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THE AIM OF AZANIA WORKER

EDITORIAL

1. The struggle for national liberation in South Africa is a struggle against white domination and racial oppression of the majority black population. While domination and racism are inextricably woven into the economic development of capitalism in South Africa. The elimination of white domination and racism can only be dominated after the disappearance of capitalism. Thus the struggle for national liberation is a combined one with the struggle for socialism.

2. The leading role in the struggle for socialism is played by the working class. In South Africa at the present time, this role belongs to the black working class in industry, mining, agriculture and the domestic service of white households. The black workers and their families constitute not only a majority of the population but are also the most oppressed and most exploited section of the population and working class in South Africa.

3. The working class can only ensure its leading role in the combined struggle for national liberation and socialism through its own independent political working class organisation which expresses its specific political, economic and social demands. We thus fully support the project of creating an independent political organisation of the working class in South Africa.

4. An independent political organisation of the working class is necessary because: 1) without an organisation of their own the workers will never in their own name and interests be able to struggle for, assume and maintain power;

worker's power is a necessary condition for successful and meaningful social change that will bring an end to racism and capitalism and usher in a period of transition to socialism, an independent political working class organisation is the means by which the working class secures its interests and representation in any political conjuncture, now and in the future; 1) without an organisation of their own the workers will not be able to press within the popular and national liberation struggle the political, economic and social demands of the working class and other dominated classes: the example of many former colonial countries shows that the popular and national struggles often end by serving the interests of indigenous middle class elites rather than those of workers and other toiling classes.

5. An independent political organisation of the working class can only be created out of the political and trade union organisations and the various socialist currents which exist at the time. For this organisation to have deep roots and a mass base in the working class itself, it cannot be built in isolation from the working class and the organisations in which the workers presently find themselves, nor can it be built by any one socialist current in isolation from all others actively involved in workers' and mass struggles. There is a need, as a step towards the building of a working class organisation for all socialists to engage in discussion. Our Journal is offered as an

open medium of expression to all socialists actively involved in struggles, and remains non-sectarian in that it will publish contributions which may not agree with our own.

6. Without a change theory and practice of social change the working class can have no organisation worthy of its leading role. Our Journal is further offered as a forum in which socialists from all political currents within the trade unions, student and national liberation movements can contribute towards the development of a relevant theory and practice of social change, and in which they can exchange experiences and lessons drawn from present and past struggles.

7. In a world dominated by capitalism the struggle against capitalism is an international one. We cannot therefore conceive of a political organisation of the working class in South Africa in isolation from the organisations, experience and history of the working class and toiling masses in other countries of the world. We offer our Journal as a link between the struggle in South Africa and the struggles in other countries and, to this end, extend an invitation to socialists in other parts of the world to join us in developing a relevant theory and practice of social change and share with us their experiences of struggles in a manner relevant to the workers' struggle in South Africa. In particular we seek contributions of articles which will help in the understanding of questions such as race, class, culture, ideology, consciousness and subjectivity.

But classic conditions many never repeat themselves in South Africa under an era dominated by late capitalism. Yet, what is important now is for the working class to unite itself as a step towards an independent working class political organisation. Without the two forms of organisation the working class under capitalism has no way in which to struggle even for the barest survival, not to say of raising its own demands and securing its own interests and bringing an end to apartheid and capitalism. We are still a long way from the conclusion of the struggles which are currently underway. A great deal has still to be done. Organising and co-ordinating these struggles, clarifying the relationship between the trade union movement and the national liberation movement, so that the former does not founder on the rock of economism; educating the cadres in the history of the working class movement — a history which never reaches the school books and seldom the media.

In articles which appear in this first issue of our new journal, we try to begin this task. From the history of the ICU in the 1920's, which marked the high point of working class struggle in the first quarter of the century and from which we can draw valuable lessons, so that the mistakes can be avoided, and the positive gains of that great movement effectively absorbed, to articles which deal with the current situation and the ongoing struggles.

We also recognise that South Africa is not an isolated country at the tip of the African continent. Indeed, the crisis of the ruling class has been intensified by the development of the national liberation movement in Black Africa, especially in southern Africa. The successful armed

political struggles in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, has re-energised South Africa as the chief gendarme of imperialism, the main counter-revolutionary force in the region. It is using this position to resist the efforts of some of the imperialist powers (US, West Germany, France) who seek a Lancaster House type of solution in Namibia. The loss of Namibia would seriously hamper the destabilising efforts directed against Angola.

The establishment of radical black ruled states on South Africa's borders has re-vitalised the national liberation movement in South Africa. It has also caused panic within the ruling class and this is part of the crisis which it is now experiencing within its ranks. The objective conditions of the growth of a 'native' capitalism in South Africa, a capitalism which needs an extended home market and favourable conditions for expanding into the neighbouring countries, demands a change in the political relationship between the rulers and the ruled. This is required in an effort to contain the rising militancy of the black workers and the industrial field and in the national liberation movement. The political representatives of industrial and finance capital, represented in parliament by the Progressive Federal Party, and, increasingly, by the 'verliges' in the white (African) National Party recognise this need and are attempting to meet this by various measures, of which the new constitution is the main pillar. But the whites are to a large extent the prisoners of their own history. For centuries they have enjoyed a privileged way of life, privileges wrested out of the blood, sweat and tears of the black workers. Sections of the white population, represented by the Conservative Party and the Heresige National Party see a threat to their way of life by even the slightest concession to any section of the black people. This 'white backlash' is part of the crisis which besets the ruling class.

Workers struggles will decide

While the incursions struggles within the ruling class may make the headlines in the South African and world press, the decisive factor which is shaping the future of the country is the dynamic of the movement of the masses which began its resurgence in the 1970's after the defeat it suffered in the 1960's.

Black consciousness gave birth to new forms of struggle: community organisations; open politics despite laws to the contrary; a self-pride resulting in a greater determination to struggle even

under the most repressive conditions, a courage to stand up for principles even under threat of life imprisonment and death sentence; and, above all, a resolve to struggle from within the country rather than from exile. This is not to pay uncritical homage to black consciousness. In the practice of some of its high priests during the 70s, we saw how black consciousness can be manipulated to serve the interests of liberalism and the black middle classes. Nevertheless black consciousness is a way in which large sections of the black oppressed perceive the structures of white domination. To what extent this is so and whether socialists can relate black consciousness to their aims are areas of debate to which this journal hopes to open itself.

But the birth of black consciousness ushered in a renaissance of the mass movement, heralded by the struggles of the workers in 1972; then the uprisings in Soweto in 1976 which was characterised by the new forms of radicalisation among the youth and among the workers. The strikes in the winter of 1980, the battles against the uprooting of urban squatter townships and 'repartition' to the 'townships' and 'participation' to the centre of gravity of the struggle to the working class. This now confronts the white power structure on two levels. One is around the economic demands and the other the fight to secure trade union recognition.

Rise of the trade unions

The rapid growth of the new trade union movement has given rise to many questions which are the subject of important debates within the movement. The question of registration, that of industrial councils, the raising of directly political demands — these are issues which will be dealt with in the current and future issues of our journal. But, fundamentally, they can only be resolved through the most broadly-based discussion within the movement itself. It is not the purpose of this journal, as we shall make clear a little later, to lay down, from above, lines to be followed inside by the living movement. The South African working class have already paid dearly as a result of this type of 'leadership'. Our only hope is that while we maintain an active presence in the struggle we will be able to participate in the discussions and contribute to the development of appropriate strategies and tactics.

The world of labour

As we have already stated, South Africa is not insulated from the rest of the world. Through its control of the media,

Contents	
The aim of Azania Worker	2
Editorial	3
Prospects of trade union unity	5
— Rose Innes Phaale	
Revolution in the Caribbean	14
— Caro Bivanho	
Trade unions and the struggle against oppression and exploitation in South Africa	17
— Dora Katzis	
Is there a non-capitalist road	23
— Harry Magdoff	
History of the ICU	25
— Sipho Buthezi	

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however, through its restrictions of foreign travel by militants, and by every means it has in its power, the apartheid regime tries to 'shield' the working masses from access to what is happening in large parts of the world, especially in those areas where the anti-imperialist struggles have achieved a measure of success.

South Africa is part of the wider world, a world still largely dominated by the great industrial powers — US, European and Japanese imperialism. They extract super-profits, not only from South Africa but from most of the countries which are commonly referred to as 'Third World' countries.

We still recall, with a glow in our hearts, the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people which brought the mightiest of all imperialist powers to its knees. The effect of that magnificent victory has had an almost catalytic effect on the people of the United States which even today imposes caution on Washington as it feels its way to new adventures in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East.

The triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 and the establishment of the first workers' state in the Western Hemisphere, right on the doorstep of the heartland of imperialism, was a victory, not only for the Cuban people, but like the victory in Vietnam, a big step forward for all the oppressed people in the world. To these two victories we owe the survival of the Angolan revolution. For

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tonal labour movement to rally to their support.

What happens in South Africa is pivotal to the future of the whole of southern Africa and, ultimately, the whole continent. When the people of South Africa, under the leadership of the politically organised working class, take power out of the hands of their white exploiters and begin the giant task of transforming the state from an instrument of oppression into an instrument of liberation — that will be a crushing blow which will send the whole imperialist system reeling. This giant task can only become a reality through the mass struggle.

No journal, however well-written and good-intentioned can supplant the leadership which must come out of the ranks of the workers themselves. We can only offer our pages as a forum for the ideas which the on-going struggle will ferment. Our aim is to be non-sectarian but to serve the movement as a whole. Unconditional commitment to the struggle in South Africa, however, does not exclude but demands critical debate. We will exercise our right of criticism constructively. It goes without saying that our readers in South Africa and abroad, have the same right and duty to criticise us and we hope they will do so. Any attempt to stifle free discussion can only be harmful to our movement and a block to ultimate victory.

FORWARD TO A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST AZANIA!

PROSPECTS FOR TRADE UNION UNITY

— Rose Innes Phaale

The emergence of the black independent trade union movement inside South Africa has developed along three relatively distinct tendencies. These are constituted by the two federations CUSA and FOSATU and, outside of these, a large group which, because they are not affiliated to either CUSA or FOSATU, has come to be known as the unaffiliated trade unions.

These distinctions, however, are far too simple to rely upon. Each union and each federation is not a monolith; each represents a complex unity allowing for a great deal of overlap in respect of certain aspects of policy and principles. It is often the case, particularly with the unaffiliated unions, that the shared principles within the tendency are not adhered to in the same way by each member union — some members having a flexible, while others a rigid interpretation of principles. Not even CUSA, as a federation, acts as a co-ordinator of its affiliated unions. As a result CUSA has not been able to state its position on many issues which affect the trade union movement. In contrast, the unions affiliated to FOSATU all act under a coherent set of principles.

A recent article in the community newspaper *Grassroots* asked if there was no basis for unity for all the independent unions. The prospects for unity are not as pessimistic as would appear. The degree of overlap and flexibility in matters of policy and principles is sufficient which to negotiate a basis for unity involving the majority of the unions. Already there is a large measure of cooperation at some practical levels between most of the independent unions. More important, there have been four summit talks involving nearly all the independent unions in a search for unity. The community newspaper remarked that 'today, there is no one federation which could claim to be truly representative of all the independent trade unions in the country. This remark was made in an allusion to the 'South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU)' which, in its days, might justifiably have made such a claim. Today, all the members of the independent trade union movement have felt and addressed themselves to the question of unity as an urgent task because as the community newspaper pointed out:

There is the need for the trade union movement to strengthen itself against attempts by the state and the bosses to divide it; a united labour movement will give workers a voice; workers

need the support of fellow unions in their fight against the bosses who are adopting a hard line approach; competition between unions and organising against each other could be eliminated; the organisation of the unorganised and the strengthening of existing unions is another priority.

At the first summit conference held in Langa, Cape Town, on 8 August 1981, the independent unions went a long way to establishing a basis for common action. All the delegates resolved that their unions are subject to control by no body other than their own members; they agreed to support each other in defiance of the legal restrictions on giving support to striking workers; they all rejected the present Industrial Council system and agreed to support each other in resisting employer pressure to participate on the Industrial Councils. All the unions at the summit were unanimous in their condemnation of the banning and detention of trade unionists in South Africa and the harassment of union members by the Soble brothers in the Ciskei. To give effect to these resolutions the summit agreed to organise ad hoc solidarity action committees in each region. These resolutions made the prospects for unity a little more optimistic. What then are the obstacles to unity?

On 24-25 April 1982 a second unity summit was held in Johannesburg. This time the unions came together to work out a basis for establishing a permanent working alliance. They agreed to aim towards the creation of one unified movement. Some unions expressed reservations to the FOSATU proposal to form a 'tight federation based on "disciplined unity" in which there would be binding policy on affiliates and joint organisational machinery' (Plant and Ward, *Black Trade Unions in South Africa*, p17). But this did not stop the delegates from agreeing to pursue their search for unity. They would continue consultations on unity in regional solidarity groups — a move intended to give opportunity to rank and file members to express their views on unity. The progress of these consultations was to be reviewed at a mini-summit with a smaller number of delegates in attendance.

The mini-summit followed in June and took place in Port Elizabeth. 'Great hopes were raised', said *Grassroots* in looking at the year during which these summits were held. 'There were specialisms that at least a united labour movement was in sight ... But these hopes were short-lived. The unity talks broke down... "There was no basis for unity at this stage", said trade unionists after the

meeting. And, at this point, a united labour movement seems a step or two out of reach'.

The statement, coming from a community newspaper, reflects the tremendous pressure for unity from the independent unions and community organisations alike. Under such pressure no one expected the talks would end in a total breakdown. Adding to the frustrations, it appeared then that the talks would never be resumed.

But, if the hopes for unity were short-lived, so too was the feeling of despair. Because a fourth summit did follow, held on 9-10 April 1983, and hopes for unity have once again been raised. The two federations, eleven unaffiliated unions and CUSA-affiliated CCWAUSA took part in the summit. FOSATU, CCWAUSA and the unaffiliated unions SAAWU, GAWU, CTMWA, FCWU and AF-CWU decided in principle to form a new federation. To this end, they constituted themselves into a 'feasibility committee' to work out the details of uniting. CUSA joined the committee subsequently. The other unaffiliated unions MGWU, MACWUSA, GWAUSA, EAWU and OGWU decided to take the proposals back to their members for consultations before committing themselves to a new federation.

The agreement to work out details for a unified labour movement represents a formidable breakthrough. That not all the unaffiliated unions have committed themselves to a new federation shows they do not all invariably act in unison. Their behaviour at previous summits bears this out as well.

After the third, summit, FOSATU complained that 'certain unions, among them MACWUSA, SAAWU, GWAUSA, SATAWU, and the BMWU (now renamed MGWU — RP), had met before the meeting and decided to raise issues which they knew would disrupt the talks' and that 'the actions of these unions have dealt a serious setback to the possibility of unity among South Africa's oppressed workers' (*Pravda Workers News*, Sept 1982). All these are unaffiliated unions. At the second summit MACWUSA walked out of the talks. At the end of the fourth summit, FOSATU released a press statement in which it 'condemned the confusion and misinformation caused by MACWUSA press statements in Port Elizabeth. Such activities did not benefit workers and would do nothing to build unity' (18.4.83). MACWUSA is a breakaway from AWU which, following a merger with NUMMAROSA, was renamed NAAWU, a FOSATU affiliate. This explains some of the acrimonious exchange between MACWUSA and FOSATU, and that between them may



lie even greater obstacles to unity.

The significance of all this is the capacity of the unaffiliated unions to act independently of one another even though they are represented as a single tendency. For example, MACWUSA walks out of the talks while the others sit through them. Also, whatever decisions, if any, were taken at the private caucus before the third summit, it is clear that SAAWU has not regarded them as binding — else SAAWU would not alone from that caucus have committed itself already at the fourth summit to join FOSATU and other unions in the practical task of laying a basis for unity. In respect to unity and other issues, the actions of CCAWUSA are also noteworthy to the extent that it acts independently of its affiliation to CUSA. The CCAWUSA represented itself at the fourth summit and, well in advance of CUSA, committed itself to unity and membership of the feasibility committee.

