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CONTENTS:

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CONTENTS.

COMMENT.

SCHLEBUSCH AND THE WAGES COMMISSIONS.

The 4th interim report of the Commission of Enquiry into Certain Organisations devotes a chapter to 'The Wages Campaign'. In this chapter it discusses the activities of the various student Wages Commissions, and reaches the following conclusions:

17.44 "To conclude this chapter the Commission wants to repeat its finding that NUSAS leaders and others are involved in the wages campaign in order deliberately to create a revolutionary climate among the Bantu population of South Africa. Their methods follow the communist guide-lines that have been laid down. Communist doctrine also rejects the idea that a revolution could originate spontaneously from alleged or actual evils alone. The following statement for example, appears in 'Lenin and Problems of Liberation Movements' (Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1966):

'The rise of the revolutionary situation, however, does not mean that the revolution is bound to succeed. The revolutionary situation only creates the objective prerequisites for the revolution. But again, these prerequisites alone do not settle the question .... For the revolution to succeed, there must be besides the indispensable objective conditions, conscious revolutionary activities on the part of the vanguard class, ... By pursuing a correct policy and working among the masses, the party can and should speed up the process leading to the creation of the necessary conditions for a successful revolution'.

17.45 In the paper which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Clive Keegan says that NUSAS cannot march in the 'Vanguard' of the revolution but that he accepts the view of Che Guevara -

'that a small group can prepare a country for revolution even if all the conditions favouring a revolution are not present. I conclude therefore that the pattern of South African political change lies in the direction of the urban skilled black proletariat. It will, in fact be a true workers' revolution.'

17.46 The NUSAS leaders concerned and their henchmen are using the wages question, which is charged with emotion, as the fuse and Bantu workers as the powder to ignite a revolution and then to stand back with their hands washed clean, less they themselves should get scorched in the fire."

These accusations are serious. But are they in fact born out by the evidence presented by the Commission. This shows that the main activity of the Wages Commission in Durban was to prepare evidence to be presented at Wage Board sittings, and to encourage workers to attend such sittings. The Commission quotes from and discusses a number of the pamphlets issued by the Wages Commission to this end. These pamphlets discuss low wages, and call on workers to take specific actions to protest about wages. The first pamphlet was issued in connection with a minimum wage determination for unskilled workers in the Durban area. The Wage Board's preliminary recommendation was for a minimum wage of R8.50 for men and R6.40 for women. The Wages Commission organised a meeting of workers, to be held before this recommendation had been ratified by the Minister, and issued a pamphlet on which the Commission comments as follows: "Considering the contents ..... one can understand that the Bantu workers were going to insist on action ....In these pamphlets the workers were first told that 'professors at the university' had worked out that they needed a certain amount of money to be able to live. Then they were asked whether they were satisfied with their wages. No worker will be satisfied with his wages if a professor has already worked out that he ought not to be satisfied with it. The pamphlet was obviously written in inflammatory language and calculated to breed discontent among the workers".

The impression created by such comment is that workers were quite satisfied with their wages until the Wages Commission came along and inflamed them to action. But it does not make much sense to suggest that workers earning R8.50 a week are satisfied until they hear about the PDL. The role of the PDL is to provide the workers with an argument which they can use to bring their plight home to a generally insensitive public. The pamphlet is not designed to create dissatisfaction. It is designed to focus dissatisfaction in a constructive way. The Commission does not mention that the only action taken by the workers was to send a petition to the Minister asking for a higher minimum wage. There is no way of defining that as a subversive act.

The Commission produces two quotations which are presumably designed to show that the Wages Commissions had <u>sinister</u> motives. The first is from a circular sent out by the Nuswel Secretary-General: "Wage Boards: use the Wage Boards as an avenue for contact; we must realise that we cannot really get higher wages out of the Wage Board nor can we see ourselves in the light of trying to get higher wages solely. The Wage Boards must be used as an entrée to getting through to Black workers, to carrying out legitimate research and finally showing Black workers a legal and recognised channel for organisation" (p 479). The second, and stronger, statement is taken from a private letter from Durban; "It is important that this type of thing is well established in all centres for the right reason and with the right orientation. We can't afford sentimental liberals who want wage increases for their own sake" (p 478).But all the first quotation shows is that the further

aim is "legal and recognised channels for organisation", which is neither illegal nor sinister. In most societies it is taken for granted that workers should have some say in determining their wages and conditions of work. Wage increases given for charitable reasons are not to be rejected; but they leave the worker shorn of any personal dignity. Only through organisation and negotiation can workers claim their dignity as human beings. Thus any workers' organisation always has twin goals: better wages and conditions, and human dignity, neither of which, as far as we know, are actually illegal in South Africa.

