. The BEC members must watch out for this, and make sure that the workers know that they can bring complaints to them.

2. They must keep in close contact with the union officials. They must encourage the officials to do their work. And the officials will often need their advice.

#### BEC OFFICE BEARERS.

In order to function properly, the BEC needs to elect from among its members a number of office-bearers who have special jobs to do. These include:

*Chairman*

*Vice-Chairman*

*Treasurer (See Ch. 11)*

*Minutes Secretary (See Ch. 10)*

*Signatories (See Ch. 11).*

#### THE CHAIRMAN.

The first job of the Chairman is to run BEC meetings and Branch Meetings. He or she has to make sure that:

Everybody gets a chance to speak  
Everybody speaks about the right thing  
A decision is taken at the end. (See Ch. 10)

The Chairman is also the elected leader of the union. This means that he or she has much more to do than just to run meetings. As leader, it is the chairman who is responsible for the unity of the union. It is the

chairman's job to try to heal any divisions and conflicts within the union. This means that he or she must have:

Dedication to the unity of the union, and to the union constitution.

The ability to bring people together. It is not the Chairman's job to make everybody agree with him or her. It is the Chairman's job to look for a solution which will satisfy everybody, and which will bring all the opinions together.

More than any other person in the union, the chairman has to combine the qualities of a leader with the qualities of a representative. This means that the workers must take the greatest care in choosing their chairman.

#### UNION POLICY.

The workers have to make decisions together on many different issues. But some of these issues apply to all workers. Some apply to all the workers in one factory. Some apply to a few or only one worker. The system of the union organisation makes it possible for these decisions to be taken quickly and in accordance with the principle of unity. It is a system which combines PRINCIPLE with DELEGATION.

What this means is that the superior body lays down the Principle, and then delegates the authority to act in terms of that principle (to other bodies within the union).

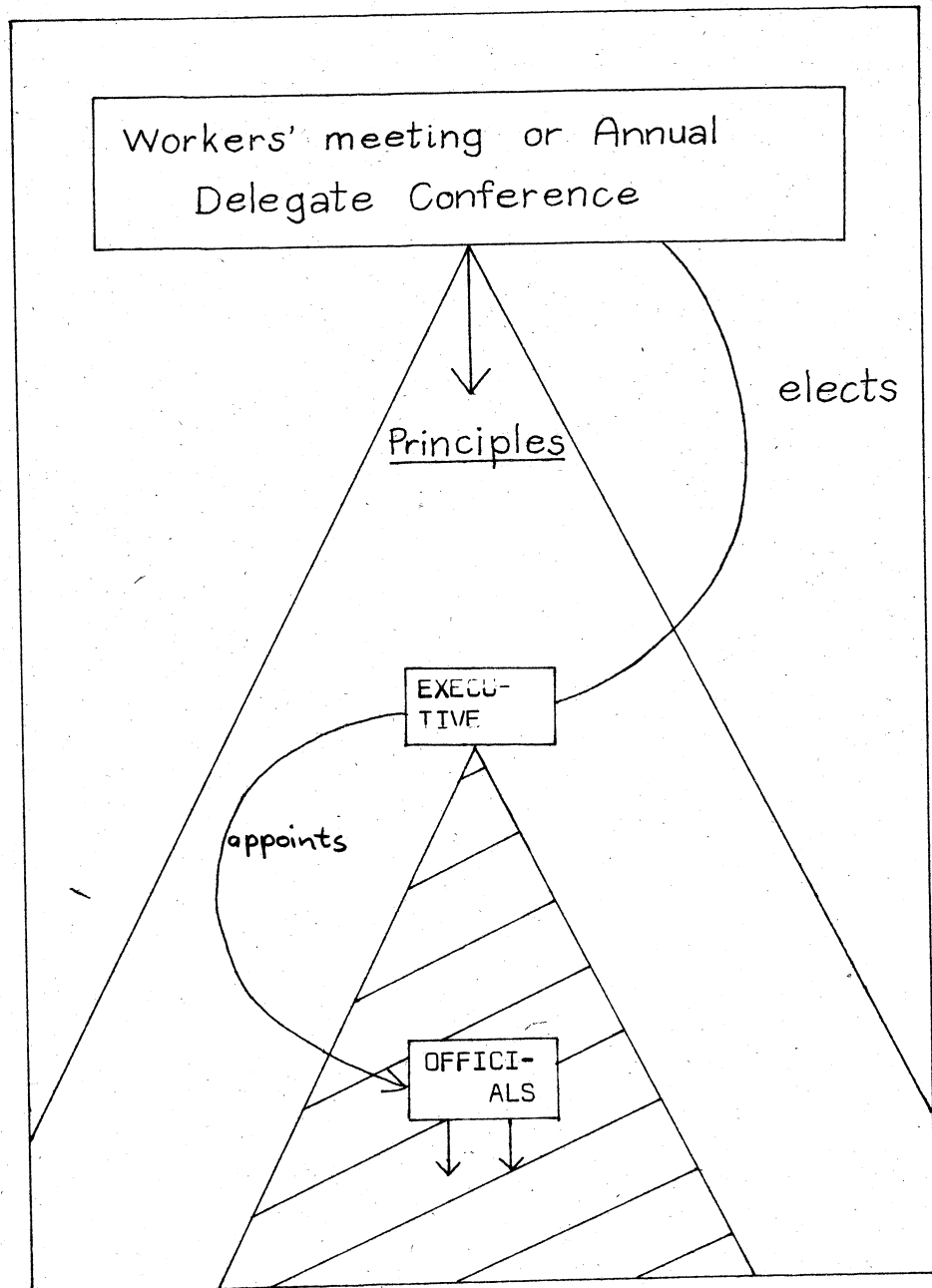
The workers lay down the basic principles of policy, either at a mass meeting of all workers, or if it is a very big union, at an ANNUAL DELEGATES CONFERENCE of workers from each branch or each factory.

The workers appoint an executive who have to act within the principles of policy which the workers have laid down.

The Executive makes further decisions on the basis of that policy, and appoints officials to carry out the

policy from day to day. These officials can also make decisions, but only in terms of the policy as it has been laid down by the Executive. We can put this in a diagram, which shows that the workers can decide anything they like, the executive's decisions are limited by the principles laid down by the workers, and the officials' actions are limited by the decisions of the executive.

But it is not only the executive and the officials who are bound by the principles of policy laid down by the workers as a whole. Every individual worker is also bound by them, even if he or she did not vote in favour of them. The democratic unity of the union means that every member of the union must accept a decision taken by majority vote after full and free discussion of the issue.



## CHAPTER 10.

### MEETING PROCEDURE.

All decisions are taken at meetings, and the heart of union democracy is good meeting procedure.

All the people entitled to do so must be able to attend.

They must all know what the meeting is about. Everybody must have the right to speak on the question.

A fair decision must be reached.

The way to run a good meeting is the same whether it is a BEC meeting, a mass Branch Meeting, or any other meeting.

1. The meeting must be properly planned. You must work out what will be discussed at the meeting, and you must make sure that there will be enough time to discuss those matters. You must also make sure that any information which is needed to help in the discussion is available.

The AGENDA of a meeting is the list of things which will be discussed at the meeting. It also shows the order in which they will be discussed.

An Agenda usually is something like this:

1. CALL TO ORDER (that is, opening of the meeting by the Chairman) and Apologies (for absences).
2. READING OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING. (we will explain this later).
3. MATTERS ARISING (from the minutes).
4. CORRESPONDENCE (report on letters received since last meeting).

5. REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES.
6. RESOLUTIONS (decisions to be taken).
7. GENERAL (time when anybody can talk about something which has not yet been discussed).
8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

Of course a real agenda would not just say "RESOLUTIONS". It would say what particular things had to be discussed and decided.

#### NOTICE OF A MEETING.

It is no good preparing the agenda carefully if nobody comes to the meeting. The meeting must be properly advertised. There are usually rules in the Constitution which lay down how much NOTICE OF A MEETING must be given. This is to give all members of the Committee or the Branch time to think about what will be discussed at the meeting. It also gives them time to make sure that they will be able to come to the meeting.

If possible each member should be sent a copy of the Agenda. If this is not possible, in the case of all the members of the BRANCH, then the secretary should make sure that as many people as possible know what the meeting is for. It is no use just putting up a notice in the union office saying "The Quarterly Branch Meeting will be held next Tuesday".

1. If possible you should put up notices in each factory. These notices should give the time and place of the meeting, and also the agenda.
2. Notices should be given to the workers as they leave the factory. These notices should also have the time, the place, and the agenda.
3. The Organisers and the Collectors should remind

the workers about it in the week before the meeting.

4. You should also make sure that the Agenda is written in such a way that the workers can understand from it what is going to be discussed.

#### MINUTES.

The easiest way to explain what should happen at a meeting is to go through an Agenda.

##### 1. CALL TO ORDER.

Usually, not everyone who is supposed to actually come to a meeting. Some people come early and some people come late. It is the Chairman's job to decide when enough people have come to start the meeting. When he thinks that the meeting should start, he CALLS THE MEETING TO ORDER. Nothing that has been said before this is part of this meeting.

If any member of the Committee cannot be at the meeting, he or she must write a note, or send a message giving APOLOGIES for not being there, and explaining why not. These apologies are given after the meeting has been called to order.

##### 2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

A meeting makes decisions. But it is important that everyone knows and agrees exactly what decisions have been taken. This can only happen if the decisions are written down.

The MINUTES of a meeting is the report of what was discussed and what was decided at the meeting. It is the job of the Secretary, or sometimes of the MINUTES SECRETARY to listen carefully to everything that is said at the meeting and make notes from which minutes are prepared. To make sure that the Minutes are correct, they should be read by everybody at the next meeting. Then, if everybody agrees that they are correct, they are usually signed by the Chairman as a sign that they have been agreed to.

### TAKING THE MINUTES.

The Minutes are very important. They are the memory of the Committee or of the Branch. Without Minutes, there will always be arguments about what has already been decided.

