

A HISTORY OF THE TRAMWAY UNION IN CAPE TOWN 1918-1945

Christopher Giffard

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For Des Giffard and Maud Giffard

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFTU	African Federation of Trade Unions
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
ASW	Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers
CCI	Cape Chamber of Industries
CFLU	Cape Federation of Labour Unions
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CTMOC	Cape Town Motor Omnibus Company
IC	Industrial Council
ICA	Industrial Conciliation Act
PTL	Peninsula Transport Company Ltd.
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions
SACTW	South African Council of Transport Workers
SATLC	South African Trades and Labour Council
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa

INTRODUCTION

The Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape) is one of the oldest trade unions in South Africa. Formed towards the end of World War I, it became one of the most progressive and powerful unions in the Cape Federation of Labour Unions until the dissolution of the latter in 1954.¹

This dissertation is a history of the Cape Tramway Union during its most important years - from the time when the tramway industry itself became monopolised in the early 1930s to the end of World War II, which also marked the end of a "progressive" era in the Union's history.

It is one of a few histories of trade unions in Cape Town, the others being Martin Nicol's history of the Cape Garment Workers' Union² and Richard Goode's study of the Food and Canning Workers' Union.³ Of these two, only Nicol's work deals with the Cape in the period before World War II. Clearly the labour history of the Western Cape is under-researched (as is the history of the region generally). Most labour histories have (correctly) focussed on the Witwatersrand, where, because of the mining industry and industrialisation, class struggle has been more intense and therefore more significant. The result, however, has been a

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1. The CFLU, later named the Western Province and District Council of Trade Unions and the Western Province Federation of Labour Unions, finally joined with the Trades and Labour Council to form the South African Trades Union Council in 1954.
 2. Nicol, M. "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town 19-1939", unpublished D Phil thesis, Economic History Department, UCT, 1984.
 3. Goode, R. "A History of the Food and Canning Workers' Union 1941-1975", unpublished MA dissertation, Economic History Department, UCT, 1986.

tendency to view South African history in terms of the experience of the Rand, and this has created an imbalance.

This study is an attempt to redress this imbalance, and to provide some more insights into the peculiar history of the Western Cape.

The Tramway Union was an important union in Cape Town in the inter-war period. It was led for many years by a man known as the "father of Cape unionism", a Scot called Robert Stuart. "Bob" Stuart, as he came to be known, was born in Aberdeen in 1870 and spent six years in America before arriving in Cape Town in 1901, where he began work as a stonemason. He soon became involved in Union matters, in particular the South African Operative Masons Society, and he was one of the founders of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions in 1913.⁴

Stuart was to dominate that body for almost 30 years. He was Secretary of the Federation when he helped to form the first lasting Tramway Union in September 1918. He was the first Secretary of the Union (part-time), a post he held, despite a break during the late 1920s, until 1936.

In the period prior to 1924, Stuart's approach was inconsistent and ambivalent - although a strong personality who liked to act for, rather than involve, the grassroots membership, he initially did sometimes support strike action in order to establish the Tramway Union as a force in the industry, gaining a reputation as a "troublemaker" in the process. But after 1924, this equivocal position changed as he discouraged worker militancy and began to rely on

4. Gitsham, E and Trembath, J.F. *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa*, E.P. and Commercial, Durban, 1926, page 176.

negotiations within the framework of the new industrial relations legislation.

Stuart was a trade union bureaucrat. He insisted on acting on behalf of the Union membership rather than encouraging the active participation of the rank and file. According to Nicol, the Industrial Conciliation Act (ICA) of 1924 gave him the perfect opportunity to operate in this way. He argues that Stuart had an alliance with the factory owners in the garment industry at least. He helped to break strikes, divide workers, kept wages low and colluded with employers and police to defeat union dissidents. "Stuart's reputation as a dictator, sell-out and bosses' man," writes Nicol, "was well-earned over his whole career."⁵

He argues, based on a report from another Cape unionist, Fred Richfield, to the Trades and Labour Council, that Stuart developed around him a group of bureaucrats which he called the "Stuart Machine". This "Stuart Machine" dominated (and even controlled) the Cape unions for a number of years.

They accomplished this by structuring the unions along lines determined by the ICA of 1924, and ensuring that they were, from the first, "sweetheart unions", dedicated to the interests of industry, rather than those of the membership. But the Tramway Union was an exception. It was not a "sweetheart union", even when Stuart was still Secretary. He became extremely frustrated at the unwillingness of the Tramway Union membership to "toe the line" as the other unions with which he was involved did. He continually

5. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 111.

threatened to resign, regarding the Union as more trouble than it was worth, but other leading members of the "Stuart Machine" persuaded him to persevere.

Stuart was Secretary of at least a half a dozen other unions, including the strategically important Garment Workers' Union. Significantly, the Tramway Union was the first union to vote Stuart out of office in the mid-1930s.

In 1932, the African Federation of Trade Unions (AFTU), the trade union wing of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), targeted the Tramway Union in an attempt to gain a foothold in the Western Cape. The move was led by the prominent General Secretary of the Party, Douglas Wolton, and the then little-known Ray Alexander, after the failure of the AFTU to gain influence in the Garment Union.⁶ Although its initial attempts were unsuccessful, the impetus begun by this agitation finally bore fruit when a radical tramway worker defeated Stuart in the Executive Committee elections in December 1935. This worker was Jimmie Emmerich, an Afrikaner born in the Transkei. He worked in the Peninsula Transport Company, one of the smaller companies to be formed in opposition to the Tramway Company during the "bus war"⁷. He was to become one of the more colourful and popular trade unionists in Cape Town, well known for his fiery speeches on the platforms of the trade unions. He represented the Union on the Cape Federation, the Trades and Labour Council, and failed in his bid to become a Member of Parliament representing the Cape Flats.⁸ Emmerich was also a

6. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 245.

7. See pages 25-29 .

8. See page 132

communist, a member of the CPSA who kept his allegiances secret for tactical reasons.⁹

There are a number of aims to the dissertation. First the aim is to provide a detailed organisational history of an important Cape Town union, one which attempted to break from the bureaucratic functioning of the Cape union movement, and was successful, at least for a short period of time.

Second, it is intended to show from this detailed history the complex and often contradictory forces at play within the Union between 1918 and 1945. In tracing the dismissal of Stuart and the rise and the fall of Emmerich, it becomes clear that individual personalities played an important role in the development of the Union.

The Tramway Union is one of the oldest unions in the country with a continuous history going back to its formation in 1918. Most of its minute books, still exist and this has made possible an in-depth chronological study of the Union. This study is thus largely a narrative one. It is an "organisational history" of the Cape Town Tramway Union. Notwithstanding the important points made by Gregor McLennan in *Marxism and the Methodologies of History*,¹⁰ and by Jon Lewis,¹¹ about the limitations of such history, it is believed that an "organisational history", based as it is on such detailed records about week to week (and in some cases

9. Interview with Ray Alexander, Vredehoek, 9 April 1991.

10. McLennan, G *Marxism and the Methodologies of History*, Verso, London, 1981 pages 114-116.

11. Lewis, J "South African Labor History: A Historiographical Assessment", in *Radical History Review* 47/7, Winter 1919, page 213.

day to day) happenings in the Union, can prove to be very useful.

This history is not concerned with tramway workers and their lives outside the arena of trade union organisation. This is not because their social and living conditions are seen as unimportant. On the contrary. But the scarcity of useful and reliable sources have dictated a much more modest attempt. Nicol has confirmed the difficulties of attempting a broader social history focus.¹²

This history of the organisation of tramway workers can still be of great importance. For example, this study will show that the specific characteristics of the Tramway Union differ sufficiently from the impression of Cape unions provided by Nicol. The Union moreover was not typical of registered unions during this period. Besides recovering lost details of trade union history, an organisational focus in this case is, therefore, useful in other ways too. The study is probably the most detailed yet of a Cape Town union, and possibly of any South African union.

The greatest influence on this study has been the work of Nicol, whose study of the Garment Workers' Union filled a vacuum regarding the past of the working class of Cape Town.

Nicol's chief concern was "to situate the history of the clothing workers within the class struggle in Cape Town"¹³ By his own admission, his characterisation of the "conditions of class struggle" in Cape Town left much to be

12. See Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers" page 4.

13. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 3.

desired, but the usefulness of the work cannot be overstressed.

Nicol's study is useful also for this one in that it deals in some depth with Bob Stuart. Besides providing the insights into Stuart and his operations in the CFLU and its affiliated unions, Nicol's work is important also for revealing the peculiarities of Cape Town. From Rob Davies work, Nicol takes the concept "conditions of class struggle" which "refers to the full range of conditions - economic, political and ideological - under which the class struggle is waged (and which is) given focus by the periodisation of the state."¹⁴ Nicol uses the phrase "conditions of class struggle", not as a concept, but as a "collective noun", which refers to the range of economic, political and ideological factors that apply at a local level, in a factory, industry or city. He argues that in order to understand struggles occurring at a local, rather than a national, level it is crucial to identify the particularities of a city, in this case, Cape Town.

Nicol identifies three main features of Cape Town's history that need to be taken into account. First, unlike the Witwatersrand, Cape Town did not develop a "substantial economic base". Its industry is labour intensive rather than capital intensive, and characterised more by competitive than by monopoly capital.

Secondly, the class struggle in Cape Town "never had the overwhelmingly racial form which marked struggles in the

14. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 11.

Transvaal."¹⁵ This was chiefly because of the racial composition of Cape Town. Despite the fact that Coloureds were subject racially oppressed, they did have a limited access to the vote and some strata were organised into largely white trade unions.

Third, the working class and its organisations failed to pose a serious threat to the ruling class in Cape Town, again unlike the Witwatersrand during the first decades of the century.¹⁶

In general, Nicol argues that the "subordinate position of Cape Town in the South African social formation had significant effects on the class struggle in Cape Town."¹⁷ The development of trade unions in Cape Town was substantially affected by the way that industry developed.

Because of Cape Town's history as a seat of government and a port, with few natural resources, commercial capitalists came to dominate manufacturing capitalists in the first few decades of the twentieth century.¹⁸ The Cape Chamber of Industries (CCI), organising the manufacturing interests, led a long term, and unsuccessful struggle for the protection of their fledgling industries.

The unions operating in Cape Town for the first quarter of this century were, for the most part, craft unions. The Cape Federation of Labour Unions, argues Nicol, was formed in 1913 by Bob Stuart and "some friends", not to meet any

15. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 68.

16. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 68.

17. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 69.

18. For a more detailed discussion of this process, see Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", Chapter 2.

need which arose in Cape Town, but to stop the South African Industrial Federation, the major trade union federation in the Transvaal, from establishing a local branch in Cape Town. Stuart was full-time Secretary of the Federation from 1915 until 1941 during which time "he successfully and treacherously torpedoed every attempt to unite the South African trade union movement into a single coordinating body."¹⁹ The Cape Federation, says Nicol, was "conservative, reformist and Cape chauvinist", and was extremely weak during its first ten years.²⁰ It led a troubled existence until the passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, which provided the Federation with the legislative structures through which it could prosper.

Nicol's work, therefore, provides not only a general basis for understanding capital-labour relations and the characteristics of Cape unionism during this period, but also a closer understanding of personalities and the role they played. Personalities, in a "backwater" such as Cape Town was, were particularly important in the struggles within the union movement.

Nicol argues that the writing of a "local history", such as this one, is an important exercise:

Local history is where mistakes are seen and understood as they occur. Local history is where trade unionists and political activists can learn lessons. Local history shows people that resistance is not only

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19. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 97. For more detail of this and also Stuart's attempts to keep the Tramway Union out of the South African Council of Transport Workers, see pages 118-123
20. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 97.

found in great events, nationally
remembered.²¹

But a local history in which personalities can be studied in detail can also be a difficult and complex history to write. On the one hand, working at a level at which personalities make an individual impact is fascinating and rewarding. On the other, these personalities are often difficult to unravel. For us in the 1990s, it is difficult enough to conceptualise life in the 1920s or 1930s. To try to pinpoint the intricacies of an individual is even more difficult. As far as Stuart is concerned, there are at least other works to compare impressions with (for impressions are often important), but in the case of Emmerich there is nothing. Be that as it may, a detailed focus such as this is nevertheless important.

There are a number of important factors to bear in mind when dealing with the tramway industry. On a technological level, it has, as is normal for any industry over a period of decades, gone through substantial changes with regard to the type of equipment used.

The industry in Cape Town began with horse-drawn carriages (essentially stagecoaches) in the 1840s. In the early 1860s the first rails for horse-drawn trams were laid. The rail system was revamped and electrified in the mid-1890s. Electric trams remained the norm for almost forty years, and buses were introduced as a supplementary form of public transport soon after World War I.²² Trams gave way to

21. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 17.

22. "Buses" is possibly too grand a term for these vehicles, much smaller than the "bus" of today. They could be compared to todays minibus taxis which ply routes such

trackless trams in the mid-1930s. Trackless trams (usually known as trolley buses) were essentially buses that were electrically-powered by an overhead electricity supply. These were used alongside buses until the mid-1960s when the last of them were finally phased out and buses were left to dominate the roads.

As far as ownership and control is concerned, the public transport industry has always been a monopoly of Cape Electric Tramways Ltd., now owned by Tollgate Holdings. During the 1920s, when the first buses appeared on the roads of Cape Town, the Tramway Company took fright (understandably as low wages assisted the independent bus-owners, many of whom owned only one or two buses, in undercutting the Company). So the state was persuaded to pass legislation restricting the running of public transport, resulting in the Company reasserting its control over the industry. This, as we shall see, had significant effects on the Tramway Union.

The transport workers themselves, particularly the "traffic men" (drivers and conductors of trams or buses) were also an important factor in the tramway industry. Drawing on comparative studies of transport workers in London, it appears that bus workers generally see themselves as some sort of labour aristocracy, quite separate from the industrial working class. This certainly was the case in Cape Town, and it had important implications for the relationship between different grades of workers within the Union itself.²³ It is only an understanding of who the Union

as from Mowbray to Guguletu, in size and in mode of operation.

23. This is dealt with in some detail on pages 21-24.

membership was and how they fitted in, regarding both the vehicles and organised labour in Cape Town, that we can begin to understand conflict within the Union.

The direction of the dissertation has to a large extent been determined by the rich sources available. The chief source for the work is the minute books of the Tramway Union. Unbeknown to the Union bureaucracy of the mid-1980s, the detailed minute books of the Union, from its inaugural meeting in September 1918 to the present day, were stored away in a cupboard in their Salt River offices, with only the minutes for 1922 and 1923 missing. Once their existence was discovered, they were largely made available to this researcher. The collection covers mostly Executive Committee meetings, but also the various kinds of general meetings which the whole membership was eligible to attend. The minutes are extremely detailed much more than mere notes about decisions taken. As will be seen from some of the quotes in the text, they include political arguments between different members and thus make possible a detailed study of relations within the Union itself. It is often possible to follow the "Union career" of a particular individual through the material.²⁴

Because of the available data it is possible to follow the struggles for control of the Tramway Union during the period under review.

Of course there are a number of problems associated with the reliance on a major source. As detailed the minutes are, they are not "neutral" in any way, nor are they a

24. The use of the word "career" will be explained in more detail on page 86

verbatim transcription of what was said at each meeting. Of considerable use when facing this problem is the knowledge that the Union Secretary always took down minutes (not a stenographer as is the practice in the Union today). Knowing that Bob Stuart or Jimmie Emmerich wrote something allows one to critically "read" the material and helps determine what evidence is valid or not.

The other records of the Union other than the minutes are unfortunately not available; this includes correspondence. Other material available to the writer included some sets of Industrial Council minutes for the late 1930s, which unfortunately are fairly scanty and cover only two of the many Industrial Councils during the 15 year period. The minutes written by the Council Secretary, H. J. Laite, are not nearly as informative about the conduct of the meetings as the Union minutes are. They merely confirm the cosy relationship which existed between the Employers' Association and the Union delegates.

The other major primary source used are the records of the CFLU. These are part of the much larger TUCSA Archives, the Cape section of which has been duplicated onto microfiche and is held in the UCT Archives. These records have also proved invaluable.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1 is essentially a background chapter. It deals with the history of the tramway industry in Cape Town, and the development of the "bus war" of the mid-1920s. The chapter also examines the characteristics of tramway workers, drawing heavily on comparative sources.

Chapter 2 details the early attempts to establish a trade union to represent the tramway workers. It begins with the entirely unsuccessful ventures just after the turn of the century, and ends with the strike which shattered the fledgling union in 1916.

Chapter 3 begins with the formation of the Cape Federation-affiliated Union in 1918. It shows the Union established itself as a force to be reckoned with in the industry through the 1919 strike and subsequent workplace conflicts.

Chapter 4 covers the period of Bob Stuart's domination of the Tramway Union. Stuart's method of using of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 and the opposition to this from within the Union is explored.

Chapter 5 deals with the opposition to Stuart in the Union. The respective political positions in the Union are examined. Finally, the 1932 strike is explained as an attempt by the left within the Union to wrest control from Stuart.

Chapter 6 covers the period during which Jimmie Emmerich and the left wing are dominant within the Union. It investigates questions of continuity and change within the Union during this period, and highlights issues such as the right wing threat, the moderate opposition and the effects of the war on the Union.

Chapter 7 details the fall of Emmerich, the personification of the left in the Union. It shows how Emmerich cracked under pressure and resorted to alcohol and theft.

CHAPTER ONE

THE TRAMWAY INDUSTRY: A BRIEF HISTORY

Urban road passenger transport is an essential part of any industrialised society. The dominant form of passenger transport to a large extent reflects the level of development of any particular society, as well the level of development of the productive forces on an international scale. The subject of "transport economics" has by now become a massive branch of economics, as towns and cities have become too large by far for the labour force to get from their homes to work and back again without well-organised and intensive public transport.

While a revolution in the transport of commodities was a necessary companion to the development of capitalist production, the revolution in passenger transportation within towns and cities came only towards the end of the nineteenth century as the working class came to be housed further and further away from industrial areas and other places of work.

In fact, the scale of this form of transport is so great in the advanced industrialised countries that it has often been moved off the already congested roads and situated underground. The London, New York and Paris subways provide ample evidence of this. This has not been the case in South Africa, as the relatively small size of the cities has not justified the large amounts of capital needed for subterranean transport systems.

The question of capitalisation itself is a crucial one. Since the days when properly organised public transport

became the norm, necessitating the laying down of tracks or electricity supply systems and the adherence to strict timetables, the public transport industry has generally tended to be more of a service (to industry, commerce and the general public) rather than a profit-making venture. In most cities the local state took over the industry at quite an early stage of its development.¹

Although most passengers using urban public transport nowadays are workers, this has not always been the case. During the second half of the nineteenth century, it was mainly the upper classes that were conveyed in the early forerunners of today's modern buses - "omnibuses" drawn by horses. This had significant implications for the industry itself - it meant that the public transport workers (or at least those visible to the public who worked on the vehicles) had to be the "better type of employee", acceptable to "the travelling public".²

The omnibus was invented in Paris around the beginning of the nineteenth century, while the earliest recorded sale in South Africa was in 1840.³ Besides the more obvious factor of South Africa's satellite status in the world economy, it is unlikely that any such vehicle would have lasted very long on South Africa's roads. Coates describes the early omnibus as

a light, fully-enclosed, vehicle drawn by horses. Inside it had two long seats along either side, a short one between those across the front and it was entered by a

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1. Cape Town and Port Elizabeth are something of an anomaly here.
 2. This notion is developed more fully on pages 21-24.
 3. Coates, P. *Track and Trackless: Omnibuses and Trams in the Western Cape*, Struik, Cape Town, 1976, page 15.

door at the rear. Passengers were also permitted to sit on the roof.⁴

The first Cape Town omnibuses were locally manufactured in Cape Town, Paarl and Wellington.⁵ Most of the omnibus services were based in Cape Town's surrounding towns and villages, providing a service to and from Cape Town. There was intense competition between a multitude of small companies.

With the laying down of tracks (the "permanent way") in the 1860s, larger scale operations began to emerge. The first company to enter this arena was the Cape Town and Green Point Tramway Company.⁶ It laid the first tracks from Long Street to Green Point in 1863.⁷ With two horse-drawn trams and eight horses at its disposal, it ran four times daily each way. The company grew slowly, and by 1875 it had five cars and 26 horses running thirteen times daily. The company had to have passed an Act of Parliament in order to lay the tracks, and it paid an annual rental to the City Council.⁸

4. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 14.

5. The word "omnibus" will be used throughout the dissertation to refer only to those vehicles which do not run on tracks but are drawn by horses. Those trackless vehicles which are powered by diesel engines should strictly speaking also be called "omnibuses", but as they are generally referred to as "'buses" or even "buses", I will stick to the latter throughout the dissertation.

6. For a more detailed discussion of the history of public transport to Sea Point, see Kagan, N. "The Growth and Development of the Municipality of Green Point and Sea Point", unpublished BA Honours Dissertation, History Dept, UCT, 1975, pages 15-41.

7. Horse-drawn trams were a relatively new phenomenon even in Europe. Although the New York and Harlem Railway had experimented with steam trams as early as 1837, London introduced horse-drawn trams in 1861, only two years earlier than the Cape Town company. See Gill, F. *Cape Trams: From Horse to Diesel*, Fraser Gill and Associates, Cape Town, 1961, page 18.

8. Gill, F *Cape Trams*, page 19.

In 1879 competition appeared in the form of a new company, the City Tramways Company⁹, which planned lines to Green Point and Sea Point, to Gardens, and to the Southern Suburbs. By 1885 the line had reached Toll Gate (in Woodstock), and in 1990, it was decided to press ahead to the Mowbray cemetery.

At this stage both companies were owned largely by local Cape Town merchant and professional interests. In addition there were shareholders from the various municipal councils. In the 1880s, three out of the five Commissioners on the Green Point Municipality were shareholders, while the Chairman of the Council was the Chairman of the Board of Directors.¹⁰

The drivers of both companies were coloured while the guards were white.¹¹ The coloured drivers wore a grey uniform with a red stripe, and a red cap. This was introduced during the "bus war" of the 1880s, in order to "smarten up the image" of the companies. The bus war was the first of its kind in the Western Cape, and is not an unusual occurrence in the transport industry. Because trams were being restricted to tracks, and therefore to a specific route, space was opened for independent operators, in this case using horse-drawn omnibuses or Cape cabs. The larger companies were forced to buy up their competition, and to sell the horse-drawn vehicles as far away from Cape Town as possible.¹²

9. The Cape Town bus company is still known by this name today.

10. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 64.

11. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 72; Gill, *F Cape Trams* page 22.

12. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 56.

With electrification came large-scale investment in the tramway industry. In 1893, both companies began to investigate the feasibility of electrifying their systems.¹³ Nobody in Cape Town had had any experience in this new form of motive power, and an American, Henry Butters, arrived from Johannesburg to investigate the possibilities.¹⁴ In addition to studying prospects for electrification, Butters set about restructuring the Cape Town companies. He bought both the City Tramway Company and the Cape Town and Green Point Company, and pushed bills through the Cape Town Parliament which gave him a concession to lay an extensive system of electrified tracks. He then made a public announcement that he had done the buying on behalf of Wernher, Beit and Co. of London, and transferred the concession to their name. The tracks were quickly laid at a cost of £ 200 000, and a power station was built.¹⁵ The first electric tram in Cape Town ran in 1896. Ten cars were imported from Philadelphia. By the following year, the company owned 32 electric trams which ran along about 23 miles of track.

Wernher, Beit and Co. decided to further "rationalise" in 1897. They formed a holding company, registered in London, Cape Electric Tramways Co. Ltd, which owned the four tramway companies in the Cape: the Metropolitan Tramways Co. Ltd. (incorporating the Caledon Street Tramway Co. and the Cape Town and Green Point Tramway Co.), the City Tramways

13. The first electric tram system was developed in Germany as early as 1881.

14. Biography of Butters in Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, pages 211-212.

15. Shorten, J *Cape Town: A record of the Mother City from the earliest days to the present*, Shorten and Smith Publications, Cape Town, 1983, page 385.

Co. Ltd, Port Elizabeth Tramway Co. Ltd¹⁶, and the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town Tramway Co. Ltd.¹⁷

By 1898, the company owned 53 electric tramcars (41 in Cape Town and twelve in Port Elizabeth), and employed 300 men to operate the services. With the switchover from horse-drawn to electric trams, the coloured drivers were replaced by white 'motormen'.

The electrification of the tramways did not proceed without a number of problems. First among these was the leakage of electric current. As the line was lengthened, the problem got worse. At one stage the ground around the power station was significantly heated up.¹⁸ A related problem was that of "electrolysis" whereby current leaked from the rails into the ground and then into the water and gas mains, weakening the joints of the pipes and reducing their life by more than a third. A third problem was that the magnetic fields generated by the current badly affected the ability of the Eastern and Southern African Telegraph Company to receive signals transmitted by ships at sea. A final problem was the condition of the capital equipment itself and the resultant noise made by the trams. This was caused by badly made rails, and sand that had leaked through the gear casings.¹⁹ Over a period of a few years, however, these problems were eventually solved, save the last one which got worse as equipment aged .

16. The electrification of the Port Elizabeth system was the result of another of Butters' coups.

17. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 99.

18. It was possible to draw enough current to ring a bell or light a small lamp by sticking two wires into the ground some distance apart on the Green Point common. See Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 105.

19. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, pages 103-104.

By the turn of the century, the existing lines served Green and Sea Point, Gardens, and the Southern Suburbs, running along Main Road. There were numerous attempts by other companies to extend lines to other areas of Cape Town, but they failed for various reasons, some because of the threat to Government-owned railways (Bellville) and some because horse-drawn transport was cheaper (Cape Flats).²⁰

By the turn of the century, there were tramway systems in Kimberley, East London, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Johannesburg lagged behind, largely because Paul Kruger, intent on protecting local farmers who were selling fodder for the horses, opposed electrification.²¹

The Tramway Workers:

Although the workforce was fairly decentralised, the tramway industry nevertheless had certain organisational advantages for trade unionists:

(The workers') conditions of work bring them together in garage and depot canteens where they can discuss grievances; the garage as a unit of organisation is compact and manageable; and there is easy and rapid communication between garages.²²

When it was reorganised after World War I, the Tramway Union organised a wide range of workers into its ranks. Besides the two obvious employment categories, drivers and conductors of trams and buses, there were also a number of

20. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, pages 121-128.

21. See Van Onselen, C *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914, Volume 1: New Babylon*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1982, page 169; see also Gill, F *Cape Trams*, page 33.

22. Fuller, K. *Radical Aristocrats: London Busworkers from the 1880s to the 1980s*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1985, page 31.

categories in the sheds - cleaners, greasers, labourers, blacksmith strikers, painters, overhead linesmen, and trimmers, and a small number of skilled shed foremen, woodworkers and mechanics. The skilled artisans were organised into the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW) and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE).

Within the Union, the traffic men (drivers and conductors of trams and buses) were dominant. They formed an "aristocracy" in relation to not only other Tramway workers, but also other workers in Cape Town. What is important here is not so much whether the traffic men should be defined as an "aristocracy", but rather whether they perceived themselves as such, and the effects that this self-perception had on their trade union practices.

Wages in the industry, the Company never tired of informing the Union, were higher than semi-skilled wages in other industries in Cape Town. The skill involved in driving a bus and the responsibility that went with it, ensured a measure of pride in the work, and restricted employment to those able to obtain licences, thus strengthening the bargaining power of the traffic men.²³ In addition, the fact that the drivers and conductors come into contact with the consumers (passengers) meant that the worker was also unavoidably a "representative" of the Company, rather than being hidden away in a factory or workshop. The Company was therefore restricted in its recruitment to "the better type of employee".²⁴

23. To see the complexities involved in driving an electric tram, see Agnew, W.A. *The Electric Tramcar Handbook*, Albaster, Gatehouse and Co, London, 1915.

24. The Company often took this quite far: "Bro. King reported that Bro. Knapp had been employed as a learner

Finally, the racial division in the Tramway workforce in Cape Town was a crucial factor in setting the traffic men a step further up the ladder. By the 1930s the traffic men were all white while the shed workers were largely coloured, with a few African labourers. This division was enshrined in an unwritten agreement with the Tramway Company, and strengthened the self-perception of the traffic men as an aristocracy. The division was almost unassailable, so long as the agreement with the Company remained.²⁵

Fuller, in his history of London busworkers, argues that the busworkers formed a new "aristocracy" on their own, distinct from the traditional "aristocracy of labour" confined to the skilled trades in 19th century England. Beside the fact that wages in the industry were the second highest semi-skilled wages in the country, he mentions a number of other reasons for this.

First, the use of motor buses as opposed to horse-drawn vehicles demanded a new, more skilled workforce which carried with it "a greater measure of self-esteem and pride". The higher standards reduced the number of serious applicants for each vacancy, thus increasing the workforce's bargaining power. Second, he finds constant references to "the trade", "giving the impression that the members ... looked upon the occupation as being rather more than a means of earning a living." And third, the fact that the drivers needed to be licensed by a State authority strengthened their notion that they belonged to an elite.²⁶ According to

driver and was refused on the Traffic Staff by Mr Robinson, because he had no teeth." Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 17/4/1940.

25. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 28/6/1939.

26. Fuller, *K Radical Aristocrats*, pages 26-27.

Fuller all these factors "which contributed to the sense of 'aristocracy' would also have fuelled the urge towards trade union organisation as a means of safeguarding status."²⁷

Fuller's study was restricted to the Traffic men in London, but this one necessarily includes discussion on the non-traffic workers in the industry in Cape Town. The "aristocratic status" of the traffic men did not provide them with sufficient organisational muscle. So it was necessary to organise other categories of workers into the Union. This made clear the character of the Union as an industrial union rather than a craft union. The reason for this industrial character of the organisation goes back to the days of the trams. In this era, the group of workers that held the key to the balance of power in a dispute were those in the power station. It was they who could make the decision to "douse the fires and cut the current" or to keep them going to allow scab labour to keep the trams moving.²⁸

As in London, however, the traffic men saw themselves as superior to the shed men or road teams. When wage negotiations were discussed, it was on the terms of the traffic men. Their interests, as we shall see later, were presented as the interests of the Union as a whole. By having some control over the organisation of the non-traffic men, the traffic men were able to have some control over their biggest threat from below - the potential of being undercut by coloured labour.