But why has a basis for unity been so elusive? According to *Grassroots* there were two burning issues which resulted in the breakdown of the third talks in Port Elizabeth. These are the questions of registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1979 and participation in the Industrial Council system. Mentioned only in passing by *Grassroots* is another issue which played a part in the breakdown of the talks. This concerns the relationship of the unions to community organisations and the popular struggle for national liberation. The unaffiliated unions have built a reputation of being more militant politically as they raise extra-industrial demands and work in closer association with community organisations. They see FOSATU as taking a narrow view of trade unionism. In the view of FOSATU the issue is posed problematically: to what extent should a trade union involve itself in political struggles at any given point in time? CUSA has not been outspoken on this issue although it has had official representation at the last two annual congresses of the Azanian People's Organisation.

Registration
With regard to registration the three tendencies are differentiating from each other along the following lines. First, the opposition of the unaffiliated unions to registration takes the form of a refusal to apply for registration, a position which some opponents have pejoratively called boycotts. Within this camp, though, are two unions which are a residue of the SACTU legacy, the African PCWU and the FCWU. Though both are non-racial by declaration, one organises 'African' workers and the other 'Coloured' workers. Both are also opposed to registration but the PCWU is a registered union in terms of pre-1979 industrial



legislation which was even more explicitly racist than present legislation. That within a tendency as strongly imprinted by an anti-racist and anti-registration stand there are two unions, one registered, whose racial split is in fact a historical effect of registration itself proves that this tendency is not an inflexible monolith. Given the progressive nature of the FCWU unions their racial split is not one incapable of resolution. FOSATU provides an example in one of its affiliates: NAAWU is an amalgamation of a registered 'Coloured' and an unregistered 'African' union in the motor assembly industry. But the point to emphasise is that the accommodation of a registered union by the anti-registration unions means that they are open to accommodation with the registered affiliates of FOSATU. At least for some the registration *per se* cannot prevent them from co-existing with registered unions in a wider federation.

FOSATU and CUSA adopt a contrary attitude to registration. Neither is opposed to registration of their affiliates under the Act. They nevertheless represent two separate approaches. FOSATU views registration as a tactic. CUSA, if only because it has not spelt or argued out what tactical advantage registration means for the black workers, has a simplistic and mildly critical position. In a policy statement it issued in July 1982: CUSA believes that the present registration procedure imposed on independent Black trade unions is an attempt to control them. The CUSA unions opted for registration under protest in the post-Wicham legislative changes as an indication of their bona fides to assist in the creation of sound industrial relations in the country. CUSA endorses the stand of member unions which have decided not to register. The Council would like to see, and has made representations to

that effect, to the Director-General of the Department of Manpower Utilisation that the registration process be removed from the present labour legislation. In its place a simple certification procedure be instituted which would entail the applicant union to deposit a copy of its constitution to the registrar upon which a certificate would be issued to the union. The effect of this would be to give the union legal competence to act for and on behalf of its members (SALB Dec 1982, Vol 8 No 3, pp69-70).

That sums up in total the position of CUSA on registration. In so far as the statement confesses 'bona fides to assist in the creation of sound industrial relations', it marks CUSA as a separate political tendency at variance with FOSATU and the unaffiliated unions like SAAWU and MACWUSA. The statement betrays a widely held view that CUSA represents a reformist current within the independent trade union movement. The reformism can sometimes be inferred from uncritical but factual observations made such as, for example, that CUSA has international links, particularly via the African American Labour Centre in Botswana. At its inaugural meeting the United States regional labour officer in South Africa welcomed the formation of the Council in what was reported to be a 'key speech' (p3, Information Paper No16, UK Labour Party International Department, Jan 1981).

Even so, the policy statement of CUSA does attest to the presence of unions within CUSA whose opposition to registration takes the form of a refusal to register and have thus adopted a position similar to that of the unaffiliated unions. The affiliates of CUSA vary also in their degree of militancy, the CCAWUSA begin more militant than

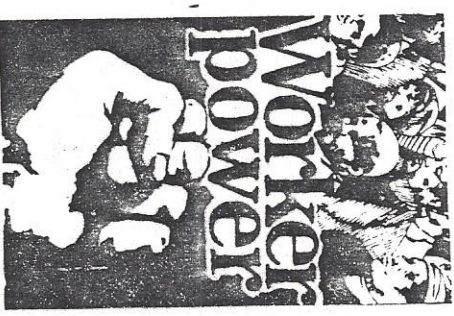
the others and tending to cooperate more closely with unions outside and to the left of CUSA. Here, too, are symptoms of a broad tendency indicating anything but a monolithic alliance.

In contrast to CUSA, the FOSATU position in regard to registration, as Fine, De Clercq and James (Hereafter referred to as FDI, SALB Sep 1981, Vol 7 Nos 182, pp39-68, also in *Capital & Cads* No 15) correctly state, is 'based on a far more complicated and contradictory analysis of the advantages and facilities it brings to black workers'. By rejecting registration as an end/FOSATU has not necessarily rejected registration as a means. Viewing registration as a tactical, FOSATU has developed a highly sophisticated approach to the question of strategy and tactics, and has in this way commended itself to some of the militant unaffiliated unions.

But, it must be emphasised, the FOSATU position has developed in the process of struggle. It is not a position which FOSATU held in 1979 when it decided to recommend registration. This can be seen from a statement issued in 1980 by the Western Province General Workers Union (now renamed GWU), one of the protagonists of anti-registration. The WPGWU lamented the fact that unions which have taken the serious step of applying for registration — in obvious reference to FOSATU because only the FOSATU unions could have taken the serious step — had not responded to a memorandum which they had hoped would initiate debate on the question of registration (SALB Mar 1980, Vol 5 Nos 6&7, p77). Writing a year later, FDI also noted that 'the unfortunate features of the debate so far are that the reasons why FOSATU has taken this position to apply for registration — RPJ have been scarcely articulated' (emphasis added). A similar criticism is made of the other side, namely that 'the theoretical basis for an alternative strategy' to boycott has barely been spelt out.

The article by FDI and the responses to it go a long way to filling the void. In particular, the argument by FDI that 'between the state's intentions and their realisation in practice falls a shadow: the struggle of the workers certainly leads greater sophistication to the FOSATU position. This argument is an advance on the initial FOSATU position when the registration was seen as means to test the racist intention of the 1979 amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act and, more pragmatically, as a tactic to deny advantage to the docile parallel unions of the racist TUCSA. The Act required unions to prove their representativeness as a condition to registration. FOSATU rightly feared that the employers' would facilitate the 'representativeness' of the

parallel unions and even set up company unions in order to prevent the formation of independent unions. TUCSA and the parallel unions uncritically accepted the amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act as a victory. The threat from the parallel unions, an extremely important factor prompting other unions to seek registration... is how the WPGWU (SALB Mar 1980, Vol 5 Nos 6&7) and others saw FOSATU's position at the time.



Other unions in the unaffiliated, anti-registration camp have become more understanding of FOSATU's position. Certainly, this change accompanies the change in FOSATU's own position as it has progressed from a simple, pragmatic tactic to a highly sophisticated strategy recognising that plant-based struggles and working class struggles can thwart the intention and alter drastically the implementation of industrial relations legislation. Thus Johnson Mphahuma, chairperson of the unaffiliated GWU (ex-WPGWU) which once spearheaded the criticism of FOSATU's position, could say at the conclusion of a meeting with FOSATU that their differences over registration is 'a minor thing which can be overcome in future' (SALB Dec 1982, Vol 8 No 3, p80). This is the view of the majority of anti-registration unions which increasingly do not see differences on such matters as registration as an insurmountable barrier to unity.

First, in a further amendment to the Act the government has made all but one of the requirements under the Act equally applicable to registered and unregistered unions alike. Except for submitting any changes in the union's constitution to the Registrar for approval, union officials in an unregistered union are also now required to supply the names of the officials in the union, fill in a form once a year which reflects the union membership, and submit audited financial statements. This nullifies much of the argument that non-registration has the advantage of immunity from any form of state control. Besides, FOSATU has always made clear that it will never relinquish control of its affiliates by members on the shop-floor to the state. Second, the prohibition regarding affiliation to a political organisation by a registered union cannot under present statute apply to the independent unions of black workers. In terms of the law a political organisation is defined as a party engaged in electoral parliamentary politics. The prohibition is therefore a control which does not apply to even a voteless independent trade union of workers black workers. Finally, a third control which the anti-registration unions feared was that the Registrar would force the incorporation of a registered union into the Industrial Council system. On this fear FOSATU has replied that the alleged in-availability of participation in Industrial Councils once registration had been conferred was proved groundless by the leading part played by FOSATU unions in rejecting the present Industrial Council system' (1982 FOSATU annual congress report). Critical of the system, FOSATU has nevertheless formulated a policy — looked at below — to which it will subordinate its affiliated unions' participation on any Industrial Council. The vindication of FOSATU can only contribute to diminishing or making academic the differences between the registered and unregistered unions. But it is vindication only so far. Not to see how controls could be applied would be taking no account of the capacity of the state not only to close loopholes in the present legislation but also clamp down very heavily on all forms of trade union activity and leave no shadow between registration and its implementation for considerably long periods of time! Fortunately the unions are not blind to the state's propensity for brutal repression. At their first summit they agreed to sup-

port each other against actions taken by the state to detain union leaders and harass union members. They demonstrated their greatest solidarity action when they organised a national political stoppage to mourn the death in detention of Neil Aspin. More and more the independent are realising that to a large extent, registered or unregistered, they really all are in the 'same boat'. In this situation the pressure for a unified labour movement becomes greater and irresistible.

Industrial Councils

Upon registration it becomes possible for a trade union to participate in an Industrial Council. In each industry an Industrial Council is constituted by law to comprise one representative from each of the registered unions in the industry and an equal number of employer representatives. This alone means that the representatives of independent trade unions can never win in any division taken to a vote, particularly as the white unions will vote with the employers against the black unions. In the event of a deadlock the dispute is referred to an Industrial Court whose findings have the force of law and are thus binding on the unions.

The independent trade unions see Industrial Councils as a state and employer regulated system whose major effect is to remove bargaining away from the shop-floor and place it in the hands of employers in consultation with union bureaucrats. The system is seen as subversive of the strong sense of shop-floor democracy and participation with which the independent trade unions have emerged. Under the system the workers can not have influence or any interventionist role to play when wage negotiations are taking place. Wages are regulated in agreements covering an entire industry. The negotiations take place once a year and at considerable distances away from the factories so that union representatives are not in a position to consult with and obtain instructions from their members. The whole system lends itself to bureaucratisation because democratic representation of the workers is replaced by expert representation. As MWASA stated: 'This system of Industrial Councils stands for everything which we are against. It takes the struggle out of the hands of the workers into the hands of union officials. It takes away the struggle from the factory floor to the boardrooms of management. This is the system of management control over the workforce. Is this what we have been struggling for' (Kwasa, June 1982).

It is not clear how CUSA sees the Industrial Council system. Its policy document (SALB Dec 1982, Vol 8 No 3, pp68-72) is silent on the ICs. However, its affiliate the recently formed and fast

growing National Union of Mineworkers has stated it will not seek representation on an IC (*Finance Week* Mar 1983).

The most outspoken views from Industrial Councils have come from FOSATU and the unaffiliated unions. The attitude of the unaffiliated unions to ICs is a logical corollary of their anti-registration stand. They are opposed to participation on the ICs; their unregistered status and refusal to have anything to do with state structures also rule out the possibility of participation. But with regard to state structures both SAAWU and MWASA have recently shown how flexible they can become when they each applied to a court of law to reinstate workers fired during work stoppages (*Rand Daily Mail*, 9.5.83).

The only answer to our problems -



UNITY AND ORGANISATION!!

Beyond agreeing with the unaffiliated unions in the criticism of ICs, FOSATU has a view which differentiates it from them. For FOSATU, as on registration, criticism of or struggle against the system has not implied its boycott:

FOSATU has repeatedly rejected unrepresentative industrial councils. When unions are representative of workers in their industry, and where workers retain democratic control over negotiations, industrial councils can be made to work to the workers' benefit! (emphasis added).

This is true of the Automobile Assembly Industrial Council in the Eastern Cape where the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers, for the first time in South Africa, won the right to a living wage.

But in most cases, the newly registered and non racial trade unions do not represent a majority of workers in the industry, and the industrial council acts to set wages throughout the industry at a uniformly low level (from *Fosatu Workers News*, Aug 1981, quoted in SALB Vol 7 No 3, Nov 1981, p15).

Thus FOSATU is not opposed to participation in an Industrial Council provided two criteria are met: first, the union participating in an IC must be representative of all workers or a major-

ity of them in the industry, and second, the workers must retain democratic control over negotiations. 'Only when workers can match the employers' strength in a powerful national industrial union, will major gains be won. Only then will industry-wide bargaining make sense', concluded the above statement by FOSATU. The policy towards ICs was reiterated in FOSATU's annual report for 1981:

With one exception (NAAWU), FOSATU unions are at present not representative of the majority of workers in their industries. To form an industrial council in these circumstances would mean committing a majority of workers in the industry to an agreement in which they had no say, and accord ill with the usual employer demands that unions prove their representativeness to be recognised in individual factories' (SALB Vol 7 Nos 4&5, Feb 1982, p110).

NAAWU, so renamed after a merger involving NUMAWOSA, took over the latter's seat on the East Cape Motor Assemblies Industrial Council. It maintained then that its seat can be used as an instrument for 'democratic wage negotiations' (SALB Nov 1981, Vol 7 No 3, p10). But NAAWU subsequently walked out of the IC in a pre-emptive strike against management who were referring a dispute to arbitration by an Industrial Court (*KWASA*, Oct 1982, p11). The court's findings would have been binding on NAAWU and would possibly have left the workers on the shop-floor with no other course of action. In this way NAAWU demonstrated how shop-floor democracy can be maintained while participating in an IC. Nor has NAAWU slammed the door on the IC because afterwards it stated it may return to the IC (*Fosatu Workers News*, Sep 1982).

During 1983 a second FOSATU affiliate took the step of joining an IC. MAWU has enjoyed phenomenal growth to become representative of a large section of black workers in the metal industry and is now the largest FOSATU affiliate. It thus satisfies FOSATU's two criteria for participation in an IC, and has accordingly joined the IC for the Iron and Steel Industry. MAWU sees its entry into the IC as a 'key change in tactics' and a 'new era of mass mobilisation'. It sees this as a tactic to 'confront employers on all levels - factory, company, regionally and nationally'. It could be argued that the employers put pressure on MAWU to join the IC. MAWU has not been free from such pressure (SALB Sep 1982, Vol 8 No 1, p74), particularly because it has won widespread recognition agreements

from employers in the metal industry. But it has set itself a standard against which its positions on the IC will always be measured - that is it will not 'sacriste the clear principles on which the union was founded in 1973: shop-floor based, worker control, worker mandates and non-racialism' (MAWU Newsletter, Mar 1983).

Thus a difference which emerges within the independent trade unions is that the unaffiliated unions reject the ICs in 100% while FOSATU qualifies conditions under which participation in the ICs can be acceptable. It is a difference which contributed to the breakdown of the earlier summits. The unaffiliated MAWUSA walked out of the second summit on the grounds, among others, that they refused to participate any further in meetings which included registered unions or unions on industrial councils' (*Fosatu Worker News*, May 1982). But this is not an attitude shared by all the unaffiliated unions. After a meeting with FOSATU the chairperson of the unaffiliated GWU said 'our differences over ICs were not so important. In meeting together, FOSATU also brought us some good advice, especially on this question of ICs' (SALB Dec 1982, Vol 8 No 3, p80). It is clear that the GWU does not take as inflexible a stand as MAWUSA on the question of ICs, though both unions belong to the unaffiliated tendency. It is also worth noting that it was the GWU along with the unaffiliated union FCWU which played the lead role in convening the fourth summit. These are very important signals that within the unaffiliated group of trade unions there are unions which do not now see differences over registration and ICs as a barrier to unity, and that the search for unity will continue in earnest.

Political Questions

Public debate as to the extent to which each union or federation of unions sees itself intervening in the political struggle for national emancipation is not encouraged by the conditions of political representation under which the unions are emerging. It behoves us, in discussing these questions from outside the trade unions and the country, to exercise the greatest self-restraint. The unions have themselves not engaged in any extensive public debate on this question. As to where each union stands exactly in relation to the various currents in the national liberation movement can usually be inferred from the various popular causes and platforms with which union leaders associate themselves. The unaffiliated unions have from their inception identified with black consciousness or the resurgent support for the ANC inside the country or both, and CUSA is increasingly associating itself with both currents. It is precisely on the relation-

ship of the workplace to the community, the trade union to the community organisation, and the working class to the popular struggle for liberation that the sharpest differences have emerged between FOSATU and the other independent unions. These differences pre-date the summit talks. But a difference which emerged within the summit talks relates to FOSATU's proposal for a structured unity of the independent trade unions.