Without minutes, there will be no way in which people who missed a meeting can know what happened at it.

What should be written in the Minutes?

They do not need to tell everything that was said at the meeting. If they did, it would take hours to read the minutes, and the next meeting would never be able to get started.

The Minutes should say clearly:

- a. who was present at the meeting and who sent apologies.
  - b. what were the main things which were discussed.
  - c. what were the actual decisions which were taken.
- If there was a vote on any of these decisions, the minutes should say HOW MANY PEOPLE VOTED IN FAVOUR, and how many people voted against.

It is very important that everybody who was at the meeting should read the minutes. Any secretary can make a mistake. So everybody should read the minutes to make sure that everything in the minutes really happened at the meeting, and that nothing has been left out.

### 3. *MATTERS ARISING.*

Without the Minutes, it is difficult to check whether the Officials of the Union and the members of the Committee are doing their jobs.

When a decision is taken, the meeting usually tells somebody to carry out that decision. This is also written in the minutes.

Then, at the next meeting, the members can ask that person if he or she did what she or he was told. They can also find out what happened. These questions are the *MATTERS ARISING* out of the minutes. The discussion of the *Matters Arising* is what ensures that things get done between the meetings.

For example, the minutes might say:

"After a discussion of the situation at Smith and Co., Mr. Khumalo was instructed to have a meeting with Mr. Smith to demand that he recognise the Union".

Anybody who wants to know if Mr. Khumalo did this, and if Mr. Smith agreed, can ask Mr. Khumalo about it when there is a discussion of *Matters Arising*.

### 4. *CORRESPONDENCE.*

It is the secretary's job to give a report of all letters received and all letters written on behalf of the Union since the last meeting. Usually there will not be a detailed discussion of every letter. But the secretary should bring a copy of every letter to the meeting, so that anybody who wants to can read them. If there is an important letter, it is the job of the committee to tell the secretary how it should be answered.

### 5. *REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES.*

One of the most important jobs of the BEC is to check up on the actions of all the officials of the Union. So that they can do this, they must be given full *REPORTS* on what each person has been doing.

1. *SECRETARY'S REPORT.* This is the main report, and deals with the activities of the Union office in the time since the last meeting.
2. *TREASURER'S REPORT.* This will contain the Statement of Income and Expenditure for the period since the last meeting. (See Chapter 12).

The Treasurer should also report how many members are paying their subscriptions, and how many members are not doing so.

3. *ORGANISERS' REPORTS.* It is a good idea for each organiser to give a short report on what he or she has done. This report should say what is happening at each factory. It should say what meetings the organiser has held with the workers; whether there are any complaints from the workers about the Union; whether there has been any trouble with management at the factory. These reports are very important. It is only through the reports from the Organisers that it is possible to see whether the Union is serving its members properly or not.

4. Often a workers' organisation will set up special committees (called SUB-COMMITTEES) to look after particular things. For example, there may be a special RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE, or a special EDUCATION COMMITTEE. These sub-committees should also give a Report to the whole Committee, so that everybody can see what they are doing.

#### WRITING A REPORT.

All reports should be:

SHORT  
CLEAR  
SIMPLE.

They should be SHORT. Do not repeat yourself. Do not put in anything that is unnecessary.

They should be CLEAR. You know all about what you are reporting. The people who are going to read the report do not know all about it. Make sure that you have told them all they need to know in order to understand it fully. For example:

"I went to the factory. The shift was just coming off

duty. Mr. Van der Merwe told me that there had been trouble. So I talked to the workers, but it was all right".

Do the members of the BEC know:

Which factory?  
Which shift?  
Who is Mr. Van der Merwe?

If they do not know, then you must explain it in your report, otherwise they will not understand it.

You must also say which workers you spoke to, and what the trouble had been. You already know those things, but the others do not know, and unless you say, they will not understand your report.

Reports should be SIMPLE. Always use the easiest words you know when you are writing a report. Use short sentences and short words.

#### RESOLUTIONS.

By the time you reach this part of the Agenda you will have discussed everything that has been done since the last meeting. You will have confirmed the minutes of the last meeting, and discussed any matters arising out of the minutes. You will have heard the reports of all the Officials and Sub-committees, and you will have discussed those reports.

Now comes the time to discuss what must be done in the future. For example, you may have to decide:

Whether to start organising at a new factory.  
Whether to buy another car for the Union.  
Whether to invest the money saved by the Union.  
Whether to call a strike.  
Whether to accept a certain proposal from the employer.

When these decisions are being made, three things are



important:

1. Everybody should know exactly what the discussion is about.
2. Everybody should have a chance to give their opinion.
3. There should be a clear decision taken at the end of the discussion.

Here are some simple rules to make sure that this happens:

1. You must make it very clear what policy you are arguing about. The best way to do this is to write down clearly what the suggestion is:  
"This BEC Meeting instructs Mr. Singh to begin organising at Smith and Co. from the beginning of next month". This is called a MOTION. One member of the BEC will PROPOSE THE MOTION, and another can SECOND it. Then all the members can discuss it.

Anybody who disagrees can say so. But some people might disagree with part of the suggestion, and agree with part of it. Then they must propose a clear AMENDMENT, which says how they think that the motion should be changed. For example:

"THAT this BEC meeting instructs Mr. Singh to begin organising at Smith and Co. FROM THE BEGINNING OF NEXT YEAR".

If this amendment is proposed and seconded, then it can also be discussed by the meeting. In this way, everybody knows exactly what different choices they can make.

2. It is the duty of the Chairman to make sure that everybody who wants to do so has the right to speak. But the Chairman must also make sure that each speaker SPEAKS TO THE MOTION, and does not speak about something different. If the speaker starts speaking about something different, and wastes the time of the meeting, then the Chairman can RULE HIM OUT OF ORDER. This means that the speaker must stop speaking and sit down.

3.

It is the Chairman's job to make sure that everyone can listen to the debate. This means that only one person can speak at a time. To make sure that this happens, it is best to make a rule that nobody can speak without permission of the Chairman. This means that the Chairman decides the ORDER in which people may speak. He cannot refuse to let somebody speak at all.

4. Everybody must have the right to say what they want to say. But also you cannot let people go on talking for ever. If it really seems that there are still many things to be said, and that there is still no agreement, then it is best to decide to discuss the question again at another meeting. But if it seems that some people are now just talking because they like talking, then it is best to end the debate and make a decision.

This can be done in two ways. Either the Chairman must himself decide to stop the debate. Or else one of the members of the Committee can suggest that the debate should be ended. This is called MOVING CLOSURE. If somebody moves closure, then there is a vote, and if the majority think that the debate should be closed, then it is closed. But it is important that this should not be used to prevent real debate. If that happens, then the people who are not allowed to talk will feel that there is no use being coming to meetings, and unity will be broken.

5. Once the debate has ended, then there must be a decision, taken by a vote. It is very important that everybody should understand exactly what they are voting about. If there is just one motion, then there is no problem. But often, by the end of a discussion, there is not only a motion but also several amendments. The Chairman must make sure that each member of the Committee knows whether it is the motion or the amendments which are being voted on.

#### VOTING.

To make sure that this happens, it is usually done like this:

First, the committee decides whether it wants the motion to be amended. By voting on each of the amendments, the Committee decides which is the best way of putting the suggestion.

Then, when it has decided on the form of the motion, it has a last vote, to decide whether or not to accept the motion.

6. People can either vote yes, or no, or they can ABSTAIN. To abstain is to say that you have no opinion on whether it is a good motion or not, so you will let the others decide.

7. There is one problem with voting. It often happens that the same number of people have voted for and against the Motion.

Then there is a tie in the voting. So, to make sure that a decision can still be made, it is usual to give the Chairman the right to decide in this situation. This is called giving the Chairman the CASTING VOTE. That is, when there is a tie, the Chairman has a second vote, which he can use to break the tie.

It may seem that there are a lot of rules to follow for a meeting. But it must be remembered that these rules have only one purpose: TO MAKE THE MEETING ORDERLY AND DEMOCRATIC. The rules ensure:

1. That everyone knows what is being discussed (Motions and Amendments).
2. That everybody has the right to give their opinion, and to hear the opinion of the others.
3. That there is a clear decision which is understood by everybody and which is accepted by the majority of the members.

#### THE CHAIRMAN AT A MEETING.

We have seen that the Chairman has many important things to do at a meeting. If the Chairman does not do the job properly, then the meeting will fail. The Chairman should:

1. Make sure that a full Agenda has been prepared and sent to all members in good time.
2. Make sure that the Report and Minutes are ready for the meeting.
3. Make sure that everyone has the right to speak.
4. But also make sure that people speak on the motion and do not speak for too long and say the same thing over and over again.
5. Make sure that everyone knows what they are voting about when the time comes to vote.
6. Make sure that the meeting does not go on for too long.

But the Chairman must make sure that he does not do all the talking himself. In fact, it is not the Chairman's job to say what he thinks. It is his job to be a referee, not one of the players. But of course the Chairman will also want to say what he thinks. When this happens, he should make somebody else Chairman for a few minutes, until he has finished discussing what he wants to talk about. This is called HANDING OVER THE CHAIRMAN. The Chairman asks another member, usually the Vice-Chairman, to take over the Chair, and this person then has all the duties of the Chairman. When discussion is over, then the Chairman takes back the Chair. In this way, the Chairman cannot be both referee and player at the same time.

CHAPTER 11.THE UNION OFFICIALS.

The BEC members are in charge of the running of the Union. Because they are all workers, they cannot look after the Union offices themselves. So special OFFICIALS are appointed who work full-time for the Union. But these officials do not own the Union. They are responsible to the BEC and to the members, and they must do what they are told.

These officials include:

1. The SECRETARY, whose job it is to supervise the general working of the office and of the other full-time officials. The Secretary is very important, and often he or she is the most powerful person in the Union. This is because he or she knows best what is happening in the Union. Because the Secretary can be so powerful it is important that the members be able to control her or him.