27. Fuller, K *Radical Aristocrats*, page 27.

28. Sterne, H. "Memories of an Old Tramwayman" in *The South African Transport Worker*, January 1940.

The Bus War:

The mid-1920s saw the beginning of the "bus war". Although the Tramway Company had been running a few buses since 1912, buses were not commercially viable until the 1920s. Major improvements were made following research to develop more powerful engines for armoured tanks during World War I.²⁹

From 1926 bus competition was unrestricted and uncontrolled, until the Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930 set up Road Transportation Boards to control the situation.³⁰ In 1932 the Central Road Transportation Board reported:

It would be no exaggeration to state that on the routes between the respective termini a condition of chaos existed. There was a vast excess of facilities over the reasonable requirements of the public; licences to operate road transport services had been issued without limitation to the detriment of both public interest and established services.³¹

In the absence of legislation controlling the operation of road transport services, small entrepreneurs were able to buy a single bus and run it profitably. They had the advantage over trams of route flexibility and unorganised cheap labour, and so could attract those people who lived in the growing suburbs, further away from the tramlines. A large section of the public actually preferred buses to

29. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 163; See also *Report of Cape Peninsula and Districts Urban Transport Committee* (1948), page 23.

30. For a more detailed discussion of the economics of the "bus war", see, Munitz, S. "The Jitney Question: Cape Town, 1927-1931", unpublished paper delivered to the Economic History Society Conference, University of Port Elizabeth, 19 July 1990.

31. *Report of Cape Peninsula and Districts Urban Transport Committee* (1948), page 24.

trams. Trams were seen as "monstrous masses of rowdy tin", while buses were quieter, faster and cheaper.³²

The number of independent buses on Cape Town's roads increased rapidly. Table I gives an indication of the increase between 1924 and 1929. The independent buses had no time-tables, no scales of fares, no fixed routes and no minimum wage requirements. Their owners employed women, young boys, and, for the first time in Cape Town, "Coloured" drivers and conductors, all at very low wages.

TABLE I: Number of Licensed Buses on Cape Town roads, 1924 - 1929³³

Year	No of buses
1924	24
1925	46
1926	53
1927	127
1928	164
1929	244

The Tramway Company began to buy buses in order to compete more effectively with the new competition, and in the process drove passengers off its own trams. Between 1925/26 and 1930/31, the Cape Town trams lost 37 % of their passengers.³⁴ For a period of three years, the Company paid no dividends to its shareholders. In 1930, as an additional measure to save money, the management of Cape Electric Tramways was transferred from London to Cape Town. The Company planned to spend as much capital as possible on buying up competition.

To protect themselves, the independent bus operators united into associations. The largest of these was the Amalgamated Omnibus Operators' Association (better known as

32. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 163.

33. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, pages 165-8.

34. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 168.

the Triangle Association), formed in 1928. The Triangle Association had about 50 members, most of whom operated one bus only. Each retained his identity, but the Association's triangle was displayed on each bus, and a time-table was observed (in accordance with a 1927 ruling by the City Council's Traffic Advisory Board). The operators on the Kensington route formed the United Bus Drivers Association.³⁵ By 1930, the number of independent buses operating in opposition to the Tramway Company had reached 200, of which 175 were owned by 80 different operators.³⁶ By now too, buses carried at least half as many passengers as trams. This number was to increase steadily until 1938 when the more popular "trackless trams" were introduced.³⁷

In 1930 a large new company, the Cape Town Motor Omnibus Company (CTMOC), began a service to Sea Point and Camps Bay. The Tramway Company quickly put an end to this threat, by entering into a series of agreements with the CTMOC, and then absorbing it as a subsidiary only a few months later.³⁸

In 1929 the Road Motor Competition Commission was appointed to solve the problem of bus congestion on urban roads. The Commission recommended the setting up of a Central Road Transportation Board and several Local Boards to regulate road passenger transport. The Boards were set up by the Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930.

Immediately, the Cape Peninsula Local Board ruthlessly cut

35. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, pages page 172-73.

36. *Report of Cape Peninsula and Districts Urban Transport Committee* (1948), page 26.

37. Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Union Statistics for Fifty Years 1910-1960*, Jubilee Issue, Pretoria, page 0-16, columns 169-171.

38. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 174.

the bus traffic by placing a restriction on the granting of certificates. Certificates for main routes were given only to large companies capable of providing all the necessary transport on that route. The smaller operators were limited to running feeder routes, i.e. to the nearest suburban railway station.³⁹ The number of buses on the Southern Suburbs route was reduced from 85 to 50, and that on the Northern Suburbs route from 36 to 20.⁴⁰

Some of the stronger companies, had through a series of mergers, established themselves as worthwhile competitors. In 1931, the Peninsula Transport Company (PTL) was formed through a merger between some Triangle Companies. It operated on the Southern Suburbs line. It was absorbed by the Tramway Company in 1934. Other remaining competitors were the Northern Transport Company (bought by the Tramway Company in 1936), Southern Transports (bought in 1948), and Golden Arrow Bus Services.⁴¹

But by 1934, the Cape Electric Tramway Company had (with help from the State) effectively put an end to the bus competition, and had acquired a monopoly of road transport from Camps Bay to Wynberg. It was once again firmly in control, and in a position to modernise and extend its operations. It's next step was to be the introduction of trolley buses (or "trackless trams" as they were called in Cape Town).

39. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 174.

40. *Report of Cape Peninsula and Districts Urban Transport Committee* (1948), page 24.

41. In 1956, the Golden Arrow Company performed a "surprise coup" by buying a controlling interest in Cape Electric Tramways. See Gill, F *Cape Trams* pages 61-71.

In less than ten years, the industry went through a massive and traumatic transformation. The monopoly of the previous thirty years came under tremendous pressure from the independent bus operators during the late 1920s. It took some years for the giant Tramway Company to reassert its tight control over the industry. As we shall see below, the struggles of the Tramway Workers were intimately affected by this competition and change in the industry.

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY ORGANISATION 1900-1918

An investigation of the prehistory of the Tramway union is no easy matter. No official records of Tramway Union organisation exist at all. What did exist was destroyed after a failed strike in 1916.¹

Even in the field of general labour organisation around the turn of the century, there is little evidence. Gitsham and Trembath's *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa*, published in 1926 deals more with "landmarks" in labour history and is concerned mainly with the Witwatersrand.² Simons and Simons focus on issues such as the colour bar in the labour and socialist movements, and less on the actual processes of trade union organisation.³

Despite the scanty evidence, it is nevertheless important to identify the main characteristics of the period, in order to observe why the Tramway Union, when it was formed in 1918, took the form and followed the strategies that it did.

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1. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman" page 5; Bob Stuart writes that when he arrived at the Union offices after the strike to take assets, all he could find was "certain covers of the Union's books". Stuart, R "I look back", *Trade Union Bulletin*, May 1950, page 9. Stuart's autobiography was serialised in the *Trade Union Bulletin* from February 1950 to January 1951, and in April 1951.
 2. E. Gitsham and J.F. Trembath, *A First Account of Labour Organisation*.
 3. Simons J. and Simons, R.E. *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*, Penguin, Middlesex, 1950, pages 73-97.

Early attempts at organising

In the early years of the tramway industry there was no labour organisation at all. It was only soon after the introduction of electric trams in 1896 that the first attempts at organisation began.

During the first decade of the century, a broad range of labour organisations were formed in Cape Town. In September 1905 the Bricklayers Union and the Amalgamated Society of Tailors were formed⁴. There was already an Operative Masons Society and a Painters Union.⁵

In 1905 a general union, the South African General Workers' Union, was formed. Its secretary was Mr J Erasmus, a reporter for the daily *South African News*, described by one of the tramwaymen, Bro Sterne, as "a live wire".⁶ Erasmus wrote a weekly "Labour Notes" column in the newspaper which he used as an organ of the emerging trade union movement.

The lack of organisation in the tramway industry around the turn of the century was reflected in the poor working conditions of its workers. The boom brought to Cape Town by the South African War had a considerable effect on the tramway industry. The Tramway Company was "reaping a rich harvest", as Sterne put it: "We were all a very happy family ... although our working conditions were far from what might be desired, our job compared favourably with outside employment."⁷

4. *South African News* 16 September 1905 and 28 October 1905.

5. *South African News* 30 September 1905 and 21 October 1905.

6. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 5.

7. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 4.

But at the end of the war the Tramway Company began a concerted assault on the tramwaymen's wages and working conditions. "Things became so bad", wrote Sterne, "that it was decided to form a Union."⁸ This was in either 1902 or 1903. Some of the traffic employees attended one of two meetings - morning and evening - at the Cooper's Arms Hotel. At the evening meeting a committee was elected. It was reported that five of the members who had been at the morning meeting had been fired.⁹

The infant union retreated immediately, the membership realising that they would be vulnerable in any open challenge to the Tramway Company's management. Without any financial backup at all; they realised that any action against this management would result in immediate dismissal, and that the membership would be powerless to do anything about it. They chose to go underground. Sterne called it a decision to "work from behind closed doors and build up a fund". Sterne continues: "This decision turned out to be so successful that the Company issued instructions that any man found collecting contributions on the Company's property would be discharged, but in spite of this threat the good work went on."¹⁰

In 1905, Alfred Sharman Giles, an engineer, was appointed General Manager of the Cape Town as well as the Port Elizabeth tramways.¹¹ His main task, according to Coates, was "the complete reconstruction of the (tramway)

8. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 4.

9. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 4.

10. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 4.

11. For a brief biography of A. S. Giles, see Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 217.

system".¹² In addition to a deep depression, the Tramway Company was having to deal with serious opposition from the Sea Point railway.¹³ Coates describes Giles as "a man who would not stand nonsense or inefficiency ... (h)e pruned costs remarkably; even the men's wages were cut."¹⁴ Between 1904/5, when he first arrived, and when he left in 1911, working expenses were cut from £ 147 356 to £ 71 742.¹⁵

The "underground" union decided to resist this first wage reduction. But this entailed exposing their membership of an "illegal" union, and "another batch" of Union members were fired. Again the union retreated into secrecy.¹⁶

The next time the tramway workers came out into the open was when they joined the South African General Worker's Union. The date of this is uncertain, but it was probably during or soon after 1905. Coates puts the date at 1908, but the only source he quotes, the article by Sterne, gives no such detail.¹⁷ Sterne writes that the decision to join the General Workers' Union was "until such time as we were strong enough to stand on our own legs".¹⁸ The Tramway Company, it seems, refused to negotiate with what Coates calls an "outside union".¹⁹ The dispute moved into the letter pages of the local press and Giles asserted that he was quite prepared to meet a deputation of the workers themselves, rather than have "outside interference".

12. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 217.

13. See Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 146.

14. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 146.

15. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 146.

16. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", pages 4-5.

17. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 155.

18. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 5.

19. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 155.

Sterne writes:

This statement was what we were waiting for; we withdrew from the General Workers' Union and once more came out in the open by calling a general meeting. At the meeting I was instructed to write the general manager asking him to receive a deputation, which request was granted. This was the first time in our sweet young lives that we were able to form contact with management ... (and) very soon friendly relations were established.²⁰

With this recognition by the Tramway Management, the new Tramway Workers' Union of Cape Town and Suburbs was born. The traffic men managed to organise the shed men into the new union. But they were unable to organise the workers at the power station who, as Sterne puts it, "were well looked after, as they were the key to success for either side."²¹

The Tramway Company's recognition of the union was not entirely altruistic. Soon thereafter the Tramway management informed the union that it wished to reduce wages. The union was given access to the Company's books, after which it agreed to a wage reduction of a halfpenny an hour, and the loss of the one day a month off which the workers previously had. The condition was that these would be restored when the situation improved.²²

In Sterne's article, the Union's history is portrayed as a continuous one. Despite the apparent interruptions, the office bearers listed at the end of the article cover the period from 1902 to 1916, without any breaks in the middle. Presumably the Union did not function during some of this

20. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 5.

21. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 5.

22. Sterne, H "Memories of an Old Tramwayman", page 5.

time, but the members themselves were apparently always aware of its existence, even when it was little more than a shell. It was the events of 1916 which finally crushed the early Tramway Union.

The 1916 Strike

In April 1916 a two week strike began which was to lead to the demise of the Tramway Union. Around a hundred workers came out on strike, and most of the traffic men from Camps Bay came out in sympathy. Certainly the traffic was immediately affected. But the strikers were not nearly representative enough to close down any routes.

There were two major reasons for the strike. The Union was first responding to low pay and bad working conditions. But the trigger was a worker who allegedly had a close relationship with management and refused to join the Union.

Working conditions were poor and the Union had been trying to negotiate better terms since early 1915 for both conductors and motormen who were employed in different categories. After about two weeks of initial training, without any pay, new workers were employed as "spare men" at a rate of 9 1/2 d per hour for conductors and 10 d per hour for motormen. A letter to the *Argus*, published during the strike, describes the life of a "spare man":

A spare man has to turn up at 5.30 a.m. and if somebody is absent, he is lucky enough to get a car for the whole day, i.e., 10 hours and thereby earns plus minus 7 s 11 d. If there is no car he has to leave at 8 o'clock and see that he reports himself again at 11 o'clock, and for all these waiting hours he does not get a blue farthing. At 11 o'clock he gets three trips, for instance, round the Gardens, for which he books plus minus 1 hour and 21 minutes. This is in one

instance. He might get a trip to Salt River, which means still less. He has to present himself again any time between 4 and 5 p.m. as booked; then he gets another couple of trips of any special car and makes another 2 or 2 1/2 hours. He has to come again at 10 o'clock to do a theatre special, which also means an hour or so booked work. Thus a spare man's time is practically occupied from 5.30 a.m. to 11.30 p.m. and all he is able to put in is about five or six hours which brings him about 5 s.²³

This stage (of being a "spare man") may last for "an indefinite length of time", a *Cape Argus* reporter was informed by Union officials. Next he would become a "relief man", which would mean an average of eight hours work a day, and get an increase of 1/2 d per hour after twelve months service. Again, a "relief man" may hold this position for years before he became a "regular member of staff". At this point he would be paid 10 d, or in some cases, 11 d per hour. The Union officials claimed that it was necessary to work a minimum of 68 hours a week to secure what they considered a living wage.²⁴ Bob Stuart described the conditions as "deplorable".²⁵

In March 1916, the Union members came out on a one-day work stoppage. At that stage there was no intention to stage a "real strike", according to William Staunton, the Tramway Union President.²⁶ He argued that it was only after "repeated attempts to influence the management by ordinary means that we decided to show them that we were earnest in our objection to work with Motorman ---- ..."²⁷

23. *Cape Argus* 28 April 1916.

24. *Cape Argus* 27 April 1916.

25. Stuart, R "I look back", May 1950, page 7.

26. Staunton, W in a letter to the *Cape Argus* 29 April 1916.

27. Staunton, W in a letter to the *Cape Argus* 29 April 1916.

Peter Coates suggests that the motorman concerned may have been someone called North.²⁸ Coates further suggests that the Tramway Workers Union was divided into two groups, the guards (conductors) led by Staunton and the motormen led by North. He argues that "Staunton's group demanded that the company dismiss one of North's group (possibly North himself). When the management refused to comply, Staunton's guard's came out on strike ..."²⁹

Coates is probably correct in his supposition about North being the target of the anger of the Tramway Union membership. But he is certainly wrong in his characterisation of the Tramway Union as being split between conductors and motormen. The Tramway Union consisted of both motormen and conductors. Its weakness was that it did not organise a high enough proportion of the tramwaymen. Also, according to Stuart, some of the motormen who were Union members continued to work.³⁰ Because driving a tram takes more training than conducting one, it was easier for the Tramway Company to keep a service running in these circumstances. It is more probable that North was leader of a "company union" (rather than a "motormen's union"), which had no ties with the Tramway Union at all.

Coates is also wrong about the reason for the strike. He follows the public statements of the Tramway Company General Manager Long in stressing the centrality of "Motorman ----", as the *Cape Argus* called him. As Staunton admitted in his letter (above), the one day stoppage in March was related to this issue. But the two-week strike

28. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 157.

29. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, pages 156-7.

30. Stuart, "I look back", May 1950, page 9.

during April and May was more related to hours of work and pay. Stuart does not even mention the issue of the unpopular motorman.³¹ And most of the debate in the press is centred on work conditions.

During the March stoppage, according to Staunton, a deputation had met with management. The result of this interview was that Mr Syfret promised that

if the men brought affidavits substantiating their representations concerning Motorman -- -- he would be dismissed, and distinctly stated that he would not have a person of this character in the employ of the company.³²

The affidavits were made, says Staunton, and "the incriminating letter produced"³³, and then the company refused to carry out what it had promised, arguing that it was a "mere quarrel between two men".³⁴

The following day Syfret responded in a letter to the *Cape Argus*, refusing to comment thus:

Any comment on my part is I think, unnecessary, but the facts obviously suggest that the object of the Union was to induce the company to dismiss the leader of a rival organisation ...³⁵

Clearly this was the issue at stake: that North was leader of a union that was established as a rival to the Tramway Workers' Union. Emmerich hinted at this when he wrote briefly about the strike in his "Twenty-one Years". He suggests that North was later made a Chief Inspector, "a position awarded to him no doubt for his valuable services

31. Stuart, "I look back", May 1950, page 7.

32. *Cape Argus* 29 April 1916.

33. This is the only clue as to what the issue was.

34. *Cape Argus* 29 April 1916.

35. *Cape Argus* 1 May 1916.

to the employers in 1916 for keeping the men divided."³⁶ And this position is echoed by Long himself in his *Argus* interview. After saying that he had offered to comply with the Union's demands by finding "Motorman ----" employment elsewhere, he states: "The position with regard to this employee has, of course changed entirely now, as it is he and his followers that are seeing the company through the present crisis."³⁷

The Cape Federation, to which the Tramway Union had affiliated earlier in 1916, urged the Union not to take strike action.³⁸ The Federation argued that the Union was not strong enough, "either in organisation or in finance" to have even a reasonable chance of success.³⁹ "Everything possible" was done to persuade the workers not to take strike action:

I myself warned the men that they were courting disaster if they resorted to strike action, and that one of the consequences of inevitable defeat would be the complete break up their Union (sic).⁴⁰

This time Stuart was to be correct. The *Cape Argus* reporter wrote:

So far it seems a rather half-hearted affair. The men are by no means a united body - that is, they are not all members of their trade union, and what are believed to be the ostensible reasons for the strike do not appeal to all alike.

It was pointed out, though, that it was not merely the dismissal of an employee that was at issue, but also

36. Emmerich, J "Twenty-one Years" in the *South African Transport Worker*, August 1939, page 3.

37. *Cape Argus* 28 April 1916.

38. Stuart, R "I look back", May 1950, page 7.

39. Stuart, R "I look back", May 1950, page 9.

40. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 3.

questions of wages and working hours; "questions which it is obviously out of the power of the local management to settle at a moment's notice."⁴¹

A few day's later, the Argus claimed, not much had changed. What was unusual was that two men now occupied the driver's platform on the trams, and the Main Road from town to Woodstock was continuously patrolled by mounted and foot police.⁴² By this time the company was hiring new labour to replace those on strike. In addition to this, women (including the wife of General Manager Long, according to Stuart⁴³) were being taken on to work as conductors. The first woman to volunteer had the idea that she was doing the strikers a favour by doing their work for them:

Of course I did not take a single penny for what I did. My work was purely voluntary, and my only idea was to keep the place open for one of the wanderers when he should return. This, I think, I accomplished, and had a man been employed instead of me, he would not have cared to relinquish the job in favour of one of the errant employees.⁴⁴

She also had a rather amusing story to tell about her first technical difficulty in changing the trolley⁴⁵:

At first it was difficult and everyone wanted to help me. My first assistant, curiously enough, happened to be a 'striker', who said that although he was on strike he could not bear to see a lady struggling with a trolley and not give her a hand.⁴⁶

41. *Cape Argus* 24 April 1916.

42. *Cape Argus* 27 April 1916.

43. Stuart, R "I look back", May 1950, page 9.

44. *Cape Argus* 1 May 1916.

45. Changing the trolley involved removing the current bearing arm from one conducting wire and placing it on another in order to go in the opposite direction.

46. *Cape Argus* 1 May 1916.

Not all strikers were so magnanimous towards the women conductors however. The *Cape Argus* claimed that it had "excised" from a letter, signed by "Sympathiser with the men", "a threat against women who are assisting the tramway company".⁴⁷

The Cape Federation, according to Stuart, tried to deal with this question of women conductors. The striker's wives were mobilised in order to remove, by force if necessary, the female labour from the trams: "The wives were marshalled together for a march to Adderley Street but, after all arrangements had been completed, they suddenly disappeared and could not be found."⁴⁸

The Tramway Company also found certain government departments willing to assist with the provision of labour. Walter Madeley, Member of Parliament for Benoni, alleged in the House of Assembly that "no fewer than 12 Harbour servants are ... working after hours with the permission of their superiors."⁴⁹ Nine ex-conductors and three ex-motormen employed at the docks had received permission to work "elsewhere" at night. In addition a switchboard attendant at the docks was granted paid leave for a day in order to work for the Tramway Company.⁵⁰ Madeley also alleged that men who were presently undergoing military training were being temporarily released so that they could work for the Company.⁵¹ The cabinet ministers declined to act on Madeley's complaints.

47. *Cape Argus* 28 April 1916.

48. Stuart, R "I look back", May 1950, page 9.

49. *Cape Argus* 1 May 1916.

50. *Cape Argus* 2 May 1916.

51. *Cape Argus* 1 May 1916.

In these circumstances, particularly with the ability of the Tramway Company to keep a minimally reduced service running, the strike was doomed to failure. The company gradually replaced the strikers. Eventually at least eighty four were dismissed. This may well have been the total number of strikers.

On 9 May, exactly two weeks after the strike began, eighty four tramwaymen appeared in court after being summonsed by the Tramway Company.⁵² Forty four motormen and forty conductors were sued for the return of Tramway Company property. After marching to the court from Woodstock, bearing the Union emblem on each of their coats, they were accommodated in eight rows of benches.

The magistrate refused to hear Staunton who claimed to speak as the leader. Much of the Company property had already been returned, showing that the strikers, even if not happy with the idea, had at least accepted the fact that the strike had been defeated and that they had been dismissed. Costs were awarded against the strikers, who were unrepresented, and they marched back to Woodstock.⁵³

Coates continues his myth about the division being between motormen and conductors when he writes that the Company "had 84 former guards (conductors) prosecuted".⁵⁴ This is despite the fact that the reference he cites is the *Cape Argus* 9 May 1916, which makes it clear that there were almost equal numbers of conductors and motormen.⁵⁵

52. *Cape Argus* 9 May 1916.

53. *Cape Argus* 9 May 1916.

54. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 157.

55. *Cape Argus* 9 May 1916.

The strike was a disaster for the Tramway Workers' Union of Cape Town and Suburbs. It decimated the Union completely. The majority (if not all) of its membership was dismissed. According to Bob Stuart, the Tramway Company used its victory to its full advantage:

The Management of the Tramway Company was exultant at this decisive victory over the men, and threatened with immediate dismissal any Employee who participated, or was found to be associated with the establishment of any Trade Union or with anything pertaining to Trade Unionism.⁵⁶

The daily press reports reflected the chief characteristics of the strike: it was a strike of white workers which was happening on the streets, in full view of the Cape Town public.

The *Cape Argus* (just like the *Cape Times* in a later tramway strike in 1932) made no secret of its support for the Tramway Company. Not only the content of the press reports, but its discourse as well, made clear the position of the newspaper. The Tramway Company, too, was happy to use the *Argus* as its mouthpiece.

On the first day of the strike, the newspaper reported that the strikers "also ask for a readjustment of the hours of working and increased pay, *questions which it is obviously out of the power of the local management to settle at a moment's notice* (my emphasis)."⁵⁷

On the second day, the *Argus* issued a warning to the strikers on behalf of the Tramway Company by informing it's readers: "*We are requested to state that the General Manager has received several offers by women to act as conductors,*

56. Stuart, R "I look back", May 1950, page 9.

57. *Cape Argus* 24 April 1916.

and that the question is under consideration (my emphasis)."⁵⁸

On the third day, the Argus published some details of the striker's demands. A reporter spoke to some striking Union members who he found on the streets and wrote of the working conditions and wages of various categories of traffic men.⁵⁹ But a more cynical view of this apparent impartiality would take into account a short article published below this one. Headed "Press and the Strike: An Unfounded Allegation", the article noted the criticism directed towards "local newspapers" for refusing to publish the striker's grievances, and vehemently denied the allegations.⁶⁰

The decision to publish those details of the striker's demands may also have been prompted by the letter which appeared below this refutation, which concluded that "the Tramway Company have (sic) brought pressure to bear upon the Press in Cape Town for the purpose of keeping the men's side out of the papers" and that it was "deplorable that the Press, which claims to represent public opinion, is being prostituted for the purpose of the Tramway Company's interests."⁶¹

In any case, the Argus on the fourth day carried a lengthy interview with Tramway Company General Manager Long. Long here was able to give his account of the history of the dispute (despite the fact that he only took up his post after it had begun) and to answer to a leaflet, which the

58. *Cape Argus* 25 April 1916.

59. *Cape Argus* 27 April 1916.

60. *Cape Argus* 27 April 1916.

61. *Cape Argus* 27 April 1916.

reporter considered "*purported* to set out the case for the men who had gone on strike (my emphasis)." ⁶²

The Tramway Union was able to respond the next day, but this time only in the form of a letter from Union President Staunton. While the Argus printed the letter, it is obvious that a letter to the press carries far less weight than a formal interview. ⁶³

On the other hand, despite the Argus' partiality towards the Tramway Company, its "Letter Bag" provided a forum which those sympathetic to the strikers could use to present their case. The fact that the Argus, as biased against the strikers as it was, could be used to further their cause, illustrates the distinct nature of such a strike of white workers. It reflects their status as a "labour aristocracy" and their support from various sectors of society, including some Members of Parliament.

In spite of the almost daily meetings held by the strikers and their supporters, sympathy strikes by the Camps Bay tramwaymen and the Bakers Union ⁶⁴, the Tramway Company, ably assisted by the daily press, defeated the strike without too much trouble. The tramway service never stopped completely, nor was it sufficiently badly slowed down to have much effect. Clearly this was a result of the fact that the Tramway Union was not sufficiently representative of the Tramway workforce. Certainly many of the traffic men were not members and continued to work.

But equally important, and something not mentioned in any of the accounts, was that the Union, notwithstanding

62. *Cape Argus* 28 April 1916.

63. *Cape Argus* 29 April 1916.

64. See *Cape Argus* 28 April 1916.

reports that it had organised workers in the sheds, was far more concerned (possibly even exclusively so) with the traffic men. The shedmen were clearly less powerful than the workers in the power station who could shut off the electric power at will. But they were nevertheless a key component of the "team" that kept the trams on the tracks. An actively involved section of shedmen may have may a significant difference. As it is, we know nothing of their participation or otherwise in the strike. This question of the second-class nature of the shedmen is one that recurs throughout the history of the Tramway union. It is not surprising; the shed men, for the most part, were coloured. Simons and Simons argue that some unions (such as the Stonemasons) refused to admit coloured members, while others (such as the Bricklayers) were undercut by coloured unionism to the extent that they were forced to admit coloured artisans.⁶⁵

The Tramway Union organised the sheds because it was in the interests of the traffic men to do so, not because the latter believed that the shed men had a right to be part of the Union.

65. Simons and Simons *Class and Colour*, pages 73-74.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNION IS FORMED 1918-1924

The defeat in the 1916 strike proved to be a crushing blow for organisation in the tramway industry. The Tramway Company had won a decisive victory and was able to call the tune. Yet the current economic conditions continually pushed the tramway workers to find ways to ameliorate their working and living conditions. Between 1913 and 1920, the value of the pound dropped 60%.¹

By 1918 the time was ripe for renewed attempts to form a union. The tramway workers decided to approach the CFLU to assist them in the initial organisation. This ensured the presence of Bob Stuart from the very beginning. On the 9 September 1918, a midnight meeting² was held at the Globe Bioscope in Woodstock. Eighty six tramway workers attended the meeting which was chaired by Freestone of the Cape Federation. The meeting unanimously decided to form a Union, whereupon Freestone delivered a lecture on "the value of organisation and the results of the last strike."³ A committee was elected with Stuart as Secretary.

From the start Stuart impressed his not inconsiderable experience of trade unionism on the fledgling organisation. He insisted that the principle of a closed shop should be a fundamental aim, not only for the traffic employees, but "also all the shedmen, all employees engaged in the maintenance and repair of the track, as well as firemen and

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1. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 157.
 2. Most important meetings were held at midnight. This allowed both the day and the night shift to attend.
 3. Tramway Workers' Union minutes 9 September 1918.

boiler attendants ... and it was decided to enrol all employees who worked in the power station (other than skilled artisans) in the new union as well."⁴ This closed shop principle would give the Tramway Union the sole right to negotiate on behalf of all categories of workers. At a meeting the following week, another 44 tramwaymen joined the Union, and an executive was elected.⁵

During the first half of 1919, the Tramway Union began to expand. In January Bob Stuart visited Port Elizabeth and formed a branch there; all 70 tramwaymen who attended the first meeting joined the branch.⁶ At the same time Sullivan, later elected President, organised meetings with the "road men", persuading them of the "value of organisation".⁷ In April the Union began to organise members working in Camps Bay.⁸

The Union's first major step was taken only months after its formation. In early December Stuart made demands in a letter to the General Manager of the Tramway Company. He told the Argus that "there was unrest amongst the drivers and conductors, who complain of the long hours worked and the smallness of pay", and handed letters written by himself and Walter Long to the newspaper for publication.⁹

The Union was demanding a substantial pay increase of around 100 %, a six-day week of 8 1/2 hours per day, extra holidays, overtime pay, and two free uniforms a year.¹⁰

Walter Long, the General Manager of the Tramway Company, not

4. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 3.
5. Tramway Workers' Union minutes 18 September 1918.
6. Tramway Workers' Union minutes 19 January 1919.
7. Tramway Workers' Union minutes 19 January 1919.
8. Tramway Workers' Union minutes 17 April 1919.
9. *Cape Argus* 17 December 1918.
10. *Cape Argus* 17 December 1918.

surprisingly refused to budge. He wrote a strongly worded letter, making it clear that the Company was not prepared to listen to any "demands". In addition, while he was ready to receive a deputation of employees, he refused to "discuss matters connected with its employees with any outside organisation, when it is quite willing to do so with the men themselves."¹¹

In all, five letters were published by the Argus on that day. Stuart also provided the paper with a schedule showing that the men on the Hanover Street route had been working an average of 70 hours per week, at 11 1/2 d per hour. Spare men (drivers) were earning 9 1/2 d per hour, about £2 5 s per week.¹² This went up to 10 d, 10 1/2 d and in the case of veterans, 1 s. per hour. Conductors were earning up to 10 1/2 d per hour for veterans.¹³ And lest the Argus readers think that this wage was sufficient, the newspaper reminded them that "(i)t must not be forgotten that the drivers and conductors are Europeans."¹⁴

The Federation, according to Stuart, urged the workers to take Long at this word, and to send a delegation to meet with him. However, they refused, arguing that they had got nowhere in the past, and were determined this time to use their existence as a union to establish themselves as a force which could not be ignored.¹⁵

The Tramway Company thus decided to meet with a delegation of tramway workers whether representative or not. Long issued a notice to workers that they had met with four

11. *Cape Argus* 17 December 1918.