Community and Popular Struggles: The unions which have spoken most vehemently for a link between themselves and community organisations are within the unaffiliated camp. Indicating that a trade union can divorce itself from the struggles of the community, a member of SAAWU expressed it thus:

SAAWU is a trade union dealing with workers who are part and parcel of the community. Transport, rents to be paid, are also worker issues... The problems of the workplace go outside the workplace. If you are underpaid it goes at home or the community (SALB Vol 7 Nos 4&5, Feb 1982, p40).

Many observers have noted that most of the unaffiliated unions originate within black consciousness either as a development or a breakaway. These origins have also been noted as an influence on their attitude to community organisations. Jeremy Keenan, for example, remarked on the people who helped organise the Black Municipal Workers Union:

Some of these people, both Council employees and their friends, were closely associated with Black Consciousness organisations, with the result that the general position that emerged... and which was to characterise that of the BMWU itself

bore traces of Black Consciousness ideology - although it must be emphasised that this position was by no means an undisputed position. This helps explain the BMWU's more political approach to labour, its emphasis on community links and issues, and its independent position in relation to other black trade union organisations' (SALB Vol 6 No 7, May 1981, p9).

Similar terms can be used to characterise other unaffiliated unions, particularly the most politicised among them - SAAWU and MAWUSA. SAAWU is a breakaway from a union dominated by a right wing form of black consciousness. MAWUSA was formed as a result of a breakaway from a FOSATU affiliate precisely because of a community issue intervening in the workplace. This episode is worth recounting in some detail because more than any other it earned FOSATU the criticism of being non-political. Thozamile Botha, an employee at Ford's Strandale assembly plant, resigned his job because, he said, his white supervisor put pressure on him to give up leadership of the Port Elizabeth Black Community Organisation (PEB-CO). At the time, PEBCO was a militant and black consciousness organisation. The response of the black workers in the plant was to strike to protest the resignation. As a result Botha was re-employed. The workers then staged further strikes in protest against the racist attitudes of white workers in the plant. When Ford dismissed 700 striking workers in the Cortina plant, the workers turned not to their union the VAW, a union recognised by Ford but to PEBCO to lead them. Ford agreed to negotiate with PEBCO provided the VAW was present. However, apart from demanding the reinstatement of union members, the VAW refused to cooperate on the grounds that 'this would implicate the



union in the unrest' and the national organiser of the UAW said 'the union regarded this week's strike as political and its move to have union members re-employed was to keep politics out of the factory' (SALB Vol 5 Nos 6&7, Mar 1980, p52).

Freddie Sauls, secretary of NLMAR-WOSA, the UAW's sister union at the time, said that the 'walkout was not connected with a work-related problem' (WIP 11, Feb 1980, p15).

Statements such as these led to FOSATU being accused of 'ignoring politics in favour of narrow factory concerns' (quoted in *The Guardian*, London, 16.4.82). Nicols described the attitude as a 'ban on politics' and stated that

one should not gauge FOSATU's attitudes to these questions from the actions of the UAW alone, but the UAW is an important member of FOSATU, with a membership of well over 10,000 spread all over South Africa and these statements have gone unrepudiated. This attitude to politics seems to command support within FOSATU as a whole (SALB, *ibid*).

A consequence of these statements which reflects FOSATU's role in a community-based issue making its presence felt at the workplace is the acrimony existing between FOSATU and, in particular, MACWISA to this day, and contributing to a breakdown of some of the unity summits.

Politically inept as these statements were when they were made, they conceal beneath them a political position consistent with FOSATU's project of a working class political movement. The position was elaborated to some extent by Joe Foster in his address as general secretary to the 1982 FOSATU annual congress. It is a position in process of development in the same way as FOSATU's position on registration and Industrial Councils developed from a pragmatic tactic to a sophisticated strategy. That it is a process can be seen by comparing Foster's address with an interview Freddie Sauls gave in reply to criticisms over the NLMAR-WOSA/UAW stand in the conflict at Ford: the more elaborate position enunciated by Foster in 1982 appears in embryonic form in the course of Sauls' interview in 1980 (Foster's address is reproduced in SALB Vol 7 No 8, Jul 1982 and in *Review of African Political Economy* No 24; and Sauls' interview is in SALB Vol 6 Nos 2&3, Sep 1980, pp53-65).

The significance of the evolution of FOSATU's positions is that they are not *ad hoc* positions. They are either fully worked out beforehand or in process of

being worked out. Either way, they are worked out in conjunction with workers and tested in practice or tempered by experience. In the interview Sauls says that the position in the Ford dispute resulted from discussions they had held with groups of workers as far back as 1971. This and other positions are dictated by what FOSATU perceives as an immediate task to build strong democratic trade unions as a means to enhance the emergence of a working class political movement. Such a movement FOSATU sees as necessary if the working class is to have any influence on, and its interests are to be secured by, the national liberation struggle. To achieve this end, FOSATU seems to have been prepared to forego some popularity in the short term and incur the charge of being non-political. Strong trade unions have to be built as a necessary foundation upon which to develop a working class political movement. Under conditions of extreme political repression, the prospects of trade unions being strangled at birth are very real. FOSATU has thus not engaged in a populism which would provoke strangulation by the state and prevent the building, while there was opportunity, of strong unions able to withstand attacks from the state and employers. It is a political tight rope FOSATU has had to walk. The political positions of FOSATU, both in the short and long term, can be worked out from Sauls' interview and Foster's address.

Sauls says that 'Botha was not a union member, he never supported the union'. Nor was Botha given the sack by Ford. He resigned because of what he saw as a pressure from a white supervisor. His resignation became an issue which affected other workers, and so the union backed not only his re-employment but also the workers' claim for lost earnings or the dismissal of the supervisor. But, when the workers were paid and Botha re-employed, Sauls says that 'what is important is that the guy goes back to work, to an unchanged situation in the very same department, with the very same people. Did management agree to change their attitude and allow him time off to pursue his political activities? The information received was that there was no such agreement'. In other words, the working class was made to expend its militancy over an issue which brought no advancement in the employment conditions of either the workers or non-unionist Botha.

Sauls rebuts the accusation that FOSATU is not political. He emphatically says that we *are* involved in politics, we are working in a context where laws are operating, laws affecting us as workers where we live and where we work. So we cannot isolate ourselves from politics. But those who say the unions must be involved in politics not give answers to the questions 'what politics? What must we become involved in?'. The lack of answers by the accusers

of FOSATU shows that they have not given thought to the problem beyond union involvement in party political and community organisations. What Sauls is alluding to is that these organisations are dominated by non-working class elements. As a result they do not articulate the specific class interests of workers. They pursue a populist or populist struggle to which the interests of the non-working class elites are articulated to give an appearance that all classes have the same interests. In this struggle the workers submerge their identity, interests and demands to those of a popular front alliance of all classes. The character of these struggles when they terminate is that the workers remain powerless, with little or no gain, and without an independent organisation to carry on the struggle for workers' power.

Sauls is calling into question the quality of politics in which workers are being urged to participate simply by virtue of being members of an oppressed majority. The primary objective at the present time, according to Sauls, is to unite the workers by working in the union movement and to build solidarity and proceed step by step to improve on the demands of the workers'. When the workers choose to identify or work with any political organisation then they will decide what interest is paramount to them and what should be pursued by any party political organisation'.

The place of the workers' struggle in relation to party political organisation is a question enlarged upon by Foster in his address. FOSATU, he asserted, has 'no intention of becoming self-satisfied trade unionists incapable of giving political direction to the workers' struggle'. FOSATU is concerned with the militancy and aspirations of the workers which must be used to 'build a just and fair society controlled by the workers'. It must build large and effective unions. But neither a large number of strikes nor a large size of trade unions can in themselves mean that a working class politics or movement exists, or guarantee that workers will have control in a new society. Whilst there is undoubtedly a large and growing working class its power is only a potential power since as yet it has no definite social identity of itself as working class'.

There are cogent reasons why a working class political movement has not emerged in South Africa. Foster points to racism, violence, injustices and velleities. In fact of all these there has thus arisen 'a very powerful tradition of populist or populist politics'. In such a historical situation 'a great alliance of all classes is both necessary and a clear political strategy'. This shows that FOSATU is not opposed to populist or populist organisations among which is

included community organisations. 'That FOSATU should be involved in community activities is correct since our members form the major part of those communities', Foster says.

But worker involvement in both community and party political organisations is not as unproblematical as is made out by those who accuse FOSATU of being non-political. Nor is the community a homogeneous group. 'All communities are composed of different interest groups and for a worker organisation to ally itself with every community group or action would be suicide for worker organisation'. For worker intervention to be effective in community politics and in the national arena of party political organisation the workers must do so from an organisational base of their own.

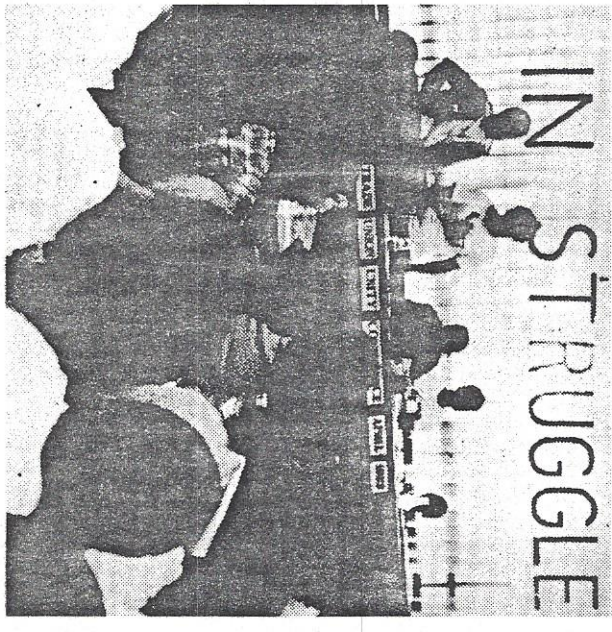
It is, therefore, essential that workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even whilst they are a part of the wider popular struggle. This organisation is necessary to protect and further worker interests and to ensure that the populist movement is not hijacked by elements who will in the end have no option but to turn against their worker supporters'.

Both Foster and Sauls see a space within which it is possible and necessary to lay a basis for a working class political movement. In his address Foster refers to a 'growing gap between popular politics and the power of capital'. Popular politics has developed around opposition to the blatant injustices of apartheid, Afrikanerdom and the government provided a facade behind which capital could hide itself and not be confronted in struggle. The liberal ideologists helped to shield capital by arguing that apartheid is an irritant aberration to a capitalist society and that, consequently, racial discrimination would disappear with the advancement of capitalism. Thus, it is apartheid, not capital, which has been the focus of popular struggles. Even black consciousness and the new forms of struggle in the 70s did not attack capital; they simply resuscitated the old populist politics of resistance. Not only is capitalist apartheid's greatest beneficiary, but hiding behind apartheid, capital grew more powerful, changing its very nature into a more monopolistic, technological, advanced and concentrated form'. Failing to emerge, though, from this development is capital's logical political opposite which is the working class political movement'. Foster states that 'it is in this context we should look at the likelihood of a working class politics emerging'.

Sauls put it this way: '(But) at this point, I don't think we are operating in a dangerous area where there's a lot of politicisation, where black nationalist ideologues dominate'. It is the absence of such ideologues which affords a space in which to build the trade unions and the working class politics. The existence of the unions is a necessary condition upon which to found a working class political movement. This is implicit in the remarks which followed: 'The people who are practical realists that to get workers united, you need to work in the union movement — and our prime objective is to build solidarity and promote step by step to improve on the demands of the workers'.

Thus, Sauls' interview and Foster's address dispel any notion that FOSATU is non-political, and that FOSATU's vision is limited to workplace demands. Over a period of time it appears that FOSATU has shown itself to be no less political, though in a different sense, than any other union; this may explain why the criticism of being non-political is not heard nowadays. It is an immense help towards realising a unified trade union movement if FOSATU's political position is understood and not subjected to distortion. It makes for a more amicable atmosphere in which to formulate the quest for unity. But it certainly does not mean that in the absence of misunderstandings there will not be political differences between FOSATU and many of the other unions. By departing from a conventional wisdom — that does not accord workers an independent political organisation within the popular struggle, but only sees them as an important component because of their numbers — FOSATU's position will continue to evoke much controversy. The differences, though, are not such as stand in the way of achieving a united trade union movement, nor is FOSATU making their resolution a condition for unity. In any wider federation there are bound to be differences on how each union and its politically conscious leaders and rank and file members see the relationship between workers and popular or populist organisations, the need or not for an independent working class political base through which to intervene in popular struggles. The choice is between popular front politics and unified front politics.

FOSATU does not explicitly say that it is arguing for a united front politics. But it cannot be otherwise. For the working class cannot be a part of the wider popular struggle and, at the same time, retain their own independent political organisation. How does this independent organisation of the working class relate to the nationalist and other non-working class led organisations all of which would comprise the wider popular struggle? Only on the basis of an independent organisation can the working class either dominate the popular struggle or, at least, ensure that its specific class



demands are raised in the popular struggle. Whichever way it means entering into a united front type alliance with the other organisations on an agreed programme, but an alliance in which each organisation maintains its autonomy.

Now that FOSATU has had some slack in the tight rope it has walked — else we would have no basis to say it's political — there are a number of pertinent questions it will have to answer in relation to populism and popular struggles if the project of an effective working class political movement is to be realised. Does the FOSATU position mean no participation by FOSATU in popular struggles until such times as a working class political movement comes into existence? And, when that movement comes into being, will it steer clear of all populism — in the same way as FOSATU has done up to now? In the meantime, are the workers expected to remain uninfluenced by the populist politics around them? The position of FOSATU, as presently enunciated, does not take into account the real world in which the black working class lives. Sauls may be correct when he says that black nationalist ideologies do not dominate on the shop-floor. But the shop-floor does not constitute the entire world of black workers. There is a world in which the forms of consciousness generated do not always conform with the projections of theory or empiricism (for instance, Sauls' observations of the shop-floor). These forms cannot be ascribed solely to populism; rather populism is an articulation of these forms to a project which will not result in the social emancipation of the working class. Will FOSATU develop its own populism which articulates the present forms of consciousness to the attainment of a 'just and fair society controlled by workers'?

Not to answer these questions in a positive and constructive way is, as Ernesto Laclau has warned in his important studies on ideology and populism, to leave without contest a crucial field of battle to the populists of whom FOSATU is so correctly critical.

Structured Unity: If FOSATU argues for a united front position at the national (and community) level of popular struggles, it has serious reservations about what it has termed a 'united front unity' of trade unions. Describing this type of trade unity as *ad hoc*, Foster listed a number of problems it poses. How, for example, are decisions to be taken and on what mandate? Does each union have an equal vote or is voting by size of membership? Such unity, Foster said, implies inexperience, political expediency or 'a preoccupation with popular politics and a lack of commitment to the building of a working class political position. FOSATU has therefore, in all the summits, argued for a 'tight' as against a 'loose federation, for a 'structured and disciplined unity'. At first, this position divided FOSATU from all the other independent unions.

By structured unity FOSATU seems to imply a structure based on industrial unions. Such a structure would allow for organisational rationalisation and resolve problems of jurisdictions. But it is on these points, however flexibly it is proposed to deal with them, that some difficulties must have arisen especially in the earlier summits. A unity based on industrially organised unions is understandably problematic for the future of general unions like SAAWU which comprise many of the unaffiliated unions.

Thus, during the first summit, most of the unions favoured a 'broad front' or loose federation. In arguing for a structured unity, FOSATU proposed that this

idea be immediately concretised by the organisation of regional solidarity action committees (SACs). There was agreement to the idea of SACs but these never took off because, as FOSATU was to argue at subsequent summits, they could not have done so in the absence of a unity structure.

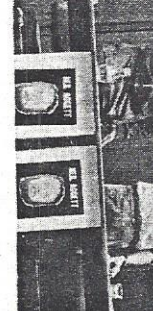
The second summit followed a week after FOSATU's 1982 annual congress at which a resolution on unity was adopted. FOSATU's position on a structured unity was therefore put more firmly at the summit. While other unions had reservations, MACWUSA disagreed with the idea of working towards a structured unity and walked out of the summit.