All important matters should be decided by the BEC meeting. The Secretary should give a regular report to the BEC meeting so that the BEC can see that its decisions are being carried out.

In many unions the Secretary is appointed by the BEC. These unions say that the BEC members know better what is needed for the job. They can meet with the different candidates for the job, and find out which one is best.

In other Unions the Secretary is elected by the members at a Branch Meeting. These Unions say that because the Secretary is so powerful it is important that he or she be chosen by all the members, and not just by the BEC.

THE ORGANISERS.

2. The ORGANISERS, whose job it is to go out to the factories, to find out what the members' complaints are, and to try to help the members in all ways possible.

They also have to try to recruit new members to the Union. The Organisers can also be appointed by the BEC or elected by all the members at a Branch Meeting.

There are three important questions which any Union has to decide about choosing its Secretary and Organisers:

1. Should they be chosen by all the members, or by the BEC?

2. How, if necessary, should they be dismissed? If a member of the BEC is not doing his or her job properly, then he or she will not be elected again. But what about the Secretary or an Organiser? They are employees of the Union. This means that they must have a Contract of Employment. This contract will say what their duties are. It will also say what period of notice must be given and how they can be dismissed if they are not doing their jobs properly. If they cannot or will not do the job, then they must be fired.

3. Should the Secretary and the Organisers be chosen from among the members of the Union? This is a difficult question. If they come from among the members of the Union, then the workers can be sure that they know the problems of the workers in that industry. But sometimes you need Officials who have had special training, and so you need to look outside the Union. But it helps if you make sure that many members of the Union have done courses like those of the IIE and so have learnt some of the things which a Secretary and an Organiser need to know.

The following "Code of Conduct for Union Officials" explains their duties and responsibilities.

The Secretary's duties are laid down in the Constitution. The BEC must make sure that the Secretary always acts in accordance with the Constitution.

If the Union is a registered Union, then it is governed by the Industrial Conciliation Act. The Industrial Conciliation Act has a section about the duties of a

Union Secretary, and so the Constitution of a registered Union must take this into account.

The Secretary, and all the other officials of the Unions are workers employed by the Union. This means that they must do what the members ask them to do. But the BEC and the members of the Union must not boss them around. They must treat them as they would like all workers to be treated by their employers.

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR UNION OFFICIALS.

#### 1. AUSTERITY.

To work for the union is to participate in the workers' struggle for their rights. It is not a career or a way of getting rich. Therefore:

a. As officials are paid by the workers, they must expect to live at the same standard of living as their fellow workers. The officials must receive enough money to allow them to live, to support their dependents, and to carry on with the struggle. The union will balance the workers needs against the financial resources of the union. But under no circumstances will it allow officials' salaries to run ahead of factory wages.

b. As this is a movement struggling for workers' rights, hours worked must be determined by the needs of the struggle. Within reason there are no maximum work hours for officials. The struggle continues 24 hours a day.

c. As the union believes in the equality of all people, it will not grade its staff. While some union jobs carry more responsibility, this is not grounds for receiving higher wages. Responsibility is an honour and a privilege in itself. Wages cover needs; they are not a reward. So the only grounds for wage differences will be differences in needs.

d. All officials have a right to security through a pension scheme.

#### 2. UNITY AND CRITICISM.

The meaning of a union is unity. The first responsibility of the officials is to maintain the unity of the workers' organisation. This does not mean that there can be no criticism within the union. Real unity requires that there should be free criticism and discussion within the union. Real unity requires that there should be democracy. But democracy is criticism AND discipline. This means:

a. Criticism must remain within the union. Under no circumstances may officials approach an outside body to resolve conflicts within the union.

b. Criticisms must be made within the proper union structures. Staff problems should be raised at staff meetings. Disputes between members of staff that are not resolved in staff meetings will be arbitrated by the BEC. Discussion of factory and union policy may occur within shop steward meetings, BEC meetings and general meetings.

c. Once a policy decision has been made by the proper authority in the union, it is the duty of all officials to carry out that policy, whether they agree with it or not.

d. One of the major weapons used by employers and other enemies of the unions is the spreading of false rumours. A rumour or story about any individual should be reported immediately to that individual. To spread a rumour further is as bad as to start a rumour. It is a serious breach of discipline.

#### 3. DELEGATION.

Union policy is made by the workers, either directly or through the BEC. Union officials do not make policy. Union officials always act under delegation from the union. This means:

a. They may not act beyond the scope of the powers which

have been delegated to them.

b. In any unusual circumstances they should not take action without reference to the BEC, or the BEC chairman, or other relevant worker representatives. This applies particularly to any situation; such as a possible strike, in which the union as a whole may be threatened.

c. All actions taken by officials must be reported back to the workers at the earliest possible time.

#### 4. THE WORKERS' INTEREST FIRST.

Organisers are expected to place workers' interests first in all situations. This means:

a. Officials must respect union institutions, attend meetings, and accept union discipline.

b. Officials must respect workers. They must not treat workers as clients but rather as fellows. Handling complaints from workers must be seen as part of the task of building worker unity.

c. They must respect the workers' money. They are responsible for money they collect, and must replace any money that is short. They must cash up at least once a week.

d. They must respect the workers' property. No Union property may be used by union officials for their private affairs. Officials are also expected to keep union office neat and tidy. No drinking will be tolerated during work time or on union premises, with the exception of functions authorised by the BEC.

#### 5. EDUCATION.

In order to carry out their duties properly union officials need training. Such training programmes are not optional extras. They are part of the officials' job,

and the officials have a duty to take part fully in the training programmes.

#### 6. DISMISSAL.

The job of a union official is very difficult and demanding. It is to be expected that some officials will not be able to cope. Union officials who are not performing their duties adequately, or who persistently act contrary to the interests of the union, may be dismissed by the BEC. An official shall have the right to be present at the BEC meeting in order to hear charges and to reply to those charges. Any official who refuses to attend in person may be judged in absentia. The decisions of the BEC shall be final.

It is the duty of any official who has been dismissed to accept the decision of the union. To fight against it, to make threats and to spread rumours will only harm the cause of the workers. Any dismissed official may remain as member of the union, and may return to union activity in the factories.

CHAPTER 12.UNION FINANCES.WHY DOES A UNION NEED MONEY?

What does the union do with its subscriptions? Each union will have slightly different things for which it uses its money, but these are the most important things for which it needs money:

## 1. Money to build the Union:

- Office rent, telephones, office paper
- wages and benefits for officials
- transport for officials of the union
- attendance allowances for meetings
- congresses, conferences with other unions
- publications and recruiting campaigns
- training for trade union officials and workers.

## 2. Benefits to be paid to members for:

- death of member, wife or husband or child
- doctors and medical attention
- lawyers and legal help
- victimisation
- strikes
- unemployment
- sickness
- retirement
- loans and welfare.

## 3. Joining fees to organisations such as:

- education organisation like the Institute for Industrial Education
- administration services like Central Administration Services
- representative bodies like TUCSA (Trade Union Council of S.A.)

But not all unions provide all these benefits. In fact some unions think that it is better for the union to fight the employer and make the employer provide benefits such as pensions and medical benefits. Each union has to decide for itself whether the union should collect enough money to provide these benefits, or whether it is better to make the employer provide them.

But there are some benefits which the employer will not provide, and so these are the most important for any Union.

These are: VICTIMISATION BENEFITS to be paid to anybody who has been sacked because of his work for the Union.

STRIKE PAY, to be paid to workers who are on strike, so that they do not have to go back to work because they are starving.

## UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS.

LEGAL HELP for members of the Union, especially when they need to go to court for civil or criminal cases connected with disputes with management.

The main task of the Union is to fight for better wages and working conditions, but these benefits can help in that fight.

No Union can provide all these benefits by itself. This is why it is very important for all the different unions to co-operate so that they can work together to provide

the best benefits at the lowest cost.

### HOW MUCH SHOULD WORKERS PAY?

The subscriptions to the Union are the Union's bread and butter, and this food can only come from the members. The higher the subscription, the better the Union can fight for higher wages, and the more benefits it can provide. But if the subscription is too high, many workers will find it difficult to pay.

Many people have thought about this problem, but it is the workers themselves in the Union who must decide how much they can afford. They must take into account the level of wages in the industry. In South Africa some of the registered Unions charge R1,50 per week, but most African workers in South Africa could not pay so much. The highest subscription paid to an African trade union is 34 cents per week for the National Union of Clothing Workers. Most African unions need subscriptions of about 20 cents per week or 25 cents per week.

It is a good rule to say that subscriptions should not be lower than 1% of the members' wage. That is, 1 cent for each rand, so that if workers earn about R20 a week, then the subscription would be about 20 cents a week. But it is important to remember the wages of the lowest paid workers in the industry. Subscriptions should always be set so that all the workers feel that they can pay the subscription without any trouble.

It is important to remember that big numbers can make up for a low subscription:

100 members X 50c subscription = R50

1 000 members X 10c subscription = R100

Because African unions cannot charge high subscriptions they must have a big membership in order to have enough money.

### HOW ARE SUBSCRIPTIONS COLLECTED?

There are three different ways in which the subscriptions can be collected.

1. The members all bring their subscriptions to the Union office.
2. Workers or Union Officials collect the money from each worker at the factory.
3. The subscription is taken off each worker's wage by a stop-order, and then the employer pays all the subscriptions to the Union.

Which method is chosen is important for the way in which the union works.

1. The first way can really work only with a small union, where the union office can also be close to where all the members live or work. Otherwise the workers have to spend a lot of time travelling to the office, and then queuing up to pay.
2. The second method has been used by registered trade unions in the past, and is used by nearly all the unregistered trade unions today. In this method special COLLECTORS are appointed, whose job it is to collect the subscriptions each week from a certain number of workers. These collectors may be either the full-time Organisers who are responsible for each factory, or else shop stewards or leading workers in each factory.