12. *Cape Argus* 17 December 1918.

13. Emmerich, J "Twenty-one Years", pages 2-3.

14. *Cape Argus* 17 December 1918.

15. *Cape Argus* 17 December 1918.

workers who had said that they wanted a wage increase because of the higher cost of living, but "should I not find it possible to accede to their requests the men they represent were quite prepared to abide by such decision and remain loyal to the company."¹⁶ Long considered the fourteen days of continuous leave to be "inadvisable".¹⁷ He offered a 20 % increase for married men and a 10 % increase for single men. Although Stuart advised the union members to accept the offer, they unanimously refused to do so. They instructed Stuart to advise Long of their decision. It is also clear that the "deputation" that met Long was not representative of anyone at all. Stuart wrote to Long alleging that he had "(taken) four men off the cars, that do not belong to the Union and (received) them as a deputation, as representing the men."

Stuart went on to state quite clearly, in a letter to Long published in the press, what his intentions were with regard to the Tramway Union:

...although (Long was guilty of) ignoring the men and the Federation, I endeavoured to persuade the men to accept the scale (of wages) drawn up, knowing full well that nothing had been gained, not even a guarantee that the increases would be paid for any length of time, but with the object at this season of the year (Christmas) to avoid any inconvenience to the public. But my persuasive powers were insufficient, and the terms as arranged by you were unanimously refused ..."¹⁸

One of the men involved in meeting Long argued that he had approached Robinson, the Assistant Superintendent, to arrange a meeting with Long in order to avoid "trouble". He

16. *Cape Argus* 21 December 1918.

17. *Cape Argus* 21 December 1918.

18. *Cape Argus* 21 December 1918.

had proposed the other three members of the "delegation" to Robinson: "Seeing that we have a combined service of over fifty years in the company, I think we should have a voice in settling our own affairs without having to consult Mr Stuart or the Federation of Trades."¹⁹

The Union members refused to agree to any conditions unless the Federation was involved. When Long still refused to meet the Federation, Stuart managed to persuade the members to meet with Long without it being present.²⁰ After a meeting with Long the deputation agreed to the terms offered, effectively a wage increase dependant on the increase in the cost of living over a period of time. At the same time, the Argus reported, "the Tramwaymen's Union was recognised".²¹

This clash - much of it carried out in the pages of the *Cape Argus* - only a few short months after the formation of the CFLU-affiliated union set the scene for what was to come seven months later: the strike that was to establish the Tramway Union and the Federation as a firm force in the tramway industry for decades to come.

The 1919 Strike

On 19 July 1919 at least 300 members of the Tramway Union came out on a strike which lasted for 17 days. The strike was the most successful tramway strike in Cape Town's history. Wages and conditions of service improved considerably and through the strike the Tramway Union managed to establish itself as the recognised representative

19. *Cape Argus* 21 December 1918.

20. *Cape Argus* 23 December 1918.

21. *Cape Argus* 24 December 1918.

of the tramway workers for many years to come. In addition, the workers established the right of the CFLU to involve itself in the negotiation process as an umbrella body, despite fierce opposition from the tramway management.

The strike started after the Union made demands in correspondence to the Company in early July. After receiving a negative response, a mass meeting of the Tramway Union was held at the Globe Bioscope in Woodstock in the early hours of the morning of Saturday 19 July. The correspondence between Stuart and Long was read out. An "overwhelming majority" decided, by secret ballot, to come out on strike. The major conflict was the refusal of the Company to accept the workers' wishes that they be represented by the CFLU in negotiations.²²

That morning, between 300 and 400 members of the Union came out on strike; not only motormen and guards, but also workers at the Power Station and the running sheds. Not a single car ventured out onto the streets.²³

Tram handles were removed and hidden, an additional precaution should the Company employ scab labour to restart the service.²⁴ Soon, a daily *Strike Bulletin* was being issued to the public free of charge, to give "the other side".²⁵ The strikers met daily, and organised pickets outside Toll Gate. Picket duty was not the most popular activity, and it had to be pointed out to the strikers that

22. *Cape Argus* 19 July 1919.

23. *Cape Argus* 19 July 1919.

24. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 5.

25. *Cape Argus* 22 July 1919; see also Tramway Union minutes 23 July 1919.

if they didn't man the pickets, they would not get strike pay.²⁶

In a statement released to the *Cape Argus* early in the following week, General Manager Long stressed two points. First, he reiterated that while he was willing to meet with representatives of his employees, in the form of the Committee of the Union, to discuss issues of employment, he refused to meet with the Federation of Trades. Second, he made it clear that Tramway Company was unable to consider a wage increase until the City Council's Finance Committee allowed the Company to institute a 25 % increase on monthly season tickets.²⁷

The Finance Committee of the City Council, however, rejected Long's attempt to draw the Council into the dispute:

I think it is as well to point out that the Council have (sic) nothing to do with the controversy. I may say, however, that the company has been repeatedly advised since they first approached the City Council that their best course would be to meet the accredited representatives of the men and endeavour to arrive at an understanding with them with regard to their differences in order to obviate a strike.²⁸

Meanwhile the Port Elizabeth tramwaymen had also come out on strike. The Port Elizabeth branch sent a telegram informing the strikers that they would accept only "co-equal terms with Cape Town", while the Durban union sent a message that no-one would come to Cape Town to work on the trams.²⁹

26. Tramway Union minutes 23 July 1919.

27. *Cape Argus* 21 July 1919.

28. *Cape Argus* 22 July 1919.

29. *Cape Argus* 22 July 1919.

An early attempt, four days later, by the CFLU to resolve the strike by holding a conference of employer's and employee's representatives chaired by an independent observer failed. The company agreed to send five representatives to meet five representatives of the workers, but insisted that the workers' representatives should be themselves employees. The tramwaymen, on the other hand, demanded the right to appoint their representatives as they saw fit.³⁰ This issue of the company's refusal to acknowledge the right of the CFLU to negotiate on behalf of the tramwaymen remained the major point of tension throughout the strike.

The Union was initially in no state to begin a strike that was to last as long as three weeks. Before the ballot of 19 July, Stuart reminded the Union members that the Union would be able to afford very little by way of strike pay. The credit balance was just less than £ 80.³¹ But the strikers were inspired in their enthusiasm for collecting funds, so much so that by the end of the strike, there was more in the Union's coffers than before it started.³² In all £ 255 was collected from the public during the 17-day strike.³³

No sooner had the "volunteers" left the initial meeting to douse the power station fires and remove the tram handles than those left behind began to discuss methods of raising money.³⁴ Certainly the public support enjoyed by the strikers made their task a lot easier. The Strikers'

30. *Cape Argus* 23 July 1919.

31. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 5.

32. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 5.

33. Tramway Union minutes 4 August 1919.

34. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 5.

Bulletin was able to report, only five days after the strike began, that: "A most gratifying feature is that public sympathy is being expressed in a practical manner, subscriptions pouring in daily."³⁵

Boxing tournaments were organised to raise money, and concerts and other entertainments were held in various halls and on the Pier.³⁶ A striker who walked the streets of Cape Town along with his black Retriever, onto whose back a collection box was strapped, became a public spectacle and "showed excellent results".³⁷

Finally, the City Council sanctioned a street collection for the strikers. The Council, however, was at great pains to point out that this did not mean that it identified with the position of the tramwaymen.³⁸

The City Council, in fact, was drawn into the strike in a central way, despite it's efforts to remain uninvolved. Council spokesmen initially refused to consider a linkage between the wage demands and the sanction of a fare increase, and merely urged the Tramway Company to negotiate.³⁹ But soon they had little choice, and eventually played the role of a "peace broker".

A call from the CFLU for the Mayor to call a public meeting was, after some hesitation, turned down, and the CFLU had to call its own meeting.⁴⁰ But on the tenth day of the strike the City Council discussed the dispute in an official sitting. While individual councillors took a

23. *Cape Argus* 24 July 1919.

36. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 5.

37. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 5.

38. *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919; *Cape Argus* 30 July 1919.

39. *Cape Argus* 22 July 1919.

40. *Cape Argus* 24 July 1919; *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919.

variety of positions, two key committees disagreed fundamentally.

The Streets and Drainage Committee recommended that as the monthly ticket prices were the same as they had been in 1901 - when wages were 30 % lower - the Company should be permitted to increase the monthly tickets by 25 %, on condition that the increased revenue only be used to pay the wage increase.

The Finance Committee, on the other hand, argued that the Streets and Drainage Committee "only went into the matter from the Tramway Company point of view."⁴¹ The Finance Committee, after investigating the revenue of the Tramway Company over the past two decades, recommended that the Council refuse to allow the increase. The resolution of the Finance Committee was carried by a large majority.⁴²

Many of the Councillors were extremely critical of the Tramway Company: the service itself was bad, the rolling-stock was out of date, the cars were overcrowded and dirty. One Councillor also warned that he'd heard rumours of a general strike in support of the tramwaymen and urged the Council to "be careful and not do anything that would precipitate such a state of things."⁴³ He believed that "war was the father of Bolshevism", and "(W)ould not industrial war have the effect of inviting Bolshevism to show its head here?"⁴⁴

By the end of July, after Bob Stuart and Gerald Long met the Mayor, the Tramway Company agreed to meet the CFLU.

41. *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919.
42. *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919.
43. *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919.
44. *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919.

At the meeting, a series of terms were agreed on. These included substantial wage increases, new uniforms and overtime pay, all "conditional on the company's being able to recoup themselves the increased expenditure out of fares."⁴⁵ The *Cape Argus* reported that the Council would be meeting the following day to review its previous decision to refuse the fare increase.⁴⁶

It was not only in the City Council that divisions existed. In the Cape Federation itself, a Special Meeting discussed the possibility of the affiliates taking action. One delegate felt that "the company had met the Federation half way" and that concessions should be made. Another was called to order for stating that "it was about time that the Federation took some definite action".⁴⁷ It became clear later that this delegate was intending a general strike. This was motivated especially hard by the Painters' Union. No action was decided on by the end of the meeting as many of the delegates argued that the Federation was not strong enough and there were insufficient funds to support such action.⁴⁸

More curious and difficult to unravel is the story of one of the Federation delegates in the negotiations, Brother Batty. The most coherent version of this is told in Bob Stuart's autobiography, which itself is not a model of reliability.⁴⁹

The first round of negotiations, between the Tramway Company and a combination of Federation and Tramway Union

45. *Cape Argus* 31 July 1919.

46. *Cape Argus* 31 July 1919.

47. CFLU minutes 25 July 1919.

48. CFLU minutes 25 July 1919.

49. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951.

delegates, took place on the 31 July at the City Hall. Stuart writes that HE made it clear that the Tramway Company would have to compromise which they then proceeded to do. A long complex agreement was worked out. He then left the room to send a telegram. When he returned, "Mr Syfret, one of the Company's delegates, greeted me with the staggering announcement that the Company's representative discovered that they had made a colossal mistake and that the negotiations would have to commence afresh. I refused to do any such thing."⁵⁰

Stuart gives no hint as to what this colossal mistake was. But the meeting broke up at this point. This fact was not reported in the press, but the Argus of that night did note that the Council was having a meeting the following morning to approve the 25 % fare increase.⁵¹ It seems then that the Company delegates were making it clear that the agreement just reached was conditional on this decision by City Council.

Whatever the "mistake", the Union representatives left the City Hall. Stuart returned to his office, he writes, where he locked the door, and "sat reflecting on the happenings of the meeting and its aftermath". This intellectual endeavour was disturbed by a "somewhat agitated" power station fireman, who told him that he had been ordered by Mr Batty to go back to work. It transpired that Batty had, while Stuart was sending his telegram, agreed to get the firemen back to work without delay.⁵² Stuart managed to stop the return to work, although he still

50. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 9.

51. *Cape Argus* 31 July 1919.

52. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, page 9.

received a telephone call from Long, who wanted to know why Batty's promise wasn't being carried out.

Stuart's version of the rest of the strike is that once he told Long that they would not return until a satisfactory agreement had been reached, Long backed down and a deal was made to end the strike.⁵³

The reality was more complex. The meeting of the City Council the day after the first negotiations did not agree to the fare increase apparently because of the Federation's refusal to accede to the Tramway Company's appeal for the increase.⁵⁴

The Batty debacle caused a stir in the Federation, but Batty survived it. Murray, a tramway delegate, said at a Special Federation meeting that he "was of the opinion that the men were in his opinion getting discontented and said some effort should be made to bring about a settlement as early as possible..."⁵⁵ Another delegate stated that "certain rumours were about" regarding Batty and the firemen. Stuart explained what happened, but felt in these circumstances that "what Mr Batty had done was done with the best intention feeling sure that he did not realise what the consequences would be." It was decided to summon Batty to the following meeting.⁵⁶ The Federation's subsequent minutes contain no reference to the matter.

A week later the City Council was still debating whether to grant the fare increase or not. Some argued that the fares should be increased if only to settle the dispute.

53. Stuart, R "I look back", January 1951, pages 9-10.

54. *Cape Argus* 1 August 1919; See also CFLU Special Meeting minutes 1 August 1919.

55. CFLU Special Meeting 1 August 1919.

56. CFLU Special Meeting 1 August 1919.

Others felt that nothing had changed the figures put out by the Finance Committee, and that the Council had nothing to do with the strike or the wage increases. Councillor Carver said that "the Council had locked out their men until such time as the Council gave consent to the company to further bleed the public. The figures submitted showed that the company was making good profits and could grant increases to its employees without further raising the fares."⁵⁷ The motion to review and rescind the resolution to disallow the fare increase was lost. There were 19 in favour and 13 against, a majority which was too small to carry the motion.

The Council did however eventually agree to the fare increase, although there is uncertainty as to how it happened. "Influential citizens" were drawn in to try to break the deadlock.⁵⁸ On 11 August, the Tramway Company and the Tramway Union arrived at a settlement. Although it is nowhere clearly stated that approval for a fare increase was granted by the City Council, this was certainly part of the deal. A few days later the Company advertised the new fare schedule in the press.⁵⁹

The settlement agreed upon by the workers at their meeting of 11 August was similar in substance to the one agreed on between the Company and the Union ten days previously, when the Council decision scuttled the talks.⁶⁰

The gains of the 1919 strike were substantial. Wages were increased for all categories of workers. Veteran

57. *Cape Argus* 7 August 1919.

58. It is not clear exactly who these were. One was Walter Snow, an MPC. *Cape Argus* 8 August 1919; See also Tramway Union minutes 9 August 1919.

59. *Cape Argus* 12 August 1919.

60. *Cape Argus* 12 August 1919.

driver's wages, for example, increased from 1 s per hour to 2 s 3 d per hour, and those of conductors from 10 1/2 d to 2 s 3 d.⁶¹ Overtime wages were improved, and extra uniforms (in particular coats, a necessity for work in the open in a Cape Town winter).⁶² Importantly also, the strikers won the right for both the Tramway Union and the Cape Federation to act on their behalf for the first time.

Both Long and Stuart addressed the 400 men at Toll Gate on the morning of the return to work, "where much exuberance of spirits was displayed, including dancing, and an occasional boxing bout ..."⁶³

The signing of the new agreement was done ceremoniously. Afterwards Long indicated that he wanted to address the workers, "to have a little friendly chat" as he put it. He "cleared up" an ambiguous clause report about the agreement in the *Cape Times*, told the workers that they should have listened to him in the first place, because they had now accepted the terms he'd offered before, and warned them not to take advantage of victimisation clause.⁶⁴

The *Cape Argus* described the end of the strike in a colourful way:

Shortly before noon one of the small Oranjezicht cars made its appearance in Darling Street, and as it proceeded knots of spectators raised cheers, which the motor-man acknowledged with pleased bows. Shortly afterwards double-deckers entered Adderley-street and there was a rush for seats, several persons, it was stated, mounting the cars just for the pleasure of getting a ride on a tram again.⁶⁵

61. Emmerich, J "Twenty-one Years", page 3.

62. See also Coates, P *Track and Trackless* page 159.

63. *Cape Argus* 12 August 1919.

64. *Cape Argus* 12 August 1919.

65. *Cape Argus* 13 August 1919.

The Municipal Option:

The City Council was at great pains throughout the strike to separate itself from the industrial conflict. But one of the issues which the Council had no choice but to face was that of municipalisation. Cape Town and Port Elizabeth were the only two urban centres in South Africa which had tramways under the control of private capital. The rest - Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Pietermaritzburg, Durban and East London - all had tramway systems owned by their respective local authorities.

The issue had anyway been put on the agenda because of the expiration of the twenty five year period stipulated in the Metropolitan Tramways Company Act. The City Council could now exercise a discretion to take over the tramway system.⁶⁶

The Cape Federation-affiliated Tramway Union reasoned that a local authority would have less interest in maximising profits for shareholders and would therefore be more likely to accede to wage demands. So certainly the Federation, many of whose workers were also daily passengers on the trams, were in favour of public control.

Certainly elements within the Tramway Company itself supported its sale to the City Council. J. B. Taylor, a London director of Cape Electric Tramways, made a statement, during the strike, that "(t)he City Council has the right to take over the tramways next year, but if they prefer taking them over at once I would be quite prepared to do everything in my power to assist them in doing so."⁶⁷ A letter from

66. See Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 159.

67. *Cape Argus* 9 August 1919.

Councillor John Carver to the Argus two days later argued that the Tramway Company was in fact trying to effect such an outcome when "it virtually locks out its men, as it is now doing."⁶⁸

Taylor's statement was certainly not "ignored by the Council", as Coates suggests.⁶⁹ The truth of the matter is that the Council was not at all interested in buying the tramway system after the expiry of the contract, let alone during the strike. For the most part, Councillors felt that the tramway system was getting too old. Carver led the charge. He claimed that "in addition to it being the worst, it was the most expensive tram service in the world. The rolling-stock was out of date, the cars were overcrowded, and he doubted very much whether they were ever disinfected. The company had never given the public a decent service at decent rates since they had used the streets of Cape Town."⁷⁰

In a later letter, Carver argued that the Council should rather replace the system with a "more modern one at once", an omnibus system. He concluded his letter by saying that the "tramway octopus has now a deadly grip on the City, which must be broken to save the people."⁷¹

The Council entered into negotiations with the Company in February 1920 in which the latter were asked the price they were willing to sell for. At exactly the same time industrial unrest began in the tramway sheds.

68. *Cape Argus* 11 August 1919.

69. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 159.

70. *Cape Argus* 28 July 1919.

71. *Cape Argus* 11 August 1919.

The conflict began when a worker in the electrical workshop refused to join the union. The *Cape Argus* dubbed him a "conscientious objector".⁷² Unlike the earlier situation immediately after the 1919 strike where, according to Stuart, Long dismissed the worker who refused to join the Union, in this case the Tramway Company refused to take action. A work stoppage which lasted only a few minutes occurred. The workers in the power station and workshops warned that, unless action was taken by management, a proper strike would ensue.⁷³

A week later another strike began. On the morning of 14 February no cars left the sheds. This time different reasons were given.⁷⁴ Stuart said that the workers "had been exasperated to such an extent that they had been forced to take this step."⁷⁵ He explained to the *Argus* that the Tramway Company was failing to carry out the conditions of the 1919 Agreement, especially with regard to the 48 hour week, which was being exceeded by far. A second and related issue was that the Union demanded the removal of the Company official who was responsible for the administration of the duty roster. The third demand was for a pay increase in line with the increased cost of living, for which allowance had been made in the 1919 agreement.⁷⁶ The union rejected a management offer of a 10 % increase.⁷⁷

72. *Cape Argus* 7 February 1920.

73. *Cape Argus* 7 February 1920.

74. Unfortunately no Tramway Union minutes exist for the period of this strike.

75. *Cape Argus* 14 February 1920.

76. The relevant clause of the Agreement read: "This agreement shall remain in force for twelve months unless there is a considerable increase in the cost of living." See *Cape Argus* 14 February 1920.

77. Stuart also admitted that one striker was given permission by the Union to drive a bus to take some

Long's argument was that nothing could be done about the wage increase until the Cost of Living Commission's report had been published. Secondly he argued that he had received a "largely-signed petition" in support of the despatcher.⁷⁸

The conflict was resolved after three days. The workers returned to work, on the insistence of the Administrator, Sir Frederic de Waal. Both the Company and the Union agreed to appoint an arbitrator and abide by whatever decision was arrived at.⁷⁹ The Administrator chose his private secretary to be arbitrator. He ruled in favour of the workers after a day of deliberations.⁸⁰

Reports of the strike inevitably zoom in on the character and role of Stuart. Coates describes him as a bumbling fool who had no support from the Tramway workers. He says Stuart was unreasonable, incoherent, forgetful and irrational, and manipulated the Union in order to further his own (unstated) interests.⁸¹ Gerald Orpen, a Tramway Company director complained, again, that "it is practically impossible to arrive at any finality in discussion with Mr Stuart, because he invariably introduces new points and runs away on some side issue."⁸²

Whatever Stuart's later relationship with the Tramway Company management it put the blame squarely on him on this occasion. The Company would clearly have preferred no Union

members of the Typographical Society on a picnic, as they belonged to a Federation affiliate, so that "the pleasure-seekers should not be disappointed". See *Cape Argus* 14 February 1920.

78. *Cape Argus* 14 February 1920.

79. *Cape Argus* 17 February 1920.

80. Stuart, R "I look back", April 1951, page 11

81. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 160-161.

82. Orpen, G in a letter to the *Cape Argus* 17 February 1920.

organisation at all: without Stuart there would have been no Tramway Union, no Cape Federation and no wage increases. Stuart's truthful protestations that he, for the most part, did his best to avert strikes fell on deaf ears. A tough position was taken on him. That fact that he was the only spokesman of the Tramway Union to be quoted in the press probably contributed to this.

Coates goes so far as to suggest that the strikes and threatened strikes during 1920 were specifically aimed at forcing the Tramway Company to sell to the City Council.⁸³ Certainly the industrial action did coincide with the debate on municipalisation. But the City Council, which anyway was divided on whether to buy it or not, would surely have been less interested in buying a company that was wracked by industrial unrest. And despite the assertions of the *Cape Argus* ("It was not known to the management that trouble was brewing"⁸⁴), the Tramway Company management which "was taken quite by surprise"⁸⁵, and Coates who suggests that Stuart called the strike "without any warning"⁸⁶, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the Union had been trying to get management to deal with the issue for some time.⁸⁷ So it is unlikely that the demands of the Union were anything other than genuine in intention.

In the end, the City Council did not municipalise the tramway system. The Council offered the Company £ 560 000,

83. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 160-161.

84. *Cape Argus* 7 February 1920.

85. *Cape Argus* 14 February 1920.

86. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 160.

87. See Emmerich, "Twenty-one Years", page 3; Tramway Union minutes 7 January 1920; 14 January 1920; 18 January 1920; 28 January 1920; 1 February 1920.

not enough to match the £ 675 000 asked.⁸⁸ After some more months of debate, the Council finally rejected a proposal to come up with the money by a very large majority in March 1921.⁸⁹ And although the question was raised again in 1925 when the lease came up for renewal, the Council was convinced by the beginnings of the bus war to leave the tramway industry well alone. Instead the Company was forced to make improvements to the system and to purchase electricity from the Council.⁹⁰

88. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 162.

89. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 162.

90. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 162, footnote.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUART IN CONTROL 1924-1932

The period of Stuart's dominance over the Cape labour movement cannot be understood without an appreciation of the legislative context in which it occurred. His consolidation of control in the industry coincided with the introduction of the new industrial relations legislation. In 1924 the State, responding to the 1922 crisis on the Rand, passed the Industrial Conciliation Act. This legislation provided Stuart with a base for his very particular form of trade unionism.

Stuart came to use the new legislation in all the industries in which he was involved. His ambivalences of the pre-1924 period, when he sometimes supported strikes, disappeared. From 1924 he argued vociferously for accommodation within the structures of the new industrial conciliation system. He worked against other forms of negotiations with management outside this system, particularly those which involved any mass action. In this way he entrenched himself in many of the Cape unions. This approach led to a bureaucratic leadership in the Cape unions and a compliant membership.

The 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act allowed for the legal recognition of trade unions for the first time, although African workers were largely excluded from the provisions.¹ The most important aspect for our consideration

1. Nicol points out that in Cape Town African workers could be subject to the Act as, for a period, they did not have to carry passes. See Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 104.

is that trade unions could apply for registration to the Department of Labour. Similarly, Employers Organisations, organised along lines of industry, could also register.

Both Davies and Lever have argued that the ICA had debilitating effects on the growth of a militant union movement: the number of strikes was reduced; bureaucratisation was increased; the struggles of white and black workers were legally separated; union membership became apathetic and declined in the short term; and union officials and employers developed a new "relationship of understanding", leading to a reduction of militancy.²

By contrast, Lewis has shown that in some industries "the techniques of militant trade unionism did survive, particularly amongst semi-skilled factory workers, but also, to some extent, amongst skilled workers."³ However, more important for us is Nicol's argument that the above points are "inadequate and misleading when one considers the effects of the laws on the class struggle in Cape Town."⁴

Nicol sets out to explain how the effects of the new industrial relations legislation on the Cape unions were entirely different from their effects in the Transvaal. The ICA was the product of class struggles on the Witwatersrand, and was followed by fewer strikes, falling membership and chaos in the Transvaal union

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2. Davies, R. "The Class Character of South Africa's Industrial Conciliation Legislation", and Lever, J. "Capital and Labour in South Africa: The Passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act, 1924"; both published in Webster, E (ed.) *Essays in Southern African Labour History*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1978. This summary is taken from Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 107.
 3. Lewis, J. *Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation in South Africa, 1924-55*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, page 30.

movement. In Cape Town, on the other hand, (which was free of any strong or militant unions), the Act resulted in a flowering of organisation and the rebirth and registration of new trade unions.⁵

In fact, he argues,

the new industrial laws of 1924 and 1925 allowed a function to be created for these trade unions. The laws were the precondition for the growth of a more permanent labour movement in the city.⁶

Nicol shows how what he calls the "Stuart Machine" used these industrial laws to entrench its dominant position in the Cape labour movement, developing new relationships with the employers, but in a different way from that in the Transvaal. New unions were formed and recognised by employers directly as a result of these laws. Cape employers, in order to escape the possibility of high wages being imposed on them by the Wage Board, were only too happy to set up Industrial Councils and encourage unionisation of their workforce. The "Stuart Machine" made good use of these fears.

The Stuart Machine, writes Nicol, relied on two supports: industrial legislation and an alliance between union officials (based in the Cape Federation) and the employers, organized in affiliates to the CCI.

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4. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 107.
 5. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 108.
 6. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 101.
 7. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 113.

Bob Stuart and Industrial Councils

The Industrial Council was Bob Stuart's major instrument in maintaining his base in a number of unions and developing a good relationship with employers. The Industrial Council system had the effect of ensuring that a handful of Union leaders negotiated binding agreements with employers while remaining accountable to their membership. Stuart was convinced of the merits of the system. Unfortunately for him, the Tramway Company was not yet persuaded that it needed to take the Tramway Union seriously. The management disliked the idea of binding agreements.

Stuart, with his experience in industrial council bargaining in other industries, tried to foist the council system onto both the companies and the Union. But Industrial Councils in the tramway industry tended to have a very short lifespan during the pre-1936 period. Because of pressure arising from both the depression and the "bus war", the main concern of the Tramway Company during the late 1920s and early 1930s was to substantially reduce wages. This the Union representatives on the Industrial Council refused to agree to, despite Company arguments that their wages would remain among the highest in Cape Town. Each of Stuart's efforts ended in deadlock and the deregistration of the Industrial Council.

Bob Stuart's approach to the Industrial Councils is best illustrated in the attempts to set up a functioning Industrial Council in 1930. An Industrial Council was established in April of that year, with the object of

(putting) the Industry in a position to enlarge the scope of the operations of the

(previous) Council in order to cover all operators, both employers and employees, engaged in the Road Passenger Transport business in the areas concerned. The new Council would cover an area which would include Cape Town, Wynberg, Simonstown and Bellville magisterial districts.⁸

The Industrial Council was set up by the agreement between the Tramway Union and the large companies, under the umbrella of the Tramway Company. One of the first resolutions stated that "the first members shall consist of the City Tramways Co. Ltd., and the Camps Bay Bus Service as employers of the one part and the Cape Town and Camps Bay Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union, representing the employees of the other part."⁹

In this regard, the Tramway Company clearly had its own agenda. On the one hand it viewed the Industrial Council as a method of keeping down wage demands, and even reducing them in this particular case. On the other, it was a legal way of dealing with the independent opposition. If the Industrial Council was able to extend its area of operation to those parts of the Peninsula where the independent companies were operating, the Industrial Council agreements would be automatically binding on the latter. This included all aspects of the agreements, including wages and working hours. The ability of the independent companies to undercut the Tramway Company, through the employment of much cheaper labour, would thus be undermined.