At the third summit there was a division between those unions favouring, with or without reservations, a structured unity and the others which argued for a return to the broad front position of the first summit. Included within the former group were unions like FOSATU, GOWU, FCWU and CTMWA, and in the latter SAAWU, MACWUSA, GAWUSA, GWUSA, BMWU and CUSA.

The fourth summit realised a significant shift in positions. First, the group favouring a structured unity increased to include SAAWU, one of the most significant unaffiliated unions. And, second, the FCWU and GOWU played the leading role in pushing for a structured unity.

The shifts represented by these three unions cannot be underestimated: as leading members of the group of unaffiliated unions they are in a position to influence the others to rethink all the differences which have divided them from FOSATU and delayed the establishment of a united trade union movement.

Conclusion
We have attempted to show in this article



that within the three broad tendencies of the independent trade unions there is sufficient ground to effect a unified labour movement. The questions of registration and participation on Industrial Councils on which there may never be an agreement on a common approach are, nevertheless, now no longer seen as constituting a barrier to unity. FOSATU does not insist on registration and participation on ICs as a condition for unity. CUSA has left the question of registration to be decided by each of its affiliates. GOWU and some leading unions amongst the unaffiliated have shown an understanding of FOSATU's attitude to registration and ICs. Provided a principled opposition is maintained against the racist provisions of industrial relations legislation, for example, unions in favour of registration do not proceed to do so on the basis of racially exclusive unions, then any new federation will have to be flexible on the attitude to registration.

Within the unaffiliated trade unions there is now support for FOSATU's position on a structured unity. The CUSA unions are industrially based so that, in principle, CUSA should have no difficulty in agreeing to a structured unity based on industrial unions. Where difficulties are likely to arise is in negotiations to rationalise the organisational structures and to demarcate spheres of jurisdiction of each union under a structured unity. But this is a problem affecting all unions whether in CUSA or FOSATU or outside either. Some union names may have to go and some general unions may have to be dissolved in the process of redistributing their members in industrially based unions. Conscious of these problems, FOSATU has already declared a readiness to give up its name if this will help bring about unity.

The organisation of a working class political movement is a question which is independent of the unity of trade unions. On the evidence so far available, it does not appear that the organisation of the political movement is a condition demanded by FOSATU for the unification of the trade union movement. Foster in his address was careful not to conflate the trade union movement with the political organisations of the working class. Ideally, there will be a political alliance between them. But FOSATU has made clear through Sauls' interview, Foster's address and its political policy adopted at the 1982 annual congress that the question of party political affiliation is a question to be decided at grassroots level after thorough discussion. The principle of shop-floor democracy is one to which all the independent trade unions subscribe. With such a precept shared by all, it means that FOSATU's particular

political views on the relationship of unions to popular struggles and even to the independent political organisation of the working class are all matters to be decided by the shop-floor, and should therefore not stand in the way of establishing a united trade union movement.

On the terrain of trade unionism all ideologies from the left to the right operate to gain political influence. On the right there will be those who will want to use the sheer weight of the numbers of workers and their unions as surrogates for the popular struggle. This will resolve neither the political oppression nor economic exploitation of the workers. On the left there will be those who recognise that for the workers to ensure that the popular struggle brings them real political and social gains, the workers must participate in the popular struggle under their own independent political organisation.

Whether a political movement of the working class — a project to which FOSATU is committed — arises and gains political supremacy in the extent of its roots in the working class itself and, a question FOSATU has not yet addressed, how it articulates the wider popular struggle, in particular the general forms of consciousness, black or nationalist, to the specific class interests of the working class. Not to answer this question is to leave uncontested a very desirable field of struggle to the non-working class elements.

Rosettes Pliable
May 1983.

List of Abbreviations.
Components Workers Union of SAMAWU — Metal and Allied Workers Workers Union.
SATAWU — SA Transport and Allied Workers Union.

- AFCWU — African Food and Canning Workers Union.
- BMWU — Black Municipal Workers Union
- CCAWUSA — Commercial, Caring and Allied Workers Union of SA
- CTMWA — Cape Town Municipal Workers Association
- CUSA — Council of Unions of South Africa
- EAWU — Engineering and Allied Workers Union
- FCWU — Food and Canning Workers Union
- FOSATU — Federation of South African Trade Unions
- GAWU — General and Allied Workers Union
- GAWUSA — General and Allied Workers Union of SA
- GWU — General Workers Union
- GWUSA — General Workers Union of SA
- MACWUSA — Motor Assemblies and Components Workers Union of SA
- MAWU — Metal and Allied Workers Union
- MCWU — Municipal and General Workers Union
- MWASA — Media Workers Association of SA
- NAAWU — National Automobile and Allied Workers Union
- NUMARWOSA — National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of SA
- OYGWU — Orange Vaal General Workers Union
- SAAWU — South African Allied Workers Union
- TUCSA — Trades Union Congress of SA
- UAW — United Automobile, Rubber Workers Union
- WPGWU — Western Province General Workers Union
- SALB — South African Labour Bulletin

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REVOLUTION IN THE CARIBBEAN

—Caro Bivianho

When imperialism withdrew from direct political control over the islands of the Caribbean (West Indies), it left behind a heritage of under-development and a weak, compradore bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie which ensured its continued economic domination. Because of the colonialist division of the area among metropolitan countries with diverse languages (Britain, France, Spain, Holland, etc.) this provided an obstacle to the unification of these countries after reaching political independence. More fundamentally, the economies of the various islands were deliberately specialised to serve the needs of metropolitan capital and also laid grounds of fears of domination by the more developed economies of Trinidad and Tobago, factors which were the major obstacles to attempts at federation.

Even politically independent countries like Haiti and Cuba were economically tied to United States imperialism which, after the war, began to play a much more dominant role in the region. In the words of the "Theses on the Colonial and National Question" adopted at the Second Congress of the Communist (Third) International: "It is necessary continually to lay bare and to explain... the deception committed by the imperialist powers with the help of

the privileged classes in the oppressed bourgeoisies. Under the leadership of declared policies of the official Communist Parties in "Third World" countries... These parties, tied to Moscow ideologically, still cling to the stagist theories developed by Stalin during the 1920s which was based on the conception that the developing countries had first to complete the national democratic stage of the revolution before passing on to countries when, under the mask of politically independent states they bring in to being state structures that are economically, financially and militarily completely dependent on them... While countries like Guyana, under Forbes Burnham, Trinidad and Tobago under Eric Williams, Grenada under Gairy, moved closer into the imperialist economic net, the first break in the chain came with the victory of the Cuban revolution in January 1959, under the leadership of Fidel Castro. Although it began, as Castro has himself testified, as a petty-bourgeois movement, with limited democratic demands (demands which could, perhaps be equated with the Freedom Charter of the ANC or the Unity Movement's 10-Point Programme), it immediately came up against the hostility both of the local bourgeoisie and US imperialism, which had huge stakes in Batista's Cuba. Even the modest reforms of the July 26 Movement threatened to cut deep into the economic interests of

whom... progressive movements have developed? We have come to the conclusion that we have to deny it... It is incorrect to assume that the capitalist stage of development is necessary for such peoples... it is established that the idea of soviets is accessible to all the labouring masses, even among the most isolated peoples...

CUBA'S INTERNATIONALISM

The victory of the Cuban Revolution, its resolute moves toward socialist resolutions, acted as a catalyst in the entire Caribbean basin and in Central and South America. It has stimulated into action revolutionary organisations with mass support, not tied to the official Moscow ideology.

Because of its isolation, because it is historically impossible to advance to a complete socialist society within the economic and geographical bounds of one island, because of the permanent threat to its security from US imperialism, the Castro leadership has been compelled to move closer to the Soviet Union economically and politically, both with regard to its internal superstructure and foreign policy. These contradictions must be the subject of another article because it is of decisive importance to all under-developed countries. But it must be stressed that the Castro regime has given unstinting and self-sacrificial sup-

port to the emerging revolutions in the Caribbean and Central America. In this respect its internationalism is exemplary. island's economy stagnated, and greeted the 13th March Revolution with some enthusiasm.

GRENADEA

The March 1979 Revolution in Grenada reached the highest level of class struggle attained in the English-speaking Caribbean since the great slave revolts of the 17th and 18th centuries. There can be no question that armed seizure of power by the New Jewel Movement (NJM), under the leadership of Maurice Bishop had the enthusiastic support of the population at large. It put an end to the years of autocratic misrule of Eric Gairy and has since given rise to the mushrooming of popular, grass-root organisations, such as the Parish Councils, trade unions for both rural and urban workers, women's organisations, a youth movement etc.

Gairy started his political career as a working class leader. In 1950 he established the first trade union of agricultural workers in Grenada's history, the Grenada Manual Workers' Union (GMWU), and led it in general strikes in 1951 and 1952. As he rose to power, however, he alienated himself from his grassroots support and gradually shifted his allegiance to the small group of big property owners and foreign capital. Corruption became rife

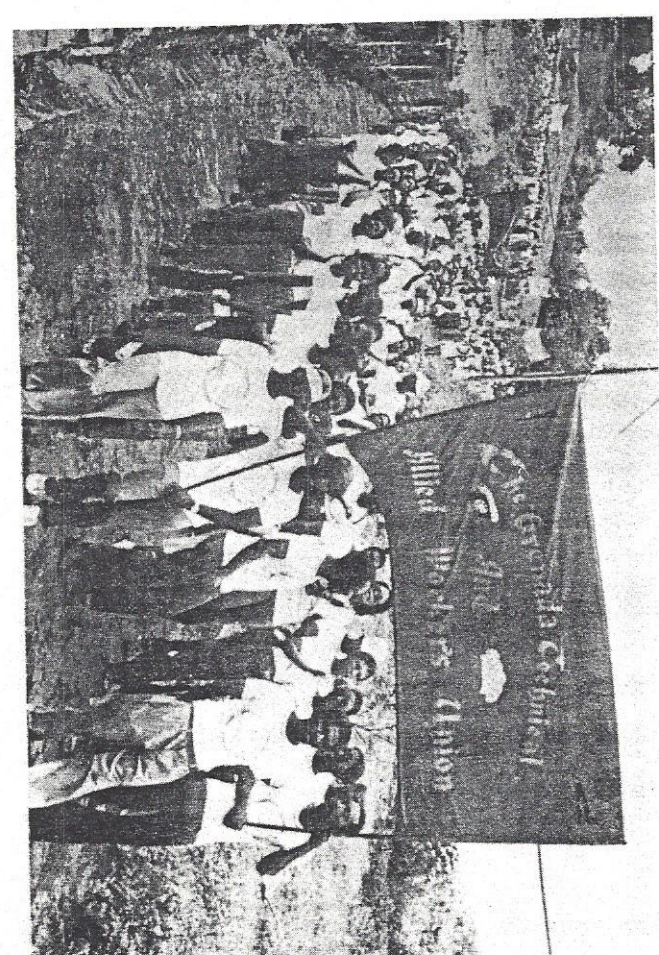
under Gairy's regime and his methods of government more personal and dictatorial. Even his capitalist supporters became dissatisfied with him, as the thinsam.

Taking Cuba as its example, the NJM has declared its goal to be socialism. Objective national and regional conditions, however make it difficult for Grenada to implement a full socialist programme. Like Cuba, it is confronted with contradictions which can only be resolved as the regional revolutionary struggles (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala) moves on to victory, extends to other countries and unite in a Socialist Caribbean Federation. The leadership of the NJM are fully aware of the difficulties which face them and make no attempt to gloss over them. As Maurice Bishop explained in an interview in *World Marxist Review*, the official theoretical journal of the (Stalinist) communist movement:

We see this revolution as being in the national democratic stage. We are an anti-imperialist party and government and we believe that the process we are involved in at this stage is an anti-imperialist, national democratic stage of development.

Another long-time leader of the NJM, Finance Minister Bernard Coard, said much the same thing:

Our primary objective at this point is



not building socialism, quite frankly, but simply trying to get the economy, which has been shattered by Gairy, back on its feet.

On the other hand, another NJM leader, George Louison, in an interview with Alain Krivine, for the French socialist paper, *Rouge*, had this to say: 'We've never hidden that we are struggling for socialism. This is our program and we consider our party to be a vanguard socialist party.'

But he then went on to confirm the estimate of the revolution and its immediate development as given by Bishop and Coard:

We felt that whilst we move rapidly to raise the consciousness of the working people, including the working class, at the same time we have to consolidate our position in certain sectors of the economy, which will help to strengthen our position, raising the level of the productive forces.

In other words, we see us moving towards socialism, using the mixed economy approach, the non-capitalist path at this stage. And that, of course, will help us increase the strength of the working class in our country and prepare us for the advance to socialism, where we can eventually have the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But now it is impossible. We have to keep up the political education work. We have to do work among the workers, work among the farmers, work among the women, the youth and even small and medium-sized business people, the middle strata and unite them for the next stage of the struggle.

In other words, we see this as a democratic stage of the struggle, preparing the masses for the transition to socialism.

The nature of the NJM regime is therefore full of contradictions, arising out of the conditions which it inherited from imperialism and Gairy. Although its leadership is drawn mainly from what can be described as the petty-bourgeoisie, it must be characterised as a workers' party, for its main organisational base has been the public sector and service sector employees. Grenada was almost totally lacking in manufacturing industry so that it has no industrial working class to speak of.

GAINS OF THE REVOLUTION

Nevertheless, the achievements of the revolution in this tiny, economically backward island are immense.

It is by far the most democratically governed island in the Caribbean. The Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), consulted the people on every step it takes. Thus, on March 17, 1983, over 1000 delegates from the island's parish councils, trade unions, farmers' organisations, the National Women's Organisation, the National Youth Organisation, met to discuss the PRG's projected budget for 1983. This was preceded, according to Grenada government officials, by over 100 budget discussions, involving more than 20,000 people. Before the budget is finally drafted, it will continue to be discussed in workplaces during weekly classes. Trade unions and workplace councils will participate in monitoring and enforcing the budget and plan for both state and private enterprise.

When the NJM came into power, about 40 per cent of the population were functionally illiterate. During 350 years of British colonial rule there was only one public secondary school on the entire island. The others were church run. Nearly 90 per cent of the population had only primary education. In 1978, the last full year of Gairy's rule, there were only three Grenadians receiving university education. One of them was Gairy's daughter.

In 1982, Grenada's economy grew by 5.5 per cent. Unemployment fell by 14 per cent. From a level of 49 per cent in 1979, it is less than 12 per cent today. Grenada's growth rate for 1982 was the highest in the Western Hemisphere, at a time when the world capitalist economy was in the trough of its worse-down-turn since the 1930's. The economy of other East Caribbean countries, still tied to capitalist economies, stagnated and declined.

LAND REFORM

Agriculture has been re-organised to make the country less dependent on imported food. For the first time, and with Cuban assistance, the island's rich fishing resources is being exploited and with it the building of processing plants, canneries and so on. A land reform program has been launched, though no confiscation of private estates is projected for the initial stage. Co-operatives have been established, drawing in workers from among the agricultural work force, small farmers and the urban jobless. These are owned by the workers who are organised by the Agricultural Workers Councils.

Now there are more than 110 university scholarships and free secondary education. A literacy campaign on the Cuban model has been launched. Equal pay for women has been introduced. There have been important strides in health. The number of doctors has been doubled and care is virtually free. The

government has launched a major housing and repair programme.

Before the revolution there was no Grenadian-owned bank on the island. The ubiquitous Barclay's and Canadian capital controlled all banking. The Commercial Bank which provides easy credit to workers, farmers and fishermen. It is moves like these which fighters US imperialism and make Reagan talk of little Grenada, with its 160,000 people as a threat to the security of mighty America.

THE WAY FORWARD

The gains of the revolution are impressive. But all history shows that if these gains are to be consolidated, the workers and small farmers of Grenada must break the economic power of the capitalist class and landlords through the establishment of a workers state, with institutionalised forms of workers control and legislative power. This is necessary for the institution of reliable long-term economic planning and control over the use of the country's natural resources and labour power, as well as the distribution of the wealth they produce. Such a program will give a new and deeper meaning to the slogan of the New Jewel Movement: FORWARD EVER! BACKWARD NEVER!

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

—Dora Katzis

There can be no doubt that the emergence of the independent black trade union movement in South Africa is a development of unparalleled importance in the struggles against oppression and exploitation in our country.