The Commission is unable to sustain the charge that the Wages Commissions acted illegally. When it attempts to insinuate subversive intent, as in the two examples analysed above, it fails to convince. In fact, the main evidence produced to substantiate its charges had nothing to do with the actual activities of Wages Commissions at all. It attempts to show that the aims were 'revolutionary', and that the methods, though legal, 'followed communist guide-lines'.

Revolutionary Aims.

The Commission attempts to establish that the aims were 'revolutionary' by means of quotations from papers by two students, Clive Keegan and Rob Davies, presented to a NUSAS congress in 1969. Both papers are connected with the re-organisation of NUSAS, and discuss what role NUSAS can usefully play in South African society. In his paper, Davies considers various possible methods of change in South Africa and concludes, "It thus appears that the possibility of political change in South Africa in the near future is extremely remote indeed, but it is also true that the present system cannot, nor should be allowed to, continue indefinitely". He writes that change will be a "long term proposition", and suggests that "it can be expected that political change will be a function of the raising of political awareness or class consciousness, of the proletariat and weakening of the structures which make up the present establishment". However, he thinks that white students can play a very small part in this. The only thing that they can do is to help african students to become more familiar with "new ideas and new tactics of overseas student groups" (p 465-466). African students, who are in closer touch with black workers can then use these ideas to "raise the level of political consciousness of the proletariat" (p 466). Keegan's paper is rather more fiery. He suggests NUSAS's role is to be "an educative organisation serving to arouse political awareness and eradicate political naivity and apathy" (p 467). He suggests that it can "educate african leaders in the art of politics and increasethe militancy of the workers. It can act as the training ground of black leaders and act as the catalyst of change but little else", and then he goes on to say, "I accept the opinion of Che Guevara that a small group can prepare a country for revolution even if all the conditions favouring a revolution are not present. I conclude therefore that the pattern of South African political change lies in the direction of the urban skilled black proletariat. It will, in fact, be a true

workers' revolution" (p 468). As the Commission points out in another context, public statements of this type, if they prove anything, prove that Keegan was not a "trained communist revolutionary". Guevara was rash in attempting to bring about a revolution in the unfavourable climate of Bolivia, but even he was not so rash as to stand up in a public meeting in La Paz and announce his intentions before he began!

These statements show that in 1969 some members of NUSAS were thinking that black workers would play an important part in long term political change in South Africa. They do not show that there was a detailed plan worked out to push this change in a 'revolutionary' direction. They do not show that these two statements were considered significant by the Wages Commissions themselves. The few suggestions about action made by Davies ... teaching african students about Sartre and Marcuse .... are almost diametrically opposed to the tactics actually adopted by the Wages Commissions. The Commission no-where attempts to show that the group who actually started the first Wages Commission heard, read, or were influenced by these ideas. There was evidently a lot of discussion about the problems of urban workers within NUSAS, but the Wages Commission set up at Natal University in 1971 was founded by students who were not at the time active members of NUSAS. The two leaders, Halton Cheadle and David Hemson had not been delegates to the Congress at which Rob Davies and Clive Keegan spoke, and, as far as we can establish, had not read their papers. The Commission writes, "It would appear that the initial activities of a Wages Commission on one campus only were in fact a kind of reconaissance operation" (p 471). On the contrary, it would seem that the whole impetus for the Wages Commissions in the form which they actually took came from the Durban group. The Wages Commission in Durban was started at the beginning of 1971, and it was only after this that members of NUSAS took up the idea. The Wages Commissions on the other campuses were set up on the design of the Durban Wages Commission, rather than as a result of the vague suggesions of Rob Davies, or of Clive Keegan's rhetorical flourishes. As we have seen, and as the Commission shows, the Wages Commissions confined themselves to legal activity associated with wage increases and the formation of legal worker organisation.