Within two months of its establishment, the Industrial Council resolved

that it be an instruction of this Council to the Secretary, that all employers affected shall be notified of the gazettal of the

8. Industrial Council minutes 9 April 1930.

Agreement of the 30th. May, 1930. that this Agreement will come into operation on the 16th. June, 1930, that they are legally bound to carry out the terms of this Agreement and that in terms of Section 12 thereof, they must remit levies to the Council as from the 16th. June, 1930.¹⁰

With only four representatives of the bus owners having seats on the Industrial Council, representation of independent companies was almost impossible. They opposed the agreement and refused to adhere to its provisions. In response, the Industrial Council, both employers and employees, threw their full weight into a legal fight against them. A special meeting of the Industrial Council was called "with the view to discussing the advisability or otherwise of obtaining the services of Counsel to assist the prosecution of those bus-owners who refused to recognise the legality of this Council's Agreement."¹¹

The Cape Town Motor Omnibus Company of Hughes refused to accede to the demands of the Industrial Council. But after a prosecution and reprimand in the Magistrates Court, Hughes gave a written undertaking to adhere to the agreement.¹² Even the one independent bus-owner who was a member of the Industrial Council by virtue of his membership of the employers association, S. M. Beeten, was reluctant to stick to the conditions of the agreement:

Mr Beeten, with a view to making his position plain, explained that as a member of the Council he would administer the existing Agreement to the best of his ability, but as a private bus-owner he refused to recognise it as a legal document and was prepared to test its legality in Court and if an inspection was made of his service and it was found that he had not

9. Industrial Council minutes 9 April 1930.

10. Industrial Council minutes 4 June 1930.

11. Industrial Council minutes 23 July 1930.

been complying with the Agreement and the matter came before this Council, he would move that a prosecution follow.¹³

This kind of approach made a mockery of the workings of the Industrial Council.

At the same time, Beeten was accused of trying to undermine the right of the Tramway Union to negotiate on behalf of the workers. The Industrial Council had been approached by "certain gentlemen who stated that they represented a number of employees who were not members of the registered Trade Union but desired to make representation to the Council in regard to wages".¹⁴ Stuart objected to the deputation as "scab labour" and a debate ensued as to whether they should be seen or not. The Industrial Council deadlocked on the question with four votes each (presumably the four Tramway Union delegates against the four Employers' Association delegates):

This gave rise to much discussion, Mr. Stuart explaining that his objections to receiving the Deputation were that it represented a "scab" organisation and being unregistered, the Council could not recognise them, and secondly that he had reason to believe that they had been influenced by the private bus-owners. He produced a letter which he claimed emanated from Mr. Beeten's office, urging the members of the "scab" organisation to make representations to this Council in regard to wages.¹⁵

When the Chairman ruled that the Industrial Council would see the deputation, the Tramway Union delegates walked out, leaving the Council without a quorum, and only able to receive the deputation in an informal manner.

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12. Industrial Council minutes 15 August 1930.
 13. Industrial Council minutes 15 August 1930.
 14. Industrial Council minutes 15 August 1930.
 15. Industrial Council minutes 15 August 1930.

By August, the Industrial Council had begun to negotiate a new Agreement. Yet the wage rates suggested by the two sides of the Council hardly came close. Existing wage rates, based on the previous Agreement of May 1930 ranged from 1 s 6 3/4 d for a driver or conductor employed for at least a year to 1 s 11 1/2 d after 5 years. During initial negotiations, the Employers' Association offered 1 s 6 d for drivers and 1 s 2 d for conductors, an absolute decrease.¹⁶ The Tramway Union delegates, on the other hand, were mandated by a General Meeting to negotiate a wage of not less than 2 s 6 d per hour for both drivers and conductors.

Bob Stuart had reacted strongly to what he termed "Beeten's delaying tactics" in bringing in the "scab labour" to give evidence to the Industrial Council. At the evening General Meeting he "characterised (the employers' proposals) as an attempt to drag the men's wages down to the level of street sweepers' standard."¹⁷ He suggested that the meeting "refuse absolutely" to even consider them. Allan Nesbitt supported this and "hoped that this devilish injustice would be hit and be hit damned hard". The impotence of the Industrial Council also came under attack: "Bro. Murray did not feel impressed with the powers of legislation given by the Industrial Conciliation Act and would rather see a spirit of resistance, even to the extent of stopping the traffic."¹⁸

16. Industrial Council minutes 21 August 1930.

17. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 13 August 1930.

18. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 13 August 1930.

At the morning meeting the following day, "Bro. Pretorius felt that it should be intimated that their buses would not run on 1/1 and 1/4 per hour, as the proposition put forward would reduce the men below the standard of a native."¹⁹ The meeting eventually decided to mandate the delegates to return to the Industrial Council and fight for their original demands. Their resolve was hardened when Stuart later provided details of wage rates in the road passenger transport industry in the rest of the country: the employers' offer of 1/6 and 1/2 was seen in the light of wages of 2/1 to 2/8 1/2 in Pretoria, 2/0 in East London and 2/8 to 2/9 in Johannesburg.²⁰ The wage differentials incensed the tramway workers:

Bro. Nesbitt illustrated the type of owners who had entered the industry with no previous experience of the passenger traffic, and were only out to drag the men engaged in the industry down to the level of sweated conditions, and asked if this class was to be allowed to dominate the terms of pay to labour, therefore it was our duty to hold the position for not only ourselves but for the whole of the workers in the country.²¹

As the next Industrial Council meeting was also deadlocked, a special meeting of the Tramway Union Executive released the delegates from their original mandate in order to (get some negotiation going). Although the Employers' Association increased their offer by 1/2 d for drivers only, the Union delegates refused to consider them.

19. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 14 August 1930.

20. Calculated from figures given in Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 20 August 1930.

21. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 20 August 1930.

Finally the Labour Department was approached to appoint a mediator. This move was also unsuccessful, for after another consultation with their respective organisations, the employers offered another 1/2 d increase for drivers and nothing for conductors, while the Tramway Union delegates dropped their demand from 2/6 to 2/4, but were "given a free hand" to negotiate. A Labour Department suggestion that fares were increased was turned down by the Employers' Association on the grounds that they would be unable to compete with the railways. The Tramway Union, on the other hand saw the slight increases offered by the Tramway Company as being an attempt to break their unity, and rejected any differentiation between drivers and conductors. The Union delegates dropped their offer yet further, to 2/2 per hour, but the mandated employers' delegates refused to budge. A resolution was passed which agreed that the Employers would try to get their organisation to increase their offer.²²

Throughout this period, Stuart tried to persuade the Tramway Union membership that the Industrial Council was worth using. Not everyone agreed. Some Union members were beginning to urge that the deadlock be broken through strike action. At a General Meeting, Stuart urged the men to "keep their heads":

He stated that irresponsible talk of strikes etc. was likely to do harm and they could take it from him that if they were forced to fight (which he wished to avoid) then he would fight with the gloves off and make use of all the financial resources at their disposal and then some (sic), but the position of the employees on private buses

22. Industrial Council minutes 17 September 1930.

was complicating the position and hurried action was inadvisable.²³

To make the situation more difficult for Stuart, the Tramway Company decided to circumvent the Industrial Council themselves. The Company posted a notice to all employees advising them that it had been decided to reduce wages by 5% from the middle of October.²⁴ It took all of Stuart's Industrial Council skills to persuade the employers' representatives to agree to drop the threatened wage reduction temporarily, and the Council decided to appoint an arbitrator. Stuart, Long (from the Tramway Company) and Beeten were nominated to carry this out. Stuart however, refused to participate in this task, as "he felt that anyone he nominated to be Arbitrator might be looked upon by the employers as being biased in favour of the employees and under these circumstances he preferred to leave the matter in the hands of the Minister of Labour."²⁵

Some of the smaller companies, notwithstanding the attempts at arbitration, decided to push ahead with their reductions of wages, as the Tramway Company had attempted to do, in particular Hughes and the Cape Town Motor Omnibus Company:

The Secretary read a letter dated 27th. September which he had addressed to the Cape Town Motor Omnibus Co. (Pty) Ltd., advising that his attention had been drawn to the fact that a notice had been posted in their garage advising employees that on and after the 25th. September the Company's old rates of pay would again apply. He pointed out that under Section 10 of the Industrial

23. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 15 September 1930.

24. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 1 October 1930.

25. Industrial Council minutes 30 September 1930.

Conciliation Act of 1924 .²⁶ the action of their Company was illegal.

The Secretary reported that on receipt of this letter Mr. Hughes had been in touch with him on the telephone and had advised him that he was fully aware of the spirit in which the letter had been addressed, but he intended to carry out the terms of his notice irrespective of the provisions of Section 10 of the Act.²⁷

This refusal by the CTMOC to carry out the terms of the Agreement was dealt with by referring the matter to the Department of Labour. Stuart's scrupulous use of the "legislation" was to ensure that no effective direct action would be taken against transgressors. Referrals to the Labour Department merely served to bureaucratise the issue, and the eventual reprimands or nominal fines imposed on the guilty companies were far outweighed by the increased profits gained from the reduced payment of wages.

Stuart continued to find himself in an ambiguous position, with the tramway workers on one side and the Tramway Company on the other. In mid-October the Tramway Company again attempted to reduce wages. The workers responded by agitating for more direct action, and Stuart had the job of pacifying them. It seems possible that Stuart had been accused by the membership of "hobnobbing" with the Tramway Company. At a Special General Meeting of the Tramway Union in mid-October, Bob Stuart referred

to the decision of the men in refusing to forego the 5%, and the serving of notice by the Company to reduce wages ... He stated that the men instead of talking of strikes round the Toll Gate and in the cars on the rank should have had more confidence in

26. Industrial Council minutes 30 September 1930.

their officials. He then reported the true facts of the position, viz. that the Board of Directors had been called together in a hurry, that he had been sent for to attend their meeting, to put up a case against the proposed reduction taking effect until the arbitrators award had been given and succeeded in obtaining a postponement of the reduction until the 30th, pending arbitration. Continuing he said he considered that the job had been done well and he hoped the men would be satisfied that the officials had not been asleep and that it would serve as a lesson to them.²⁸

At the end of October Sir Carruthers Beattie was appointed as arbitrator, and by the end of November he was ready to make an award. The award turned out to be a massive wage decrease: 1 s 9 d for drivers and 1 s 6 d for conductors, compared to 2 s 3 d, won in 1919, and 1 s 11 1/2 d from 1926 to 1930, during the "bus war".²⁹ Only overtime wage rates were increased. But the wording of the Award was unclear, and the Tramway Company interpreted it to mean that the 48-hour week was no longer mandatory.³⁰ The Company, determined to use the Award to its advantage, employed more part-time workers and kept overtime work to a bare minimum. Provoked beyond endurance, a well-attended midnight meeting of tramway workers voted overwhelmingly for strike action.³¹ At a midnight meeting at the Globe bioscope the following night, the Secretary wrote, "the hall was crowded to its

27. Industrial Council minutes 30 September 1930.

28. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 15 October 1930.

29. Emmerich, J "Twenty-One Years", pages 2-3.

30. Emmerich, J "Twenty-One Years", pages 2-3.

31. The Tramway Union received a letter around this time from the East London union, which informed them that the East London workers tramway workers were guaranteed an 8-hour a day wage even if they only worked for 1 hour. (Tramway Union Executive minutes 26 November 1930.)

fullest capacity, there was great enthusiasm and grim determination in the men's attitude."³²

Cheers greeted claims that the majority of the tramway workers were in favour of strike action, and after deciding to take legal action against the CTMOC for underpayment of wages, the meeting passed a resolution at 4 am with two voting against

that the Tramway and Omnibus employees in the mass meeting assembled hereby give Mr Stuart the Secretary power and authority to put into operation the result of the strike ballot at the most suitable time to be decided upon by him, having regard to all the circumstances which might arise in the interval, the men undertaking to act when called upon by a time notice signed by Mr Stuart.³³

This, of course, was an open invitation to Stuart to take whatever action he saw fit. Stuart was never one to call a strike, even when mandated to do so. But the resolution did give him some muscle when dealing with the employers. The arbitrator, Sir Carruthers Beattie, and the Mayor of Cape Town, intervened to prevent the strike and met with Long, Orpen and the Tramway Company directors. It was agreed here to refer the issue to three independent King's Counsels of the Cape Law Society.³⁴ They eventually ruled in favour of the Tramway Union, guaranteeing the workers a 48-hour week, and the Company was forced to make up back-pay.³⁵

32. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 20 December 1930.

33. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 20 December 1930.

34. Tramway Union Emergency Executive Meeting minutes 23 December 1930.

35. CFLU minutes (Joint Executive Meeting of CFLU and Tramway Union) 8 January 1931; See also Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 179; Emmerich, J "Twenty-one Years", page 6.

At the end of 1930 the Tramway Union decided to deregister the Industrial Council as it was serving no purpose. Simmering conflict in the tramway industry, nevertheless, continued into 1931. In March, a dispute arose when Cape Electric Tramways absorbed Hughes' CTMOC.³⁶ The Tramway Company decided to retain Hughes to run the service, which covered the Sea Point and Camps Bay routes. All the CTMOC workers were dismissed, and some were re-employed along with some Toll Gate workers to staff these routes. All the Sea Point and Camps Bay workers were to be re-employed at starting rates of pay. In addition to this, Hughes demanded, as a condition of employment, all workers to sign a document stating that they would not join the Tramway Union, but would rather be members of his own company union. Anyone refusing to sign would not be considered for employment. Stuart, at the Tramway Union's Annual General Meeting, interpreted this correctly as an attempt by Hughes to break up the union. As a response to this, he suggested, he should take steps to set up another Industrial Council. Some argued that this was a useless step, less than 3 months after the deregistration of the previous Industrial Council. Yet Stuart managed to push through a resolution which instructed the Executive to look into the possibility.³⁷

Stuart and the Executive also dealt with the issue at hand. This time the rank and file were determined not to lose the momentum of united opposition to unpopular management decisions. A midnight meeting in early April unanimously passed a long resolution:

36. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 179.

37. Tramway Union Annual General Meeting minutes 25 March 1931.

That this Union of Tramway and Omnibus Workers hereby demand the withdrawal of all discharge notices handed to its members by your company, and request the substitution of notices of transfer involving no loss of pay or seniority or services to any man, no alteration to conditions of service, and no departure from the long established custom of the Tramway Companies of deducting employee's contributions to this Union, Sick Fund etc. through pay sheets, and employing union labour exclusively members of this registered organisation, and that all negotiations be conducted through the official and authorised channel of this Union. Further, that the Executive Committee be authorised to take any steps necessary to obtain the above going, and hereby pledge our loyal support when called upon, as we regard these demands as affecting our fundamental principles. Negotiations shall not be protracted beyond Saturday April 4th at midnight (48 hours later).³⁸

A secret ballot resulted in 244 voting for "direct action" and five voting for "submission".³⁹

A special Executive emergency meeting was convened the following evening. Bob Stuart was absent from the meeting as he had left for Port Elizabeth. Two Executive members delivered a letter with the previous night's resolution to the Tramway Company's Orpen, who said he would find it difficult to call the Board together as it was a public holiday. They informed him that the time limit must be strictly adhered to. The two unionists then returned to the meeting where preparations for a strike were underway.

The Executive was to act as a strike committee. Eight pickets were to be arranged, spread all along the tram and bus routes, "and a flying squad quartered at Trades Hall".⁴⁰

38. Tramway Union Special Midnight Meeting minutes 2 April 1931.

39. Tramway Union Special Midnight Meeting minutes 2 April 1931. The morning meeting voted unanimously for direct action.

40. Tramway Union Special Executive Emergency Meeting minutes 3 April 1931.

Tea and food supplies were to be organised for the pickets. An Executive Committee member was mandated to send a wire to Stuart to tell him to return. During the meeting, the Tramway Company made a futile effort to avoid a strike:

The Committee continuously sat, reliefs being arranged until Major Baskin called to endeavour to arrange a meeting with directors to negotiate a settlement. The Committee met at 10 p.m. at the Trades Hall to receive them, and were surprised when only Mr. Long and Mr. Hughes attended. They were requested to put forward any offer they had to make as the basis of settlement before the time limit expired. The gentlemen refused to offer anything and proceeded to use threatening language to the Executive to induce them to call the strike off. After listening to them patiently for some time they were told firmly that the Executive were there for negotiation and not to enter into arguments, the time for that had passed and as they appeared to have no offer to make they were requested to retire as the Committee was about to proceed to the Globe Bioscope to meet the members.⁴¹

On 4 April, according to the *Cape Times*, "all the men went on strike", putting both buses and trams out of action by slashing tyres and removing essential parts.⁴² When the bus tyres had been replaced and drivers found to defy the strike, the Company asked the police for protection. The police refused, saying that "the men on strike will naturally say that the government should not take sides and that scabs have no right to expect police protection."⁴³

The five-day strike was a complete success for the Union. The Tramway Company backed down and allowed the Sea Point and Camps Bay men to join the Tramway Union, although

41. Tramway Union Special Executive Emergency Meeting minutes 3 April 1931.

34. *Cape Times* 4 April 1931.

43. *Cape Times* 7 April 1931.

Hughes published his own rule book for workers, causing much hilarity:

The absurd and outrageous remarks caused much merriment and were received with derision (by an Executive Committee meeting). Mr. Evans stated that he and Mr. Freestone had had to sit and listen to the reading of these by the author, Mr. Hughes, and had advised him in the strongest terms against its issue as the whole thing would cause serious trouble amongst the men who would rebel against such a conglomeration of schoolboy regulations...⁴⁴

But the strike had been an illegal one, and the entire Executive Committee as well as 12 other members were fined £5 under the Industrial Conciliation Act.⁴⁵ An appeal against the fines, however, was successful.⁴⁶

Bob Stuart and the workings of the Tramway Union

It seems that the only reason that this strike actually happened was because Bob Stuart was away at the time. The Executive Committee thus took their mandate from the membership seriously, and implemented it immediately. Nevertheless, Stuart became almost indispensable to the union because of his status as a skilled bureaucrat. He used this position to get his own way in the union. In fact he probably threatened union members with the withdrawal of his skills more often than he threatened the companies with the withdrawal of union labour. During the 1930s he threatened to resign at least once a year. On several occasions he actually did so but was always persuaded to withdraw his resignation. In addition the financial position of the union

44. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 6 May 1931.

45. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 180; Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 6 May 1931.

46. *Trade Union Bulletin*, October 1941, page 33.

even after 1924 (as with most other Cape unions) was such that they could not afford to employ a full-time secretary. Consequently, "as long as a union was unable to pay the full salary of its secretary no challenger would seek to unseat him. No one could afford to."⁴⁷

The structure of the union itself was moulded to these needs of Stuart. A bureaucratic top-heavy structure, the executive consisted of a chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer and four other members, as well as the secretary. The shop stewards, the only direct contact the Executive had with the rank and file, while attending executive meetings, were considered less important, and were at times prevented from voting on contentious issues. Executive members were paid for attending meetings, and "reliefs" were found from amongst the rank and file to fill in their schedules. The Executive members placed themselves "above" the rank and file.

Election to the Executive was considered a promotion by many, and it was from the Executive that the Tramway Company recruited inspectors. This was done for three reasons. Firstly the Company needed inspectors who had had some experience of discipline, and this was often gained on the Executive, where often the members would see to the interests of the Company. Secondly, as the members at one depot complained, "as soon as the men obtained a good Shop Steward or Executive member he was taken away from them by being offered an Inspector's position."⁴⁸ The Company thus contrived to deprive the workers of their more efficient

47. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 113.

48. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 3 June 1936.

representatives. Thirdly, the Executive member concerned was offered a choice between a salaried position with a much higher income, and a commitment to the union. Although some members decided that their first commitment was to the union, it was not unusual for one of the more militant Executive members to bow to family and other pressures and accept the post. The Executive thus became a "training ground" for the Tramway Company and a "launching pad" for the careers of the membership.⁴⁹

In addition to the more conventional tasks of the Executive, such as the negotiating of agreements, it also played a disciplinary role within the industry. Personal disputes were referred to the Executive, which always tried to settle them amicably. Added to this, it was the Executive which decided on the issues of seniority.⁵⁰

The social security role played by the Tramway Union was, in the absence of any security from either the Company or the State, an important one. The provision of victimisation pay, especially in the early 1930s, to the independent companies' workers for giving evidence to the Wage Board or Industrial Agents, or for being a member of the Union, was a large drain on the Union's funds. In addition the Union had a Distress Fund and co-operated to form a separate Sick Fund, which was later taken over by the Company.⁵¹

49. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 3 June 1936.

50. The "Seniority list" was a list of workers in order of length of service, in order to determine the next in line for promotion, or to decide who to favour in a dispute over a particular shift between two workers.

51. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 6 January 1932.

Involvement of the rank and file in union affairs was restricted to quarterly general meetings (or Special General Meetings in times of crisis) and depot meetings, the frequency, or even existence, of which depended on the dynamism of the shop steward in question.

Yet Stuart never got the whole-hearted support he believed he deserved. In the late 1920s Stuart lost the Secretaryship for a short period. It was the only time in his 18 years of domination that he did not occupy this key post.

The conflict first arose out of the relationship between the CFLU and the Tramway Union. At the annual meeting of the Federation in March 1926, the possibility of the Tramway Union disaffiliating from the CFLU was discussed. Several delegates were strongly critical of the Tramway Union for "not doing justice to the industrial movement", and not participating fully within the CFLU. It is not clear exactly what the Tramway Union reasoning was, but it seems that the Union was not convinced of the benefits of affiliation. 52

At a CFLU Executive meeting some weeks later, Bob Stuart announced that his term of office as the Tramway Union Secretary was about to expire. At the end of the previous year

some difficulty had arisen as to his position and the Tramway Union had chosen to appoint him for 3 months which he raised no objections to but he felt after the service he had given that the Tramwaymen were treating him with a good deal of suspicion

52. CFLU Minutes 4 March 1926.

and for that reason he had decided to give up the position.⁵³

The Tramway Union Executive requested that he continue, the CFLU suggested the same, but Bob Stuart was allowed the freedom to decide.

It is unclear whether he vacated this position in March, or a few months later. Stuart wrote:

During my thirteen years as Secretary of the Tramway Union, I had a very difficult time - so much so that at one stage, I gave it up feeling that whatever service I gave, there was always someone to come along and cause upset and dissension, and this happened so frequently that I felt I had had enough and left.⁵⁴

Allan Nesbitt, a Tramway worker, took over as Secretary, but conflict with Stuart (as CFLU Secretary) continued. The handling of a dispute in Port Elizabeth in 1927 gives some indication as to how Bob Stuart was operating. When the dispute began, Nesbitt was called there to assist.⁵⁵ The Cape Town union heard no news for a week, and some unknown Tramway Union Executive members unofficially asked Bob Stuart to go to Port Elizabeth to find out what was happening. Stuart obliged. When he got there, he wrote later, he found that Nesbitt had been merely "collecting information as to the trouble", and had not yet seen management.⁵⁶ Stuart immediately went to see management. In his own words, "being in possession of the trouble, I met the Management ... and within fifteen minutes

53. CFLU Minutes 18 March 1926.

54. Stuart, R "I look back", April 1951, page 17.

55. As the Cape Electric Tramway Company owned the Port Elizabeth Tramway Company, the Port Elizabeth Tramway Union was a branch of the Cape Town Union. The Port Elizabeth union decided to secede in November 1929 (see CFLU Minutes, 14 November 1929).

56. Stuart, R "I look back", April 1951, page 18.

the difficulty had been settled."⁵⁷ Stuart spent barely 7 hours in Port Elizabeth, but he found time to send a telegram to the Tramway Union saying: "Dispute settled, management accepted my terms."⁵⁸

The short time taken for Bob Stuart to settle the dispute on 'his' terms is hardly surprising. It seems he knew the management fairly well despite the membership's criticism of this relationship. He wrote:

I had no difficulty with the Port Elizabeth Management (on a previous occasion - C.G.). I got along with him (sic) so well that some of the men were of the opinion that I was by far too familiar with the Management ... I have always found that it is better for any one to be on friendly terms with those who have to be approached from time to time.⁵⁹

In spite of Stuart's claims that it was the Tramway Union Executive Committee which sent him to Port Elizabeth, this body reacted angrily to his telegram. They interpreted it as an attempt to "score points from" Nesbitt.⁶⁰ In typical style,⁶¹ Stuart argued that he was misunderstood, and the matter was dropped.⁶² Soon after this, Bob Stuart was elected Secretary again. Unfortunately, once again the circumstances in which Stuart replaced Nesbitt were not recorded in the available documents.

It was the workers in the independent companies, in fact, who provided some of the first organised opposition to Stuart's dominance. These workers had begun to trouble Stuart an inordinate amount. Probably it is for this reason

57. Stuart, R "I look back", April 1951, page 18.

58. CFLU Minutes, 1 September 1927.

59. Stuart, R "I look back", April 1951, page 10.

60. CFLU Minutes, 1 September 1927.

61. See Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 112.

62. CFLU Minutes 1 September 1927.

that he had an ambivalent position towards organising them. On the one hand it was necessary to organise them in order to persuade the Minister of the Union's representivity, but on the other they constituted the most vigorous opposition to Stuart's policies.⁶³ The main problems came from the workers of the Peninsula Transport Limited (PTL). These workers (and workers in some other small companies) had a fairly high proportion of Jewish immigrants. The four owners of the PTL were Jewish, and they reserved the conductors positions for Jewish immigrants, some of whom were unable as yet to speak English. As in other areas, some of these workers brought with them radical traditions, and were a potentially strong force in opposition to Stuart's reformism.

An organisation of independent busmen, the Private Omnibus Employees' Union, based in the PTL sheds and buses was formed by the PTL as a "company union". Any one attempting to join the Tramway Union was sacked. But under the secretaryship of Jimmie Emmerich, a militant bus driver, the private union joined the Tramway Union en masse. It was no easy task however. Ernest Stokell, another PTL unionist working with Emmerich described it like this:

If any man went to the Tramway Union he'd get dismissed. Well, Emmerich and I would go round and meet Murray - a long-time Exec member and later Industrial Agent - Murray lived in Woodstock. And in those days you had the back lanes in Woodstock. And we used to go to Murray's house through the back lanes- zig zag so no one could see where we were going. And then we had to see Bob Stuart. You see, the Company used to spy on

63. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 20 May 1931.

us and we climbed through a window into the Trades Hall to go and see Bob Stuart.⁶⁴

The private union, however, had begun to pose a threat to Stuart when the two organisations discussed amalgamation in mid-1931. The private union made a range of demands including that for a joint secretary, but the more powerful Tramway Union resisted them. Eventually the PTL was given one Executive position and two shop stewards (one each for buses and sheds) as representation in the union. Emmerich was one of those elected and immediately became a thorn in Stuart's side.

64. Interview with R. E. Stokell, May 1985.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL 1932-1936

The year 1932 was a tumultuous one for the transport industry. On the one hand, the companies cut wages to a bare minimum and introduced various "trapping" measures to prevent "financial waste". On the other, the Union was unified in its opposition to these initiatives. But the Union leadership's problems were compounded by the fact that opposition to its methods were growing within the Tramway Union, and was stimulated by agitation from outside - by the African Federation of Trade Unions (AFTU).

The CPSA and the Tramway Union

Eddie Roux, a Communist Party member, later wrote that "the communists organised a group of militant tramway workers to oppose ... Stuart, who, they alleged, was trying to negotiate an agreement in favour of the bosses."¹ Attempts by Stuart and his executive to channel grievances through state structures failed for two reasons: first because of the intransigence of the Tramway Company, and second, because of the pressure being brought to bear by the militant section of the Tramway workers to take "direct strike action".

The "trapping system" involved two plainclothes inspectors who "spied" on both drivers and conductors.² The

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1. Roux, E. S. P. *Bunting: A Political Biography*, Cape Town, African Bookman, 1944, page 147.
 2. One of these inspectors was an ex-tram driver called North, who had led the rival union during the 1916 strike. Emmerich suggests that the position of inspector was "awarded to him no doubt for his valuable

one inspector used traps with marked shillings and , it is alleged, even used members of his family to carry this out. Drivers had been asked by the inspectors to check on the behaviour of conductors in their rear-view mirrors. The Company also employed a new welfare officer - a retired police major - to visit the workers' homes and "check up whether the men indulged in gambling, horse-racing or playing cards".³ Workers who were caught in the "trapping system" were charged by the Company and penalised by deductions from wages, or even dismissal.

In August, Stuart wrote to the Company, demanding the removal of the inspectors and the welfare officer, the withdrawal of the trapping system, and the right of union officials to be present when any charges against the workers were answered.⁴ The Company refused to accede to any of the demands, and suggested that only a small minority within the Union supported them. A week later, the first steps were taken towards the formation of an Industrial Council for the road passenger transport industry in the Cape Peninsula. It was at this stage that the AFTU began agitating. The AFTU was revived in 1931 as the successor of the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, an organ of the Communist Party. The Political Bureau of the Party acted as the Executive of the AFTU.⁵ The object of the AFTU was to create

a revolutionary class struggle, uniting all workers, black and white, against the Government, Employers and Trade Union

services to the employers in 1916 for (sic) keeping the men divided". (Emmerich, J "Twenty-one Years", page 3.)

3. Coates, P *Track and Trackless*, page 180.

4. *Cape Times* 17 August 1932.

5. Bunting, B *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary*, Inkululeko Publications, London, 1975, page 68.

Bureaucrats who now form a united trinity against the workers.⁶

Any use of 'class collaboration legislation' was opposed, in contrast to the earlier approach of the CPSA of using the legal machinery available. Nicol remarks that "the AFTU does not ever seem to have organised unions itself. It confined its role to forming 'revolutionary opposition groups in the existing unions'."⁷

In April 1931, the Communist Party asked Ray Alexander, a young Party activist recently arrived from Latvia, to make contacts in the Tramway Union. The Union was identified as a special target for two reasons: first, public transport was seen to be a strategic sector, and secondly, the Tramway Union was the strongest union in the CFLU.⁸ So, during the 1931 tramway strike, the Party activists began to make contacts and establishing relationships by collecting food and delivering it to the strikers.⁹

The next step was to form an activist group among the Union members, in line with the policy of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) of "having minority movements in the trade unions". "The idea," said Alexander, "was that you don't destroy the unions, you work in the unions with a view to change their political outlook."¹⁰

One of the key actors in this process was Maurice Kagan, also from Riga, who Alexander had known as a student activist. When Kagan arrived in Cape Town, he stayed with

6. *Umsebenzi* 4 September 1931, quoted in Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 245.

7. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 246.

8. Interview with Ray Alexander, Vredehoek, 9 April 1991.

9. Interview with Ray Alexander, Vredehoek, 9 April 1991.

10. Interview with Ray Alexander, Vredehoek, 9 April 1991.

Alexander's cousin. They met, and it emerged that he was already working for the Peninsula Transport Company (PTL), an opposition company based in the southern suburbs. Alexander had been working with a group of rank and filers at the PTL, particularly to get information from them, and Kagan, a more experienced activist, now provided an opportunity to deepen the level of Party involvement in the industry. By the time of the 1932 strike, said Alexander, "we'd got Jimmie Emmerich, Maurice (Kagan) got him, and there were other workers ... and we started a group of about four or five."¹¹

Jimmie Emmerich was the most prominent of the group. Little is known about Emmerich's early life. He was born in the Transkei into an Afrikaans working-class family and moved with them to Cape Town when he was still relatively young. The family had struggled in the years after World War I as his father was unable to find employment when he got back from the war. Emmerich was working as a bus driver at the Peninsula Transport Company in the southern suburbs when he was recruited by Kagan.