This independent trade unions are the most widespread and highest form, to date, of black working class self-organisation and power in South Africa. And it is the black working class that will, and must, lead the struggles for national liberation in South Africa.

The black workers will lead that struggle not only because of their numerical preponderance in the black population of South Africa, but because the black urban working class is the most concentrated, strategically placed and powerful sector of the exploited black masses of South Africa.

The black working class must lead that struggle for national liberation because it is in that position that they will develop and come to a fuller realisation of their own organisational capacities and potential, and their own ability — as well as their interest — to carry the national liberation struggle forward to full class liberation in a truly democratic, socialist society in South Africa.

Thus, it is not only out of but during these processes of struggle that a powerful independent working class movement must emerge. This working class movement will eventually comprise not only the trade unions but working class parties as well. What their configurations and relations will be, further political debate, developments in struggle — and history — will decide.

Suffice it here to say that for the immediate, and even the middle term future, there are a number of important questions for us to discuss as to how to extend, develop and strengthen the independent trade unions in South Africa — for they are the foundation, or necessary condition, for the building of a powerful working class political movement in South Africa. There is a complex series of questions around different areas of life and struggle of the black masses of South Africa that trade unionists are confronted with.

Trade Unions as such, and in relation to each other

First of all, there are the variety of questions concerning various forms of trade union organisation and the structuring of the trade union movement, as such, that are already the subject of much discussion, and organisational effort and practical experience amongst trade unionists

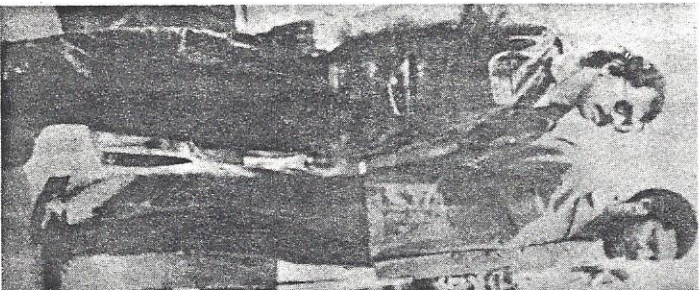
in South Africa. But as new trade unions continue to struggle into existence in workplace after workplace, extending to more industries and sectors of employment, and further regions and new working class activists all over the country, it is worth making a resume of the experiences and conclusions to date, and asking — and if possible answering — such age-old trade union questions as:

1. Should a trade union be a body that incorporates all workers who are amenable to unionisation, irrespective of their areas or sectors of employment, in order to build the largest, most wide spread membership possible? This approach is argued as being the fastest way to build trade union membership and strength, and hence improve perspectives for working class unity. Or should trade union members be recruited and organised on a factory or plant-based system — built from and contributing towards the organisational unity of workers within each respective industry? In this latter way each union is structured from the base up to unite and represent the workers in one industry (for example: one union for the motor-car manufacturing, or textiles industry, or the mines... or docks... or transport... etc.) The broad organisational question confronting unionists here is whether the most effective unity in struggle, and democratic participation of the workers in the union can be achieved through the incorporation of workers into general unions that are not plant or factory-based and cut across sectors of employment; or whether these ends can best be guaranteed through shop-floor based industrial unions?
2. The general unions cutting across different sectors of employment must not, however, be confined with questions about another type of unity of different categories or layers of workers. These concern longstanding trade union questions as to whether trade unionists should aim for vertical integration of all workers into one union within the same sector of employment, or should aim for horizontal organisation of specific types or layers of workers. In other words, is it more effective to unite all the workers from the bottom up within the same area of employment (eg as MVA/SA has done — including in their ranks all black workers employed in the media from unskilled manual workers, to semi-skilled technical operatives, to professional personnel such as journalists), or should unions aim to organise specific layers of workers (as in professional bodies or craft unions) who face the same types of problems in conditions of work and wages... etc? Trade unionists have to

decide which approach is more effective in defending workers' rights and which is more conducive to advancing working class unity and strength.

3. In addition to questions of organisational unity of all workers within factories or workplaces, and organisational unity of workers within entire industries or sectors of employment, there is the question of unity amongst trade unions as such. The reasons why it is necessary to form and extend national trade union federations, and one nation-wide independent trade union federation are already being seriously discussed by a large number of trade unions in SA — including those united under FOSATU and CUSA, as well as unaffiliated unions such as SAAWU and others — altogether embracing well over 300,000 unorganised workers. The main questions confronting them now are the practical ones of how to effect such trade union unity; but for those unions which have not yet entered into the discussions, it is still important to present the arguments as to why one united trade union movement is so vitally important for the defence and real advancement of black working class interests in SA.
4. Finally, there are questions relating to internal modes of organisation and methods of work within unions that are, after long years of experience, agitating working class activists all over the world. These are questions such as the methods of electing trade union leaders; the relationship between these and rank and file members; and the relationship of power and responsibility between elected leaders and full-time trade union employees. These questions of internal trade union democracy are part and parcel of the struggle to convince workers everywhere that the trade unions are their representatives and defenders; and are vitally important to ensure that union leaderships always remain close to the needs of, and answerable to the workers they speak for. These questions of internal trade union democracy are also central to preparing the trade union movement for a leading role in the struggle for democracy in South Africa and for carrying the struggle forward for a democratic socialist society in South Africa.

We welcome contributions from experienced trade union activists about the stage of the debate within our country on these, and other questions relevant to the most effective development of the independent trade union movement. We offer our journal as a vehicle for reports on, and further discussion about these issues, based on the experiences and



aspirations of trade unionists in South Africa themselves.

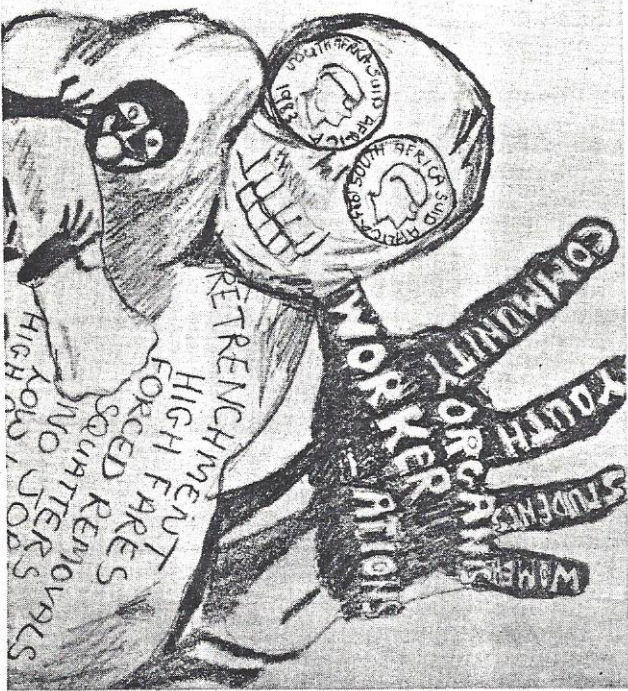
Trade unions in relation to other black working class and popular organisations in South Africa

The black working class in South Africa is faced with acute problems of extreme exploitation and oppression in their places of work. And they are faced with further oppression and the denial of the most minimal human rights when they leave the factory gates.

They are faced with extreme difficulties about where they live, and the conditions in which they have to live. They are confronted with dire problems about where their families live; whether they can live together, where their children can live and get education, what kind of education they can get and whether they can get education. They are faced with gross disabilities in where they receive (or do not receive!) medical treatment, transport facilities, leisure facilities, etc.

The responses of working people to these problems are many and varied. And one of the most important features and advances of the oppressed black population in South Africa today is the growing proliferation of popular and working class self-organisation around all the problems of their lives, and confronting all aspects of their oppression. This raises a further series of questions for trade unionists in South Africa:

1. *Firstly, what are the aims and organisational characteristics of this multiplicity of popular and working class organisations in South Africa? What are their bases of support and what are their orientations? What are the distribution, effectiveness and relations between the many local, regional and national groups in our country — the sports, social, cultural, professional, women's student, tenants and other broader community groups that are now organising, agitating and producing publications (such as the excellent community papers 'The Eye' and 'Grassroots') around all the concerns in the lives of the black population?*
2. *What is — or should be — the relationship between these popular organisations fighting for the rights and conditions of life of the mass of the black population outside the factories, and the independent trade unions fighting for the rights and conditions of work of black workers within the factories, or other workplaces? Is it enough for community and trade union organisations to recognise each other as operating in different fields but around the same problems? Is it enough for them to accept this sort of 'division of labour', entering into occasional or periodic ad hoc cooperation on specific issues? Or do the problems confronting the black population demand more consistent, intensive and structured cooperation or coordination between the various 'special interest'*



community groups and the trade unions?

3. *Or is it inadequate, or wrong, to pose the problem or questions in those terms? Should it, in fact, not be a question of how trade unions can cooperate, from within the workplaces, with community groups outside places of work struggling around the problems which affect the workers' lives? Should trade unions, themselves, actually aim to go outside the narrower confines of the workplace and the economy, and concern themselves directly with the social and political circumstances of the workers' lives? This of course raises the questions of whether, or when and how trade unions should take on the broader social issues and problems confronting the black masses which condition and create many of their problems in the workplaces and which, themselves, have their origins in the political and ideological character of the capitalist state in South Africa.*

4. *Finally, there are other related questions which both community and union activists today should consider, although they appear to pertain to the more distant future socialist society in South Africa. These are questions relating to the ways in which can be encouraged the organisational and analytical skills and political understanding of the mass of the population which are the true guarantee of a future socialist democracy in our country. Or, to put it more concretely, how can socialists in South Africa today work*

for the closest cooperation and greatest possible unity of all organisations of black popular power — towards national unity for the great national liberation struggle ahead — and, at the same time, defend and develop all the diverse forms, and the dissemination of autonomous self-organisation of the mass of the black population in grass roots groups around all aspects of their lives? For is it not there that lie the fundamental bases of pluralist socialist democracy?

Once again, we invite contributions on these, and related questions from the experienced and informed trade union and community activists of the black population of South Africa. We wish to offer our Journal as a vehicle for reporting on the present situation obtaining in South Africa, especially with regard to the current discussions around these questions.

Trade unions in relation to the labouring black masses outside the urban areas of South Africa.

The independent trade unions in South Africa are making huge strides forward in organising and defending black workers in various sectors of the economy and regions of the country. Unfortunately, their work is rendered much more difficult, and their efforts and achievements are under constant threat from the particular political, economic, social and demographic features of the South African social system.

It is not only that trade unionists and trade union 'rights' are under constant threat from the authoritarian police state in South Africa. After all, trade unions all over the world have had to struggle in to existence and to develop *in spite of* the state! And trade union activists and organisers in many parts of the world (from Nazi Germany, fascist Argentina to the 'democratic' USA and stalinist Poland) have suffered intimidation, victimisation, violence and even death in their struggles to further the unionisation and strength of the working class.

In South Africa, however, trade unionists face not only these difficulties but other peculiar challenges and problems in organising the black working class, arising from the particularly marked way in which capitalist development in South Africa has taken place on the basis of a systematised super-exploitation of poverty-stricken, regenerated cheap migrant labour from the rural areas of South Africa (and beyond).

That historical economic process — which originally created the 'Native Reserves' in South Africa — continued into the twentieth century and came to be reinforced and developed in terms of the economic, political and ideological strategies of the Apartheid State, with its 'Bantustans'... 'Black Homelands'...

and, most recently, its 'Independent Native States' being created out of the old Native Reserves.

As a result of these combined, economic, political and ideological processes there has been created and sustained in South Africa an impoverished, but considerably proletarianised and semi-proletarianised, rural population that is unusually large for so developed a capitalist economy as that of South Africa, and that is strategically important to the economic, political and ideological needs of the ruling class. The existence, and the demographic socio-economic and political configurations of this large proletarianised and semi-proletarianised rural population confronting the urban-based trade union movement in South Africa with some unusual difficulties challenges... and opportunities.

1. First of all, there are the questions relating to those sectors of the rural black population incorporated as agricultural labourers onto the white farms in South Africa. It is, of course, not unusual for trade unionists — all over the world — to encounter great difficulties in organising and defending agricultural labourers. It is, however, more than usually difficult for trade union organisers to reach the millions of black agricultural labourers scattered over the vastness of our country and confined on the huge white agricultural estates, where they live and work under semi-like conditions of oppression, exploitation and misery. Given the extreme difficulties in reaching these black agricultural workers, must their organisation await a later stage of trade union strength in South Africa? Are such sectors of the black working class not enough immediate strategic importance to the development of the black working class movement to warrant the huge efforts that would be required to organise them? It could be argued, to the contrary, that their extreme misery demands that this sector be prioritised! Or should socialist trade unionists in South Africa be approaching the question of organising and politicising agricultural workers in terms of the vital role that they will play in the future socialised agricultural production that should develop on those huge estates once their white exploiters have been expropriated?

2. There are, however, other sectors of the labouring black masses in the rural areas that could be pointed to as a greater or more immediate priority for trade union efforts, owing to their larger numbers and to their intermittent periods of employment in the urban areas that makes them more accessible to unionisation. This refers, of course, to the millions of migrant labourers moving — forcibly moved! — to and from the urban industrial areas and the rural Ban-

tustans in South Africa. They tend to be concentrated in specific areas of the economy — such as the mines — which are of enormous strategic importance to the ruling class; and the organisation of such workers would therefore give the independent trade union movement important leverage on behalf of the interests of the black working class. Migrant workers also tend to be concentrated in the particularly difficult or dangerous areas of employment and at the unskilled levels of work, at the lowest wages, and they are in urgent need of trade union protection. How can trade unionists overcome the great problems of organising these workers while they stay in the towns are so limited and their economic and legal situation so vulnerable? How can they be effectively organised while they tend to be kept apart from other workers — whether those from the towns, or other migrants from different Bantustans — living in 'tribal' barracks? (These problems NUM organisers on the mines are only too well aware of!) How can trade unions improve the conditions of work and life of migrant workers in the urban areas, and their rights to come and work and stay with their families in the urban areas?

3. Or would that be approaching the problems of the migrant workers — and the problem of migrant labour in South Africa *per se* — in an inadequate or wrong way? Is it not rather a question of tackling the migrant labour system itself and at its source in the Native Reserves-cum-Bantustans-cum-Independent Homelands? The fundamental question is whether trade unionists can really improve the conditions of work and wages of migrant labourers at the urban end without tackling the trap of rural poverty and oppression that forces the rural population into the migrant labour system — to work wherever and for whatever wages they can. For that matter, can trade unionists really guarantee the gains that they achieve even for urban-based workers while there exist vast reservoirs of poverty-stricken inhabitants in the Bantustans, to be drawn upon when and as the ruling class requires: as 'scab' labour to break strikes, or to undercut urban wage advances? Furthermore, faced with the fact that many, or even most, of the workers they are attempting to organise and defend — and they themselves — can at any time be declared 'aliens and sent back' to their 'homelands' in the Bantustans, can black trade unionists afford to ignore the political questions of the Apartheid State's strategy to create 'independent states' in the Bantustans in order to deny black workers their very right to exist and work — let alone claim political and civic rights — in the society that their labour has created.

4. It seems that, even if they so wanted, trade unionists cannot simply confine their activities to the 'white' urban areas and to the urban-based working class. In order to defend the urban-based working class the trade unions will have to organise and defend the proletarianised and semi-proletarianised masses in the Bantustans that the ruling class maintains as a 'reserve army' of labour against the interests of all workers. If they are to build a united black working class movement, trade unionists have to destroy the divide-and-rule (and divide-and-exploit) Bantustan strategy. They have to fight for a united black working class in a *unitary* South Africa. But the most difficult questions facing working class activists are how to challenge and destroy the Bantustan system through the united action of black workers everywhere in South Africa. How can a close political and organisational unity of the urban working class with the proletarianised and semi-proletarianised rural population be achieved? This is actually a very complex question for when we speak of the proletarianised rural population we speak of only part of that population; and when we speak of the semi-proletarianised rural population we must understand what the 'other' part of their social identity and consciousness might be. And then there are those sections of the rural population that may be neither proletarianised nor semi-proletarianised but, more correctly, peasant or landless peasant! What is the balance between these different situations and orientations amongst the rural population, and what are their own subjective aspirations?