"Communist guide-lines".

This brings us back to the question of methods. The way in which it is shown that the Wages Commissions follow "communist guide-lines" is by giving extensive quotations from Lenin's essay "What is to be done?", and then making vague remarks such as "there were several similarities between student methods described by Lenin and those of the Durban students". (The Commission makes this point a after having shown that Lenin is criticising these methods, but it seems to think that there is something sinister about anything Lenin even talks about). At another point it refers to plans for Wages Commission organisation as follows: "In many respects these instructions are reminiscent of the guide-lines laid down by Lenin".

Finally it reaches virtually unbelievable heights of self-satire when it says of a paper by David Hemson, "It contains a section under the heading "What can be done? (which incidentally is strongly reminiscent of Lenin's "What is to be done?")" (p 485). If anybody is South Africa who asks questions about future action, using some permutation of the words 'what' and 'done', is a communist, our police are going to have a very busy time!

Lenin's essay was written in 1902 and discusses problems of organisation under tsarist dictatorship. Because it deals with workers and because it deals with the problems posed by secret police, almost anything written on those topics is bound to have some similarity at some point with what Lenin says. But what is important in comparing what Lenin wrote with anything written by the Wages Commissions is the fact that Lenin advocates virtually opposite policies. The Commission seems to be aware of this at the beginning of its discussion of Lenin, when it writes, "There were, as far as the Commission could determine no attempts to keep things secret. The meetings of workers was organised openly and publicity sought and obtained for it. This kind of thing would not have been in keeping with the modus operandi of trained communist revolutionaries. In his work "What is to be done?" Lenin quotes almost identical actions by students to illustrate what he calls "primitive methods"! But even beyond this, Lenin's essay is an attack on what he calls "trade union consciousness". Lenin argues that by themselves the workers develop only "trade union consciousness", and so that it is necessary to establish a tightly-knit band of professional revolutionaries who will combine political agitation with trade union work. Lenin was arguing for a small group of revolutionaries who would act clandestinely and illegally in such a way as to give a political form to the workers' discontent. The Wages Commissions, on the other hand were acting openly and legally, and were working towards ordinary worker organisations and worker action. The only similarity with Lenin's "guide-lines" is the fact that, through no fault of their own, they usually constituted a small group.

The Commission does produce one piece of evidence which it suggests shows that there was an attempt to establish a secret Leninist inner core. This is a confidential circular which suggests that the commissions be divided into two levels, one being a caucus of representatives from each major sector or group who would basically outline the strategy for each commission. "Apart from ordinary reasons of efficiency, it is pointed out that "Any organisation concerning itself with fundamental issues such as poverty wages automatically brings itself under surveillance and, while what we are doing is legal, great interest will be shown in our activities by the powers that be", and further on it is written that this system "will to some extent protect the black people with whom we come into contact since obviously only trained and informed people can be concerned with contact with workers" (p 478). It is a sad fact about our society that legal action often leads to informal

harassment by the "powers that be". It is a sad fact that african workers interested in workers' organisations are especially likely to be subject to such harassment. But to be aware of such sad facts does not make one a communist following Lenin's guide-lines. Incidentally, it is also unlikely that the complicated organisational structure envisaged in this document was ever actually instituted. Most Wages Commissions consisted of a small core because only a small core are willing to do the work. We can only conclude that the Commission produces no evidence to show that the Wages Commissions "followed Communist guide-lines" in any sense other than the trivial sense that communists, like many other groups often develop worker organisations.

Helen Suzman is right when she says that what the Commissioners do is to "weave a web of conspiracy out of scores of unrelated incidents spanning ten years". But the question is, why do they do this? The simple answer, that they are fundamentally dishonest, is almost certainly wrong. The problem is much deeper than that. The Commission exhibits certain intellectual blind spots. And this is not just a polite way of saying that they are stupid. They see the world through certain spectacles, and their vision is therefore permanently distorted. They are quite unable to understand social processes. In the real world social changes occur partly as a result of such things as economic growth and technological advance. These things change peoples' perceptions, and present them with new problems. Some classes are strengthened and others decrease in number. Within this context different groups try to defend their interests in any way they can. Sometimes they take part in parliamentary politics, but more usually they will engage in direct bargaining or direct trials of strength with other groups. In a democracy, parliament is designed to mediate in some way between all these groups. This means that not all social conflict takes place or is resolved in parliament. Legal action and parliamentary action are not identical. It is only if all this is ignored that one can explain all manifestations of social conflict as being the result of a conspiracy of agitators, and that one can claim that anybody who speaks of means other than the ballot box is necessarily speaking of violent revolution.