### THE COLLECTOR.

There must be many collectors, because if each one has to collect from many members he or she will not have time, and will find it difficult to find the members each week. It is best if each collector has to collect from about 20 to 25 members each week. This way it is easy for the collector to know each of the members for whom he or she is responsible, and easy to make sure that each one pays each week. It also means that each collector does not have

to handle too much money, which may get lost or stolen.

Each collector will have a list of the members from whom the subscriptions have to be collected. Usually these members would be in the same department in the factory.

Because the Collector has to speak to the members each week, he or she is one of the most important people in the Union Organisation. The Collector can tell if the workers are dissatisfied with the Union, and if they no longer feel that it is worth paying the subscriptions.

If the workers are dissatisfied either with the Union or with the employer, it is the collector who will hear about it first. If the Union is big, then it is very difficult for the full-time officials to speak often to each worker, and there will be general meetings where each worker can talk only every six months or even every year. So it is only through the collectors that the full-time union officials can find out what all the members are feeling.

It is also the job of the Collector to recruit new workers to join the Union, and to tell the Union officials when any member leaves work or is sick.

#### COLLECTING THE SUBSCRIPTIONS: THE RECEIPT.

Whenever people deal with money, it is important that everything should be written down, so that nothing can get lost or stolen. What needs to be written down when a collector is collecting subscriptions?

The MEMBER wants to be able to show that he or she is a fully-paid up member of the Union. So the member has a MEMBERSHIP CARD, which says that he or she is a member, and on this card there are spaces on which payment can be marked with a special stamp.

The member also wants to be sure that the subscription

goes to the Union, and not just into the collector's pocket. So the member wants something to show which collector collected the money. This is the RECEIPT, on which the collector writes who collected the money, how much was collected, and who it was collected from.

The COLLECTOR wants to be sure how much money has been collected, and wants to be able to show the Union officials that all the money has been brought to the Union, and that none has been lost or stolen. So the Collector keeps a COPY OF EACH RECEIPT in the RECEIPT BOOK.

The TREASURER of the Union wants a record of how much money has been collected, and wants proof that THE COLLECTOR has not lost or stolen any. So the Treasurer keeps a record of every receipt book, and as soon as the receipt book is full it must be handed in by the Collector.

If the Union does not keep a record of the receipt books, then the collector can throw away the receipt book and pretend that he or she has not collected any money.

#### THE RECEIPT.

The receipt protects the member, by showing that the money has been paid, and also protects the Collector, because if the receipts are kept properly the collector can never be unfairly charged with having stolen the workers' money.

*SO IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE RECEIPTS BE FILLED IN PROPERLY AND KEPT PROPERLY.*

The receipt should always say:

1. Who the money was paid to; (e.g. Textile Union)
2. Who paid the money;
3. How much money was paid;
4. On what date it was paid;
5. Which collector it was paid to;



6. What the money was paid for. (e.g. joining fee, subscription).

Here is an example of a properly filled in receipt:

195		4-6-1975 R	
Received from: Sibongile Nala			
Ontvang van: ep. Affitesc			
the sum of: one		Union No. 1	
die som van: Rand		2794	
for: Subs June 1-5			
vir: J. Shongwe			
With Thanks/Met Dink			

It is no use if the receipt is filled in properly and there is no copy. So you must always make sure that a proper copy is made. Also a RECEIPT SHOULD ALWAYS BE FILLED IN IN INK, so that it cannot be changed afterwards.

The member keeps the receipt, and the collector keeps the copy of the receipt in the receipt book. When the book is full, it has a complete record of all the money that the collector has collected and must pay to the Union.

But the collector does not wait until the book is full before paying the money in. All the money collected each week must be taken to the Union. There the treasurer will write down how much money has been paid. When the receipt book is full that must also be handed in, and then the treasurer can check how much should

have been handed in (by looking in the receipt book), and how much has been handed in (by looking at what he has written down each week).

Another system which is perhaps even safer is for the collector to collect both the membership card and the money. A first receipt is given by the Collector, who then takes the card and the money to the Union offices. The Card is stamped by the secretary or the treasurer, and a second receipt is made out, which is then given to the worker together with the card. The advantage of this method is that the worker can see if the collector is really giving the money to the union. Because the worker wants the membership card and the second receipt, the collector has to be quick about handling the money in to the union.

#### STOP-ORDERS.

3. The third way in which the subscriptions can be collected is by a STOP-ORDER. In this case the EMPLOYER agrees to collect the subscriptions FOR THE WORKERS AND pay them to the union. The employer takes off the subscription from each worker's wages, and then pays all the money he has collected to the Union, together with a list of all the workers from whom money has been collected.

This is the method which is used by most registered unions. They can use it because the Industrial Conciliation Act says that as soon as a registered union has recruited more than half the workers in a factory, then the employer has to collect the money if the trade union asks him to.

But all unions with African members are unregistered and it is much more difficult for them. They cannot make the employers collect money by stop-orders if the employers do not want to do so.

There is no law which says that employers cannot collect money by stop-orders for the Union, but the Department of Labour tells employers that they may not make any deductions from workers wages without the permission of the Department, so that the Department can stop the

employers if they want to. This is why very few African unions have their subscriptions collected by stop-orders.

Although the stop-order system is the easiest for the Union, there are also arguments against using this system, even where it is possible.

#### ARGUMENTS ABOUT STOP-ORDERS.

The arguments for stop-orders are:

1. It provides a steady income for the union.
2. Not having to worry about collecting money, the Union has more time to organise and to improve services for its members.
3. The stop-order shows that the employers recognise the trade union.
4. Workers do not stop paying the union because of small disagreements.

These are very strong arguments, but there are also arguments against using the stop-order system.

1. When the cheque comes straight from the employer there is less contact between unions and officials and members, and the members can easily lose interest in the union.
2. Because the union does not have to worry about income, it is easier for the officials to become bureaucratic and not work hard for their members.
3. It could be that the employer could suddenly stop the stop-orders at a difficult time for the union, and then the union would have to start a collecting system very quickly, in the middle of its other difficulties (say a strike).
4. It could tie the union closely to the employers. The union might have to give up certain things in order to get and keep the stop-order.

It is very difficult to say which of these arguments is the strongest. Each union has to decide for itself.

#### HOW THE MONEY IS KEPT.

It is no use collecting the money carefully from the worker if it is kept badly by the Union.

The most important thing for keeping the money safely is that EVERYTHING MUST BE KEPT WRITTEN DOWN. If everything is written down, it is much more difficult for money to be lost or stolen. So when the collector brings in the money which has been collected, first it must be checked with the RECEIPT BOOK to make sure that all the money has been brought in. Then it must be written down in the ACCOUNT BOOK.

All the money which is spent must also be written down in the account book. Then, by looking at the account book, and adding up how much has been collected and how much has been spent, it is possible to tell how much money the union has, and so whether any has been lost or stolen.

Each time any money is collected (or spent) you write the DATE, where the money CAME FROM, and HOW MUCH money there was.

When you reach the bottom of the page, you add up the total for the page, and then you CARRY IT FORWARD to the next page, and write it in the money column at the top of the next page.

*(Example of Income & Expenditure Account on pages 124 & 125.)*

We have seen how the money is ENTERED in the accounts. But what must be done with the actual rand notes and coins which are collected? It is not a good idea to keep all these in the office, because if there is much cash in the office it can easily get lost or stolen.

		INCOME (Receipts)			
1974		BALANCE	B/F	110	00
Apr.	8	Receipt	Book I	259	80
"	10	"	" II	484	70
"	12	"	" III	50	00
"	14	"	" IV	183	80
"	16	"	" V	192	00
"	18	"	" VI		80
"	20	"	" VII	2	00
"	22	"	" VIII	4	40
"	24	"	" IX	2	00
"	26	"	" X	2	60
"	28	"	" XI		50
"	30	"	" XII	5	80
"	31	"	" XIII	11	60
				R1310	00

=====

		EXPENDITURE (Payments)			
Cheque No.					
90257	Apr. 1	Wages	(March)	35	00
90258	1	Rent		85	00
90259	1	Telephone		36	00
90260	8	Photostating		75	00
90261	8	Transport		6	50
90262	12	G.F.W.B.F. Subs.	(March)	709	70
90263	15	Stationery		70	06
90264	20	Wages		44	33
90265	23	Bank Charges		1	87
90266	28	Office Equipment		2	30
90267	28	"	"	10	00
90268	28	"	"	29	05
		TOTAL		1104	81
		Balance Carried Forward		205	19

=====

R1310 00

So the union must open a BANK ACCOUNT, and pay all the money that is collected into the bank account. This is a good idea for two reasons:

1. The money cannot get lost in the bank.
2. The bank keeps careful records of the money, and these help the union to keep its own records. At the end of each month the Bank will send a BANK STATEMENT, which says when and how much money has been paid into the Bank by the Union in the month. It shows how much money the union has taken out of the bank, and how much there still is in the bank. This way, even if the treasurer is not doing his job properly, the bank will soon show how much money the Union has.

The money which is kept in the bank can be used in two ways. The first way is to go to the bank everytime that the union needs some money, and to take the money out of the bank. But this is often a nuisance, so the bank gives you a CHEQUE BOOK, and you can then pay people with cheques instead of with the actual money. On the cheque you write the name of the person to whom the money is paid, and the amount that you are paying them. (It is very important to write all this in the proper way. If you open a Bank Account then the bank will explain to you exactly how to do it).

The person to whom you give the cheque can take it to your bank, and the bank will pay them the money from your account.

*(a copy of a bank statement appears on page 127)*

PETTY CASH.

But you cannot always pay for everything by cheque. If an organiser needs a ten cent busfare, he or she cannot give the bus-driver a cheque for ten cents. There is often a need for small sums of money to be spent, and for this cash is needed. So a certain amount of cash must be kept in the office for this purpose. This money is called PETTY CASH.