All these questions amount to important strategic choices for trade unionists. Should they focus more on those rural dwellers who have a fuller proletarian identity and unequivocal working class aspirations? This is the strategy for building working class unity. Or is it a question of building a class *alliance* between the urban working class and all these other sections of the labouring masses of the rural population — including amongst them poor and landless peasants? If so, on what organisational and programmatic basis should such a worker-peasant alliance be forged?

These questions have to be, and can only be answered by activists on the ground in South Africa themselves. For these are both practical questions of how to actually achieve that organisational unity; and they are empirical-political questions that can only be answered on the basis of close contact with and understanding of the present socio-economic circumstances and political class aspirations of the different sectors and layers of the working masses of South Africa. Finally, these questions have to be approached in the light of the

need to build a powerful independent black working class movement in South Africa, while at the same time aiming towards alliances between the working class and other, non-working class sections of the oppressed black population of South Africa for the national liberation struggle immediately ahead.

The above questions about class unity and class alliances amongst the labouring masses of the black population of South Africa become even more crucial when considered in the broader context of the complex totality of the oppressed black population of South Africa and their struggle for national liberation.

This complexity arises not only from the longstanding 'racial' divisions of the black population of South Africa — into 'Bantu', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' sections — deliberately fostered and manipulated by the white ruling class. Nor does it arise only from the equally insidious ruling class attempts to splinter the 'Bantu' population into a multiplicity of different 'tribes' or incipient 'nations'.

All these divisions amongst both workers and the oppressed black population in general are, of course, serious impediments to their concerted action against their oppression and exploitation; and they must be strenuously challenged — ideologically, politically and organisationally — by trade unions, by community groups and by all the national liberation organisations in South Africa.

There are, however, yet further divisions and real and potential divergences of interest within the black population that South African trade unionists must take full cognisance of. If they are to successfully build a powerful independent working class movement in our country while the black working class is also playing a leading role in the national liberation struggle and movement.

These divisions and divergences of interest arise from the growing class differentiations within the black population. These have emerged partly as an objective effect of the functioning of the capitalist system in our country, and as a result of the efforts and initiatives of blacks themselves — and in spite of racist legislation impeding the free upward mobility of blacks in the system. But the development of non-working class layers in the black population in South Africa has also, in more recent years, become a conscious strategy amongst the more sophisticated, self-enlightened sections of the ruling class.

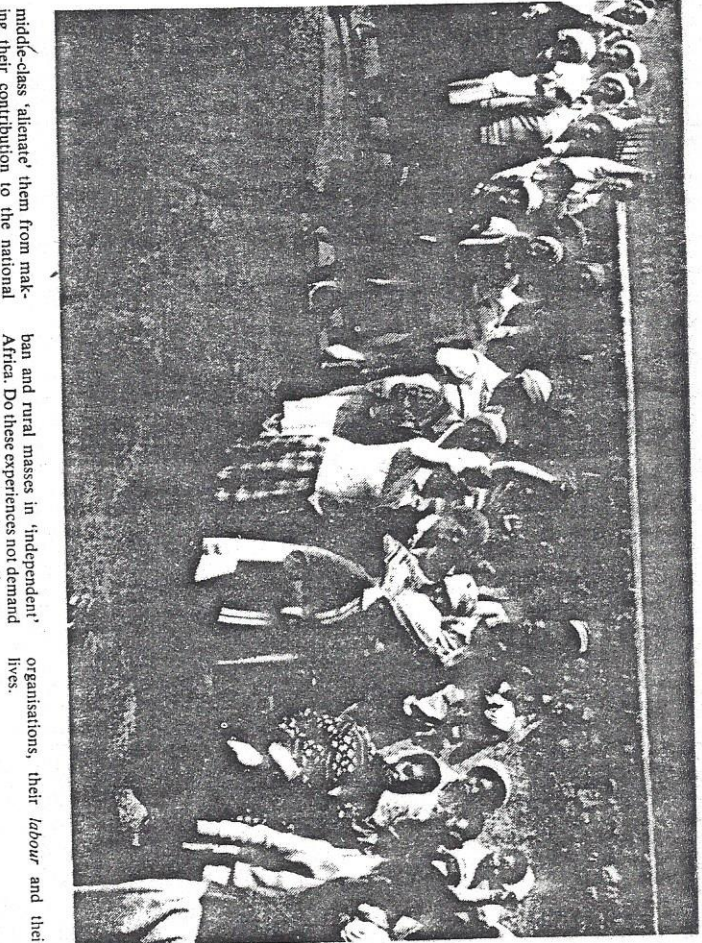
They seek to create amongst the blacks not only compliant white collar functionaries and administrators, and various, relatively privileged professionals to help them run their Bantustans and the urban black 'townships'... etc.; but also petty-bourgeois traders and small property owners, and the like, with a material stake in the system. They are even deliberately training and encouraging a new 'managerial' class amongst the more educated layers of the black population, and a small but significant solid black bourgeoisie with vested interests in the capitalist system in South Africa.

The effect of this class differentiation does not, however, simply mean that there are numbers of blacks who are willing to collaborate with the white ruling class in running the Apartheid-Capitalist system in South Africa. Nor does it mean only that there are (even larger) numbers of black petty-bourgeois whose relatively privileged economic and social circumstances, compared to the misery of the exploited masses, make them more prone to be 'moderate and cautiously reformist in their approach to racial oppression in the system. It means also — and most significantly — that there are variety of different classes and actual and potential class interests/aspirations present in the national liberation movement.

This is because these actual and aspirant petty-bourgeois and their own elements continue to suffer (their own degree/type of) racial oppression and many are radicalised towards the politics and organisations of national liberation. They do not necessarily explicitly articulate their more specific class interests — adopting rather the populist ideology of common 'black identity' with the masses, and the politics of 'national unity' — but nor do they thereby abandon such narrower class interests and susceptibilities.

Thus there are a variety of different classes and class interests/aspirations present both in the black population and black national liberation movement in South Africa. There are also a variety of ways of confronting this issue among black political organisations and currents in South Africa, and there are a number of vitally important questions facing South African trade unionists and working class activists in this regard:

1. How should working class activists and trade unionists deal with the fact of there being expanding layers of the black population of South Africa with different class interests and possibilities to those of the (other) masses? Is this process not yet developed enough to warrant any political response at this stage? Is it *per se* inimical to the imperatives of building the broadest, strongest black unity in South Africa to raise such potentially 'divisive' questions? Might the expression of reservations about the motivations and aspirations of the black



middle-class 'alienate' them from making their contribution to the national liberation struggle? Or is pointing out such class differences amongst the blacks in fact, important to the development of black working class political consciousness? It can on the other hand be argued that black working class consciousness must, in the first instance, be developed in their struggles with white Capital, with whom they are in absolute and immediate contradiction, and not necessarily through raising their secondary, and largely future, conflicts of interest with the aspirant black bourgeoisie. Perhaps, in regard to the latter, the black working class will come indirectly to a realisation, and 'size up' what is the class character of the black petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie from the ways in which such elements themselves view and respond to the development of working class organisation and consciousness in the coming period. Alternatively, it could be argued that it is necessary to start now, directly alerting the black working class to the possibilities of what the black middle-classes are capable of doing. There are already numerous examples all over Africa showing the way in which the black middle-classes have — largely through their role in the national liberation struggles — been able to suppress, or dilute or divert the development of working class consciousness and struggles amongst the oppressed and exploited ur-

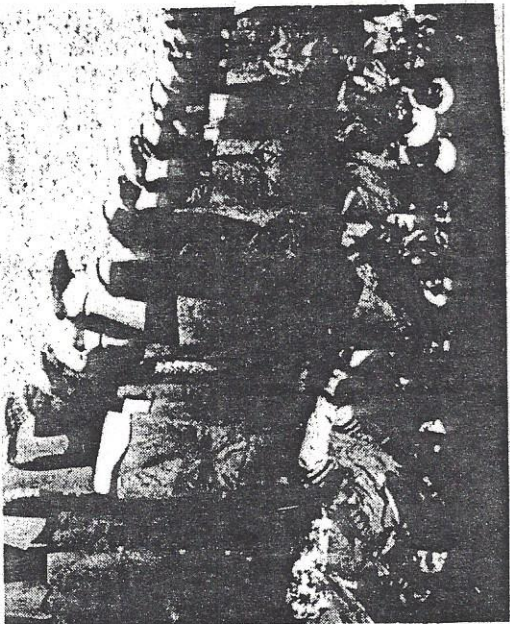
ban and rural masses in 'independent' Africa. Do these experiences not demand that we in South Africa learn the appropriate lessons and start now to preempt the black middle classes from repeating that pattern in our country too? Of course we have a much larger black working class in South Africa than anywhere else on the continent; but we also have a larger number of petty-bourgeois elements and a large and very politically sophisticated white bourgeoisie that will move rapidly to buy off and manipulate such elements against the working masses once the struggle really begins to unfold.

This is not to argue that there is some 'original sin' or potential treachery inherent in those individual militants who come from the middle-classes! What it does mean, however, is that working class militants have to be aware of different class interests at work within the national liberation movement. They have to know about the proven ability of non-working class forces to utilise the language of working class struggle — and even the terminology of Marxism-Leninism — to maintain their hegemony over the working masses. All such elements — and indeed all working class activists themselves — have to be judged by the ways in which they actively contribute to the development of independent working class consciousness and power in South Africa, and workers' democratic control over their own

organisations, their labour and their lives.

2. Similarly, all political groups and the national liberation organisations in South Africa must be carefully assessed in terms of their politics and practices in relation to the development of organised working class power and class consciousness in South Africa. There are many other criteria by which all such political organisations can and should be assessed. On what sort of programmes and policies do they organise, and what ideologies inform their politics? What are their strategies and methods of struggle? Equally important, how are they organised and how conscientiously do they defend and actively propagate democratic organisation, discussion and debate within their structures and the real development of the organisational capabilities and political understanding of their rank and file members? What is the relationship of responsibility and power between the rank and file and the leadership in each of the national liberation organisations? And what, for that matter, are the social and political characteristics of the leaderships?

Important as all these criteria are, however, the overriding consideration for trade unionists in assessing the various national liberation organisations in South Africa is what their attitudes are to the interests and role of the working class in the national liberation struggle.



and the national liberation organisations enter into *ad hoc* cooperation or alliances on specific issues as they arise? Or, once again, does the scale and complexity of the national liberation struggle demand that eventually they will have to establish more consistent, intensive and structured cooperation or coordination between the trade unions and the national liberation organisations — as applies similarly to the trade unions and the community organisations?

This, in turn, raises a further set of vitally important questions because there are different forms of 'structured cooperation' between a diversity of groups. These forms are based on very different conceptions of the social forces at work in the struggle, their interests and relations, and their immediate and longer-term goals. Put succinctly — if the black population of South Africa is conceived of as one broad oppressed mass whose vital interests are the same, and who are struggling on identical bases against the common enemy, then the organisational expression of their political unity is the *populist front* with an appropriate populist ideology, in one form or another, emphasising the common 'racial' or 'national' bases to their common oppression... and emancipation. In this form all organisations — and social forces — submerge themselves into one broad mass organisation. If, however, the black population of South Africa is not seen as an undifferentiated mass, but made up of a complexity of different longer term class interests, as well as immediate common national aims — and as having already begun to produce a wide variety of *bona fide* organisations reflecting the different local, regional and sectoral struggles — then the more appropriate form of structured political cooperation must be the *united front*. In this case, the variety of organisations unite on a commonly agreed programme and structure, without abandoning their own organisational forms and identities and their own specific programmes and the interests they represent. This is the organisational and political unity that it recognises that the political front that it is so urgent to build amongst the black population of South Africa must allow in an *alliance* of classes in the oppressed population of our country. It is in this way only that the labouring classes of South Africa will not simply be the numerically dominant force, the 'shock troops' of the struggle — as has been the case in so many struggles in Africa and the world — but will participate as an organised, and self-conscious class force that gives power to and leads the national liberation struggle, as well as ensuring the defence and victory of the struggle for an end to class exploitation.

There are actually a variety of differing approaches which it is important for trade unionists to distinguish. One approach is to ignore entirely the fact of there being different degrees and types of oppression and exploitation of the black labouring masses within the broader black population — and to focus only on racial domination in a general sense as suffered by the whole black population. Another approach is to recognise the fact of the exploitation of the black labouring masses and the particularly acute degree and nature of the racial oppression that they suffer — but to use this only to reinforce the arguments against the horrors of the Apartheid system without ascribing any particular interests or role to the masses, as workers, in the struggle. A rather different approach is to recognise the particular oppression and exploitation of the masses and to ascribe to them a significant role in the national liberation struggle — but this essentially on the basis of their numerical preponderance in the black population and their need and willingness to fight for their liberation and so on. Then there is the approach that does see the particular oppression and exploitation of the black labouring masses and their need to struggle against their more specific oppression and for their liberation from class exploitation — but without recognising the reasons for workers to build their own organisations of class power *now* in the national liberation struggle: or, in fact, even arguing for the postponement of the organisation and struggle of the working class as workers to some 'future stage' after the national liberation struggle.

How are these different approaches to specifically working class interests and organisation reflected in the various na-

IS THERE A NON-CAPITALIST ROAD?

— Harry Magdoff

My remarks will be blunt because of time limits. Perhaps that is just as well, if they thereby also help sharpen some of the issues. In Marxist circles, and prominently advanced at this conference, there is a widespread theory that a third line of social development exists, one that is neither capitalist nor socialist but which nevertheless leads inexorably to socialism. This 'non-capitalist development' is supposed to be achieved by those Third World countries which in-

duce democratic reforms of an anti-imperialist anti-capitalist, and anti-feudal nature. Nations that undertake such reforms are thought to be *ipso facto* in clear-cut transition stage between national liberation and socialist revolution.

This theory rests on two propositions: (1) not all countries must necessarily pass through all the stages of capitalism on the way to socialism, some stages, especially the more advanced ones, can be bypassed; and (2) the typical Third World country, even under the best of circumstances, cannot move directly from dependency on imperialist centres to socialism; a long period of preparation is needed. Granted that both of these propositions are valid, it is all the more important to distinguish, clearly and unmistakably, between two very different types of post-colonial situations.

On the one hand there are Third World countries where the colonial or neo-colonial state has been smashed and a new state created — a new state based upon, and reflecting the transfer of power to workers, poor peasants, and the most oppressed sections of the population. Here a long and complex class struggle, involving at different times various forms of temporary class alliances, and compromises and a great deal of trial-and-error experimentation is to be expected. There is no guarantee that such a country will eventually enter upon the road to socialist transition. But if there has truly been a transfer of power to the most oppressed, and if the masses have been mobilised to exercise this power, there is a good chance that it will.

On the other hand there are Third World countries in which, despite anti-imperialist actions and graniose promises and slogans about socialism, the prospects for socialist transition are unlikely to emerge. In these countries the old state, built up under colonial and neo-colonial conditions, has not been smashed and the oppressive internal class structure has not been basically altered. It is true that in some of these nations a seemingly radical shift in class power has taken place: a transfer from the tradi-

tional ruling class (compradors of foreign capitalists, big landowners, monopoly business, and bankers) to an alliance based on various segments of the middle class (rich peasants, traders, small industrialists, professionals, upper-echelon civil servants, and military officers). Yet, striking as this change may be, it is important to understand that this new ruling alliance does not represent, and eventually must be antagonistic to, the interests of the masses of exploited workers and peasants.

The underlying social antagonisms of these regimes may at first be obscured because of these class realignments. But a less obvious feature of these governments is that they frequently create conditions out of which new social classes and new class differentiations gradually evolve. New exploiting sectors arise alongside the growth of a state bureaucracy which administers the new nationalised and state-owned industries and financial institutions, the emergence of a new phenomena, differing in many ways from the normal class structure of advanced capitalist countries; but for all the differences, there is an underlying similarity, since the new ruling power gains its strength and security from the exploitation of other classes. Furthermore, the nationalistic anti-imperialist policies of these regimes are secretly limited by the constraints of the world capitalist system in which they operate.

Some of these new and radically oriented governments may at first take bold anti-imperialist measures. Foreign-owned firms may be nationalised and a government monopoly over foreign trade instituted. In addition state-owned industries may be greatly expanded and energetic agricultural reforms introduced. Yet despite all these dramatic reforms, the contradictions and constraints which characterise this kind of society are such that the result is likely to be not a noncapitalist road to socialism, but a new variant of capitalism that in the final analysis remains dependent on the imperialist centres. We know this not only from theory, but also from historical experience.