We do not know exactly what role has been played by Wages Commissions in the growth of worker militancy in South Africa over the last few years. The Durban strikes in 1973 had a number of positive results. The Prime Minister said that a lesson had been learnt (and surely it is a good thing for lessons to be learnt). The Minister of Labour was given the opportunity to amend the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, in a way which he presumably thinks is an improvement. Above all, at least 60 000 very poor workers received wages increases averaging at least R1.50 per week, which amount to nearly R5 million per year, and is probably more money than has been raised for the poorer members of our community by all the charities and university rags of the last decade. If the Durban Wages Commission was indeed responsible for

this, then many people would be inclined to think that they had much to be proud of.

But of course it is ridiculous even to suggest that they were responsible in this way. Contented workers do not go strike in tens of thousands just because students issue ' inflammatory' pamphlets. In the real world outside the parliamentary chambers, events do not happen in that way. The strikes can only be understood in terms of the very rapid development of the South African economy the changing role of the african workers in the economy, inflation, the wage gap, and growing frustration. To explain all this away with reference to a conspiracy "to create a climate in Durban in which strikes would be inevitable" (p 482), is mind-boggling.

The conspiracy theory is associated with the other unstated premise of the Commission. This is that change must EITHER be 'through the ballot box' OR else by violent revolution. But this is simply not true, In normal democratic societies there are innumerable pressure groups arguing and agitating for particular policies. Sometimes these pressure groups are able to mobilise enough resources to get their policies accepted. In South Africa the white trade unions are such pressure groups. If they disapprove of a government policy they do not feel that they have to wait for the next election and then form a political party to vote the government out of power. They try, using all the means at their disposal, to bring home to the government their disapproval of the policy. Nobody suggests that such pressure group tactics are undemocratic, nor that, because they do not involve change through the ballot box they must be violent. In a society in which most citizens do not have access to the ballot box, obviously great pressures are going to be brought to bear by other means. Not even Mr. Vorster would have the cheek to tell Chief Buthelezi that he must try to get more land 'through the ballot box'. It is taken for granted that he will use other methods, such as making speeches, trying to arouse sympathy, holding meetings and issuing statements. All this is part of pressure group politics. Workers' organisations are not political parties, and in South Africa black workers do not have the vote, so it is inevitable that they will also act as pressure groups. They will try to bring about the change in two ways which do not involve the ballot box. The first way is to try to change the power relations within each factory, by establishing the right of the workers to stand as a united body and to have a say in their wages and conditions of work. This in itself would constitute a change, and indeed a revolutionary change in South African society. But it does not involve illegal or violent acts. Secondly, black worker organisations, like Wages Commissions and all other bodies, will issue statements about government actions which affect their interests. They will make protests designed to persuade the government to change its policies where these policies are against what they see as being their interests. The Commission, giving as the only alternatives ballot box politics and violent revolution, has ignored the vast body of actions and events which make up socio-

political life in an ordinary community. It is only after they have done this that they can force such unlikely evidence into a conspiracy to bring about a violent revolution.

CRITIQUE OF "PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS".

The following is a letter received criticising an article which appeared in the May issue of the Labour Bulletin. We appreciate this valuable contribution to the debate about the problems and direction of the emerging trade unions and hope that it will be continued.

Dear Madam,
An article appeared in the May issue of your "Labour Bulletin", called "The Problem of African Trade Unions". This letter is written in the hope that your journal published opposing views. It is also written for the purpose of re-opening these issues to a further scrutiny.

From my own experience of trade-unionism, from my meetings with some of the organisers of the unions that encircle Bolton Hall and from statements made in the Press by people connected with the above, I have concluded that this article is titled "The Problems of African Trade Unions", as if the problem arises out of the trade unions being racially circumscribed in the South African context, and not from the method in which these trade unions have been organised, and by whom they have been organised. This is not to deny the very important problems that arise out of being an un-registered union.