Douglas Wolton, General Secretary of the CPSA, was banished from the Witwatersrand in 1932, and moved to Cape Town. When he arrived, Alexander could report to him that the Party had a "unit" in the Tramway Company and the one in the PTL. From then on Wolton began to work with this grouping.

At least eight leaflets were distributed to the tramway workers between August and November of 1932. And, as a follow-up, they worked closely with a group of broader

11. Interview with Ray Alexander, Vredehoek, 9 April 1991.

militant workers, urging them to press for "direct strike action".¹²

Although the leaflets dealt with specific issues that arose during this period, some general themes are evident in all of them. Firstly, there was an attack on the Company for retrenchments, 'trapping' and attempting to reduce wages yet further. Secondly, there was an attack on "Stuart and Co." for selling out the workers by trying to "break their fighting spirit" and channel it into an Industrial Council where Stuart could retain control. They also accused "Stuart and Co." of assisting the Company to carry out wage reductions. Thirdly, the leaflets urged the workers to "prepare for strike action", and to set up "rank and file Committees of Action" to coordinate a strike.¹³

Ray Alexander and Wolton met individual workers at the beachfront in an attempt to persuade them to urge strike action at the next midnight meeting.¹⁴ Ernest Stokell later described Wolton's method of operating as "sort of behind the scenes, like a mole kind of thing. He didn't come into contact with the union because Bob Stuart went wild when he knew we were talking to him." Attempts at a settlement continued through from August to November. As Stuart put it, "every endeavour was made by (the) union to arrive at a settlement."¹⁵ Meanwhile the Tramway workers became

12. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933. The general guidelines for such a strike are published in *Strike Strategy and Tactics: The Lessons of the Industrial Struggles, Thesis adopted by the Strausburg Conference held under the auspices of the Red International of Labour Unions*, published by the National Minority Movement, c 1932.

13. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933.

14. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933.

15. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933.

increasingly frustrated. In mid-November, the Union applied to the Industrial Council for a wage increase (the same increase demanded by the AFTU in its leaflets). The Industrial Council was unable to reach any consensus, collapsed, and applied for deregistration. A new war began in the newspapers in which the Employers' Association pleaded poverty, arguing that the never-satisfied employees "appear to regard the Industrial Council as a channel for the sole purpose of effecting substantial increases in wages."¹⁶

The union issued a statement to put their case before the public. It raised all the grievances of the Tramway workers, including:

the constant issue of irritating and multiple regulations, the persecution of the men by inspectors and traps, by reports for petty offences, (and) fines inflicted by way of suspension and discharge.¹⁷

Jimmie Emmerich, by now an Executive Committee member, was suspended after being accused by Stuart of being responsible for the AFTU leaflets.¹⁸ The AFTU agitation continued. So, a midnight meeting of the Union was called, drawing only about 200 workers, instead of the usual 800. The object of the meeting was to "give the executive power to deal with the situation as it thought fit",¹⁹ in an attempt to entrench control in the hands of Stuart. Stuart's reasoning is made clear by the *Cape Times* report:

It is believed that the Union's Executive is doing everything possible to settle the men's grievances by constitutional means, by that its actions along pacific lines are

16. *Cape Times* 19 November 1932.

17. *Cape Times* 23 November 1932.

18. CFLU Special Executive Meeting minutes, 24 July 1933.

being hampered to some extent by the outbursts of a few hotheads, who are being swayed by the 'direct action' policy of a new organisation. There is reason to believe that the Tramwaymen's Union has always advocated, and still advocates, constitutional and peaceful means for settling differences. But there is also reason to believe that a small Communistic element is continually urging tramway and bus employees to use the direct action method of the strike.²⁰

This attempt to concentrate decision-making in the hands of the moderate Executive was not the only method Stuart used to sideline the Communist influence. He also passed on the leaflets to the C.I.D. who, as a result, raided the Long Street offices of the Friends of the Soviet Union, from where the AFTU operated.²¹

Although Stuart was partly instrumental in helping to convict Wolton and Alexander in March 1933 for inciting workers to commit a crime, he did not manage to keep the militant spirit of increasing numbers of Tramway workers in check. This failure he attributed to the role played by the AFTU. He said in court that "the workers had it in their own hands, and if it had not been for your (Wolton's) insidious propaganda I do not think there would have been a strike".²² As Wolton puts it,

in spite of the attempts of the Secretary ... to prevent action at a mass meeting of the Tramwaymen's Union, which was affiliated to the Federation, the workers decided on strike action.²³

19. *Cape Times* 25 November 1932.

20. *Cape Times* 25 November 1932.

21. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933. They were charged with inciting certain Tramway workers to commit a crime.

22. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933; see also *Cape Times* 8 February 1933.

23. Wolton, *D Whither South Africa?*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1947, page 80.

The 1932 Tramway Strike

At midnight on Thursday 8 December 1932, the Tramway Union held a mass meeting at the Astoria Theatre in Woodstock. Stuart was unable to keep the militancy of the Tramway workers in check. Soon afterwards Stuart was forced to release the results of a ballot which had been conducted at the end of August, which effectively gave the Executive the power to call a strike. The results were that 640 voted for the Executive to take action and 20 against. The strike began immediately the meeting finished. Teams of messengers took news of the decision to those waiting at the depots. ²⁴

"All the shop stewards waited at their depot to get the word," says Ernest Stokell, "and then we had a team of men that was going to put the buses out of order." At 4 a.m., when the meeting was concluded, the Tollgate depot was raided by 100 strikers. Six policemen guarding the depot were brushed aside, and the control handles of the trams were removed. Other strikers proceeded to other depots and did much the same thing. The garages of the independent bus companies were also raided. Here a group led by Jimmie Emmerich removed essential engine parts, poured sugar into the petrol tanks and slashed the tyres.²⁵ The Tramway Company, by this time too late, suggested a Wage Board sitting in response to drivers and conductors demands for a

24. This strike is dealt with in more detail in Giffard, C "Cutting the Current: Cape Town Tramway Workers and the 1932 Strike", paper presented to the Workshop on the Western Cape, Centre for African Studies, UCT, 1984.

25. Interview with Ernest Stokell, May 1985. Stokell himself was involved in these actions and was later acquitted on a charge of illegal possession of a revolver.

flat rate of 2 s an hour.²⁶ The Tramway Union had by now, however, lost all confidence in Wage Boards.

On the first morning of the strike, the Tramway Company posted a notice outside its depots. It notified workers that

unless they return to duty by noon to-day they will be considered as having left the service of the Company, and their places will be filled.²⁷

The Tramway Union statement, also published in the newspaper, outlined the major grievances of the Tramway workers. It claimed that wage cuts in the industry were higher than those in any other industry since 1928. The wage demand was for an increase from 1 s 9 d an hour for drivers and 1 s 6 d an hour for conductors to a flat rate of 2 s an hour for both. The statement suggested that

it was the brainwave of the Arbitrator (in 1928) which produced the amazing phenomenon that the requirements of the men, because one happened to be on the front and the other on the rear of a vehicle, were in future to be expressed in wage terms of different denominations ... actually reducing the standard of life of the man behind the vehicle below that of the man in the front.²⁸

Other grievances included overcrowding and the speeding up of time-tables. The latter forced drivers to break the speed limit, and to pay their own speeding fines.

The Employers' Association argued that wage increases were impossible. It was estimated that the increase demanded would increase the wage bill of the Tramway Company by £20 000 a year, and that of the Peninsula Transport Company by

26. *Cape Times* 9 December 1932.

27. *Cape Times* 10 December 1932.

28. Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape) *The Case for the Men*, Cape Town, Bon Accord Press, 1932, pages 1-2.

£8 400 a year. The Union responded to this by pointing to an over-developed salaried administration and recent retrenchments.²⁹ The situation was deadlocked.

Between 700 and 800 workers came out on strike on the Friday morning. The City Council immediately intervened and suggested two Council members as arbitrators. Their condition that work commence before arbitration was rejected by the workers, and the attempt failed. Hopes for a settlement then turned towards the Minister of Labour, Colonel Cresswell, who was on his way to Kuils River for his Christmas vacation.³⁰

Meanwhile, all public transport had ceased from Camps Bay to Wynberg. In Kensington, however, clashes ensued when strikers armed with "sticks, branches and spanners" advanced on the garages of the United Bus Company to put the buses out of action. Kensington bus workers and residents, called to defend the garage by a gong and motor horn, drove the strikers off.³¹

On the first day of the strike, two people were arrested. One, who used to work for the Tramway Company, was arrested for receiving stolen goods - tram handles, tram keys and distributors from bus engines - and hiding them in his shop. In the late afternoon, Douglas Wolton was arrested at the Tollgate depot for charges under the Industrial Conciliation Act and the Riotous Assemblies Act.³² Wolton

29. Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape) *The Case for the Men*, page 5.

30. *Cape Times* 10 December 1932.

31. *Cape Times* 10 December 1932.

32. *Cape Times* 10 December 1932.

was refused bail and remained in prison for the duration of the strike.³³

The weekend saw continued efforts on the part of the strikers to put more buses out of action. A second clash occurred at Kensington, when a lorry load of "non-European strikers" arrived.³⁴ Once again they were unsuccessful. It seems that it was the workers of the two large companies - the Tramway Company and the Peninsula Transport Company - that formed the core of the strike. They were the most strongly organised at this stage, and relied on damaging opposition buses to keep them off the road. On Sunday morning a lorry load of strikers broke into the garage of the Golden Arrow Bus Company in Observatory. They removed the distributor covers and magneto pencils, cut the magneto wires and slashed the tyres of all seven buses in the garage.³⁵ More arrests for damage and theft followed.

The Tramway Company did its best to run at least a skeleton service. But it would not do so unless the police gave this service their protection. The police, however, refused this protection. They were prepared to guard depots and make arrests for damage and assault, but tried to remain relatively aloof from the strike. The Minister of Justice, Pirow, stated that "the Department's policy is that life and property will be rigidly protected at the existing bus

33. *Cape Times* 10 December 1932.

34. The Tramway Company's drivers and conductors were all white at this stage. It was only the independent companies that employed 'coloured' drivers and conductors. Other work at the Tramway Company, however, was performed by 'coloured' labour, and it is possible that it is these strikers that are referred to.

35. *Cape Times* 12 December 1932.

depots (but) any emergency bus service by way of breaking the strike will not receive police protection."³⁶

Meanwhile, Cresswell's first attempt at arbitration failed. The Tramway Company refused outright to consider arbitration. It stated that it would pay the workers the wages owed to them (from the previous week) if they returned their uniforms. The Union agreed to arbitration on condition that their 2 days unpaid wages were paid to them first.³⁷

The actions of the strikers began to go further than just damage to property. On Tuesday 13 December, a 'loyal employee' who was scabbing was kidnapped, taken to the bushes in Constantia, and beaten up. The *Cape Times* reports he "declared that he had not been in sympathy with the strikers from the start, and would 'die for the company' if necessary."³⁸ He nearly did. The Tramway Company began to add its own protection and barricaded its sheds with timber, planks and galvanised iron.³⁹

On the Wednesday, the sixth day of the strike, Stuart wrote a letter to the Minister of Labour, in which he stated that the Tramway Union's suspicion of the last Wage Board Determination was not justified. He wrote:

It may be frankly said here and now that, had we known the contents of the Wage Board report prior to the strike taking place, no strike decision would have been taken. Unfortunately, the report was not published.⁴⁰

The critical clause in the Wage Board report stated:

The disappearance of excessive competition should, in the Board's opinion, lead to

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36. *Cape Times* 13 December 1932.
37. *Cape Times* 13 December 1932.
38. *Cape Times* 14 December 1932.
39. *Cape Times* 14 December 1932.

employers being able to pay even higher wages than those contained in the recommendation.⁴¹

These few words apparently restored the Tramway Union's faith in the legislative machinery. Stuart persuaded a mass meeting in the City Hall that the Wage Board was sure to increase wages considerably.⁴² The union was thus prepared to accept the intervention of the Wage Board, as long as there was no victimisation, all members were covered by the determination, and that wages and all working conditions would be dealt with.⁴³

The Company also agreed to a Wage Board sitting, but its additional conditions were strict:

- 1) that the strikers return to work immediately;
- 2) that the Company would no longer collect union subscriptions;
- 3) that it would recognise neither the Tramway Union nor its shop stewards;
- 4) that the Industrial Conciliation Act be amended to include the private transport industry as an essential service (thus making strikes illegal); and
- 5) that the strikers return and replace equipment stolen or damaged.⁴⁴

The Tramway Union refused to accept the clauses concerning subscriptions, recognition and the replacement of equipment. The Tramway Company stuck by its insistence and a new deadlock was reached.

40. *Cape Times* 15 December 1932.

41. *Cape Times* 15 December 1932.

42. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 18 December 1932.

43. *Cape Times* 14 December 1932.

44. *Cape Times* 15 December 1932.

The strikers' 'militant actions' continued. An inspector from Camps Bay was kidnapped and beaten up on emerging from a hall after a dance. He was later found at Bakhoven.⁴⁵ Arrests were made, and after 10 days of strike action, 30 people had been charged with offences ranging from riotous assemblies to damage to property, theft, kidnapping and assault.

The commercial press came out clearly on the side of the Tramway Company. *Cape Times* editorials even went so far as to suggest that "Mr Pirow is himself indirectly the author of this strike trouble".⁴⁶ The *Cape Times* refused to consider workers' demands other than the wage demand. Along with the Company, the newspaper argued that there were higher wages and less unemployment in the road passenger transport industry than in other industries.⁴⁷

Public support for the strike was largely absent from the newspapers. While the editors relentlessly attacked the Tramway Union in editorials each day, very little support was shown for the strikers. One exception was a short article on a resolution by the Cape Peninsula District Committee of the Labour Party. The resolution criticised the newspapers for 'misleading' the public and pledged its support for the strikers. The Trades and Labour Council in Johannesburg offered its support and started collections of strike funds.⁴⁸

An attempt by Salt River Railway workers to set up a Workers' Defence League to deal with scabs also managed to

45. *Cape Times* 16 December 1932.

46. *Cape Times* 14 December 1932.

47. *Cape Times* 14 December 1932.

48. *Cape Times* 16 December 1932.

grab a headline. A Strike Committee speaker at this mass meeting argued that the "Editors of the St. George's-Street Press" should be arrested under the Industrial Conciliation Act for "inciting public violence against the strikers". The meeting, in conclusion, decided to "convey their congratulations to the tram and bus workers for the magnificent stand they had taken against the 'onslaught' on the workers' standard of living."⁴⁹

The initiative taken by Stuart and the Executive on the previous Wage Board report began to take its toll, however. The weakness and confusion evident in Stuart's letter put the Tramway Company onto the offensive. The Company reiterated its 3 contentious conditions, refusing to budge, and warned that it would begin employing new labour.⁵⁰ On Friday night, a divided Tramway Union held a midnight meeting to discuss future plans. The meeting decided to stop the strike and return to work. After discussions involving Cresswell throughout the weekend, a settlement was reached.⁵¹

In accordance with the settlement the Wage Board began its investigation in mid-January 1933. The Tramway Union was not very successful in its efforts, although it did manage to prevent further wage cuts. Drivers' wages remained at 1 s 9 d an hour and conductors' wages were raised from 1 s 6 d an hour to 1 s 8 d. Wolton gave a short piece of evidence on behalf of the AFTU, much to the dismay of Stuart.⁵² But it

49. *Cape Times* 15 December 1932.

50. The Tramway Company placed an employment advertisement in the *Cape Times* on the 15 December 1932. It claims to have received 600 applications on that day alone. See *Cape Times* 16 December 1932.

51. *Cape Times* 19 December 1932.

52. CFLU Executive Meeting minutes, 12 January 1933.

was Stuart and the Tramway Executive who were most vocal during the hearing. More alarming for the Union, however, was a change in the strategy on the part of the companies. Whereas before the Tramway Company had represented its own interests at Wage Board investigations, it (and the independent companies) began to use legal representatives. As it was the CFLU and Tramway Union officials who presented the Union's case, the workers were at a distinct disadvantage.⁵³

One of the more important long-term results of the strike was the amendment of the Industrial Conciliation Act to include private transport undertakings as an "essential service". This was one of the conditions of settlement of the Tramway Company. As mentioned earlier, road passenger transport in all the major centres besides Cape Town and Port Elizabeth were owned by local authorities. As such, they were defined as "essential services" in terms of the Act and strikes were illegal.

The Tramway Union successfully applied pressure on the Federation to take action in protest against the proposed amendment. The Tramway Union "considered (it) to be a distinct menace to the Trade Union's right to exercise the weapon of direct action in cases of dispute with private enterprise."⁵⁴ The protests were in vain. On 8 March 1933, the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended to include:

Whenever within the area of a local authority sanitation, or passenger transportation, or a fire extinguishing service is provided by some other person than the local authority, the provisions of

53. CFLU Executive Meeting minutes, 12 January 1933.

54. CFLU minutes, 2 February 1933.

this section shall apply ... in like manner as if such person were a local authority.⁵⁵

The amendment had its desired effect. The 1932 strike was to be the last major bus strike in Cape Town for decades.

The Company withdrew its recognition of the union, refused to collect stop-orders any longer, or to have any relations with Stuart. Despite Stuart's opposition to the strike, he was still recognised by the Management as the key Union leader. After a number of months, the Company informed the Executive that it was prepared to establish a Works Committee, consisting of both workers' and employers' representatives. Stuart vehemently opposed this scheme, arguing that it was a "back-door method of representation", an attempt on the part of the Company to exclude him from the negotiating process.

Some Executive members supported the system, however, arguing that it was possible to retain the Executive as an important structure, and that the Executive itself could be represented on the Works Committee. A motivation by Executive Committee members that the Executive form itself into a Works Committee was squashed by Stuart. Stuart's fear of the rank and file membership of the Union can be seen clearly from his response:

The Secretary thought that it most peculiar that a Works Committee should be spoken of at the present time, and he could only put it down to the fact that the Company was anxious to get in touch with the rank and file, and ignore the Secretary.⁵⁶

55. Coates, *P Track and Trackless*, page 182.

56. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 15 March 1933.

It was not only the Company that had an interest in rank and file negotiation. The radical section of the Union membership too, had been pushing for this kind of representation, excluding Stuart. Neither the settlement of the strike nor the new amendment stopped the agitation within the Tramway Union. On the contrary. Wolton was granted bail when the strike ended, and he immediately began to tour the bus and tram depots. He even called mass meetings.⁵⁷ Wolton argued that Bob Stuart had once again "sold out" the workers by negotiating a settlement behind their backs.⁵⁸

Jimmie Emmerich later stated that the union members were not satisfied with the manner in which the strike took place. He claimed that Bob Stuart did not inform them of the state of the Tramway Union's finances, and that "consequently, they were of the opinion that the strike had been called off on account of lack of funds".⁵⁹

According to the Executive Committee minutes, the AFTU had some measure of support on the Executive and, presumably, also amongst the rank and file. At a meeting in early January 1933, the existence of an AFTU caucus within the Tramway Union was discussed:

Bro. Murray made a statement as to Executive members attending meetings organised by the AFTU, under the lap, where arrangements were made for filling the official positions, and the new Executive. Bro. Stuart stated that in view of the information which had been conveyed to him, to the effect that 7 members of the Executive had been attending (these meetings), he was not prepared to

57. State vs Alexandrovitz and Wolton, March 1933.

58. In his trial Wolton was convicted and sentenced to 3 months hard labour, his second such sentence in 2 years. On his release, he and his wife Molly returned to England where he worked as a journalist.

allow any business to be transacted, which was likely to be conveyed to outside parties.⁶⁰

When three Executive Committee members were accused of attending AFTU meetings, they denied the charges, although they "expressed the opinion that there was a feeling of dissatisfaction at the terms of settlement". One of them, Bro. Hoffman "definitely stated that the policy of the leadership had meant the downfall of the men".⁶¹

Stuart under Pressure

Attacks on Stuart from amongst the rank and file continuously threatened his "personal honour". On one occasion, Stuart was informed by the PTL Directors that Maurice Kagan, one of the militant faction at the PTL and later a prominent member of the CPSA, had said on a bus rank "that Stuart has sold the men in terms of settlement, and had been paid in £5 notes for doing so".⁶² During the meeting between the Directors and Stuart, Kagan had been summoned, had admitted the statement, excluding the part about the £5 notes, and was dismissed on the spot. Stuart later said that "in so far as he was concerned, he had appealed to the Directors not to discharge Kagan, therefore, it was untrue to blame him for Kagan's discharge."⁶³ Stuart again threatened to resign. He told a general meeting of the Union that

his record was a clean one, over a number of years' association with the Union and the

59. CFLU Executive Meeting minutes 24 July 1933.

60. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 4 January 1933.

61. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 4 January 1933.

62. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 11 January 1933.

movement generally, and he would not allow youthful members, who had come into the Industry with conditions made for them, to run around with such statements. If the Union did not want his services, they could say so and end the matter, but they would have to decide that by the whole membership; he would not run away from that issue, either they must give him their confidence or withdraw it; if the latter, then the responsibility was theirs.⁶⁴

According to the minutes of a CFLU General Meeting, he "said that it was his intention to cut himself off from the Tramways Union on account of certain corrupting happenings within the Union, with which he could no longer allow himself to be associated."⁶⁵ The minutes add that four CFLU officials

urged Bro. Stuart to reconsider his decision, having regard to all the circumstances, and still continue to resist the influences which were now working to wreck the Unions attached to the Federation, and to uphold the prestige of the real (sic) Trade Union movement.⁶⁶

Stuart decided to remain, and the Tramway Union was either unable or unwilling to do without him at that stage. But they were not to accept him uncritically. He was sharply admonished for his practice of dealing with the employers above the heads of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee passed the following resolution:

That this meeting strongly opposes the practice of the Secretary going to consult the employers without the authority of the Executive; and that in any complaints against employees, the accused be represented by the Secretary and a member of the executive or a Shop Steward. No member

63. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 11 January 1933.
64. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 11 January 1933.
65. CFLU Minutes 12 January 1933.
66. CFLU Minutes 12 January 1933.

to be interviewed by employers without official witnesses of Union.⁶⁷

Nevertheless the struggles for control by the left continued unabated. Wolton unsuccessfully opposed Stuart in the elections for secretary in early 1933. Soon after this he was convicted for his role in the strike, after Stuart gave evidence against him, and he was sentenced to 3 months hard labour. On the completion of this sentence, he left for England to take a job as a journalist.

The Wolton's sudden departure "without asking permission" from the CPSA left the Party better, rather than worse, off. During Wolton's Secretaryship in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the membership of the CPSA had diminished considerably. While the Party could claim 3 000 members⁶⁸ at the end of 1930, there were only 53 in April 1932.⁶⁹

This was the result of the policies of the leadership triumvirate of Douglas and Molly Wolton and Lazar Bach, who carried out a purge with the ostensible aim, Brian Bunting suggests, of Africanising the Party:

The expulsions deprived the Party of many of its leadership cadres, alienated many supporters, severed most of the already tenuous links with the white trade union movement, ushered in a period of political isolation.⁷⁰

Bach remained in the CPSA, but was increasingly challenged by democratic elements within the Party. After a trip to Moscow with Moses Kotane, he remained behind permanently. This left the way open for the more democratic forces to assert themselves and revive the CPSA.

67. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 12 January 1933.

68. Bunting, *B Moses Kotane*, page 54.

69. Bunting, *B Moses Kotane*, page 62.

70. Bunting, *B Moses Kotane*, page 57.

In the Tramway Union Emmerich now became the main focus of opposition to Stuart. On being re-elected to the Executive, he continued to run into trouble as a result of his connections with the AFTU which continued trying to recruit members from the union. The Executive decided that no member of the trade union could belong to two different transport organisations, and Emmerich, branded as an AFTU member, was given a week to decide which organisation to resign from. He refused to do this and was suspended from the Executive once more.⁷¹

A few months later, in March, Jimmie Emmerich allegedly issued a document "making certain allegations against the policy and leadership of Mr Stuart."⁷² Some Executive Committee members wanted to expel Emmerich from the Union, but they eventually decided to take legal action against him.

In July a Special General Meeting was called "on requisition".⁷³ Stuart was absent from the meeting and "considerable disturbance ensued". It was explained by Evans (of the CFLU) that

there (was) a case sub judice which involved Mr Stuart and Bro. Emmerich, and that Mr Stuart had no desire to discuss the matter or to be present at the meeting to influence them on the questions for which the meeting had been called, and further that he would not be a party to the continuation of the existence of groups of members attached to any outside body, as dual representation within the Organisation would only lead to trouble.⁷⁴

71. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 15 March 1933.

72. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 28 March 1933.

73. This means that it was called by petition of a certain number of union members.

74. Tramway Union Special General minutes 19 July 1932.

Emmerich, addressing the meeting, denied that he was a member of the AFTU, pointing out that there was no individual membership, but only organisational affiliation. But he was a "militant member of the Tramway Union and was not satisfied with the policy and leadership of the Union and was prepared to suffer for his militant opinions, and asked the meeting to cast their votes for his reinstatement."⁷⁵ Eventually a motion that he be unconditionally reinstated was withdrawn. The meeting unanimously carried a resolution "that Bro. Emmerich be reinstated on condition that he undertakes to refrain from taking the business of the Union or Executive to any person outside."⁷⁶

In response Stuart resigned, successfully forcing the rank and file to reconsider this decision.⁷⁷ But his reacceptance was not so straightforward this time. An Executive Committee meeting debated for hours if they should accept the resignation or not. The preceding few months had created major splits within the Union. Murray argued that

the Union was on the verge of disintegration and that there would be no lasting satisfaction if any of the interested parties got their man in as Secretary as there would always be a large element of discontent among the others. Many men were taking up the attitude that if a certain aspirant to the Secretaryship did not get in they would cease contributing, while others stated they would withdraw their contributions if Mr Stuart left the office.⁷⁸

75. Tramway Union Special General minutes 19 July 1932.

76. Tramway Union Special General minutes 19 July 1932.

77. Tramway Union Special General minutes 19 July 1932.

78. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 24 July 1933.

The more important argument, though, was whether Stuart's resignation should be accepted. The Executive was split on this issue. Some argued that Stuart should be asked to withdraw his resignation, while others felt that it would be better to "take control out of the hands of the Secretary and exercise it as a committee".

Emmerich, back now on the Executive Committee and no doubt a little self-conscious about the debate,

stated that it was not his wish to be disruptive. The revolutionary section would disappear as soon as the control was taken out of the hands of the Secretary and placed in those of the rank and file. He would not support any extreme man for the position of Secretary, and thought that some one from among ourselves should be appointed, in the meantime,⁷⁹ preferably from the tramway service.

It was eventually decided to take the issue to a General Meeting of the Tramway Union.

Emmerich's differences with Stuart at this stage were fundamental. Emmerich put his case to a Cape Federation meeting dealing with Stuart's resignation:

He was in favour of militant action and was against the Industrial Legislation as it caused the workers to become apathetic. The workers should dictate the policy - not an individual such as Mr Stuart or any other person. He claimed that they were fighting on a policy which would build up the trade union movement.

Bob Stuart, on the other hand, said Emmerich, "represented a policy which was extinct, viz. industrial legislation, and he (Emmerich) disagreed with the policy of bringing in arbitration and legal men."⁸⁰

79. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 24 July 1933.

80. CFLU Special Executive Committee minutes 24 July 1933.

Once again Stuart came out on top. Emmerich made an offer to resign if the membership wanted him to. At a "double" general meeting the members voted by 105 to 12 that he should do so. This was a graphic display of the lack of support for Emmerich's political line and the perceived indispensability of Stuart. Another resolution refused to accept Stuart's resignation.⁸¹

With Emmerich now keeping a low profile, Kagan began to take the limelight as the "scapegoat representative" of the radical faction. He apparently issued a circular by the "Revolutionary Section of the RTUO (Red Trade Union Organisation) in the Tram and Bus Workers' Union" which some Executive Committee members felt had been held out as bait to secure the return of one of their nominees on the Executive.⁸² Those distributing the circular were called before the Executive Committee. They all claimed that they hadn't even read them, and named Kagan as the member who asked them to do the distribution.⁸³ At the same meeting, a Shop Steward said "that Bro. Kagan, who was a communist, has been frequently visiting the sheds ..." As this was creating "a great deal of unpleasantness", it was decided to summon Kagan to the next Executive Committee meeting.⁸⁴ But nothing serious resulted. Kagan was merely "warned by the Chairman regarding talking to Tramway employees on the permanent way and in the sheds whilst they were on duty, as the Manager of

81. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 31 July 1933.

82. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 30 August 1933.

83. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 6 September 1933. These members were reprimanded.

84. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 6 September 1933.

the Tramway Company had taken exception to his conduct, and they did not wish to see him penalised in any way."⁸⁵

In the meantime, Stuart had returned to Cape Town once again and immediately went about setting up a new industrial council. The Department of Labour had written a letter to the Tramway Union, saying that it was difficult to carry out the Wage Determination "owing to the collusion which obtains between employers and employees."⁸⁶ A General Meeting thus gave the Executive Committee the authority to begin the process of setting up the machinery. Emmerich and Kagan opposed this, arguing that the Union should rather try to "communicate" with the employers to "bring about the necessary understanding" to keep the Wage Determination operating. They lost the vote by 35 to 3 at the morning meeting.⁸⁷ A speech by Emmerich at the evening meeting, however, resulted in a 23 to 8 vote against the setting up of an Industrial Council. The combined vote was 43 to 26 in favour of an Industrial Council, and Stuart got his way again.⁸⁸

The Tramway Union and the South African labour movement

After the passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1924, there were concerted attempts to unify the South African trade union movement. But, over a period of more than a decade, Bob Stuart resisted all attempts to bring about national unity. He deliberately kept the CFLU out of the national umbrella organisations, first the South African

85. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 20 September 1933.

86. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 27 September 1933.

87. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 27 September 1933.

88. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 27 September 1933.