Why should this be so? While a presentation of the entire argument cannot be undertaken within the present limits, I will briefly touch on three critical problem areas: agriculture, financing investment, and a strategy of development that accommodates to an existing internal class structure.

Agricultural reforms introduced from the top by regimes of the kind in question do not tackle some of the most severe obstacles to agricultural progress. For even reforms which are successful in

eliminating very large landowners from the countryside still leave oppressive groups of merchants, moneylenders, and rich farmers who rule the roost in the rural villages. These local upper strata may not be very wealthy by Western standards or even by the norms of the big cities in their own countries, but their livelihood and prosperity are based upon the exploitation of the local poor and landless peasants. It follows that an agricultural reform — even one which is very progressive in intent — has only limited value as long as it does not encompass the overthrow of the local oligarchy, including the elimination of the police, gangster squads, courts of justice, and the other sources of power of the local elites. If this oligarchy is not rooted out and the long-oppressed local poor involved in the transfer of power, then conditions for the solution of the agricultural problem do not exist. Neither can the backwardness of the peasantry be overcome nor can the economic constraints on the economy as a whole be removed under these circumstances.

The limitations of agricultural reforms of the so-called noncapitalist development regimes were recognised in one of the papers presented at this Round Table discussion. The suggested solution was the establishment of cooperatives. But what needs to be understood is that without a social revolution in the countryside, cooperatives can quickly become new centres of exploitation. It does not take long before either the old oligarchy, or the new one emerging in the midst of the agricultural reforms, becomes the dominant influence in the cooperative and utilises its leading position to advance its own interests. For the ones chosen to administer the cooperatives — whether by appointment from the capital or by democratic elections — are those who can read and write, who have connections with leading political groups in the capital, or who have some special advantage such as religious prominence. Since there is no basic change in the social environment and in prevalent economic processes, the cooperatives become instruments for control over the rural poor and for the enrichment of privileged administrators.

What is ultimately at stake in this kind of basically bourgeois agricultural reform is not only the oppression of the rural masses but also the potential for the nation's economic progress. Existing low and unreliable levels of food production in these countries put a lid on the living standards of the urban as well as rural masses and restrict the ability to accumulate capital for investment. To

HISTORY OF THE ICU

— Sipho Buthelezi

The history of working class organisation in South Africa: the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU).

By Sipho Buthelezi

The birth of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, the ICU, on January 17, 1919, was the culmination of the African workers' struggles that had evolved since the turn of the 19th century. It also demonstrated the absence of an organisational mechanism through which the African workers could channel their political and economic demands arising from the exploitative and oppressive conditions in which they lived and worked in South Africa.

The importance of the ICU was that it provided a historical reference for future political struggles and organisation. Its insertion into a rising workers' mass movement helped to merge the economic and political or the immediate and historic demands of the African working class. The adoption by the ICU of social and political demands during the formative period, and the reflection of these in its 1925 constitution, in turn contributed to the radicalisation of the social and political struggles of the oppressed in general.

Wartime industrialisation, post-war inflation, increased pressure on the already scarce land due to the 'reserve' system, and accelerated labour migration, all brought about a new surge of mass action and organisation aimed at fighting back against intensified exploitation and oppression.

Before the formation of the ICU, African workers had launched their economic struggles in the gold mines in 1901-2 strikes and mass desertions occurred at the Consolidated Main Reef, Goldenhuis, Langlaagte and Durban Rooledop, as well as at the Vereeniging Coal Mines and the Bakapan Electric Works. These struggles took place in the circumstances of wage reductions and an offensive by the Rand mining capitalists, in close collaboration with the post-Boer war British colonial administration, to destroy the informal bargaining power of the African industrial labour force.

In January 1900, a maximum monthly wage for African workers of only 20 shillings was imposed by the British colonial government; a curfew was also introduced; all gatherings of Africans prohibited and frequent raids made into the mine compounds to enforce control over the labour force, and to discourage any protests by the workers.

Earlier on, African expectations had been raised by the prospect of a British

administration in the Transvaal, and pass books were burnt *en masse* when Robert's columns entered Johannesburg in June 1900. As it turned out, however, more oppressive measures were adopted against the African workers. Eight thousand workers were conscripted to build a new railway line for transporting coal along the gold reef at the wage rate of only 10 pence a day — four thousand men were drafted to form a cheap labour force for the British colonial army; and the rest of the workers were retained by the mines for the maintenance work at the wage rate of one shilling a day. Martial law restrictions were placed on the movement of Africans, so that many workers found it almost impossible to return home and were, therefore, compelled to remain on the mines long after their contracts had expired.

The Miner administration in Cape Town extended the pass department, developed legal procedures to deal with breach of contract, introduced a scheme to register the fingerprints of all mining employees to help identify those who deserted and established regulations to prohibit mining companies recruiting in designated 'labour districts' under exclusive state control of cheap labour.

All these repressive laws were soon to unleash the anger of the workers against the system of exploitation. The first significant and sustained African workers' strike erupted in 1913. This strike began after white miners walked off their jobs in June of that year. After the subsequent general strike of July 1913 while trade unions, under the auspices of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions presented a statement of their grievances entitled *The Workers' Charter*. Some of the demands of *The Workers' Charter* reveal the true intentions of the white workers: preventing the African workers' entrenchment in skilled, semi-skilled and even unskilled jobs.

Available evidence shows clearly that the discrimination of the white overseers recruited mine-workers against the Africans was originally craft-based discrimination, but as African workers acquired more skills and could be seen as competitors in the job market they then discriminated against on the grounds of colour. To protect their own interests, craft unionists advocated a white 'civilised' labour policy which envisaged the segregation of Africans in the reserves and their total exclusion from all industrial work. Until such time that this policy could be implemented, they advocated the extension of the 'colour bar' in such a way that all blacks would be debarred from handling any form of machinery, thus precluding them from

serving any indirect form of apprenticeship.

While miners, in contrast to the artisans, were not in favour of dispensing with black assistants, even on the drills, and did not support the idea that the African miners who did the heavy 'rough' manual work, which white miners had to perform overseas, should be entirely excluded from the mines. They therefore favoured only some application of the colour bar.

The insecurity of the white miners which permeated the entire labour force on the Rand; the unemployment among white workers during 1912 and the beginning of 1913; retrenchment and fear of all-round wage reductions; the management's tardiness in improving working conditions; the failure of the management of all the mines to give any recognition to the trade unions; the ever-present danger of plithis; and the colonial government's slow response to these conditions made all workers believe that the only redress for their grievances and demands was to resort to militant action.

During the 1913 white workers strike, the African workers stayed away from work under hostile pressure, including physical threats, from the white workers, but soon began to hold their own meetings and discuss demands, refusing to go to work as a result of their own grievances; the strike grew, until thirteen thousand African miners had downed their tools; the authorities, who had treated the white miners cautiously, were alarmed at the African strike.

They leaped into action to crush the strike and used the police to break up the demonstrations and mass meetings. Strike leaders were arrested. Finally, the colonial army of occupation was sent in to crush the strike and force workers back to work. Although the 1913 African workers strike was crushed, the post-World War I period saw the intensification of the black working class struggles in South Africa. The most important African workers organisation thrown up by these struggles and the deepening class consciousness among the workers was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. Founded in Cape Town in early 1919, the ICU grew in membership strength in the mid-twenties until by 1927 it could claim a membership of one hundred thousand; the biggest mass working class organisation on the African continent.

One of the early founders of the ICU was Klemens Kadiale, who was born in Malawi of a peasant family, near the Bandawe mission station around 1896. Kadiale helped found the ICU with an initial number of twenty-four, mostly

open the floodgates of production and productivity the peasants themselves have to become actively involved in removing the shackles of centuries-long oppression and backwardness. They themselves have to become the instruments of a technological agricultural revolution — in the installation and control of irrigation and water conservancy, improved use of manure and other fertilisers, development of reliable storage facilities, experimentation with new seeds and plants, double-cropping, adaptation of new tools and machines, etc. This of course calls for a restructuring and expansion of industry to supply the agricultural sector with the needed supplies, a course which profit-guided industrial firms, whether private or state-owned, are reluctant to pursue. Without a totally new departure in the city and in the country, the agricultural bottleneck remains.

A second obstacle to achieving economic independence from the imperialist centres and paving the way for socialist transition arises from the difficulties of increasing investment — or, in Marxist terms, mobilising the surplus for investment. Planned socialist societies obtain control over the surplus by eliminating the accumulation of surplus in private hands and by regulating wages and prices. The kind of regime we are now discussing can get access to some of the economic surplus via State-owned industries. The profitability of these industries, however, is generally of a low order. Industries counted on to produce for export have to keep down the prices of their products in order to compete in world markets. And the profits of those industries that are concerned with providing materials and equipment for internal private industry are likewise constrained in order to provide profitable opportunities to smaller native industrialists who are part of the social base on which these regimes rely. The major source for financing of development must therefore come from taxation.

Apart from persistent difficulties arising from tax evasion this method of surplus mobilisation becomes a major source of social tension. The masses have little enough income from which taxes can be extracted. Furthermore, given prevailing low levels of productivity and therefore of total national output, the tax bite on the middle and upper echelons has to be quite large if a sufficient surplus is to be obtained.

Theoretically, the non-capitalist road is one in which harmonious class alliances are needed for the struggle against monopoly capital and imperialism. But in fact the extremely perplexing problems of internal financing for growth intensify sources of conflict not only between the lower and upper classes but

within the dominant class-alliance as well. Inability to overcome the contradictions and social unrest involved in collecting investment funds leads either to stagnation or to reopening the door for the investors and bankers of the advanced capitalist nations.

This turn to foreign investment and loans, and the consequent increased dependency on the imperialist metropoles, has still other roots, primarily an inability to step firmly onto the path of self-reliance. The latter goal is loudly proclaimed, but the steps taken in that direction are necessarily tentative and limited. The reason is that self-reliance cannot be reached without a basic restructuring of the economy and a determined reversal of the 'classical' social priorities of a bourgeois society. It is also of vital significance that these regimes find it necessary to follow the consumption patterns of the advanced capitalist nations. This being the case, the economic strategies of the presumably noncapitalist nations must, in the final analysis, resemble those of the non-revolutionary capitalist societies.

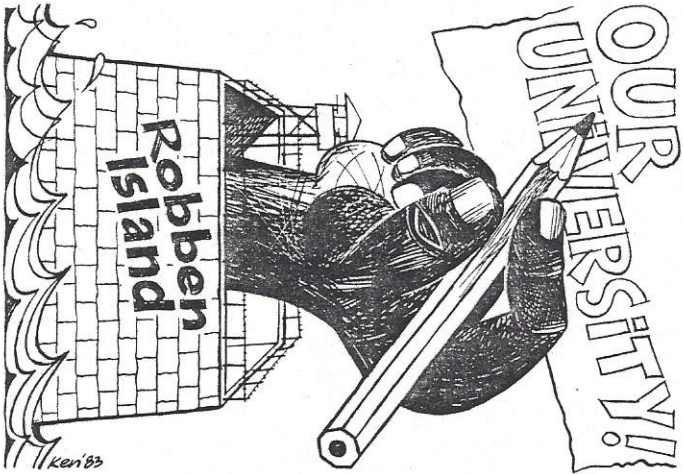
Not does the similarity stop at the outline of economic strategy. In both types of Third World countries the need for foreign exchange with which to buy capital goods, raw materials, and food is

met by focusing on the expansion of exports. But the exports of the countries of the kind we have been considering are especially vulnerable to the vicissitudes and manipulations of world markets. Balance-of-payments deficits therefore crop up repeatedly. Relief is then sought by attracting more foreign investment and loans. And this is the route to ever more and greater balance-of-payments crises, since profits have to be paid to investors and interest to lenders. Debt peonage is therefore always on the horizon.

In short, even with the best intentions the countries which do not undertake a true social revolution remain trapped on the capitalist road, or are quickly pushed back on it.

My purpose in these brief remarks has not been to throw a blanket of despair on all reform-minded governments. Situations vary from country to country, and it is not my aim, nor is it within my competence, to propose an absolute formula applicable to all situations in the Third World. What I am warning against is blind optimism and the substitution of illusions for hard analysis.

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'coloured' dock workers. Following a successful dock strike which ended in early 1920, attempts were made by the authorities to depose Kadalie, but he succeeded in engaging the services of his influential white liberal friends and the deportation order was cancelled.

At a coordination conference of black trade unionists held at Bloemfontein in July 1920, Selby Masing and elected president of the ICU, and Member of Kimberly became general secretary. Kadalie, who had hoped to head the ICU as general secretary, was disappointed, and after the conference he collected together all the conference documents and left with them for Cape Town. In 1921, in a meeting held in Cape Town, Kadalie successfully manoeuvred to depose Masing and was elected general secretary of the ICU. This action precipitated the struggle for organisational control in the workers' mass movement which was to bedevil the ICU throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The wartime capitalist crisis which led to a substantial rise in the cost of living and wage depression increased the militancy of the African workers and the ICU expanded rapidly throughout the four provinces of the Union, and even outside the country, for example in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The ICU set up its own paper, the *Workers' Herald*, which was edited by Kadalie between the years 1923 and 1928.

In 1925 the ICU issued its revised constitution which characterised the struggle in South Africa as primarily between *labour* and *capital*. Although Preamble II of the constitution embraced revolutionary Marxist objectives, it did not state how these were to be achieved and makes no reference to political (state) power for the workers in a new society envisaged by the ICU. The Preamble declared that:

Whereas the interests of the workers and those of the employers are opposed to each other, the former living by selling their labour, receiving for it only part of the wealth they produce, and the latter living by exploiting the labour of the workers; depriving the workers of a part of their labour in the form of profit, no peace can be between the two classes, a struggle must always obtain about the division of the products of human labour, until the workers through their industrial organisation take from the capitalist class the means of production, to be owned and controlled by the workers for the benefit of all, instead of a few. Under such a system he who does not work, neither shall he eat. The basis of remuneration shall be the principle, from each according to his abilities, to every man according to his needs. This is the goal for which the ICU strives along with all other

organised workers throughout the world.

The constitution also provided for open membership to all races, but although Europeans were eligible for membership of the ICU, 'under no circumstances shall such a member hold office'.

Significantly, the ICU constitution, especially its Preamble, envisaged a radical transformation of South African society, and reflected directly and indirectly the earlier class struggles of the African working class and their aspirations. It called for a fundamental redistribution of economic and political power. What is not stated, however, is how the ICU proposed to effect this radical transformation. Instead of working out a clear-cut political programme of action, the ICU leaders were content to spell out organisational objectives aimed at organisational efficiency alone. The neglect of the principle of the *primacy of politics* in the class struggle under the conditions of colonial oppression was to lead to intense internal factional struggles which eventually brought about the collapse of the organisation.

As we have previously indicated, by 1927-8 the ICU had reached its zenith organisationally with a membership of a hundred thousand. Kadalie, armed with these monumental figures which surpassed any other workers' organisation in Africa, made ceaseless but futile attempts at recognition by the organised white labour movement for the ICU. When all efforts failed to win such recognition, Kadalie chose to export the question of recognition, and in 1927 travelled to Geneva as an unofficial delegate to a conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). For five months Kadalie toured Europe, lecturing to sympathetic audiences and gaining wide publicity for his campaign for ICU international recognition.

Through Arthur Creech-Jones, Fenner Brockway and other contacts in the British labour movement and the Independent Labour Party, Kadalie secured a TUC-sponsored adviser, William G. Ballinger. However, after Ballinger arrived in South Africa in 1928, his relations with Kadalie became strained.

In the meantime organisational tensions, which had been developing during Kadalie's absence abroad, led to a split away from the ICU under A.W.G. Champion who formed his own organisation, the *ICU Yase Natal* (ICU of Natal).

Champion had met Kadalie in 1925 and joined the ICU as Transvaal secretary, and was subsequently posted to Durban, later that year, as secretary during Kadalie's overseas trip in 1927. In 1928, charged with financial ir-

regularities, Champion was suspended as national secretary, but resented his control as leader of the now independent and powerful *ICU Yase Natal*. This too later declined when Champion was banished by the government from Natal following a period of unrest and 'rioting' in Durban in 1930.

Meanwhile in early 1929, with heavy pressures upon him and criticism coming from all quarters, Kadalie resigned as ICU general secretary. In a new attempt two weeks later, Kadalie attempted to oust his rivals who had come together around Ballinger. This bid failed and in March Kadalie formed the 'Independent ICU' which was based mainly around East London. There in 1930 he organised a general strike of significant proportions and at a trial in the Grahamstown Supreme Court, Kadalie was charged and sentenced to two months imprisonment in connection with the strike. Later in 1930, he was banned from addressing or attending meetings on the Rand, and he moved from Johannesburg to East London.