Date	Category	Debits	Credits	Balance
17/01/75	B/F			226.61
18/01/75	DEP	11.47	35.48	
18/01/75	691	40.00		210.62
18/01/75	692	.10		210.52
20/01/75	CCC		100.00	
25/01/75	DEP	3.10		
25/01/75	694	30.00		277.42
25/01/75	697		844.86	
27/01/75	DEP	3.50		1,119.75
27/01/75	L/F	16.26		
28/01/75	693	10.48		1,090.04
28/01/75	696	110.00		
30/01/75	695	.05		979.99
30/01/75	INT	8.00		
1/02/75	698	27.55		
1/02/75	S/O	120.35		833.58
1/02/75	S/O		94.60	
4/02/75	DEP	5.00		923.15
4/02/75	699	12.91		910.27
7/02/75	700	10.71		899.56
8/02/75	701			899.56

*Handwritten notes:*  
 - An arrow points from the 899.56 balance to the text "balance of money left in bank."  
 - An arrow points from the 94.60 credit to the text "money deposited in bank."  
 - An arrow points from the 10.71 debit to the text "money paid out in cheques."  
 - A small note next to the 899.56 balance says "re: letter to my van, reimburse start of month".

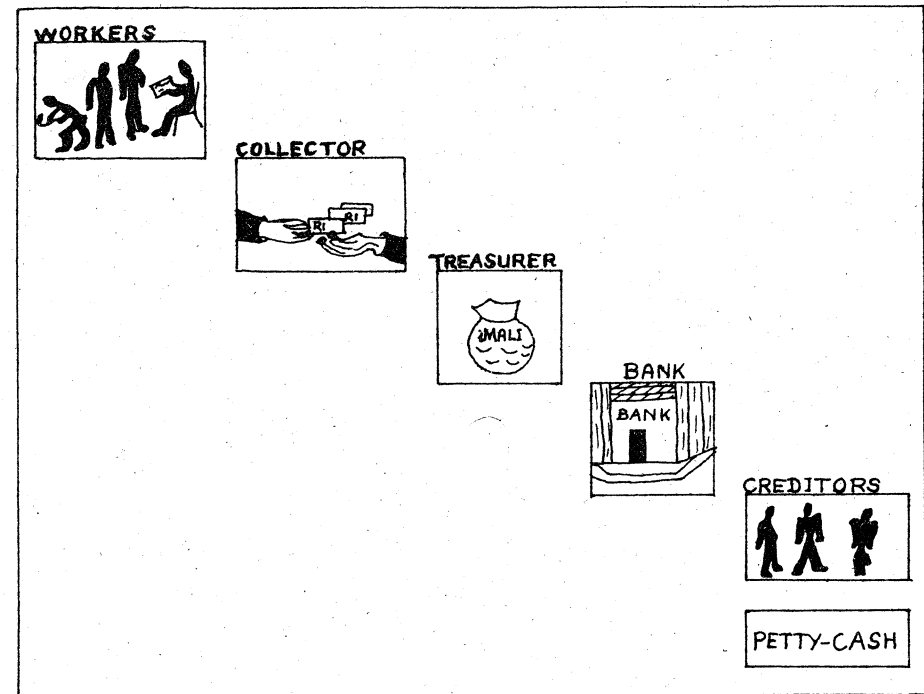
All money that is collected should be paid straight into the bank. It should not be used for petty cash. Instead you should take a certain amount of money out of the bank again to use as petty cash. This makes it much easier to keep records, and stops you getting the money you are collecting mixed up with the petty cash which you need to spend.

With separate petty cash, there should also be a separate PETTY CASH BOOK. In this book you must enter everything for which the petty cash is used. Even if you spend 2 cents to buy a rubber for the office, it should be entered in the petty cash book. Then at the end of each week you can add up how much petty cash has been spent, and you can add up how much cash you have left (CASH ON HAND). Then you can see if any has been lost or stolen.

WITHDRAWN for Petty Cash	R20,00
Total Petty Cash spent in week	<u>R13,25</u>
Balance	6,75
CASH ON HAND	<u>R6,75</u> =====

Therefore no money is missing. The cash still there is equal to the difference between the cash that was taken out of the bank, and the cash which has been spent.

So the money goes from the worker, to the collector, to the treasurer, to the bank, and from the bank it goes either directly to people to whom the union owes money, or else it goes to the petty cash first. We can put all this in a diagram.

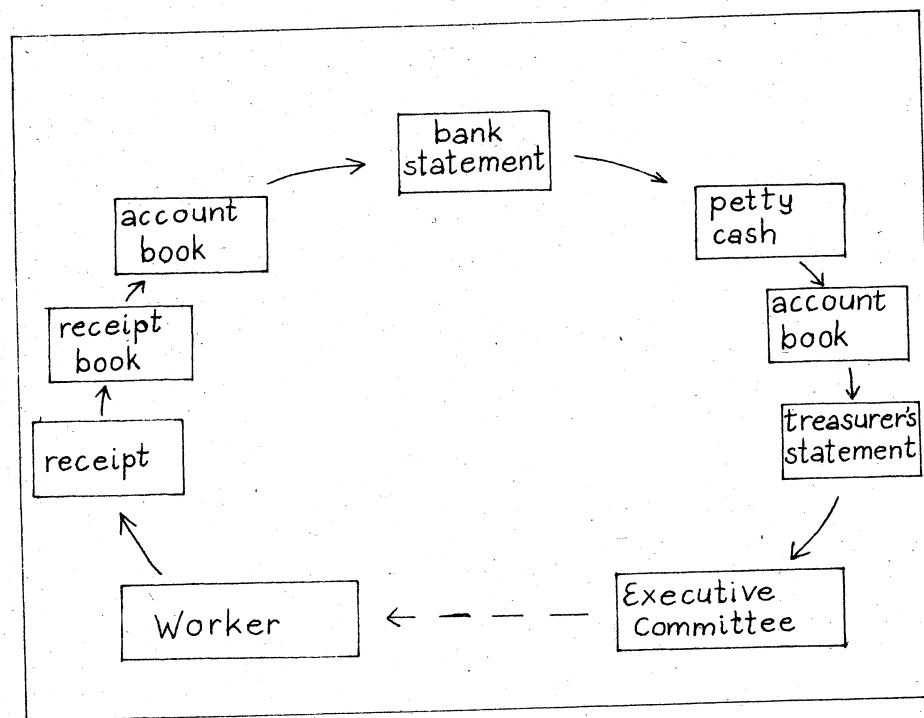


Every time the money moves it must be written down. The collector gives a receipt to the worker, and he gives the full receipt book to the treasurer. The treasurer writes it down each time the collector gets a new receipt book, and then he writes it down when the collector hands back the receipt book full.

The treasurer writes down in the Account Book how much money he received from the collector. The Bank writes down how much it received from the union and again writes down how much it takes from the bank in the Bank Statement. Then the treasurer writes down in the Account Book what happens to the money which is taken out of the Bank.

The secretary writes down in the petty cash book all the little bits of money which are spent from the petty cash, and then the treasurer also puts this into the Account Book.

Then every month the treasurer makes a Statement of all the money received and spent, and shows it to the executive so that they can see that the money is being kept correctly. We can put this in a diagram.



So in the end a full report goes back to the executive, who are the representatives of the workers. It is their job to look very carefully at the statement each month, and and to make absolutely sure that everything is in order.

Then they can tell the workers that their money is being

kept and used properly.

This means that all workers, and especially the union executives, must be absolutely sure that they can read a statement properly.

The statement which the Treasurer hands to the executive each month will be like the PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT (also called the Income and Expenditure Account)

### MONTHLY STATEMENT.

At the end of each month, the person whose job it is to look after the accounts must add up the income and the expenditure, and give the executive a STATEMENT of the income and expenditure for the month. In this way the executive can keep a check on what is happening to the money, and on how it is being spent.

The statement must show HOW MUCH money has been received and spent. It must also show WHAT the money has been spent on. In your account book you have written down all the money as you have spent it, one thing after another. For your statement you must separate out the different things on which you have spent money. For this you can use a special book called a LEDGER. In the ledger you keep a special page for each different kind of thing on which you spend money. There will be a page for salaries, a page for office expenses, a page for transport expenses, a page for PAYE and other taxes, and so on. Once a month the treasurer goes through the account book, and writes each item from the account book into the proper page in the ledger book. When each item from the account book has been POSTED across to the Ledger book, the treasurer adds up the figures for the month on each page in the ledger book. These figures are the total amount spent for each kind of thing for the month.



BALANCING THE BOOKS.

The Treasurer must be sure that the figures have been posted correctly into the ledger book, and that no figures have been copied down wrongly, and that none have been forgotten. It is easy to find out. All you have to do is to add up all the figures for the month in the account book. Then you add up all the totals for the month in the ledger book. If these two amounts BALANCE, then no mistake has been made. If they do not balance, then you have to do it all over again, to see where you made a mistake.

It is also important to balance the amount of money which you should have according to your monthly statement with the amount of money which you actually have in the bank, and in your petty cash.

Once a month at least you should count all the money in the petty cash, and work out from your petty cash book how much there should be.

The bank will send you a Bank Statement each month, and that will show you how much money is in your Bank Account. But remember that some of the cheques which you have paid out to people may not have been cashed yet, so that the amount shown in the bank statement may be more than you really have. To find out how much you really have, you must look on the statement at which cheques have been cashed, and then look in your cheque book to see which still have not been cashed. Add up these cheques, and subtract the amount from your bank balance. This should give you the same figure that is shown by your account book.

Example: This is how you work out the amount of money you have in the Bank.

Balance as at 31. 07. 74                      R1 297,64

Cheques outstanding:

A. Smith	92,10
P. Office	7,11
P. Dlamini	100,00
	<u>199,21</u>

199,21

Correct balance

R1 098,43

This correct balance should be the same amount as is shown by your account book.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT.

There are two important things about how the money is spent.