Industrial Federation and later, and more importantly, the Trades and Labour Council. He also repeated this approach within the specific confines of the transport industry. As Secretary of the Tramway Union, he refused to allow the Tramway Union to affiliate to the South African Council of Transport Workers.

Cresswell, appointed Minister of Labour in 1924, advocated national unification because the ICA provided the possibilities for trade unions (and organised capital) to negotiate at national level. As Williams puts it, Cresswell "hoped to see the national leadership of the movement also channelled into some institutionalised, and hence controllable, expression."⁸⁹ The Transvaal supported this idea, but the Cape, led by Stuart in the CFLU, was to frustrate them. Simons and Simons write that Stuart, the "stubborn Scot, refused to play second fiddle to the north, and rejected its white labour policy."⁹⁰ The Cape Federation argued that the Transvaal unions were racist, in contrast to the alleged "non-racialism" of the Cape unions and, therefore the interests of Coloured workers in the Cape would be threatened by this unification.

As both Nicol and Williams point out, this was not the whole story. The Transvaal unions were beginning to move away from their whites-only regulations, while the so-called "non-racialism" of the Cape unions themselves was questionable. According to Simons and Simons the attitude of the Cape Federation to African trade unions was "more

89. Williams, K "The resolution of the Cape-Transvaal conflict in the Trade Union movement of South Africa", unpublished paper, Oxford, 1974, page 2.

90. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, page 187.

ambiguous than Stuart would acknowledge".⁹¹ And Williams argues that white unionists had no choice but to include Coloured members. The structure of industry in the Cape made the presence of Coloured workers in the Cape unions inevitable. Pieter van Duin, in a study of the building industry in Cape Town, wrote:

It became increasingly clear to white artisans that the only lines along which they could hope to maintain their position on the labour market were those of 'equal pay for equal work' and 'the union rate for the job'. To this end, coloured workers had to be organised and incorporated into what had been, up to this point, white unions.⁹²

The Tramway Union itself was not a non-racial union. Employment in the better-paid driver and conductor posts was restricted to whites. Coloureds were employed only in the sheds or the roadgangs. A small number of Africans were employed in the roadgangs. This state of affairs was the result of an agreement between the Tramway Union and the Tramway Company. It was never challenged by Stuart.

The Trades and Labour Council, in its bid to become a truly national organisation, omitted a colour bar from its 1925 constitution. This was only a tentative step, but it was a conciliatory gesture. Despite this, Stuart and the CFLU remained aloof.

In 1930, another unity undertaking by the Trades and Labour Council was unsuccessful. This time, the CFLU

91. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, page 382.

92. Van Duin, P, "Artisans and trade unions in the Cape Town building industry, 1900-1924", in James, W and Simons, M (eds) *The Angry Divide: Social and economic history of the Western Cape* David Philip and Centre for African Studies, UCT, Cape Town, 1989.

approach was "even more bizarre", according to Williams. In this initiative,

the same leadership participated actively in the creation of a new national organisation and then allowed from within its own ranks an attack on that Trades and Labour Council which wrecked Cape support for that body (original emphasis) ...⁹³

By 1935, the Trades and Labour Council decided that it would be of no further use to deal with the Cape Federation. It decided to appoint a special organiser for the Cape.⁹⁴ The organiser established a Cape Districts Committee, which began to organise workers in the sweet, chemical, brewing, explosives and food and canning industries, which the Federation had failed to organise.

Similarly in the tramway industry Stuart was successful in keeping the Cape Town union out of the South African Council of Transport Workers (SACTW), established in 1933. At first the Union agreed in principle to the establishment of a "National Co-ordinating Committee of Transport (Buses and Trams)" in April 1933.⁹⁵ Stuart and Executive Committee member Spiller attended a meeting in Johannesburg intended to set this up. However, Spiller (supported by Stuart)

considered that there was more behind the movement than met the eye, and was of the opinion that the purpose of the meeting was the amalgamation of the different Unions into a National Union, which he could not agree to ... (and also) ... that he, personally, had been approached and asked as

93. For a detailed explanation, see Williams, K "The resolution of the Cape-Transvaal Conflict", page 5.

94. Williams, K "The resolution of the Cape-Transvaal Conflict", page 9.

95. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 26 April 1933; see also Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 19 April 1933.

to how soon the Tramway Union would join the Trades and Labour Council.⁹⁶

Stuart claimed that he had not received a mandate to commit the Union to a national movement. His job, he said, was to "assist in the formation of a Co-ordinating Committee", which he was quite happy to do - as an outsider, it seems. Clearly, there was a grave suspicion that the proposed national organisation was a thinly veiled attempt to find another way to incorporate and dominate the Cape unions.

This was the reason given for the Tramway Union not joining the South African Council of Transport Workers when it was formed. The Union feared a "northern plot" to form a national transport union, and which would force the Tramway Union to break from the Cape Federation. There was some truth to these fears.

The SACTW's official journal, the *Road Transport Worker*, reported early in 1936 that copies of a proposed constitution for the "proposed national Union" were available.⁹⁷ But it was not to be: the proposals were toned down a couple of months later to involve a "Federal Union of Transport Workers", and even this did not see the light of day.⁹⁸ The Union agreed to co-operate with the Council - members of the Cape Town Union (including Emmerich) worked on the Council's magazine - but it was only after 1936 that the Union decided to affiliate to the Council. That was the year that Emmerich took over the reins from Stuart.

96. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 14 June 1933.

97. *Road Transport Worker*, Vol 2 no 25, Jan/Feb 1936.

98. *Road Transport Worker*, Vol 2 no 27, April 1936.

Both Nicol and Williams point to the 1936 ousting of Stuart by Emmerich as Secretary of the Tramway Union as a turning point in the history of the relations between the Transvaal and the Cape.⁹⁹ When Emmerich took over, Stuart was still busy fighting the trade union leaders of the Transvaal, as is evident in his CFLU Secretary's Report for 1935. A section of Stuart's 47 page report, written after his unseating, is unusually and ironically eloquent:

The strange taunt that Cape Town is the cinderella of organised labour definitely held in bondage through the crass ignorance and stupidity of a self-elected junta of leaders having their headquarters in the Federation, and from there preaching the gospel of non-resistance, is not borne out by the facts of history; not the history invented and promulgated by Mr Andrews and his kind, but the history of recorded events which he who runs may read.¹⁰⁰

Emmerich's rise to prominence

As mentioned above, Jimmie Emmerich's rise to prominence began soon after the 1932 strike. He was first elected to the Executive when the Peninsula Transport workers joined the merged with the Tramway Union in 1931. With the first publication of the national journal, *The South African Road Transport Workers' Magazine*, in 1933, a magazine committee was set up in Cape Town to send in contributions and to organise distribution.¹⁰¹ Emmerich was

99. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers", page 114; Williams, K "The resolution of the Cape-Transvaal Conflict", page 10.

100. Stuart, R "Twenty-third Annual Report of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions - 1935", pages 44-45.

101. The name of the magazine was changed to *The Road Transport Worker*, *SA Transport Worker*, and later *Transport*.

elected secretary of the committee, prompting Stuart to participate in order to keep an eye on things.

The following year Emmerich was again elected to the Executive, and proved to be a valuable member, organising the workers in the smaller companies. By March 1934, he was in charge of the Imperial, Cardinal, Grassy Park and Constantia Bus Services, thus gaining a strong foothold amongst the independent companies. Maurice Kagan assisted Emmerich in these tasks.

Emmerich and his leftist colleagues found it difficult to make headway, however. It was not only Stuart who made life tough for them. In 1933, soon after the strike, the members of the radical faction at the PTL were physically attacked by other workers. Ernest Stokell, one of those assaulted, allegedly saw two workers who attacked him receiving money from Mr Schapiro of the PTL management. Another worker testified that Mr Schapiro promised that "if they smashed up Stokell, Hoffman and Emmerich, they would get a holiday."¹⁰² Apparently Schapiro had given one of the attackers a list of 11 men to "weed out" of the PTL.¹⁰³ Emmerich was also assaulted, but he opposed taking the issue to court, as he felt the Directors could bribe witnesses.

When the PTL was absorbed by the Tramway Company in late 1934, neither Emmerich nor Kagan were re-employed by the Company. An attempt to call a strike while Stuart was away in Port Elizabeth failed. The Executive managed to delay the action until he returned. Although the radicals

102. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 5 February 1933.

103. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 8 February 1933.

remained on the Executive and drew victimisation pay, the majority of the Executive were apparently not sympathetic to them.

Although there is no evidence to support this assertion, Stuart possibly collaborated with the Tramway Company to remove Emmerich and Kagan, two of his greatest threats, from the industry completely. Nicol writes that "Stuart and his followers...used and abused their constitutional power and real power as officials to keep control of the (any) union. If this proved inadequate, they could rely on the employers to help dispose of dissident elements."¹⁰⁴ Certainly Stuart didn't strain himself to get two of his most active Executive members reinstated. He said that

the unofficial action (while he was in Port Elizabeth) was tantamount to a vote of no-confidence in the deputation to management, with the result that he was not prepared to take any further action while this stigma had been placed on the deputation...(He was) of the opinion that nothing more could be done, but as there seemed to be some difference of opinion...perhaps it would be in the best interests of the organisation to have a special meeting (to decide on further action).¹⁰⁵

A majority of eight Executive members declared at this Special Meeting, that the Tramway Company was justified in these "retrenchments". Stuart did not even attend. However, facing a potential strike ballot, Stuart and the Chairman

104. Nicol, M "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers" page 113.

105. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 31 October 1934.

again met Management and reached agreement that the victimised activists be re-engaged.¹⁰⁶

Tensions between Stuart and Emmerich nevertheless remained. Emmerich, often supported by other rank and filers, was openly critical of Stuart's role, especially his relationship with management. And a few days after Emmerich's reinstatement, Stuart accused Emmerich of writing an anonymous article in *Forward* on the amalgamations in the transport industry. He refused to accept a nomination for secretary for 1935 for this reason. A week later he was forced to retract his accusation after finding out that Emmerich did not in fact write the article. At the next election he was again elected Secretary. Emmerich was elected Chairman.

The election brought the conflict even closer to a head. At one stage during the year Stuart resigned, alleging misconduct in the election of Emmerich. He also cited as a reason his refusal to sit on the Executive with another leftist, Marcus. The Executive organised a ballot to see if the membership would accept his resignation. The union decided by 354 votes to 289 to accept the resignation. Stuart objected to taking the issue to the rank and file in this way. The Executive ruled that because of irregularities, the ballot should be held again. Still able to call the tune, Stuart then informed the Executive that he would resume his post if a midnight meeting wanted him to, but on condition that there was no ballot. The Executive

106. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 7 November 1934.

agreed to this and the meeting of just over a hundred members decided that he should continue.¹⁰⁷

By 1935 the union was in chaos and the Executive continued to act in an unconstitutional way. At the end of that year Emmerich was at last nominated as Secretary to oppose Stuart. To make this possible, allowance had to be made for a full-time secretary. Stuart, as secretary of the Cape Federation as well as other unions, had been able to survive financially on a part-time salary; indeed, as unions were poor, this was one of the ways which he used to remain in power. For anyone to seriously oppose Stuart, it was necessary for the Union to provide full-time employment in order to safeguard the contender from victimisation.

The constitution was amended, and Emmerich defeated Stuart in the elections. Ernest Stokell suggests that it was Emmerich's dynamism that enabled him to win the election:

The man who shouted ... with the tramway people in those days, and even today, I think, the man who shouts the most gets the support. And Emmerich used to go round having little meetings at the various depots and there were a lot of depots in those days, you had a small depot at Maitland, Westerford Bridge, Camps Bay, Sea Point, one in Strand Street, Ravenscraig Road...¹⁰⁸

It was these small depots that Emmerich was given the task of organising, often working with the men in recognition struggles and even strikes at times. Clearly Emmerich's new approach of performing important organisational work rather than merely being seen to be attacking Stuart's policies and pushing his own "direct action" philosophy was important in the elections.

107. Various Tramway Union minutes, February to April, 1935.

108. Interview with Ernest Stokell, May 1985.

Various factors must have contributed to Stuart's defeat. Although he had been with the union for 18 years, there had always been those who were discontented. The financial position of the union was poor. The wages of the traffic men were the lowest in the country. Stuart was seen clearly to be blocking any combination with the organised workers in the rest of the country, either industrial (through the Council of Transport Workers) or general (through the Trades and Labour Council). Furthermore his relationship with management led to distrust among the rank and file. But perhaps it was by default more than anything else that Emmerich won the election; the workers may simply have opted for change, any change.

Nevertheless the election of Jimmie Emmerich as the first full-time secretary of the union ushered in a new phase in its history, one in which it soon came to be regarded as one of the most progressive trade unions in the Western Cape.

CHAPTER SIX

THE EMMERICH ERA 1936-1942

The leadership change in the Tramway Union ushered in a new era. The public image generated by Emmerich reflected a more progressive union, and on the ground the rank and file began to participate more fully in Union affairs through their shop stewards. But the radical changes promised by Emmerich in his agitation since the 1932 strike failed to materialise. In the eight years in which it was in control, the left failed to mould the Union into a truly progressive mouthpiece of the workers.

Emmerich's election victory over Stuart was not accompanied by anything like a "clean sweep" on the part of the left-wing faction in the Union. While there were some changes to the Executive Committee, these were not significant. What was more important was the political direction of the leadership. Political allegiances of individual Executive members were complex and changing, and there was always an element that opposed Emmerich's approach to trade unionism. Rank and file support was also not guaranteed.

Nevertheless, from the start of Emmerich's term of office, he began to expand his support. He soon gained the respect of the greater part of the union membership. A dynamic activist, he learned the ropes fast and worked very closely with other respected union leaders, such as Allan Nesbitt, the Treasurer.

Supported by a majority on the Executive, Emmerich set out to implement the many changes the left had been pushing

for while Stuart was still in control. The first major change concerned the issue of unity. The Tramway Union became the first Cape union to break from the isolationist policies of Stuart. After inviting representatives of the South African Council of Transport Workers (SACTW) to speak at a General Meeting, the Executive decided unanimously to affiliate the union to this body. While Stuart's Executive had kept the union out because of a concern that it was a "plot" to form a national transport union, Emmerich's Executive now gave its support because they were in favour of the eventual establishment of a national union.. King, one of the coloured Executive Committee members, suggested that the past reasons for not affiliating were certainly largely due to the colour bar in the other centres,¹ but he now argued that although the other centres had not yet dealt with the problem of non-racialism adequately, the presence of the Cape Town Union in the Council would be a factor in encouraging a move towards non-racialism.² According to Nesbitt it was the Ministry of Transport which clinched the matter of affiliation: "The forces against us were organising nationally, therefore, it was our duty to do the same if we wanted to survive."³

Emmerich later wrote in the "Cape Town Notes" in the Transport journal that there had been attempts to form a national transport union (rather than merely uniting in a federal structure) for a number of years. These attempts had

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1. Ray Alexander argues that King was "a stooge of Bob Stuart"; interview with Ray Alexander, 9 April 1991.
 2. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 15 April 1936.
 3. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 15 April 1936.

been unsuccessful and were not likely to succeed immediately. Nevertheless, wrote Emmerich, "the S.A. Council of Transport Workers ... can, and will, serve a very useful purpose in the very near future."⁴

Both Emmerich and Nesbitt argued strongly in favour of a national organisation of transport workers. Similarly they used their positions as Tramway Union delegates to the Cape Federation to push for unity between the Federation and the Trades and Labour Council. It was largely due to their efforts that these two bodies signed unity agreements in 1938. While many of the Executive members had, under Stuart's leadership, supported his isolationist policies, they now changed their tune.

As mentioned earlier, Emmerich was a member of the Communist Party. He had been recruited by Maurice Kagan when he was working for the PTL and had been part of the "inner core" of the Party-organised tramway workers throughout the 1930s. He was active in the Friends of the Soviet Union and the League Against Fascism. He displayed a keen interest in the international struggle against fascism, referring constantly to the Spanish civil war and ensuring union support for these struggles.⁵

Emmerich, however, never made public his membership of the party - in fact he denied it. In 1938, he said that he had "been told that I am a Jew-Communist. Actually I am neither. I am born and bred Afrikaner."⁶ This was done for

4. *The South African Transport Worker* July 1937.

5. This "active support" included the collection of money for the Republicans in Spain, and the holding of meetings in their support.

6. *The Guardian* 6 May 1938.

tactical reasons.⁷ It was probably felt that a known communist would have less chance of gaining support from a white-dominated trade union. Yet the membership of the Tramway Union was under no illusions. A large proportion of the union membership regarded him as a communist. Ernest Stokell said:

Emmerich was a communist. He didn't say he was, but he was a Friend of Soviet Russia...Emmerich's idea was communism, and (while) Bob Stuart believed in trade unionism...Emmerich was more 'of the masses'.⁸

Emmerich, in his writing, certainly never pushed an open Party line.⁹ In 1937, discussing the issue of unity, he wrote:

The (trade union) movement stands for something greater and wider than just carrying on the guerilla warfare between employer and worker. As my colleague, Allan Nesbitt, describes it, trade unionism stands for the ultimate control of the whole industrial machine by the workers for the benefit of the workers- in short, the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of the Socialist State. In the meantime, under the capitalist State, it provides workers with their only effective protection against the oppression of an industrial machine controlled by capital, for the benefit of capital. Until the present time, the trade union movement does not appear to have seriously attempted to fulfil its ultimate object, with the result that the political side of the Labour movement, particularly in the Cape, when compared with trade union membership, is practically non-existent.¹⁰

7. Interview with Ray Alexander, 9 April 1991.

8. Interview with Ernest Stokell, May 1985.

9. Most of Emmerich's writing was for *The Guardian* and *The South African Transport Worker*. He often wrote in support of the Labour Party.

10. *The South African Transport Worker* September 1937.

Emmerich is referring here to the Labour Party as being the political arm of the labour movement. The CPSA is nowhere mentioned. And indeed, when Emmerich stood for parliament in 1938, he stood as a Labour Party candidate in the Cape Flats constituency on a "bread and butter politics" ticket.¹¹

From the time that he was elected Secretary, he became a full-time union activist and continued to take on more and more responsibilities. In addition to doing a large amount of organising in other industries, he also accepted various official positions.

During 1937 the SACTW headquarters moved to Cape Town. Cape Town also took over the running of its journal, the South African Transport Worker. Its quality had begun to deteriorate and the Cape Town union was unhappy about putting money into it. The delegates to the SACTW Conference in East London in April 1938 were mandated to threaten "that unless the Conference agreed to permit the Cape Town centre the opportunity to produce the Magazine, we would be compelled to withdraw our financial support."¹² Conference quickly agreed. It was also decided to transfer the Headquarters of the Council to Cape Town, and Emmerich was elected Secretary, and Nesbitt and Pienaar (also from Cape

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11. See *The Guardian* 11 March 1938 for Emmerich's election manifesto which he presented jointly with Forsyth (Woodstock) and Costello (Maitland). Although the majority of people living in the constituency were Coloured, there were 7 000 whites and 1 500 Coloureds on the voters role. This was partly because white women were enfranchised while Coloured women were not. (*The Guardian* 8 April 1938.)
 12. "Report of Delegates to the Annual Conference of the South African Council of Transport Workers held at East London, on 13th, 14th, and 16th April, 1938", page 8.

Town) President and Vice-President respectively. Emmerich became editor of the journal.¹³

The new editor soon changed the editorial content of the journal. Emmerich began to publish more articles about international struggles against fascism, used the journal as a pro-trade union unity organ, and allowed space for prominent leftists such as Bill Andrews to put forward their conceptions of South African history and contemporary politics.¹⁴

As Secretary of the Council, he responded to appeals for help from other centres, and played an active role in negotiating agreements in Bloemfontein and Durban.

In 1938, Emmerich was elected to the Executive Committee of the Cape Federation, despite having turned down a nomination for the CFLU Presidency the previous year.¹⁵ Then in 1939, in his capacity as secretary of the TLC-affiliated Council of Transport Workers, he was elected to the Executive of the Trades and Labour Council. In 1938 he tried unsuccessfully to win a seat in parliament. In 1941 he was elected Secretary of the Cape Federation.¹⁶ The pressures resulting from his wider activities were to negatively affect Emmerich's work, as we shall see below.

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13. "Report of Delegates to the Annual Conference of the South African Council of Transport Workers held at East London, on 13th, 14th, and 16th April, 1938", page 11.
 14. Bill Andrews' "Class Struggles in South Africa" was serialised in *The South African Transport Worker* beginning in July 1941, for example.
 15. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 24 February 1937.
 16. *The Guardian* commented on Emmerich's defeat in the election: "Greyshirt tactics and money, coupled with the fact that there was no Nationalist candidate, and many Nationalist votes went to the Greyshirt, explain this defeat." (*The Guardian* 20 May 1938.)

Continuity and change - the Tramway Union in the late 1930s

As far as his work in the Tramway Union itself was concerned, Emmerich proved himself to be an able negotiator on the Industrial Council, gaining the respect of the Executive and rank and file alike.¹⁷ Using this industrial machinery, Emmerich managed to secure what was described as the best increase in the history of the union in an agreement that was to stand for 5 years. The Cape Town traffic men had always been the lowest-paid in their category in the country. This was due to the fact that the rest of the country had municipalised tramway systems, while in Cape Town the tramway system was privately owned. In contrast, the shedworkers in Cape Town were the best paid shedworkers in the country, largely because it was African labour that was employed elsewhere while in Cape Town it was coloured labour.¹⁸ Emmerich's approach was that any agreement which did not include a similar increase for the shedmen should not even be considered. The 1937 Agreement did not bring the traffic wages up to nearly the level of the Johannesburg workers, but the gap was significantly reduced. The success was so appreciated by the rank and file that the whole Executive was returned in the elections in January 1938.¹⁹

The financial position of the Union began to improve considerably after 1936. When Emmerich took over as Secretary, the Union had £ 1 250. This had increased to £ 2

17. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 29 December 1937.

18. See Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 19 May 1938.

19. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 9 February 1938.

000 by the end of 1938 and to £ 4 800 by the end of 1939.²⁰ Cape Town provided the basis of support for both the Council of Transport Workers and its journal. They were also able to invest £1 000 in the new Trades Hall built by the Cape Federation.²¹ The improved financial fortune of the Union was partly achieved through a double levy on members (usually reserved for emergencies such as an impending dispute) for a prolonged period.

While the structures of the union remained substantially the same, Emmerich attempted to strengthen contact with the rank and file. He urged that the role of the shop stewards' should be greater, and that more frequent depot meetings should be held. In 1937 the Shop Steward structures were altered to allow for 13 Shop Stewards instead of the usual 10.²² In the "Cape Town Notes" of the Journal, he wrote:

I wish to recommend, in the interests of the Union, that the members and shop stewards pay more attention to this important part of the Union's work. The membership as a whole should be acquainted with the individual grievances of members and must learn that collective discussion and decision is far more useful and healthy to the Union than individual effort ... The leadership can only tackle these grievances efficiently and to the satisfaction of members when they are in constant touch with the rank and file, and depot meetings have in the past, and will in the future, have the effect of keeping them in touch.²³

20. Secretary's Annual Reports for 1938 and 1939, published in the *South African Transport Worker*, February 1939, and the *South African Transport Worker*, February 1940.

21. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 9 March 1938.

22. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 January 1937.

23. *The South African Transport Worker* July 1937, page 8.

On an ideological level, the Executive attempted to provide radical political options to the membership. In 1939, after Emmerich and Nesbitt had been supplying *The Guardian* to the membership out of their own pockets for 3 years, the Executive decided to buy 20 dozen a week out of the journal fund and to distribute them to depots free of charge.²⁴ An attempt to send a Tramway Union delegate to the Soviet Union in 1937 for the 20th Anniversary of the Revolution was unsuccessful due to financial considerations, after a moderate backlash on the Executive.²⁵

But these changes did not herald a new type of Tramway Union. It remained the same in many respects. This was most evident in the relations between white and coloured workers in the union.²⁶

The other area of continuity was with regard to the Industrial Council system, which Emmerich earlier opposed. Despite his earlier emphasis on direct negotiation with management he quickly became lodged within the Industrial Council structures. And he later said that "much can be said for the usefulness of the Industrial Conciliation Act and much can be said against it."²⁷ He neglected to expand on this. It is unclear from the Union records exactly why there was this change from his earlier opposition to the Industrial Councils.

This was probably due to Emmerich's success as a negotiator on the Council, where he managed to win substantial increases for the membership. But the use of

24. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 7 June 1939.

25. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 July 1937; 14 September 1937.

26. This is dealt with in more detail on pages 151-160.

27. Emmerich, J "Twenty-one Years", pages 2-3.

this machinery led to an inability of the left to mould the union into a democratic structure. Despite the fact that Emmerich reported back on Industrial Council meetings, refused to make decisions without consulting the membership, or urged more regular and frequent depot meetings, the rank and file still did not play a more active role in the affairs of the union. The very structures of the Industrial Council system were designed, as Davies suggests, to exclude them and to restrict the active participation in the negotiating process to a union bureaucracy. Emmerich, whether he liked it or not, was now the leader of that bureaucracy.²⁸

Related to this, the structures of the union remained bureaucratized too. The fact that the shop stewards took second place to the generally elected officials meant, in effect, that rather than "being in constant touch with the rank and file" the union operated above the heads of the rank and file. The small increase in the number of shop stewards after Emmerich had been in office for a year was the limit of reforms in this area.²⁹ The structure of the union, as well as the structures for negotiations, left little room for collective action, or participation of the rank and file, besides the occasional depot meeting or general meeting.

Why did the Union continue to use these structures when it was not illegal to by-pass the legislative system completely and to use "direct negotiation"? Emmerich

28. Davies, R "The Class Character of South Africa's Industrial Conciliation Legislation", page 79.

29. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 January 1937.

probably found that he was not a "free agent", even though he now led the Union; the opposition of moderates on the Executive Committee was probably still a major barrier to change.

The challenge from the moderates

Throughout the period when the left was in control of the Tramway Union there was ideological opposition to them. The opposition ranged from former supporters of Stuart to Afrikaner Nationalists, some of them members of the Ossewa Brandwag, who were active in the Union from the late 1930s onwards.

The moderate opposition was at first the major problem. They continually opposed the political alliances that the union was beginning to make, for example when collaborating with the League Against Fascism and War, or the Friends of the Soviet Union. In fact, it was largely due to the efforts of this group that the Tramway Union was unable to send a representative to the Soviet Union to attend the 20th anniversary celebrations.³⁰ They also tried to create the impression with the rank and file that Emmerich was "wasteful". Soon after assuming office, Emmerich refused a travel allowance offered to him by the Executive because

he had been informed by various members that certain Committee members had supported the travelling allowance of the Secretary with an ulterior motive. These persons when questioned by rank and filists stated that they only supported it with the idea of making the Secretary expensive, and he was

30. The Friends of the Soviet Union had offered to pay half the cost of sending a Tramway Union delegate to the Soviet Union.

not prepared to accept anything that had been given in that way.³¹

A resolution arguing for a part-time Secretary put to a general meeting by this group in mid-1937 won only three votes out of 130.³²

The agitation of Stuart supporters against Emmerich began immediately after he came into office.³³ It came out into the open during the abortive wage negotiations at the end of 1936. The Tramway Company had been intransigent in considering a demand for increased wages, saying it was unable to grant an increase at that time, but if the Union came back in January 1937, it would reconsider.³⁴ Emmerich wanted to force the Company into an Agreement immediately, but Nesbitt argued that the Union

should wait about 2 months before approaching them, as summer would be in and wage negotiations are always more successful in summer than in winter time.³⁵

A midnight Meeting supported Emmerich:

this midnight meeting instructs the IC delegates to submit for an immediate increase of 15 % throughout the industry, and report back to a special general meeting ... as soon as possible, but not later than one month from now. Further, that a double levy be introduced immediately the present levy expires so as to build an emergency

31. Emmerich refused to divulge the names of his informants and this in itself caused much tension over the following weeks. (Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 22 July 1936).
32. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 20 May 1937.
33. For example, in June 1936, Jennings moved to abolish depot meetings, which Emmerich saw as the way to strengthen rank and file participation in Union affairs. The move was defeated as it was argued that depot meetings "were of great material assistance to the Organisation" (Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 17 June 1936).
34. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 16 September 1936.

fighting fund, and that the Executive Committee be instructed to give publicity to the men's grievances through the press, pamphlets and other means.³⁶

The resolution was carried unanimously. At this point Jennings, one of Stuart's supporters, claimed that if the vote was by ballot and not by a show of hands, a lot of members would have voted against the resolution. He said people were "afraid to vote the other way in public. He was rebutted by rank and file members.³⁷

The Executive Committee decided to put off action until the middle of October 1937, but to begin collecting a double levy in the meantime.³⁸ Jennings, as an IC delegate, attempted to get the 15 % demand dropped. He wanted rather to just accept that there would be an unspecified increase.³⁹ His motives were questioned by other Executive Committee members who wanted to know why he was having private conversations with the Tramway Company manager.

The wage negotiations, meanwhile, were leading to a dispute. The Tramway Company was given more time, until the middle of December, to state what their minimum increase would be, and the Tramway Union geared up for a strike.⁴⁰

At a sub-committee meeting on wages, Emmerich suggested "certain sanctions" or a "work to rule" instead of going on strike. First, the workers should refuse to work overtime;

35. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 16 September 1936.

36. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 19 September 1936. "The Case for the Men" was republished in *The South African Transport Worker*, December 1936.

37. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 19 September 1936.

38. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 25 September 1936.

39. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 17 October 1936.

40. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 2 December 1936.

second, they should comply with the Council's speed limits: 20 m.p.h. for buses and 7 m.p.h. in the city and 12 m.p.h. in the suburbs for trams; third, they should comply with the Company's own overloading regulations; fourth, the drivers should refuse to work for Charabancs Ltd. on their day off;⁴¹ and fifth, they should eventually refuse to collect fares if the other sanctions did not have their desired effect within a given time.⁴²

This suggestion was supported by a large proportion of the sub-committee. Emmerich and the Executive Committee, however, felt that the Union should wait for the next Industrial Council meeting at the end of January before action was taken, and attempt meanwhile to secure more public support.⁴³ At this stage, Jennings changed his position completely. He said the Union should rather demand an immediate increase and threaten sanctions if the Tramway Company did not comply:

This was the stage when we could fight, as the Company had become afraid of us and asked us to wait until January. They would give us an increase rather than lose revenue through the application of sanctions over Christmas. The Secretary had made a mistake just after the commencement of the negotiations - his policy was wrong (interjections).⁴⁴

This caused a consternation. Some Executive Committee members were "wondering why Bro. Jennings had become

41. Charabancs Limited was a company owned by Metropolitan Tramways which hired out buses and provided drivers, usually tramway drivers on their day off.