Thus by 1929, the ICU had split into three warring factions: the 'Independent ICU' which followed Kadalie, mainly based around East London; the 'ICU of Natal' which followed Champion; and the 'ICU of Africa' which supported Ballinger.

The question we can ask at this stage is: What brought about the ICU to this crisis in such a short space of time? Most observers have emphasised the problem of *personality cults* and personal rivalry, especially that between Kadalie and Champion, as causes for the disintegration and eventual collapse of the ICU. Revolutionary socialists have, on the other hand, argued over many decades that the break up of the ICU cannot be explained simply in terms of personal incompatibility of the individual leaders concerned or the fanning up of old differences of opinion on the organisational questions, namely financial irregularities, autocratic rule and inefficiency in certain branches of the organisation. Important though these issues may have been they were symptoms of underlying *political* problems rather than causes of the crisis itself.

We suggested at the beginning that the birth of the ICU provided a potential, by powerful mechanism through which the economic and political demands of the African working class could be merged in the struggle against exploitation and oppression. We also pointed out that the ICU leadership failed to work out a clear analysis of the economic and the political conditions obtaining in South Africa, and as a consequence this prevented them from hammering out a clear-cut political and organisational strategy through which they could strive

for the achievement of the stated objectives of the organisation.

The central issue raised by the emergence of the ICU and the massive entry of the workers into the organisation was of *representation* of the workers and the articulation of their historic interests. In this regard, the central weakness of the ICU programme was lack of prior commitment by the leadership to transforming the political role of the ICU and the working class in South African society. Kadalie, instead, believed that overt political agitation was best left for the ANC. At the 1923 conference the ICU leadership expressly dissociated itself from the ongoing political struggles of the oppressed:

This organisation (ICU) resolves unreservedly to dissociate itself from any political body whatever, and declares that its objectives are solely to propagate the industrial, economic and social advancement of all African workers through industrial organisation on constitutional lines.

The failure of the ICU leadership to take cognisance of the vital role of a workers' mass movement in the political struggle of the oppressed was not helped by the hostility of the ANC towards independent workers' organisation. Selby Masing, for example, founder member of the ANC later remarked in his unpublished autobiography on the attitude of the Congress towards the ICU:

They (ANC leaders) did not want the workers to become a unit by themselves. They wanted whatever was done in the interest of the workers to be done by Congress itself. To suggest that you would form another organisation you had (at) once the best of the leaders against you.... They were opposed to any workers organisation started away from the Congress.

The contradictory position of the ICU's stated objectives involving the redistribution of economic and political power in South Africa, while at the same time denying the ICU as a whole any role 'whatever' in the political struggle of the oppressed reflects on the political culture in which the ICU evolved during its formative years, and was to lead to the demise of the organisation in its later years of existence. In 1918, before the formation of the ICU, Kadalie had befriended A.F. Barty, a white socialist who ran a cattery business in Cape Town. When Barty was nominated to stand as a Labour Party candidate in a parliamentary by-election, Kadalie invited Barty to join his election committee. Barty was narrowly defeated in the election itself.

The significance of Kadalie's participation as Barty's election agent reflects his lack of appreciation of the class character of the South African state, formed in 1910 primarily as a union of British mining capital and Boer agricultural/rural interests. This weakness was to lead Kadalie to enter not only into electoral alliances with socialists but with liberals and even with Afrikaner nationalists, depending on the circumstances presented to him at any particular time. Thus for example, in 1924 Kadalie forged an alliance with General J.B.M. Hertzog, the avowed racist leader of the Boer Nationalist Party, purely on the naive belief that a change of government was necessary and would be in the best interests of South Africa.

In May 1924, at the ANC conference held in Bloemfontein, Kadalie moved a motion which declared support for General Hertzog's opposition. The motion was adopted by conference and was hailed by Kadalie as his 'first major political victory'. Hertzog welcomed the ANC resolution and arranged to have it printed in thousands by the Nationalist headquarters in Cape Town to receive Kadalie and to have the general election issue of the *Workers' Herald* (the ICU paper) printed by the Nationalist press. Tens of thousands of it were accordingly printed and distributed freely throughout the Cape Province.

Soon afterwards, a conference of Cape Native Voters Association met in Kingwilliamstown under the chairmanship of Professor D.D.T. Jabavu. Both Kadalie and W. Masabaha (a trade unionist from Port Elizabeth) went to the conference and as Kadalie said later, they had 'no difficulty' in finding the train fares. General Hertzog and Arthur Barlow, MP, had arranged for their fares from Bloemfontein. At the conference itself, the pro-Sinus African politicians supported General Smuts for his pro-British imperialism stand. Kadalie put forward the Pro-Hertzog position and justified his reactionary and collaboratorist stand in these words:

We argued that the decision of the conference should not be influenced by what the old Boers did to the Africans, the English on their part did likewise by exporting the Africans to be sold in the slave market of the New World, which resulted in the presence of Negroes in America.

Kadalie and his fellow collaborators with racists urged the conference to support the ANC Bloemfontein resolution supporting Hertzog's nationalists, and 'to be guided by the European electors who desired a change of government.' Kadalie's motion, he later proclaimed enthusiastically, 'won the day'. On June 12, 1924 the Nationalist-Labour alliance

won a decisive victory at the polls and this brought about a qualitative shift in the ICU's ideological position. This ideological shift presented itself in the acceptance by the leadership of the existing political order in South Africa. One ICU resolution in 1925 categorically accepted political presentation of Africans by whites and declared that the ICU was not even prepared to 'enter into any futile discussion of the pros and cons of the policy of the present Government.'

The qualitative shift in the ideological direction of the ICU towards conformity and open collaboration with the Afrikaner Nationalists reflected not merely pressure from external social forces, but a realignment of class forces within the ICU as well.

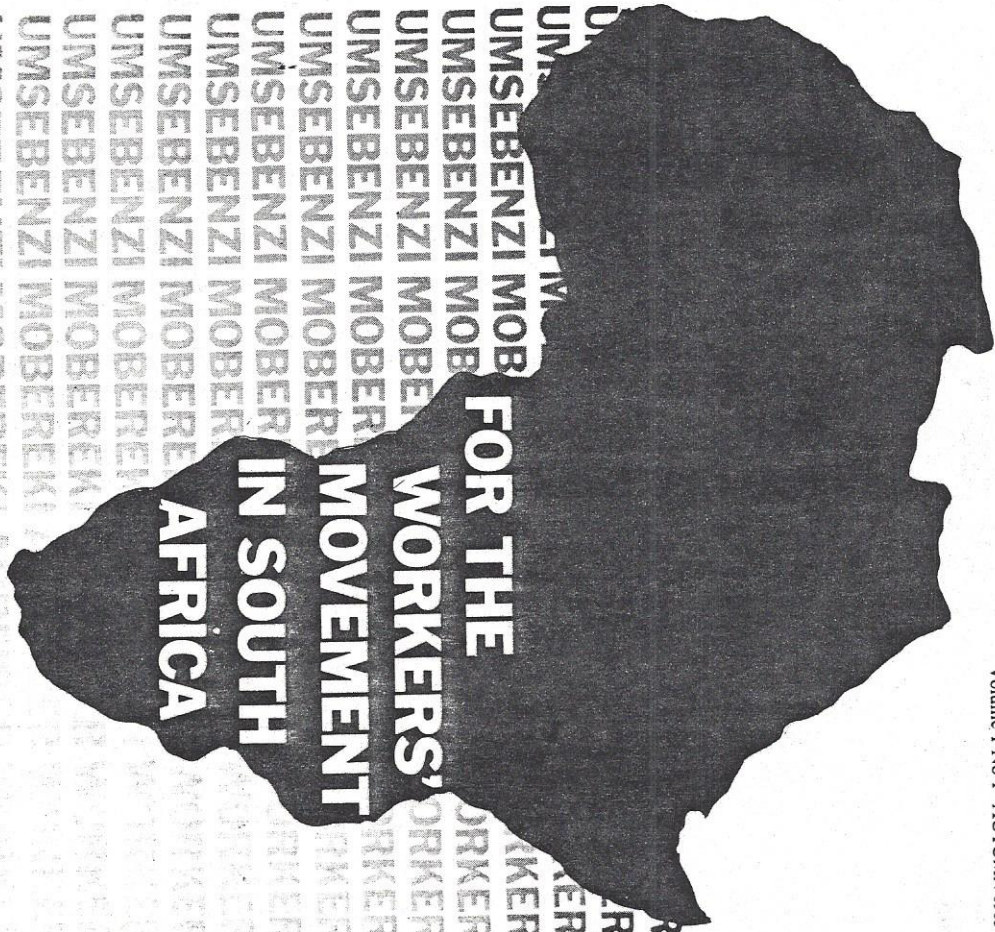
In the early 1920s there had been a massive entry of urban African and 'Coloured' workers into the ranks of the ICU. To meet the expectations of the workers, petty-bourgeois elements who provided the organisational leadership of the Union were compelled to embrace an anti-capitalist programme. Despite the high-sounding revolutionary rhetoric however the ICU leadership's organisational practice remained elitist. This, indeed, is the essence of the contradiction of the ICU: whilst the leadership talked working class politics, their practice in the day-to-day affairs of the organisation often served to dilute the workers' struggles towards the overthrow of the capitalist order in South Africa. Furthermore, the lack of class analysis and the failure to understand the class character of the South African state limited the ICU's objectives to negotiations with the government in power and the industrial capitalists. The function of the ICU was thus confined to negotiations which sought to regulate wages and conditions of labour, and to foster the best interests of its members.

The massive recruitment of aspirant petty-bourgeois elements (e.g. Teachers) as fulltime organisers, beginning in 1925, tended to accentuate the ideological and organisational direction of the ICU. The strike weapon, which the workers had effectively used to exert pressure on the ruling class and the capitalists in industry to meet their demands, was abandoned and even threatened by Kadalie as wicked, obsolete and useless. And of course, strikes could not have been in the best interests of fulltime paid officials who could not get paid during strikes!

Thus, for example, when farm workers in Northern Natal were threatened with eviction for belonging to the ICU and suggested a strike, the officials sidetracked them with unrealistic proposals and promises to buy land for the evicted tenants. In another instance, coal miners in Natal, many of whom were ICU members, struck work in June 1927. The officials retreated and denied

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**FOR THE
WORKERS'
MOVEMENT
IN SOUTH
AFRICA**

responsibility for the strike, and even declared that the strike was illegal. During the same year, dock workers at the Point in Durban, the main base of the ICU, came out on strike twice within a short period and received no help or guidance from the Union.

When workers at Kazem called for a strike for higher wages, they were advised by Henry D. Tyanmazash, the ICU provincial secretary, and Kadalle's 'old and able' colleague (Kadalle's words) to resume work pending discussion of their grievances. The workers refused and were dismissed, their place being taken by migrants recruited from the mines.

Tyanmazash believed that a real trade union's task was to avert and not to 'look for' or 'manufacture' strikes. Such attitudes towards the strike weapon were reinforced by the influence of the British TUC-sponsored adviser W.G. Ballinger. At a reception committee in Feterasstown (JHB) in July 1928, Ballinger emphasised that a strike should be the last resort of any trade union for, according to him, it is a gesture of despair as they had found in Britain. The ICU, Ballinger advised, should organise quietly along the lines followed by the (reformist) European trade union movement.

To emphasise the 'correctness' of this new approach, Tyanmazash proudly noted that *only* three strikes had ever been initiated by the ICU since its inception: the first and the only successful one at the Cape Town docks, in November 1919; the one at Maryilans (JHB) in 1927; and the one at Onderstepoort in Pretoria, in 1928, where 71 strikers were fined and dismissed from employment.

From what we have said above it thus becomes clear that the ICU leadership failed to adapt the organisational methods of the Union to the growing militancy of the workers and their massive entry into the organisation. Besides the strikes noted by Tyanmazash above, many others were initiated by or led at branch level by the workers themselves; but the paid ICU bureaucrats invariably intervened on the side of the employers only to persuade the strikers to return to work pending negotiations.

A glaring example of this contradictory position was demonstrated on the diamond diggings at Lichtenburg in June 1928, when claim holders arbitrarily and without advance notice reduced wages from 18s and 20s a week. Some thirty thousand Africans went on strike. The government intervened and persuaded diggers to offer the workers 15s a week, at which point Kadalle and his associates pledged support for the government's 'solution' and appealed to the strikers to return to work whilst the union leaders negotiated a final settlement.

This transparently collaborationist role of the ICU bureaucrats in this strike

and many others had the negative consequence of workers' disillusionment and disaffection with the union; and desertions by the workers began in earnest by the late 'twenties. When the disintegration of the ICU was becoming more and more obvious, Kadalle became more critical of the paid bureaucrats. But his main concern was for organisational efficiency rather than the questions of strategy and tactics. His bitterest criticism was, however, reserved for his TUC adviser, Ballinger. Kadalle re-narrated later in his autobiography and points out that 'with a wiser and more experienced adviser', the ICU could have been saved from the 'ship-weak'. Instead of trying to save the movement from the shipwreck, Kadalle complained, Ballinger 'put many of us at loggerheads against one another, thus making it difficult for us to compromise for the good of the movement we all loved and some of us had suffered for.'

From Kadalle's own observations (and many others), the problems of personality cults, personal rivalries, and the incompatibility of individuals are seen as causes of the disintegration and eventual collapse of the ICU. Kadalle did not, of course, admit that personally cults develop mainly as a result of the absence of democracy in an organisation, a development for which he was personally largely responsible with regards to the ICU.

The eventual split in the ICU was not so much the result of psychological factors but arose from irreconcilable differences on the crucial questions of strategy and tactics. External social pressures, initially from white liberals (around 1926) and later Ballinger's participation in the ICU, led Kadalle and his close associates to adopt a reformist middle-course of constitutional forms of struggle buttressed by moral persuasion on the ruling class to advance the cause of the workers. Walter Citrine, Creech-Jones, Winnifred Holtby and Kadalle's other Fabian socialist 'friends' in Britain impressed upon him the importance of strict adherence to constitutionalism, avoidance of strikes, communism, or politics; and they held visions of a great bureaucratic organisation 'based on the model of the best modern trade unions in England.'

This approach to questions of strategy and organisation was bitterly contested by Champion's faction of the ICU. Champion complained and accused Kadalle of being 'full of English ideas'. As he put it:

After spreading a gigantic spirit of mistrust against the White man and his government he (Kadalle) came back from overseas with a sudden revolutionised mind. He wanted a European private secretary, while girls as shorthand typists. All that was

strange to us who knew his teachings so well.

These differences over questions of strategy and tactics continued to sharpen after the special conference held at Kimberly in December 1927, and led to serious debate throughout 1928. In the meantime another programme was being put forward by James A. La Gunna, E.J. Khale and John Gomas, who in December 1926 were expelled from the ICU under the guise that they belonged to the Communist Party. They were accused of giving more attention to political propaganda than to improving the economic conditions of the workers.

From this brief history of the ICU there are a number of lessons to be gained for the emerging black working class movement today in South Africa today. The most evident of the dangers to the unity and strength of the working class movement is personal ambition, corruption and opportunism amongst trade union leaders.

More fundamental however is the fact that the ICU was led in an individualistic and autocratic or, at best, in a bureaucratic way, with little or no real consultation of the rank and file members, and it was precisely the lack of democratic expression and control over the leadership that allowed for the excesses of individualistic rivalry and conflict that ensued.

Even more significantly, the lack of democratic participation in the organisation was the other side of the coin of the lack of active political mobilisation of the mass of the members of the ICU. Far from actively encouraging the workers to understand their exploitation and fight for their liberation, the ICU leadership actively and increasingly discouraged workers from struggle and ended up by demobilising hundreds of thousands of militant workers.

Finally, the ICU was a workers union in name only. It was, more correctly, a mass working class movement albeit the largest that Africa had known to date. And it failed because that broad loose organisational structure was inadequate to the political and economic demands of workers' struggles against their capitalist employers and the bourgeois state.

Workers unity has to be built from the ground up — from the workplace, across companies, regions and entire industries in a democratic, disciplined way for them to be able to achieve the real power that they need to confront the oppressors and to liberate themselves from exploitation.