1. How do you decide what things should be done with the money?
2. How do you make sure that the money is used in the way in which you have decided?

It is the job of the workers, through the executive committee which they elect, to decide how the money is to be spent. First the executive committee must decide what things the union needs and how much these things will cost. If there is not enough money for them all, then they must decide which are the most important, and how much these things will cost.

It is no use trying to decide this each week, because some things have to be bought every few days (like bus tickets), some things have to be paid every month (like rent, salaries and telephone bills), some things have to be paid every year (like licences and insurance), and some things have to be paid only every few years (like cars and typewriters).



THE BUDGET.

This is an example of a Budget.

ESTIMATED INCOME

5200 paid up members @ 15c per week = R40 560,00

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE

Contributions to Benefit Fund		20 280,00
Salaries:		
Secretary	1 200	
5 Organisers	5 000	
Typist	900	7 100,00
Office:		
Rent	960	
Telephone	120	
Stationery	90	
Electricity	60	1 230,00
Transport:		
H.P. payments	1 200	
Running Expenses	960	
Bus Fares	480	2 640,00
Affiliation Fees IIE		150,00
Printing Costs		600,00

---

R32 000,00

Balance of R8 560 to be distributed as follows:

Savings Bank for new car	R2 000,00
Strike relief fund	R3 000,00
Legal Aid Fund	R3 560,00

---

R8 560,00

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So to fit all these things together, the executive should decide at the beginning of each year:

1. How much money they expect to receive during the year, and
2. What they will need for the year and how the money is to be spent for the year.

This plan for the year is called the BUDGET. One of the most important jobs of the treasurer is to prepare the budget, but it is the executive as a whole which finally decides exactly what should or should not go into the budget.

But it is not enough for the executive committee to approve the budget at the beginning of the year and then to leave it for the rest of the year to the officials to spend the money.

The Budget is only an estimate. During the year there will be changes in the costs of things, and also it will be found that some things which were not budgeted for are needed, and that some things which were budgeted for are not needed.

So the Executive must also check the expenditure as it is made. *No expenditure should be made* (except regular expenditure) *without the permission of the executive.* (If it is a specially big expenditure it should get the approval of all the members of the union at the Annual General Meeting).

In order to get the permission of the executive, the Secretary of the union must present all the expenditure for the month to the monthly meeting, and only expenditure authorised by the meeting can be made. Usually the cheques are made out and signed at the monthly meeting. That way the executive can decide also which debts should

be paid first.

A cheque has to be SIGNED by the person from whose account the money is to come. If the cheque is not signed by the right person, then the bank cannot pay out money and the cheque is useless. So it is very important who is allowed to sign the cheques for the Union.

#### SIGNATORIES AND TRUSTEES.

If one person opens a bank account for himself, then it is his own signature which must appear on the cheques. But if an organisation opens an account, not all the members of an organisation can write their names on the cheque at once. So the organisation tells the bank which members of the organisation are allowed to sign the cheques.

It would be very bad if only one person could sign the cheques, because then if that person was a thief he could take all the money out of the bank and run away with it. So organisations usually tell the Bank that the Bank must only cash cheques when they are signed not just by one person, but by a certain number of people. It can be two people, or three people, or even more, if the organisation decides. The people who are allowed to sign the cheques are called the SIGNATORIES. Let us say Mr. Khumalo and Mr. Singh are appointed by the Union. Then if Mr. Singh signs the cheque by himself it is still no good. If Mr. Khumalo signs the cheque by himself it is also still no good. Only if they BOTH sign the cheque will the bank cash it. That way they check one another, and no one person can run off with the money.

Most unions appoint about 5 signatories, and they tell the Bank that they must cash a cheque only if it is signed by *at least three* of the five signatories. The signatories are usually the secretary, the chairman, the vice-chairman, the treasurer and another member of the executive. This means that a cheque can never be signed only by full-time officials (secretary and treasurer). It must always be

signed by at least one of the workers representatives, who are called TRUSTEES.

A good rule to make it that the Trustees should only sign the cheque only after the officials have signed, because the person who signs last can best see that the cheque is used for the right things.

#### BALANCE SHEET.

So far we have seen that the elected representatives of the workers can check the way in which the money is spent in three ways:

1. They have to approve the annual budget.
2. They have to approve expenditure each month.
3. The cheques cannot be cashed unless they have been signed by the workers' trustees.

But it is also important that the workers themselves, and not only their representatives, should see what is happening with the money. For this reason, the treasurer must prepare an annual Balance Sheet, to be submitted to the workers at the Union's Annual General Meeting. This Balance sheet is exactly the same as the Balance Sheet which the Directors of the Company have to show their shareholders every year (see The Worker in the Factory).

It shows:

1. An Income and Expenditure Account for the year.
2. A Statement of the Assets and Liabilities of the Union at the end of the year. This must show everything that the union owns and how much it is worth (desks, typewriters, stationery etc.), and how much money the union has saved over the year? and how that money is kept.

It is the special job of the trustees to check the Balance Sheet, to make sure that all the property is really there, and to give a report to the workers about

the union funds, and to make recommendations about how the funds should be used.

THE AUDITOR.

But what happens if the treasurer is a crook? How can the workers be sure that the Balance Sheet is really true?

There are special people called AUDITORS whose job it is to examine the books and records of Companies and organisations to make sure that these books have been kept properly. The work of auditors is strictly governed by law. The auditor is brought in from outside specially to do the job of auditing the books, and he produces a report which says whether in fact the finances of the Union are in order.

THE FINANCES OF THE UNION MUST BE AUDITED ONCE A YEAR. This is the last guarantee that everything is in order. The auditor must check the following things:

- has everything been written in ink?
- have all receipts been written properly and kept safely?
- are the members up to date in their subscriptions?
- has the union paid all the money it owes?
- has the money been spent as the Constitution says?
- has every cheque been agreed to by the executive?
- has every cheque been signed by the right signatories?
- has everything been added up correctly?
- Is the money in the office waiting to go to the bank the same as the receipt books show?
- Do the accounts show the same amount of money as is in the bank?
- has the annual statement been drawn up properly?
- has the Balance Sheet been drawn up properly?

You can see from these questions that the Auditor has to check every single thing to do with the finances of the Union for the whole year. If everything is in order, then he writes to all the members saying that everything is in order.

THE BALANCE SHEET AS AT 19 DEC. 1971.

ACCUMULATED FUNDS:

Balance as at 18.1.70	42 468,30	
Less Excess of Expenditure Over Income	2 161,17	40 307,13

CREDITORS:

Cheques not paid		2 317,31
		<u>42 624,44</u>

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Furniture & Fittings	780,00	
Funeral Assurance Scheme -	1 510,00	
Debtors	762,78	
Investment (for current value)	38 530,79	
Savings Account	737,91	
Cash	302,96	
	at bank	252,96
	on hand	<u>50,00</u>

42 624,44

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CERTIFIED IN TERMS OF OUR REPORT OF EVEN  
DATE.

E. H. Khuzwayo & Partners

*E.H. Khuzwayo*  
-----  
Chartered Accountants Auditors

So for the money to be kept and used safely:

1. The worker must pay the subscriptions on time.
2. The worker must check the collector by asking for a receipt.
3. The treasurer must check the collector by getting the receipt book back.
4. The executive must check the treasurer by seeing the monthly accounts.
5. The signatories must check one another by signing the cheques only when they are supposed to.
6. The workers must check the executive and the officials by looking carefully at the Balance Sheet.
7. The Auditor must check everybody by examining all the books and records once a year.

If all seven of these things are done, then it is impossible for big amounts of money to be stolen from the union.

The trouble begins when all these things are not done properly. The most dangerous things are:

1. When the collector does not give receipts.
2. When the treasurer does not check the receipt books regularly.
3. When the executive does not demand to see a regular monthly statement.
4. When the books are not examined once a year by an independent auditor.

## CHAPTER 13.

### THE UNION LOCAL.

The Union is the workers. The Union is a way for the workers to come together to solve their own problems. This is why it is important to have as much participation as possible from all members. The full time union officials should only be called on when necessary.

It helps the workers and shop stewards in a factory if they can get together somewhere, and have their own office. This is what the *UNION LOCAL* is for. A Local should be made up of the workers from a few factories which are close together.

Through the local the shop stewards and the workers from these different factories can come together to help one another. At the local meetings the complaints which cannot be solved by the shop steward at each factory are discussed and action decided upon for the workers in that area.

The Local is also a training centre for shop stewards, with training courses, shop steward meetings, and advice on taking up complaints.

Often different trade unions in the same area can share the same local office. This helps the different trade unions to cooperate. If they share the same office, then it costs less. They can share one full time typist to look after the office. They can share a telephone and other office equipment. They can all use the office for running training courses. They can share books on factory law.

Not all Unions have Locals, but it is a good idea to work towards setting up Locals.

### ORGANISING THE LOCAL.

For the workers in the factory, the shop steward is his trade union representative, and the Local is his trade union office.

All workers should attend branch meetings, but they do not always do so. Sometimes transport is a big problem.

Also workers would often like to talk about their difficulties with somebody from the union after work. But often the Branch Office is too far away from their factory, so that it is difficult for them to go there. If there is a Local Office where they can talk with the shop stewards or see the organiser they will feel that the union Officials are much closer to them.

The Local should have a regular monthly meeting of all workers in the union. At this meeting workers can talk together about their problems and decide what to do about them. It is also a good idea to have an educational film or lecture at the monthly meeting. This encourages members to come, and helps them to learn.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Local, a Committee is elected to look after the affairs of the Local. Usually there will be at least two members from each factory elected to the Local Committee. The details of how many people should be on the committee will be in the union Constitution.

The Committee will elect its own Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. It will meet about once every two weeks to talk about the affairs of the Local. It is the job of this Committee, through the Secretary, to see that any decisions of the monthly meeting are carried out properly.