42. Tramway Union Sub-Committee (Wages) minutes 9 December 1936.

43. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 15 December 1936.

44. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 15 December 1936.

militant all of a sudden". Emmerich claimed that he wanted to fight, but not at this stage:

He wanted another election of officers to take place before the Union embarked on a fight; there was a split on the Executive Committee, and that reflected itself amongst the rank and file. He knew of three different points of view amongst the men on the wage question and he wanted to unite those factions so that we could go forward and fight unitedly.⁴⁵

Jennings then tried another tack - he issued a public leaflet, criticising the Executive Committee and arguing that the finances of the Tramway Union were particularly weak. In his defence, he said that "every time he rose at meetings to criticise, he was charged by Bro. Harris and others with being a supporter of Stuart's."⁴⁶ In addition to this

there were a few men on the Executive Committee doing the work and the rest followed like sheep; it appeared that the party system was creeping into the Executive Committee, which was not a very good thing.⁴⁷

Further, Jennings argued, there was outside interference which was influencing Union affairs. He said that "the outside influence he referred to in his pamphlet was men like Weinberg and others, who were continually visiting the Secretary in his office." A motion to suspend him from the Executive Committee was defeated by 10 votes to 3. But Jennings pushed things too far when he "rose and asked the members why they had not voted for his suspension,

45. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 15 December 1936.

46. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 21-31 December 1936.

47. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 21-31 December 1936.

contending that they were frightened of facing the rank and file at a general meeting." He refused to apologise when asked to do so, and a further motion to suspend him was passed:

The resolution was being put to the vote when Bro. Jennings rose and said he would withdraw the remark, but the Chairman ruled he was too late as nine members had voted in favour of the suspension.⁴⁸

One of Jennings' allies, Nobby Spiller, blamed Emmerich for the pamphlet: he said that Emmerich was an old culprit, and that he "had started the fashion in 1932".⁴⁹ At the Annual General Meeting, facing a vote of censure, Jennings launched into Emmerich and the agreement:

Bro. Jennings attempted to justify his action in issuing the pamphlet by stating that he had not got a square deal on the Executive. In a lengthy speech he criticised the policy of the present Secretary and stated that there was a clique in operation which supported the Secretary in everything he did and would not accept any suggestions from himself. He felt that they ought to have got that increase in wages a long time ago and that we had a big fight ahead of us at the end of the Agreement ... He also considered that we were wrong in sending forward a demand for a 15 % increase; we should have left the matter entirely in the hands of the employers to come forward with whatever they were prepared to offer.⁵⁰

The ambiguity of Jennings' position points towards an attempt to create dissension rather than develop a consistent position. He decided to stand against Emmerich as Secretary in the 1937 elections.

48. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 21-31 December 1936.

49. Tramway Union Annual General Meeting minutes 13 January 1932.

50. Tramway Union Annual General Meeting minutes 13 January 1932.

In April 1937, the CFLU leadership, still controlled by Stuart and his followers, attempted to get Jennings appointed as an Organiser for the General Workers' Union which was being formed. The Tramway Union representatives lodged objections to the appointment as Jennings "had not been an honest trades unionist in so far as he had been responsible for a number of under-hand tricks while a member of the Tramway Union". The Executive Committee endorsed this objection and Jennings was not considered for the position.⁵¹

A month later another Stuart supporter, Boyd, jumped into the fray, and attacked Emmerich for assisting the Port Elizabeth union. Emmerich had gone to Port Elizabeth for a conference and he had stayed behind for a few days to help organise the shedmen. At a General Meeting, Boyd argued that he had spent an "exorbitant" amount of money on his trip, and that a General Meeting had made a decision not to help the Port Elizabeth union in any way:

After a lengthy speech in which the most disgusting language was used, he moved:- "that the office of full-time Secretary and Industrial Agent be abolished and that a part time Secretary be appointed who would also act as an Industrial Council Agent. Further, he moved a vote of no-confidence in the full Executive Committee."

The motion was defeated by 120 votes to three.⁵² The morning meeting wanted to expel Boyd from the Union, but Emmerich intervened and asked the meeting to leave the matter in the hands of the Executive Committee.⁵³

51. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 21 April 1937.
52. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 20 May 1937.
53. Tramway Union General Meeting 21 May 1937.

In 1939, the anti-Emmerich faction again went on the offensive when Boyd accused him of attempting to steal £ 900, by persuading the Cape Town Union to loan the Johannesburg Union £ 1 000 when it only needed £ 100, and pocketing the rest himself. It was ascertained that Boyd was in constant contact with Bob Stuart who was suspected of being behind the initiative.⁵⁴

In 1940 Boyd accused Emmerich of "messing up" the finances of the union, whereas, he argued, when Stuart was Secretary the finances were in good shape. Emmerich responded by showing how in fact the union was much better off financially than it had been before 1936. Boyd was forced to apologise, but managed to score a victory at the same time. Many of the members had become disenchanted with *The Guardian* as a result of its pro-Soviet position on the Finnish crisis, and Boyd managed to persuade a majority of Executive members to sever all connections with the newspaper.⁵⁵ Then Stuart was nominated for the position of Secretary in February but his nomination was rejected by the Executive.⁵⁶

Afrikaner Nationalists and the Tramway Union

From the late 1930s onwards a small group of far right Afrikaner Nationalists started having an unsettling effect

54. Boyd was a member of the Tramway Union Executive Committee on and off from the early 1930s till the mid 1940s. He was probably the most obstructionist individual in the Union during this period. His negative approach led to his suspension on one occasion and disciplining on a number of occasions.

55. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 2 February 1940.

56. Tramway Union Annual General Meeting minutes 21 February 1940.

on the union. Although they never made any attempt to gain control of the Union - none even stood for Executive positions in the annual elections - they were able to disrupt Union activity far beyond the proportion of their numbers, an estimated 5 % of the membership.

Dan O'Meara has shown how the attempts to gain control of trade unions, particularly in the railways, mining, building, iron and steel, clothing and leather industries on the Witwatersrand, was part of a strategy by Afrikaner petty-bourgeois groups in the 1930s, particularly members of the Afrikaner Broederbond.⁵⁷ Through a "Christian-national" form of labour organisation, they wished to "free our fellow members of the Volk from the exclusively materialistic labour organisation under foreign control, and to bring our people into an economic-cultural organisation which makes provision for economic and spiritual needs."⁵⁸ As O'Meara writes elsewhere, Afrikaners as a group were "wracked by severe class divisions", and the petty-bourgeoisie hoped to blur class issues and rally the Afrikaner working class on an ethnic basis to assist the petty-bourgeoisie in their struggle for economic and political power.⁵⁹ This necessitated the "active combating of any notion of class struggle", stressing rather the common interests of capital and labour, and a sustained attempt to gain control of existing trade unions.⁶⁰

57. O'Meara, D. *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948*, Ravan, Cape Town, 1983, page 83.

58. A. N. Pelzer, quoted in O'Meara, D *Class, Capital and Ideology*, page 78.

59. O'Meara, D "The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927-1948: class vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 4, 1977-78, page 176.

60. O'Meara, D *Class, Capital and Ideology*, 1983, page 78.

In the Transvaal, the Christian-nationalists attacked the Mine Workers' Union and the Garment Workers' Union, actually taking over the former. They also gained control of Spoorbond, the railways union. But these were their only successes.⁶¹ The records show that the Afrikaner nationalists caused only small ripples in the ranks of the Tramway Union.

As early as mid-1937, Jimmie Emmerich reported that he had been informed that Albert Hertzog, the "champion of racial trade unions" was planning to move in on Cape Town. The plan was to take over existing unions by disruptions, and his first target in Cape Town was to be the Tramway Union, probably because of its "radical" image. The immediate response of the leadership was to attempt to persuade the Industrial Council to establish a "closed shop" in the industry.⁶²

Emmerich began to take the issue seriously. He wrote a long article, "Politics and the Trade Union Movement", published in the *Guardian*, which dealt at length with the question of Afrikaner Nationalism. He argued that "the cultural aspirations of the Afrikaner people must be developed". He suggested also that while "they must be assisted in their struggle for freedom, because their struggle is the struggle of people the world over", Afrikaner workers should nevertheless be persuaded that "the only movement that can satisfy their anti-imperialist aspirations is the labour movement."⁶³

61. O'Meara, *D Class, Capital and Ideology*, 1983, page 95.

62. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 16 June 1937.

63. *The Guardian* 24 September 1937.

But Hertzog's intended challenge to Cape Town failed to materialise. There were only sporadic incidents in the next few years. In 1939 a Union member, Retief, circulated National Party petitions in support of "segregation". But when asked whether he objected to "non-European" members in the Tramway Union, his reply was decidedly pragmatic:

Bro. Retief replied that he knew he would be cutting his own throat if he demanded that the Union should not take in non-European members. He, however, took exception to the remarks of Bro. Weir, to the effect that the European and non-European workers of South Africa must be prepared to stand together in their places of employment in factories and demand equal pay.⁶⁴

No action was taken against Retief.⁶⁵

In the middle of 1940, a Union member, Wolfaardt, was reported to have caused a political clash at the Southern Transport Company depot.⁶⁶ Wolfaardt declared to the men in his depot: "France has fallen, the downfall of England is only a matter of a few weeks and then Hitler will triumph in South Africa" They now refused to work with him and demanded his internment. Despite the intervention of Emmerich and the chairman who tried to defuse the situation, a depot meeting at Southern Transport recommended his expulsion. The Executive issued a leaflet warning that any action taken before a general meeting would be unconstitutional and would be dealt with harshly.

The Executive were concerned about the possibility of a split in the union. As Murray pointed out, "there were a number of men in other depots who had said far worse things

64. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 8 March 1939.

65. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 15 March 1939.

66. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 17 May 1940.

than Bro. Wolfaardt". And Emmerich tried to play down the issue by suggesting that Wolfaardt "was more ignorant than deliberate in his statements". More importantly the Union feared a legal suit. It had just unsuccessfully defended an action where workers had secured the dismissal of an inspector by refusing to work with him. The resulting law suit had been very costly, and had hit the Union hard financially. The Executive Committee embarked on delaying tactics and managed to persuade Wolfaardt to apologise. It was decided to give him a second chance.⁶⁷

A month later the Union was forced to declare its policy on the war.⁶⁸ A resolution supporting the South African government entirely in the war effort was put to a midnight meeting and was carried by 800 votes to 15. The workers decided to fight Nazism in South Africa and overseas, and demanded the internment of Nazi sympathisers who publicly supported the aims of Hitler.⁶⁹ At the same time right-wing actions were starting in earnest. Almost every Executive Committee meeting from August 1940 for over a year afterwards had to deal with issues connected to the right-wing threat. Complaints about statements made by the right-wingers began to pour in to the office: there were reported to be many petitions going around, and one member was heard to say that he hoped "that the boats carrying the children from England to South Africa (are) torpedoed."⁷⁰

Much of the activity, however, was of a passive nature: some

67. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 24 July 1940.

68. For a more detailed discussion on the reasons for the declaration, see section on "Tramway workers and the war" below.

69. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 10 August 1940.

70. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 4 September 1940.

drivers refused to stop their buses (or to stop playing billiards) for the noon pause.⁷¹ Another demanded that child passengers address him in Afrikaans.⁷²

Emmerich received a letter threatening his life if the Union took action against the "Nazi element". He was immediately ordered by the Executive to buy a bullet-proof vest and a revolver. (Emmerich later reported that the bullet-proof vests at Woolworths proved unsuitable.)

When another member, Bezuidenhout, began to recruit for the Ossewa Brandwag within the Union, the Executive Committee took fright. After first arguing that while they had no right to interfere with the political views of members, they agreed that Nazism posed a threat to the Union movement as a whole and that they should take action. The legal adviser was called in and asked if the Tramway Union could legally take steps against Ossewa Brandwag members or "causers of dissension". He argued that the Union could legally take whatever action it saw fit because the war context made it very unlikely that any court would interfere with actions in line with the constitution.⁷³

A few months later, a midnight meeting was called to deal with the disciplinary cases of six members. Emmerich cautioned restraint. He suggested that the meeting consider the "general question as a whole", rather than focussing on the individuals involved. He did not want to expel them because of the effect of unemployment on their families. The meeting decided that Ossewa Brandwag members should resign

71. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 August 1940; 18 September 1940.

72. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 14 April 1940.

73. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 25 September 1940.

from that organisation within 7 days or face expulsion.⁷⁴ No one resigned however, and the Executive extended the deadline by two weeks, probably in the hope that the Nazi sympathisers would leave quietly.⁷⁵ Again nothing happened until Bezuidenhout was overheard to say that the Executive was "only bluffing" and that they could do nothing.⁷⁶

When summoned to meet the Executive, Bezuidenhout succeeded in causing one of the most tumultuous meetings of the year. He accused the Chairman, Viveiros, of siding with him and implied that there was a secret alliance between Viveiros and the Ossewa Brandwag. Eventually it was decided to suspend Bezuidenhout until the next general meeting, not for his membership of the Ossewa Brandwag, it was stressed, but for causing friction.⁷⁷ The Executive decided to take action, even though it would probably lead to legal action. But once again the matter was dropped; the next general meeting decided not to uphold the suspension, and the issue was shelved.⁷⁸

This was the last mention of Afrikaner Nationalism in the Tramway Union records. It was not mentioned again in Executive meetings. The Nazi sympathisers presumably were quietened by this episode. The Union Executive had trodden very lightly during the whole affair. The general feeling was that the issue of Afrikaner Nationalism was too big for the Union itself to deal with, and that it should be handed

74. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 26 October 1940.

75. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 4 November 1940.

76. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 3 December 1940.

77. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 11 December 1940.

78. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 21 January 1941.

over to the Government. So, in the long run, no action was taken against the Nationalists. The leadership was successful in allowing the tensions to trickle away.

The Bezuidenhout issue brought major tensions in the Executive onto the surface. It was determined that Viveiros, the Chairman, if not pro-Nazi then certainly was not anti-Nazi. Tensions erupted between Viveiros and Emmerich, with the result that Viveiros was suspended from the Executive.⁷⁹ An alliance between Viveiros and the moderate opposition to Emmerich, led by Boyd, developed. They circulated a malicious rumour around Johannesburg that Emmerich was in prison after being convicted of stealing £ 2 000 from the Tramway Union. However, Emmerich, despite opposition from some executive members, was made Secretary of the Cape Federation after Stuart resigned. In the next Tramway Union Executive election, both Viveiros and Emmerich were returned to their respective positions. But Emmerich's support had decreased, and he polled just less than 50% of the votes cast.⁸⁰

Tramway workers and the war - race and gender

The conservative character of the rank and file was certainly a major problem faced by the leadership. Their experience of trade unionism was the paternalism of Bob Stuart, who contrived to exclude them from decision-making. And their reasons for rejecting Stuart in favour of Emmerich was not so much a feeling of lack of control over their

79. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 22 January 1941.

80. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 August 1941.

trade union as a dissatisfaction with the concrete results of Stuart's leadership. The tramway workers were a relatively privileged "aristocracy", notwithstanding their low wages compared to those in other centres. They struggled to retain their positions of privilege, sometimes in conflict with the "official" line of the union leadership.⁸¹

The traffic men employed by the Tramway Company were white, and one of their sectional concerns was the possibility of undercutting by coloured labour. So while the union leadership asserted a non-racial position, a number of petitions were received from white traffic men which expressed concern about the attempts by the Company to employ coloured labour on certain routes. The participation of Coloured workers in Union matters did increase slightly after Emmerich became Secretary - Ray Alexander remembers that "before Jimmie (Emmerich) came on you couldn't see a Coloured worker at a meeting"⁸² - but the leadership tried not to rock the boat. They acquiesced in practice to racial discrimination, as this extract from the Executive minutes demonstrates:

Bro. Greenfield reported that there was a certain amount of agitation amongst the men who were claiming that the Company was employing some non-Europeans as drivers and conductors. The Secretary pointed out that he, personally was not concerned with whether the Company employed Europeans or non-Europeans, as long as the men were of decent appearance and there was no attempt to undercut wages and reduce conditions in the industry. Bro. Nesbitt drew attention to the fact that it was the policy of the Company to employ Europeans as drivers and conductors, and agreement had been reached years ago that only men who had a European appearance would be employed. He felt that

81. This can be seen clearly below in the discussion on coloureds, women and the war.

the Company⁸³ should be reminded of this undertaking.

This issue often surfaced but it was the war which forced the union to confront it head-on. When about 250 tramway workers signed up during the war, the Tramway Company was faced with a major (white male) labour shortage. The union was given two choices: to agree to the temporary employment of either women or coloureds, both of which were perceived as a potential undercutting threat. The first decision of the rank and file was to refuse to consider either possibilities. But the Company returned with an ultimatum - to make a decision between the two or the management would decide. Eventually, after much deliberation, the workers made their choice. They agreed that white women could be employed only as a temporary measure, and on condition that this was restricted to members of their families only. Emmerich wrote in the Secretary's Annual Report:

In the event of women being required, we would only consent to the training of wives and very near relations of tramwaymen, who we felt would not permit themselves to be used against the interests of the organisation.⁸⁴

In addition to this, the Company placed advertisements for men over 45 years of age or exempt from military service in order to stop the continual flow into the army in the event of military conscription.

82. Interview with Ray Alexander, 9 April 1991.

83. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 12 January 1938; see also Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 3 June 1936.

84. Secretary's Annual Report for 1939, published in *The South African Transport Worker*, February 1940.

These decisions created tensions in the union. One of the Executive stalwarts, Bro. King, was a coloured worker who had represented the sheds for nearly ten years, and he objected strongly to the decision not to allow coloured workers onto the buses. King's objections were supported by the National Liberation League which continually pressed the union to allow coloured traffic men on coloured routes, but to no avail.⁸⁵

Unfortunately for the white traffic men, this "family labour" solution to the labour shortage was insufficient to satisfy the needs of the Tramway Company, and the latter placed the ball firmly back in the Union's court. In June 1940, with the white labour shortage still a problem the union was forced to confront it again. But this time there were three alternatives open to the Union: first, to accept those white men who did not want to join the army; second, to widen the scope of the employment of women and employ non-family members; and third, to accede to the demands of the shed men and the National Liberation League, and to employ coloureds on traffic.

As Emmerich reported it, all three alternatives were problematic. The first was a problem if the men refused to fight because of their political convictions. The less problematic ones held that it was Great Britain's war, not South Africa's. But

other persons...were adopting a definite Nazi complex and were welcoming the victory by Hitler and Nazism in this war. People who held that view must be strenuously opposed by Trade Unions and Trade Unionists and must not be allowed to enter the movement.

85. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 1 April 1941.

The problem with employing more women was that the routes on which they could work were limited, and that rest-room accommodation was a problem. The third possibility, that of employing coloureds on traffic, now needed serious consideration, argued Emmerich, and the Union might need to consider a combination of all three alternatives.⁸⁶ The Union clearly did not see the problem in as urgent a light as the Company did. Possibly this was because of the added strength that a labour shortage gave the workers. The Company, desperately trying to reduce the outflow into the armed forces, resorted to outright lies. Management informed the Union Executive that "the Tramway Men were now required to remain at their positions in case of internal trouble and were not wanted at the Front for that reason." In addition, because "the Union had not yet declared its War Policy, the Military Authorities were stating that they were not prepared to accept Tramway Men, even if they managed to get away, owing to suspicions on Tramway Men who joined the army."⁸⁷

A Tramway Union deputation then met a joint deputation from the army and the Departments of Labour and the Interior, who assured them that there was no suspicion of Tramwaymen at all and that the government wanted "as many men as possible in khaki, particularly transport men and that the Government was taking care of the internal situation." The deputation also raised the question of equal pay for "non-European" servicemen, and were promised that

86. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 26 June 1940.

87. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 30 July 1940.

the government representatives "would discuss the matter of equal treatment with their colleagues".⁸⁸

The coloured shed men were not passive in their bid for employment on the traffic staff. In August 1940 they drew up a petition in which they asked the Union to give preference to those Union members in other departments. The petition argued that these workers who helped to build the Union up never hesitated to sacrifice for the cause of the workers:

Many members of the traffic staff have, with typical working class courage, volunteered, but...we regret... to say that amongst the new men who are now being engaged to replace those that have gone are to be found supporters of Nazism, hostile to the working-class movement and to the traditions of trade unionism... We feel sure that the Union will not be unworthy of its traditions and the interests of the workers by allowing the fact that we are Non-Europeans to stand in the way of our replacing our absent brothers.⁸⁹

Despite attempts by the two coloured Executive members, Bros. King and Gideon, to bring the matter up for discussion at a general meeting, the majority of the Executive voted to leave the matter "in abeyance". Gideon, with the help of the National Liberation League, then took the petition to *The Guardian* which published it in full under the headline "Nazis in the Tramway Union".⁹⁰ Eventually the matter was raised at a rowdy midnight meeting which had been called to deal with individual Nazi sympathisers in Union ranks. Discussion on the matter didn't get very far, however. After the petition was read out by the Chairman, "order

88. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 8 August 1940.

89. *The Guardian* 15 August 1940.

90. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 21 August 1940.

predominated at the meeting" and it was closed.⁹¹ The matter was left in abeyance.

When the Company wanted to employ women conductors on certain branch lines in early 1941, Emmerich opposed it as he was not satisfied that the source of white male labour had been exhausted. The response of King and Gideon was that coloured labour should be employed. Their arguments, especially King's were hardly militant or radical. Gideon argued that no new workers, male or female, should be employed before the claims of Coloured shedmen were satisfied, but King accepted the dominance of white workers in the Union. He claimed that "the Coloured man was not responsible for his own existence and the white man was and he should look after him properly and not prevent him from progressing." This servile approach had no success. The Executive again ruled that "the question of employment of non-Europeans be left out of the discussions".⁹²

The Executive's response to Gideon and King's repeated requests exposed the attitude of the majority of white workers towards their coloured colleagues. Coloured workers were not regarded as having an equal status even though, Bro. Henry pointed out, he as a shedmen had had to teach white workers how to drive.⁹³ Gideon roundly criticised the leadership given by the Executive Committee.⁹⁴

When the issue was raised at a general meeting, Boyd argued that coloureds should join the army "instead of clamouring for the jobs of those who had joined"; in the

91. Tramway Union Midnight Meeting minutes 26 October 1940.

92. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 1 April 1941.

93. Tramway Union Special General Meeting minutes 27 May 1941.

94. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 28 May 1941.

event of a shortage, he felt, women should be employed. And after Murray stated that there would be a split amongst the whites if coloureds were allowed on the traffic staff, it was decided to hold separate ballots on the issues of employment of women and coloureds. The Executive decided that the ballot would be restricted to the workers in the Cape Town tramway companies.⁹⁵

This restriction had the effect of increasing the proportion of whites to coloureds who were eligible to vote. The smaller companies independent of the Tramway Company had, since the days of the bus war, employed a larger proportion of coloured labour, some of it on their traffic staffs. Once again, the union membership rejected the employment of either women or coloureds.⁹⁶ As a response to the agitation by Coloured workers for employment on the traffic staff, two petitions were handed in by groups of white traffic men opposing coloureds being on the traffic staff.

But finally, pressure from the Company forced the Union membership to submit. In July 1941 a midnight meeting agreed that women could be employed on certain routes, subject to seven conditions laid down by the Union. These included: that the employment was temporary, lasting for the duration of the war or until (white) male labour was available; that women conductors be paid as per the Industrial Agreement; that the Company institute a Cost of Living Allowance; that the allowance be payable to those on or leaving for active

95. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 & 28 May 1941.

96. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 9 July 1941.

service; and that preference be given to the family of Tramway workers.⁹⁷

So the attempt by Coloured Union members to rid the Tramway Union of its own "colour bar" had failed. In fact, a significant group of white workers tried to push the coloured shedworkers back even further. Shedmen often knew how to drive buses, and part of the job of some of them was to change buses on the road. For this, of course, they were paid shedworkers' wages. But now petitions went round calling for this activity to cease.

In early November 1941, the M & K Bus Service, employing mainly Coloured labour, was absorbed by the Tramway Company. A meeting was called to discuss the implications after "a number of members of the Union were complaining against the Non-Europeans in that service being taken over."⁹⁸ And on top of this, Bro. Gideon, the hardest fighter for racial equality within the Union, left the industry at the end of 1941, claiming that he was framed by Boyd and another Executive Committee member, Steede. He was accused of taking Union business outside the organisation, allegedly giving information to a journalist about the petitions organised by the white workers.⁹⁹

Women were less of a threat to the long-term security of the white traffic men than coloured members of their own union. They probably recognised that it was easier to get women out of those positions when the situation returned to normal. The actions of the white workers, as a privileged

97. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 12 July 1941.

98. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 7 November 1941.

99. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 17 October 1941 & 29 October 1941.

stratum in the industry and dominant (politically and numerically) within the Union, in making this choice are not surprising. But their actions were symptomatic of a conservative group of white workers, not highly skilled but highly privileged, who are more concerned to further their own interests as a privileged stratum rather than the interests of the working class as a whole.

Certainly this generalisation cannot be applied to Jimmie Emmerich himself. He had, it seems, a proven track-record when it came to non-racialism. Mrs Z Gool, speaking in his support during his parliamentary election campaign, said:

He is a man who has already proved his worth to non-Europeans. He was not afraid to come out on the streets in protest against Italy's action in attacking Abyssinia. He took a leading part in a meeting of protest on the Parade. When the Native Representatives Bill was passed he spoke strongly, and courageously opposed it at public meetings.¹⁰⁰

But this particular issue shows how Emmerich was unable to assert this non-racialism, and was forced to bow to the racist interests of the dominant grouping within the union. The interests of the white traffic workers were too well entrenched to allow a serious challenge from any quarter.¹⁰¹

100. *The Guardian* 8 August 1938.

101. Interestingly, the London Busworkers faced the same decisions during World War I, and responded in a similar way, although clearly the racial tensions were not as great. See Fuller, *K Radical Aristocrats*, pages 40-45.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE END OF EMMERICH 1942-1945

The fall of the left in the Tramway Union began around 1942. Because the left were so highly dependent on one man, Jimmie Emmerich, their loss of control and the fall from grace of Emmerich are almost synonymous. Emmerich, after Nesbitt's death in late 1940, lost his only long-term close support on the Executive Committee, especially in areas where he was particularly weak, such as that of finance. And the result was the return to dominance of the moderate element within the union, a dominance that remained unchallenged until the mid 1980s when busdrivers politicised in community politics tried to defeat the entrenched bureaucratic leadership.¹

The pressure from the moderate element never really let up during the war years. In the 1941 Executive elections they signalled the start of a new, more determined and confident challenge to his leadership. But it was Emmerich himself who contributed most to his downfall. By 1942 he was showing signs of being unable to cope with the pressure. It also came to light that he had a drinking problem and was involved in various financial malpractices.

In February 1942 he was unable to present minutes, reports or memoranda, "due to the pressure of the recent negotiations". Though "disappointment was expressed", the Executive allowed the matter to drop.² A few months later,

1. See Giffard, C "Transport and General Workers' Union Organises Western Cape Busdrivers" in *South African Labour Bulletin* Volume 13 no 2, February 1988.
2. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 4 February 1942

the Treasurer, Bro. Rogers, charged Emmerich with receiving a sum of £25 on behalf of the Union, spending it, and when found out, saying it could be deducted from his salary. He was also criticised for not being in his office enough. But his reasons were accepted.³ A few days later he again took Union money, this time, he said, "to help Mrs Stevens", the Union typist. When, two weeks later, it was found that Emmerich had not in fact given any money to Mrs Stevens, the Executive was plunged into a crisis. Emmerich "admitted that he had not played the game, and that he was bad".⁴

The Executive Committee was split over how to deal with the issue. A few members felt that drastic action should be avoided, because he had told the truth or only 'white lies'. Others felt that stronger action was necessary: Boyd said things "had gone so far that the men in bars talk about the Secretary's action, and that we must take this matter in the hands of the rank and file." Eventually a lenient stand was taken. The Executive decided not to take the issue to a General Meeting, but warned that the next time Emmerich tampered with Union finances he would be suspended. Emmerich responded with humility:

The Secretary stated that he appreciated the fact that the Executive looked leniently upon his sins, and he gave the assurance that a new life is dawning for him, and that he now pass a resolution that he will never touch liquor again. 'So help me God'. (sic)⁵

While some of Emmerich's colleagues tried to support him, there was little that they could do because Emmerich's drinking habits continued and he also started running up

3. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 27 May 1942.

4. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 24 June 1942.

5. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 24 June 1942.

debts from some of the Union members. The Executive had decided that Emmerich must repay the amount owing (about £ 10) that month,⁶ but he was unable to make good his promise. He could not stop drinking and his debt problems increased. He had to apply to the Executive for pay in lieu of leave, to help him settle his debts. Even this amount was insufficient to settle them in full, and it was decided to make deductions from his salary to make up the difference.⁷

A nagging illness first diagnosed in 1937 also seemed to be affecting Emmerich. It is not clear if this was related to his drinking. He gained a lot of weight. The problems continued to compound. He allegedly solicited a bribe from an independent bus service owner who wanted support on the Industrial Council to gain an exemption from minimum wage rates. His defence was not very convincing. Pienaar, an old-time Executive Committee member, reported to a Special Executive meeting that he and Emmerich had been seeing Mouton, the independent bus owner, when Emmerich had asked him (Pienaar) to leave the room for a few minutes:

Mr Mouton had since informed him that when he left the room, the Secretary had said to Mouton that he would see him right with these exemptions if he gave him £ 50.⁸

Emmerich argued that Mouton was lying, and claimed that he had asked Mouton

if a proper agreement was drawn up through an attorney whether he would loan him the

6. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 24 June 1942.
7. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 8 July 1942.
8. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 28 July 1942.

sum of £ 50 which he would repay with interest.⁹

Even if this claim by Emmerich was true, it would have been highly irregular for a Union secretary to borrow money from an employer of his members. Not surprisingly, the majority of the Executive didn't believe him. He was placed on probation for six months:

It was ... decided that the Secretary must adhere to the office hours as decided by the Committee and if he was not in the office at the times stipulated, but was away on other business, the typist must be acquainted with his whereabouts, so as to be able to either get in touch with him, or put members in touch with him. Further that the Secretary should not enter public houses during office hours."¹⁰

It was now that the moderate grouping climbed in to make capital out of the situation. Boyd collected lists of Union members to whom Emmerich owed money, and handed them in to the Executive. It was brought to the attention of the Executive that Emmerich had borrowed £ 154 from the Union attorney. By this time, Emmerich also owed money to a tramway worker who had fixed his car, and it was therefore "on his suggestion that Mr Schaeffer (the lawyer) had issued an attachment (order) on his car in order to prevent some other creditor who was hostile and pressing him from attaching." The part-time mechanic was advised by the Executive Committee to file a claim at Wynberg Court.¹¹

Finally in September, Emmerich again arrived at a meeting drunk, and it was found that he had

9. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 28 July 1942.
10. Tramway Union Special Executive Committee minutes 28 July 1942.
11. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 11 August 1942.

"misappropriated" another £ 3 of Union funds. This time the Executive members reluctantly suspended him. One member stated

that he was not here to defend Bro. Emmerich, and that it was known that he could have been the 'uncrowned King of Labour' today, but through his own weakness, he was lost, and is now standing the consequences.¹²

Another offered to stand security for Emmerich, saying that "the Union would lose a great man, and that he was worth a lot more than £ 3".

But Emmerich had virtually thrown overboard his own union ambitions:

The Secretary then explained his case, and said that unless the Union was prepared to grant him a sum of money of about £300, it was useless for him to carry on with his duties as he would carry on the same as he was doing now, by having to drown his sorrows in drink. The Committee must not suspend him, they must sack him. He told the Executive he was not pleading for mercy.¹³

Rogers of the moderate opposition was appointed Acting Secretary in Emmerich's place. The episode opened the way for Boyd in his endeavours to reduce the importance of the position of Secretary. He narrowly failed to pass a resolution reducing the appointment to a part-time one and succeeded in reducing the salary to £ 30 per month.

The Executive decided to write off the amount owed by Emmerich. After his suspension, he joined the army. It is unclear in what capacity. By this time he was probably physically unfit for active military service. Emmerich's

12. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 2 September 1942.

13. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 2 September 1942.

skills were sorely missed and the Union failed to settle its leadership problems. Rogers did not acquit himself particularly well in his new post and he was accused of being "nothing but a passenger and a rubber stamp".¹⁴ The unity that had existed on the Executive fell apart. The Tramway Company Manager commented: "I have heard and received a lot of reports. Executive members are getting out of hand and are not able to control the men."¹⁵

One of the leftists who had worked with Emmerich on the Executive in the past, Russouw, took the opportunity to issue a leaflet signed by 14 others which criticised the Executive for incompetence. It was directed mainly at the Chairman, Bro. Viveiros, and his supporters. And when elections for the Executive came up in June 1943, Emmerich's name was once again put forward. A Special General Meeting decided not to accept his nomination, but a petition signed by 243 members demanded a ballot on the matter.¹⁶ The result of the ballot was in favour of Emmerich's nomination being accepted. In the ensuing election in August 1943, he was again elected Secretary of the Union. A resolution was passed

that the Acting Secretary carry on and inform Mr Emmerich that he has been elected Secretary of this Union and that by a resolution of a General Meeting held on the 11th November, 1942, the salary laid down is £ 30, plus cost of living allowance. The Secretary must also be informed that a monthly card would be issued to him to enable him to travel to and from work.¹⁷

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14. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 26 May 1943.
 15. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 21 June 1943
 16. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 7 July 1943.
 17. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 18 August 1943.

Emmerich's re-election may have seemed strange after his recent escapades, but it was a sign of the loyalty his years of work had instilled in the members. Faced with a Union that seemed to be falling apart, the membership apparently voted for the one person who had held it together in the past, and had seen that their economic interests were furthered.

On Emmerich's return, the Union decided not to hold any further elections for Secretary - the position would in future be an appointed one.¹⁸ The constitution was altered accordingly. Emmerich was back in the driving seat. And although he was re-employed at a reduced salary, it was increased by £ 10 after only two months. However he failed to regain his enthusiasm or take advantage of his reprieve. During the first few months of his second term nothing of consequence occurred, and then the tell-tale signs again began to emerge in May 1944. Emmerich was again granted pay in lieu of leave and an invoice for £ 13 from a liquor store which arrived at the Union offices turned out to be a private order from Emmerich.

The debilitating squabbles recommenced. Emmerich tried to defend himself and his supporters accused members of the Executive of framing him.¹⁹ The Chairman, James Thorburn, took "strong exception" to remarks that he was after Emmerich's job:

He had been a friend of the Secretary since 1927 and in his present position with the Sports and Billiards Club, he was earning more than the Secretary, and being Scotch (sic), what he earned mattered to him more than anything else. He objected to Mrs

18. Tramway Union General Meeting minutes 7 October 1943.

Emmerich stating to four different people that he was maneuvering for the Secretary's job by taking him out and filling him up with liquor, and then bringing him home in a state of intoxication, while the Chairman himself remained sober.²⁰

Ray Alexander backs up this story told by Emmerich's wife. She remembers that a man called Bester, who had worked with Bob Stuart, "had organised a thing against Jimmie. They took him out to the bar on a Friday evening for a drink. Now Jimmie had stopped drinking. They took him out on the excuse that a few workers are having problems, he must come to them ... so they take him away there and they make him drunk, and ... they took him to a prostitute ... and they took a picture of him with a prostitute, he had his arms around her. They brought him in a drunken state on the Saturday morning, 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning with the photos to Tilly (his wife), whereupon Tilly wanted to chuck him out."²¹

Further complaints ensued and again Emmerich took money from the Union safe and did not pay it back when he said he would. The Executive again wanted to suspend him. Instead Emmerich asked to be allowed to resign. Even so a handful of members of the Executive Committee still tried to keep him in his position. They proposed that the resignation be effective as from the end of the year, "but if he pulled up his socks, the matter be reviewed."²² But the Executive had had enough. They decided to accept his three months notice,

19. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 30 August 1944.

20. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 13 September 1944.

21. Interview with Ray Alexander, 9 April 1991.

22. Tramway Union Executive Committee minutes 8 November 1944.

release him immediately and pay him the three months salary.

It was the end of the Jimmie Emmerich era.

CONCLUSION

The Tramway Union was unique among trade unions in Cape Town. Not only was it one of the oldest trade unions in South Africa, it was also one of the most powerful and progressive components of the umbrella CFLU, therefore providing an ideal focus for an organisational history of the working class experience in Cape Town.

Based largely on official minutes, this study provides hitherto unknown details about the inner dynamics of the Tramway Union. It shows that the Union was not typical of registered unions at the time, and it provides support for Nicol's contention that labour struggles and organisation in the Western Cape (and therefor in other regions too) differed in important respects from those on the Witwatersrand and need to be located within their particular context if they are to be properly understood. For too long the pivotal experience of the industrial heart of South Africa has been projected onto other areas of the country. This study, therefore, confirms the paucity of research on South Africa's early labour history and emphasises the need to take into account regional and other specificities when dealing with the history of working class struggles in South Africa.

The study also reveals that the history of the Tramway Union in the period under review largely revolved around dominant personalities - Robert Stuart and Jimmie Emmerich - who represented different approaches to trade unionism. It contributes important details on the approach, actions and

character of Stuart, perhaps the most important trade union leader in Cape Town for several decades.

The dissertation also provides a case study of how the CPSA-initiated AFTU tried to infiltrate the broad trade union movement and steer it in a more radical direction. However, we see that the radical agenda remained largely unfulfilled and that in fact the Tramway Union (and others) became conservative and bureaucratic structures which failed to become engines of change, economically and politically.

To recap then, the Tramway Union under study was formed in September 1918, more than 50 years after the first tram companies were established and 20 years after the electrification of the tramway system. Tramway workers were for many years too vulnerable to organise openly. It was only when the umbrella Cape Federation was started in 1913 that conditions became ripe for the organisation of a Tramway Union that stood a chance of survival.

Bob Stuart was involved in the formation of the Union in 1918, insisting that the Union should widen its base by organising not only the "aristocratic" traffic men, but also the shed workers, road workers and others in the industry. Stuart was regarded by employers at this time as a trouble-maker who should not be recognised. Because the Tramway Company refused to deal with Stuart or the Union, Stuart at times supported strikes as a "necessary evil". This was to change in later years, resulting in opposition to his leadership from the mid-1920s to his dismissal as Secretary in 1935.

The change in approach to trade unionism on the part of Stuart and the Union was caused largely by the introduction

of the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1924. This Act provided the framework for capital-labour negotiations and effectively undermined rank and file participation in Union affairs by concentrating power in the hands of Union bureaucrats. Stuart used the Industrial Councils provided for in the Act, in the many industries in which he operated, in order to entrench his own position in the leadership. But it was not easy going. It took Stuart some years to persuade the Tramway Company management of the usefulness of the legislation. Once he had done so the management showed its appreciation by coming to Stuart's aid, and at one stage attempting to fire those workers who opposed him.

Opposition to Stuart's leadership from the mid 1920s onwards is evident in the records. He was replaced as Secretary for a brief period in the late 1920s, but it was only in the early 1930s that the opposition took any organised form. In 1931 the African Federation of Trade Unions, the trade union wing of the CPSA, decided to concentrate its organising efforts on the Tramway Union, because it was a strategic sector and because of the perceived radicalism of its workforce. The AFTU, led by CPSA General Secretary Douglas Wolton and activist Ray Alexander secretly recruited tramway workers which it organised into cells. One of these recruits was Jimmie Emmerich, who would later defeat Stuart in the Executive polls in 1935.

Growing discontent among the tramway workers during the course of 1932 provided fertile ground for the AFTU. Leaflets attacking not only the Tramway Company but also Bob Stuart and his colleagues were distributed. A strike in December showed that Stuart was beginning to lose control.

But Wolton's jailing under the Riotous Assemblies Act in early 1933 and his subsequent emigration enabled him to regain control and put the pressure back on his radical critics.

Stuart's experiences in the trade union movement during the next few years were tempestuous. The opposition became more vocal and focussed. Emmerich, now exposed, was able to openly criticise Stuart's policy of conciliation and explain why he thought that "direct action" would be a more appropriate course.

Emmerich finally won the Secretaryship, now a full-time post, in the 1936 elections. A policy of "direct action", however, did not result. Instead Emmerich set about using the same industrial councils that Stuart did, evidently getting better results via improved wages and working conditions for the tramway workers. In addition, Emmerich ensured that the shop steward structures were given more weight, and that the rank and file were closer to the Union Executive than before.

But Emmerich's efforts to reproduce his leadership at lower levels in the Union were not effective. He failed to develop a strong young leadership to back him up or to succeed him, and he relied strongly on Allan Nesbitt, the Union Treasurer, to support him. Criticisms of Emmerich as a "one-man show" which were levelled at him at the time were largely justified. He was also unable to carry the rank and file with him on some important issues. An example of this was the refusal of the largely white membership to allow Coloured labour to be used on the traffic staff during World

War II, preferring instead the employment of their own wives and daughters.

Opposition - whether right-wing or moderate - was evidently a frustration for Emmerich throughout his period of leadership. But in the end it was Jimmie Emmerich who defeated himself. Unable to deal with his responsibilities in the Union movement, Emmerich turned to drink, corruption and theft from his own organisation. Emmerich's demise marked the end of any convincing attempt by the left wing to influence the Tramway Union. It led to the increasing bureaucratisation of the Union as a member of the conservative TUCSA. It was only with the formation of COSATU in the mid 1980s that the Tramway Union was again challenged by the more radical elements within its own membership.¹

1. See Giffard, C "TGWU Organises Western Cape Busdrivers".

APPENDICES

- Appendix A Jimmie Emmerich.
- Appendix B Allan Nesbitt.
- Appendix C Jimmie Emmerich chats to Tramway Union members.
- Appendix D SACTW delegates to Annual Conference, Durban April 1941.
- Appendix E Ballot paper for 1936 Tramway Union Executive Committee elections.
- Appendix F AFTU leaflet: "Tram and Bus Workers. Prepare for Action", circa 24 August 1932.
- Appendix G AFTU leaflet: "New Attacks on Tram and Bus Workers", 22 November 1932.
- Appendix H Tramway Union leaflet: "To the Travelling Public of Cape Town", 13 December 1932.
- Appendix I Preparatory Examination sheet in the case of King versus Douglas Wolton and Ray Alexandrovitz, 18 February 1933.
- Appendix J AFTU poster: "Mass meetings of all PTL workers", January 1933.

APPENDIX A



J. W. EMMERICH

APPENDIX B



BRO. A. NESBITT

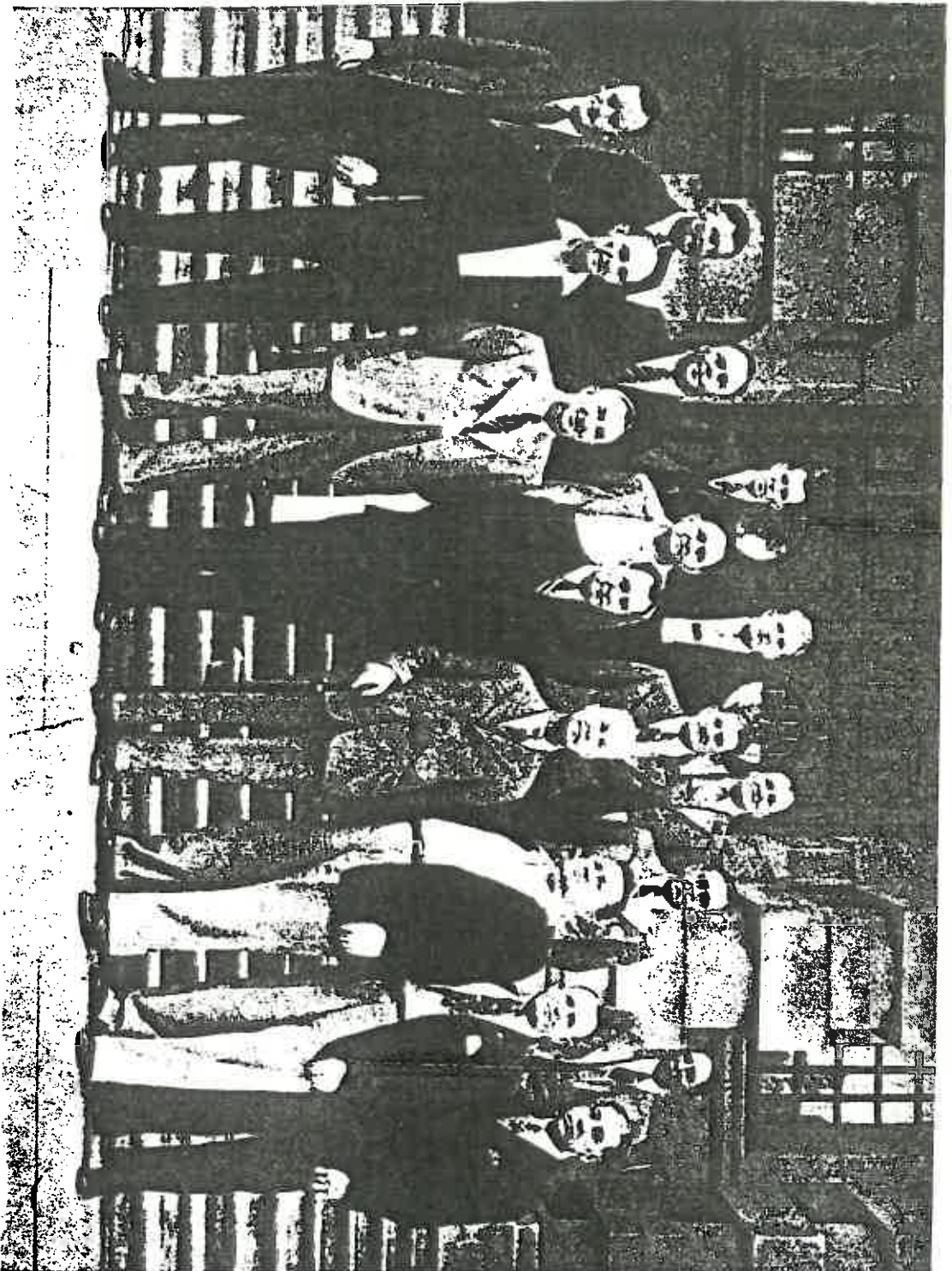
APPENDIX C

Jimmie Emmerich, popular Secretary of Cape Town's Tramway Workers' Union (right), chats to some members of the Union.



APPENDIX D

SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF JEWELLERS.
DELEGATES TO EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE. CITY HALL, DURBAN. APRIL, 1911.



Back Row: R. J. Johnson (Durban), S. G. Page (Durban), P. Watson (Durban),
Middle Row: J. E. Gordon (Pietermaritzburg), J. J. Roets (Johannesburg), M. Ellenbogen (Johannesburg Taxi Drivers), J. Hagen
(Pretoria), W. T. Blennerhasset (Durban), P. King (Cape Town).

Front Row: J. Murray (Cape Town), W. Riley (Johannesburg), J. E. M. Evens (Durban), J. J. Venter, President (Johannesburg),
W. H. Andrews (Veteran Trade Union Leader), J. W. Emmerich, Secretary (Cape Town), H. Epstein (Cape Town), B. H. Theron
(Johannesburg).

APPENDIX E

TRAMWAY & OMNIBUS WORKERS' UNION (Cape)

BALLOT PAPER
STEMBRIEFE

1184

FOR VOOR

GENERAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS
ALGEMENE VERKIESING VAN AMTENARE

FOR 1936

VOOR 1936

FOR SECRETARY	Bro. R. Stuart - - -		Vote for ONE Name only Stem voor EEN Naam alleen
	„ J. W. Emmerich (Trams) -		
FOR VICE-PRESIDENT	„ C. H. Loubser (Buses) <small>Sitting Member</small> -		Vote for ONE Name only
	„ F. Edwards (Buses) - -		Stem voor EEN Naam alleen
	„ W. Leary (Trams) - -		
FOR 8 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS as follows : 2 TRAMS 2 BUSES 2 SHEDS 2 PRIVATE The Two Candidates in each of these Sections receiving the Highest Number of Votes will be declared Elected.	„ M. Woudberg (Trams) <small>Sitting Member</small> -		
	„ H. Boyd (Trams) - -		
	„ B. Draper (Trams) - -		
	„ M. Hoffman (Trams) - -		Vote for TWO Names only
	„ H. Inglesby (Trams) - -		Stem voor TWEE Name alleen
	„ Archie May (Trams) - -		
	„ H. B. Roberts (Trams) -		
	„ I. Tregar (Trams) - -		
	„ F. Groonotte (Buses) <small>Sitting Member</small> -		
	„ N. C. Daniel (Buses) <small>Sitting Member</small> -		
	„ S. Berg (Buses) - -		Vote for TWO Names only
	„ A. de Lucchi (Buses) - -		Stem voor TWEE Name alleen
	„ J. J. Green (Buses) - -		
	„ W. Hart (Buses) - -		
	„ A. V. Roberts (Buses) -		
„ P. King (Sheds) <small>Sitting Member</small> -			
„ C. Bulpitt (Sheds) - -		Vote for TWO Names only	
„ S. Kruger (Sheds) - -		Stem voor TWEE Name alleen	
„ W. G. Lundie (Sheds) -			
„ E. Ryan (Sheds) - -			
„ J. Tidman (Sheds) - -			
„ W. Slabbert (N.T.C.) <small>Sitting Member</small> -		Vote for TWO Names only	
„ C. J. Fitzpatrick (N.T.C.) -		Stem voor TWEE Name alleen	
„ — van Rensburg (Golden Arrow)			

NOTE.—The Ballot must be marked X otherwise paper will be disqualified

R. STUART,
General Secretary.

APPENDIX F

T R A M A N D B U S W O R K E R S . P R E P A R E F O R A C T I O N .

The attack of the Company Bosses on the wages of Tram and Bus Workers has now reached a decisive stage; the proposals being to reduce Drivers to £3.12.0. per week and Conductors to £3.0.0. whilst an increase in working hours to 63 per week is rumoured.

Whilst the Bosses are completing their plans for this attack on the Workers conditions and are preparing to break any resistance offered by the Workers by actively organising strike-breakers, the Cape Federation of Trades and the Union leaders are playing for time and are endeavouring to divert the coming struggle of the Workers into the channels of the Industrial Council.

This playing for time means to delay action until the Industrial Council is recognised and so to make future strike action illegal and this policy of Stuart and Evans is the same policy which handed over the Building Workers for wage cuts through "Conciliation", which betrayed the strike of the Butchers and which will betray the Tram and Bus Workers unless stopped immediately by the workers themselves.

In the meantime the trapping system continues unhindered - claims by workers for back pay are being quietly dropped - and the clamorous demands of the workers for increased wages are being side-tracked in spite of the growing volume of discontent of the workers who increasingly demand direct action.

In this critical situation which seriously threatens the already bad conditions of the workers, only the immediate preparations for strike action can beat back the attacks of the Bosses. Only through the immediate repudiation of the Industrial Council and the unconditional withdrawal of the workers delegates - only by a complete break with the betrayal policy of Stuart and Evans - only by the setting up rank and file Committees of Action to prepare for Strike action - only by such methods can the workers break up this smashing attack which the Bosses are now preparing.

The general meeting of the Workers tomorrow night must give a clear and sharp answer to all the manouvres of the leaders and the Bosses and must definitely call for the immediate preparation for strike action.

DOWN WITH THE TRAPPING SYSTEM.

DOWN WITH THE WAGE CUTS AND INCREASED HOURS.

DOWN WITH THE INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL.

DOWN WITH THE POLICY OF BETRAYAL OF THE FEDERATION OF TRADES.

FOR INCREASED WAGES AND THE RESTORATION OF EQUAL WAGES FOR DRIVERS AND CONDUCTORS.

FOR THE IMMEDIATE SETTING UP OF COMMITTEES OF ACTION AT EVERY DEPOT.

PREPARE FOR STRIKE ACTION. N O W. !!!

Issued by the Transport Section - AFRICAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNION

81 Long Street Capetown.

APPENDIX G

NEW ATTACKS ON TRAM AND BUS WORKERS

10 Tramway Workers under notice --- rumours of further retrenchments on Trams and Busses --- the open flouting of the workers demand for wage increases by the Bosses --- are further indications of the steady drive being made by the Companies to reduce the standards of life of the workers.

With the repudiation of the Industrial Council by the Bosses and their statement in the Capitalist Press that they cannot pay, the efforts of the Union leaders (Stuart and Co) stand openly revealed as attempts to bluff the workers with promises of wage increases through the Industrial Council whilst actually they were suggesting to the Bosses how to carry through wage reductions. (Recommendations to the workers that they should ~~XXXXXX~~ forfeit one and two days a month)

The P.T.L. Workers now losing 9 to 10 hours a month will especially understand the role of the Union leaders as organisers of wage reductions, standing on the side of the Bosses against the Workers.

Whilst Stuart & Co send telegrams of protest to the Government against the Witwatersrand banishments under the Riotous Assemblies Act, they follow the example of Pirow and ban militant workers from the Union (suspension of Committee member for advocating a militant policy) and thus they further reveal themselves as Dictators trying to close the mouths of all workers who stand for the militant protection of their wages and conditions.

In the face of the joint attacks of the Bosses and Union leaders which increase from week to week, the Tram and Bus workers must seriously face up to the position and see where they are being led. The acceptance of the leaders proposals for short time at reduced wages has now been revealed as an invitation to the Bosses to go further.

A.F.T.U. calls upon all Tram and Bus Workers to demand that if short time is necessary in order to prevent dismissals, there must be no alteration in wages and that every worker shall continue to be paid for a 48 hour week, even though actually working less.

The forthcoming general meeting must be made the occasion for the repudiation of the present policy and for the introduction of a fighting policy to protect wages and conditions under the leadership of A.F.T.U.

ALL AGAINST ANY FURTHER DISMISSALS.
DEMAND THE RE-INSTAEMENT OF WORKERS ALREADY DISMISSED.
FOR EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WORK --- SHORT TIME WITH MAINTENANCE OF PRESENT PAY (48 HOUR WEEK)
AGAINST THE VICTIMISATION OF MILITANT UNION MEMBERS BY STUART & CO.
DEMAND THE WITHDRAWAL OF PIROW'S BAN ON TRADE UNIONISTS AND COMMUNISTS.
FOR THE REPEAL OF THE RIOTOUS ASSEMBLIES ACT.

PREPARE FOR STRIKE ACTION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF A.F.T.U. TO ENFORCE YOUR DEMANDS.

APPENDIX H

The Tramway & Bus Workers' Union

13th December, 1932.

TO THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC OF CAPE TOWN.

The struggle of the Transport Workers is an economic necessity, not only for the uplift and amelioration of the conditions of the Transport Wage-earners, but for all who receive wages or salaries. Too long have these classes submitted to the employers' constant demands for reduction of wages, thus further minimising the purchasing power of the community, with an aggravation of the depression. Although wages have now descended to subsistence level, profits and dividends have increased, demonstrating there is a determined effort to capitalise industry by deprivation of the wage-earners and salaried employees of a fair and equitable reward for their services. This can continue no longer. Desperation and a desire to end the tragedy of starving in employment instinctively prompted the Transport Workers to protest with all the power they possess.

The struggle is confined not only to the wage question, but to the tyranny of petty officials on the road, goading the men into a frenzy of irritability and obstinate resistance to any further despotism of the Company. Continual pecuniary deductions for trifling offences, without the men concerned being heard in their own defence, incensed the men by its unfairness. The men were thus deliberately whipped by these methods into antagonism, in order to carry out successfully a reduction of wages, under the pretence the Company was opposed to an increase wages.

Men's niggardly wages mulcted for damages incurred in the ordinary running of the industry, which should be a liability of the business or insured against as required by the traffic regulations. Notwithstanding all these disabilities, the Company refuses to listen to any proposals. The companies are no longer in cut-throat competition, but have reached an understanding which is advantageous to themselves and their shareholders, but which adds to the burden of the public at large through increased fares and to the load of the workers by unfair regulations and low wage standards.

The men are fighting as an advance guard for all wage-earners and salaried employees, appealing to the public to consider the merits of their case. Mere stupid vilification such as appeared in the "Cape Times" is inspired by persons who have not the moral or physical courage to come out into the open. We should like to know the relationship between the "Cape Times" and the Directorate of the Company. The former, whose leader columns are usually impenetrable to other than vested interests, yesterday distinguished itself by out-heroding Herod, by devoting one and a half columns of ludicrous subterfuges and fallacies to vindicate the innocent and fattened darlings of the Tramway Company's Directorate.

On dissection this fardel of nonsense amounts to the unusual achievement of making the discovery there has been a dispute in the Transport Industry for some time, and the men demand an increase of wages, as well as that the public is being subjected to the indignity by having no transport. But the public is made a catspaw to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the shareholders and out of the "Cape Times" columns because the latter imposes where it cannot dupe. The wage-earners are the major portion of the community and they know the Tramway and Omnibus Workers are justified in their demands.

The officials of the Union dissociate themselves from acts of violence and sabotage. The Company's naive action of differentiating in paying the non-European staff and not paying the Europeans was calculated with insidious subtlety to engender colour malice and to create defection.

In conclusion, the purpose of publishing this bulletin is to enlighten the public, who are being misled by the Press, who maintain we are fighting for wages alone, which is untrue.

Issued by Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union Strike Committee:

J. MURRAY.
W. HORACK.
L. KOCH.

V. GIANTONI, Chairman.
J. JENNINGS, Vice-Chairman.
C. LOUBSER.

APPENDIX I

PREPARATORY EXAMINATION.

U.D.I. W.
Formal ID. in Case No. 27/1914, Q.V.F.C.E.

In the case of the King versus Douglas Gordon Wolton,

a male, European, born in the United Kingdom, aged 34 years

Contraventing Section 12 (1) of Act 27/1914, in contravention of Section 15 (2) of Act No. 27 of 1914.

At Capetown in the District of the Cape on the 18th day of February, 1933 in the presence of

M. W. Boyle Esquire, Additional Magistrate for the said District, appeared Douglas Gordon Wolton (hereinafter called the accused)

34 years of age, born at United Kingdom by trade or occupation a secretary residing at Capetown in the District of the Cape who having heard the evidence adduced in support of the charge made against him that upon or about the day of

1933, and at Capetown in the District of the Cape the said accused did wrongfully and unlawfully

wilfully and maliciously incite certain employees of certain local companies supplying the community of Capetown and Suburbs with transportation services to break a condition or contract of employment with the said companies, knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that the probable consequence of their so breaking such contract would be to deprive the members of the aforesaid community, or a large section thereof wholly or to a great extent of their transportation services.

PREPARATORY EXAMINATION.

U.D.I. W.
Formal ID. in Case No. 87/1914, Q.V.F.C.E.

In the case of the King versus Ray Alexandrovitz

a female, European, born in Russia, dress-maker, aged 20 years

Contraventing Section 12 (1) of Act 27/1914, in contravention of Section 15 (2) of Act No. 27 of 1914.

At Capetown in the District of the Cape on the 18th day of February, 1933 in the presence of

M. W. Boyle Esquire, Additional Magistrate for the said District, appeared Ray Alexandrovitz (hereinafter called the accused)

20 years of age, born at Russia by trade or occupation a dress-maker residing at Capetown in the District of the Cape who having heard the evidence adduced in support of the charge made against her that upon or about the 24th day of August 1932 and the 25th day of December 1932

1933, and at Capetown in the District of the Cape the said accused did wrongfully and unlawfully

wilfully and maliciously incite certain employees of certain local companies supplying the community of Capetown and Suburbs with transportation services to break a condition or contract of employment with the said companies, knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that the probable consequence of their so breaking such contract would be to deprive the members of the aforesaid community, or a large section thereof wholly or to a great extent of their transportation services.

APPENDIX J

~~A.F.T.U. TRANSPORT SECTION~~

~~Meeting on gate outside P.T.C. Depot~~

SC MASS MEETINGS
OF ALL P.T.L. WORKERS

WILL BE HELD AT

FORRESTERS HALL
(Opp Westerford Arms)

ON

WEDNESDAY JAN 4th

AT

10AM AND 2:30PM

AGENDA

- (1) BETRAYAL OF STRIKE
- (2) REPORT AND ELECTION OF DEPOT COMMITTEE
- (3) GENERAL

IMPORTANT: ROLL UP

R. Wilson

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Umsebenzi

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