### THE LOCAL COMMITTEE.

The Local Committee has four main jobs:

1. Together with the Organiser and the Branch Office, it must arrange training programmes for shop stewards and other workers. It must make sure that every shop steward understands his or her duties, and knows the law.

When there is a new Agreement on wages and conditions, it must have a special training course explaining everything in the Agreement to the shop stewards.

2. It must make sure that the Organisers are visiting the factories regularly, and are trying to organise factories which are still outside the Union.

3. It must make sure that the workers' complaints are being dealt with as quickly as possible.

4. It must make sure that the money is being collected regularly by the Collectors. The Collectors can hand in the money at the Local Office. This makes it easier for them, and means that they can hand in the money more regularly.

In the Local committee members must always be ready to listen to any complaints which the workers in their factory have about the Union. When members stop paying their subscriptions they should find out why. It may be because the Union is not doing its job properly.

### THE LOCAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

The job of the Chairman is to call meetings and to make sure that the meetings are run properly. The Chairman is in charge on the Local Committee meetings and also the monthly meetings of the whole local. The VICE-CHAIRMAN does this job if the Chairman cannot attend the meeting.

The TREASURER has to keep a check on money collected and spent by the local. Because the Local does not have many fulltime officials, it will not spend much money. It will usually share its office with other unions in the

district. So most of the subscription money will go to the Branch Office. But some money will be needed to cover the costs of the Local. How the money is to be shared between the Local and the Branch will be written in the Constitution.

The SECRETARY has the most work to do for the Local Committee. The Secretary must:

1. Write the minutes of the Local meetings and the Local Committee meetings.
2. Write any letters that the Local has to send and write any reports which the Local has to send to the Branch.
3. Check through the Complaints forms and make sure that they are all being dealt with.
4. Keep a check on the receipt books of the Collectors and make sure that the money is being sent to the Branch.

The Secretary only works for the union in his/her spare time. But because he/she often has to do this union work at night and over the week-ends, it is usual to pay the Secretary some money to make up for the many hours of union work.

## CHAPTER 14.

### THE RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE.

The only strength which workers have lies in their solidarity. Unless they all stand together they can do nothing.

But this does not mean that all workers will join the union straight away. They have to be told that there is a union. They have to be told why it is important that there should be a union. They have to be told what the union can do for them. They have to be RECRUITED so that they join the union.

For all unions it is very important to keep on recruiting new members. Workers who do not join the union can make it much weaker. Also, it is not fair that some workers should benefit from improvements which the union gains, without themselves being members.

We have seen that it is the job of the shop steward to recruit any new worker to become a member of the union. But because recruitment is important, many unions have a special RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE. The Recruitment Committee has three jobs:

1. It must make sure sure that the shop stewards are trying to recruit new workers.
2. It must organise recruiting in factories where the union is not strong enough to have a shop steward system.
3. It must organise regular RECRUITING DRIVES to encourage all workers to belong, and to help the shop stewards in their recruiting work.

### THE RECRUITING DRIVE.

A recruiting drive must be planned very carefully. You must begin by finding out where you most need to do the

recruiting. How many members do you have in each factory? Which departments in each factory are weak and which are strong?

Do you want first to recruit all the members in a few factories, or do you want to get some members in each factory?

Once you have answered these questions, you can work out in which factories and departments you want to recruit. You can work out how many new members you can hope to get from these factories and departments. Then you must decide how you are going to do it.

There are three main things which have to be done:

1. Members of the union must talk to individual non-members to get them to join. You must work out which members must do this, and which non-members they must speak to. You might decide that the members of the Committee should do this themselves, or that the shop stewards should do it, or that you should get special volunteers from among the more active members. You must have a special meeting of all those who are going to help with the recruiting drive. At this meeting you must make sure that everybody knows exactly what must be done, and who they must talk to. You must make sure that someone will cover each department of each factory where you are recruiting.

You must decide when the recruiting drive will start, and how long it will go on for.

2. You must work out what the new members will want to know about the union. You must write pamphlets or a special newspaper which will explain to new members what they need to know. This must explain about the Constitution of the Union and how the Union works.

It must explain why their subscriptions are needed and how the subscriptions will be spent. It must explain what the Union can do to help them.

And it must explain how they can help their fellow

workers by joining the Union.

The Recruiting Committee must decide how many of these pamphlets will be needed, and it must make sure that they are printed in time for the Drive. It must also arrange for these pamphlets to be handed out to all the workers at the different factories.

3. You must decide what meetings should be held for the non-members to encourage them to join. At these meetings you should try to show a film about Unions, and you should have a leading member of the Union who will give a short talk about the Union. You must get the non-members to say what their problems are, and talk about how the Union could help them with their problems.

You must decide where these meetings should be held. It might be a good idea to hold them as near the factory as possible. But it might also be a good idea to hold a small meeting of workers who live near each other. Such a meeting can be held over the week-end, when the workers have more time. If you decide to have house meetings like this, then of course you must find out where the non-members live, and where it is most convenient for them to hold a meeting. You must arrange whose house the meeting will be held at.

We can see from what we have said that the Recruiting Drive is an important part of the educational work of the Union. It is teaching non-members what a Union is for. It can help to make the members themselves more interested in the Union.

A Union must try to grow all the time. It is easy for the Officials of the Union to begin to feel satisfied once the Union is big enough to pay their salaries. Then it might be easier for them not to have too many workers.

The fewer members they have the fewer complaints they have to solve. But once a Union stops growing it starts dying.

Young worker stop joining the Union. The Union's bargaining power is weakened by the non-Union factories. The Union can do less and less even for its old members. Gradually they too feel that they are wasting money paying their subscriptions. In the end there is nothing left at all.

## CHAPTER 15.

### MEMBERS, REPRESENTATIVES AND OFFICIALS.

We have now seen that there are three different groups of people in a Union. There are the MEMBERS of the Union. There are the REPRESENTATIVES who the members choose to run the Union for them. There are the OFFICIALS who are appointed by the members and the representatives to do the actual work of the Union.

All the organisation of the Union, all the rules about Branches and BECs and meetings, are made to ensure that the Representatives represent the workers, and that the Officials work for the workers.

But however good the rules are, there can still be two big problems.

The first problem is that the rules do not do anything. They only make it possible for the members to do something. If the members do not take an interest in the Union, then there is nothing which can make sure that the Representatives and Officials are doing their jobs properly.

This is bad for the workers.

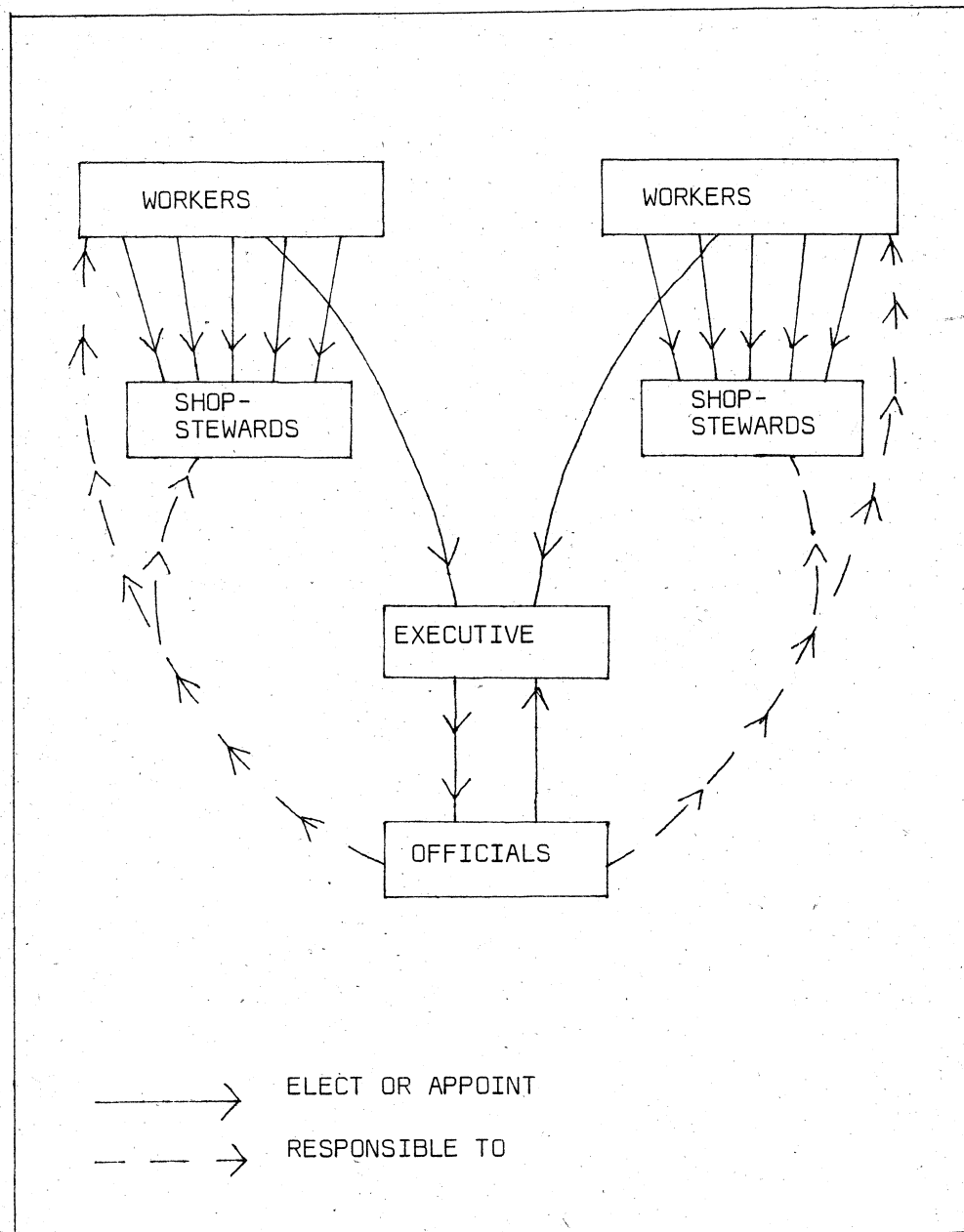
The strength of the Union does not come just from the subscriptions of the members. It comes from their active support. A rich Union with lazy members is much weaker than a poor Union with interested and active members.

It is the duty of the Members to take an active part in the affairs of the Union. If the members do not do so, then it is the duty of the Representatives and the Officials to find out why not, and to take action to make sure that the members do take part.

### KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.

The second big problem is this. The people who know most about what is happening inside the Union are the full-time Officials who work for the Union all day.





The people who know least about what is happening are the members. The Representatives know more than the members, but less than the Officials.

This means that if the Officials or the Representatives are bad or corrupt, they might still be able to hide it from the members. But this is not such a big danger if the members are active.

What is a bigger danger is that the Organisers and the **other** Officials may feel that they know everything and can tell the Representatives what to do. The Representatives may feel that they know more than the workers, so they must tell them what to do.

In this way, EITHER the workers stop listening to the Representatives and the Officials.

OR they fight with one another, and nobody will listen to anybody else.

OR the workers do what the Representatives or the Officials say, but without really understanding or agreeing with it.

All these three things are bad. They lead to a weak, divided Union. Instead of the workers running the Union, it becomes an AUTOCRACY with one leader who tells everybody what to do. Or it becomes BUREAUCRACY in which the Officials and the Representatives think that they know everything, and take no notice of the members.

#### ORGANISATION AND EDUCATION.

The only way to prevent this happening is through EDUCATION.

Education happens in two ways.

1. The Union must organise education programmes for its members;

- a. It should print pamphlets telling the workers what is happening in the Union. If it is big enough, it should try to start its own newspaper which can be used to educate the workers about their Union and about their industry.
- b. It should organise lectures for the workers, and special training programmes for shop stewards, executive members, and any other workers who want to know more about the Union.
- c. It should encourage as many of its members to take advantage of courses like the IIE Diploma in Industrial Relations.

2. The second way in which education happens is in the actual running of the Union.

Everything that happens in the Union must be used to help people to learn.

Solving workers' complaints must be used to teach the workers about how the Union operates, and about the laws.

If an Organiser feels that he or she knows better than the BEC members, then he or she must explain carefully so that the BEC members can also learn. It is no use simply saying "But I know better".

If the Representatives feel that the members do not understand what is happening, then they must use the Branch meetings to teach them about what is happening.

AND IT IS THE WORKERS WHO KNOW BEST WHAT THEIR PROBLEMS ARE. THE OFFICIALS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES MUST ALWAYS BE READY TO LEARN FROM THE WORKERS.

#### THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

We have seen that one of the most important jobs of a Union is education.

It must educate its Branch and Local Committee members so that they know how to run meetings, and what their jobs are.

It must train organisers.

It must train shop stewards about how to handle complaints and how to help the members.

It must educate all its members about the laws and about the agreements which lay down their wages and working conditions.

It must educate all its members about the importance of workers' solidarity, and about the problems which a Union faces.

Because education is such an important task of a Union, it is a good idea for each Union to set up a special EDUCATION COMMITTEE. The job of this education committee is to prepare a good education programme for the Union, and then to see that this education programme is carried out. To do this, the Education Committee must do three things:

1. It must decide what kind of education is most needed. Do the workers understand the Agreement? Do they understand the Grievance Procedure? Are there negotiations for a new agreement coming up, which might need special preparation of the members? The Committee must find these things out by talking to the most active members, and asking everybody what is most needed.
2. The Education Committee must find out what Resources there are which they can use in their education programme. Is there a room that they can use as a classroom near the factories, (perhaps a Church Hall)? What transport is there for workers coming to do the courses? Can institutions like the Institute for Industrial Education, or the Urban Training Project help? Are there any books which can be used for the education courses? Are there any films about trade union work, which can be borrowed from a Film Library? (The British

Embassy, and the United States Embassy and the Canadian Embassy all have Film Libraries from which free films can be borrowed).

3. Given the needs of the workers and the resources available, how can the education programmes best be run? Who should it be for? Who should do the teaching? How long should the course last? Should the union also produce or distribute special pamphlets explaining certain things?

Once all this has been done, then the Education Committee must present their programme to the union executive and to the members. If everybody agrees to it, then it is the job of the Education Committee to carry out the programme.

They must make sure that all the members know about it. They must find out how many people will be attending, so as to make sure that there will be enough space and enough books and other equipment.

They must make sure that the speakers come to the right place at the right time. They must explain carefully to the speakers what is needed from them.

They must attend the course themselves to make sure that everything goes off properly.

#### WORKERS EDUCATION.

There are number of institutions in South Africa which provide special education programmes for workers. These are:

Institute for Industrial Education (IIE)  
4 Central Court,  
125 Gale Street,  
Durban.

Urban Training Project.  
6th Floor, Executive House,  
27 West Street,  
JOHANNESBURG.

Workers Advice Project,  
9 Benbow Buildings, Beverley Str.,  
Athlone, CAPE TOWN.

Industrial Aid Society,  
306 Sacta House,  
277 Bree Street, JOHANNESBURG.

#### EDUCATE YOURSELF.

As an active trade unionist it is your duty also to educate yourself. You need to know about your industry, about the South African economy, and about South African society.

You should read the newspapers every day.

You should read the SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN. This is produced 10 times a year by the IIE. It has articles on trade union problems and strikes, labour laws, economics, and the history of worker organisations.

You should read books. The trouble with books is that it is difficult to know which ones to read. Also, many of the good books are written in a very difficult way, instead of in everyday language. And there are very few in African languages. However, the IIE is producing a series of books for workers.

Short History of Worker Organisations  
Workers' History of South Africa  
Workers' Legal Handbook  
The Worker, Wages and the Factory  
The Worker in Society  
Negotiation.

Apart from these, here is a list of other books which are quite cheap, very interesting, and not too difficult to read. Most of these books will have a BIBLIOGRAPHY at the end, in which further books are suggested.

#### ECONOMICS.

*Maurice Dobb - Wages* — (Cambridge University Press  
(Paperback)

This is a very good introduction to the question of what determines wages. If you want to read more on economics and wages, this is the book that you should begin with.

*Jan Pen -- Income Distribution -- (Penguin).*

This deals with the question of how it is that some people get bigger incomes than other people. It also tries to show how incomes could be made more equal.

*Jan Pen -- Modern Economics -- (Penguin).*

This book is about how the economy of a whole society works: about the relation between incomes, investment and employment.

*M. Kidron -- Western Capitalism Since the War -- (Penguin).*

This deals with recent changes in the economies of the USA and Western Europe.

*Joan Robinson -- Economic Philosophy -- (Penguin).*

This is about different theories of how the economy works.

#### TRADE UNIONS.

*Tony Lane -- The Union Makes Us Strong -- (Arro.) Books).*

This book gives a history of trade union movement in Britain, and talks about the problems facing workers today.

*Richard Hyman -- Strikes -- (Fontana).*

This is a very good little book about strikes, and about relations between workers and employers. Sometimes the language is a little bit difficult, but most of it is relatively easy.

*Huw Beynon -- Working for Ford -- (Penguin).*

This is a really excellent book. It is about workers in car factories in England.

There is not very much written about trade unions in South Africa. There is Clements Kadalie's autobiography

*"My Life and the ICU" (Frank Cass).* The IIE has produced a book on the Durban Strikes in 1973. It is called "The Durban Strikes". It contains a history of the strikes, interviews with workers and a discussion of what was said about the strikes by politicians. It ends with an explanation of the economic history which caused the strikes, and with a chapter on the importance of trade unions.

#### SOUTH AFRICA AND AFRICA.

Trade unionism is not only concerned with what happens in your own factory. It is also concerned with the place of workers in society. To understand this you have to know something about the history of your society. About Africa, there are many good books by Basil Davidson. The easiest is:

*Basil Davidson -- Introduction to African History -- (Allen & Unwin).*

Another is:

*Basil Davidson -- Africa in History -- (Paladin).*

On South Africa you should read:

*Eddie Roux -- Time Longer Than Rope -- (University of Wisconsin Press)*

This is a history of the black struggle in South Africa, and has a number of chapters about black trade unions.

*Denoon -- Southern Africa Since 1800 -- (Longmans).*

*L.M. Thompson -- African Societies in Southern Africa*  
This book is a little difficult, but it is very interesting. It deals with the history of some of the early societies in Southern Africa before the conquest.

*Peter Randall -- Power Privilege and Poverty -- (Sprocas)*

This book is about the South African economy.

During the next two years the IIE will be producing more books on trade unions and on South Africa. These books will be announced in the South African Labour Bulletin.

At the back of the book we have mentioned you will find a BIBLIOGRAPHY, which is a list of other books to read on the same subject. Once you have read all these books you can choose further books to read from these bibliographies. Also the SALB carries reviews of interesting new books.

#### BUYING OR BORROWING BOOKS.

Most of the books that we have mentioned are quite cheap. You should be able to find them in any big bookshop. But if the bookshop does not have the one you want, then you can ask them to order it for you. You must tell them the full name of the book, the writer and the publisher. We have put the name of the publisher after the title in the list above (e.g. Penguin).

Always remember to ask for the paperback edition. Many books are published in a cheap paperback edition, and a more expensive edition with a hard cover.

Even if you decide to buy some books, you should also try to borrow some books from a library. The IIE has its own library, and all the books that we have listed are in the IIE library. If you live outside Durban, you should try to join your nearest Provincial Library. If the library has not got a particular book, you can ask them to get it for you on inter-library loan. Most libraries are either free, or charge a few cents for a book. You can usually take a book away for two weeks. Most libraries also have a "reference" section, which will have things like dictionaries which you can use in the library. The reference section usually also has some magazines. For example, the Financial Mail is a bit expensive to buy (50c per week), but it is worth reading if you can find it in a library.

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