It is my belief that many of the problems that confront the labour movement in South Africa, are due to the division of the working class into African and non-African; and the protection of the non-African skilled worker by the State instead of by solidarity.

When one looks at the history of workers' movements, and particularly the one in the first industrial society, England, one sees that the organisation was first formed along 'trade' lines. Skilled workers organised themselves against both unskilled workers and their employers. Such organisation was technically an easier proposition. There were fewer to organise and they were strategically placed in the labour hierarchy, which made their labour withdrawal particularly threatening. The forces of mechanisation (and others) tended to degrade the status of skilled workers to such an extent that the artisan differentiation all but disappeared. Only one course of action lay open to them, and that was to organise their unskilled brothers. Two important structural aspects need to be stressed:

1. The organisers of these unions had a long experience of trade unions.
2. These organisers were organising from within.

In South Africa, the State intervened and provided statutory protection against artisan displacement, and arrested the development of the trade union movement. The historical role of the skilled worker organising the unskilled worker, has in the 1970's fallen on different shoulders. It is therefore important for the organ-

isers to see themselves in a catalytic role rather than an instrumental role.

The problems that the article so authoritatively lists, are not really discussed historically, nor are they seen to have arisen from the peculiar situation of the labour movement in South Africa. The 'white' students who started the unions at Bolton Hall, are neither black nor working class. Their counterpart, the black students in B.A.W.U., are not of the working class. Both groups approach the black working class from the 'outside'. The structure of the unions that they have set up symptomatically mirrors this.

The point which I am trying to make is that these unions were deliberately created by people outside the working class, and this has influenced the way in which these unions have been organised. The problems are very largely the consequences of such organisation.

By contrast we were all trained in the trade-union movement and our attempts at organisation were based upon both an experience as workers and as trade unionists. The 'new' organisers as I have said before have not benefited from either experience. The problems that are facing those unions are, I think, attributable to the methods applied by these novices.

I refer the reader to page 41 of the article where I should like to deal with each of the problems and answers put forward by Linda Ensor.

1. "Workers' attitudes are the key to organisational capabilities.

Beneath all the jargon, the problem seems to be that the workers are not too 'receptive' to unions. External factors such as management, homeland governments, rumours, etc. affect the workers, and either make them unreceptive to membership, or make that membership superficial. The remedies posed; to fiddle with these external determinants so as to produce the right effect on those passive receptacles, the workers. There can be no other interpretation of that section of the article. Nowhere else is this paternal contempt for the thinking capacity of the worker displayed.

I wish to analyse what is at stake here;

a) The problem of attitude is a problem that confronts the union before it arrives from outside, that is to say, it, too, is an external determinant.
b) The workers have no deep-seated need for collective organisation. They are influenced decisively by external factors; namely there is essentially no working class as a class.
c) Attitudes and organisation are separated. The only link suggested in the changing of attitudes by the union, is through 'propaganda'. Once this has been done, the organisation can begin.

One should not be talking about 'attitudes'. Leave that for market research and washing powders. One should be concerned with shifting the organisational momentum from without the factory to within the factory. The preceding article on Leyland suggested such a case. The union was organised from within the factory by the workers themselves.

The problem here, is more the attitude of the union to workers, than the other way around.

2. "Victimization".

This is a real problem. Of course, its only resolution is the collective action of all workers in the particular plant. But by definition of the problem, this is not a course open to the union officials while organising the workers outside the factory gates. This situation of victimization is the product of organising openly in front of the factory gates, and allowing anyone to join (the new organiser is not in a position ot judge his enrolling members). Management are alerted and react against individual members.

Perhaps organising unions in such a way that the recruiting is done in a less obvious manner, and therefore is less open to victimization, in that the recruitment is done by workers themselves and the accent is upon comprehensive membership rather than on mass 'sayine lapha' membership, would solve this problem.

3. "Difficulties in maintaining membership".

The problems are posed in technical terms; stop order facilities, collection difficulties (shifts, overtime, etc.). The question is never posed whether the workers themselves should collect and organise. This does not rule out the fact that there are problems in this line of action. I believe, that this is the area where the problem should be thought out.

In regard to the problem of maintaining membership, it is true that the manner in which union dues are collected (an aspect of the collective nature of the union), is going to decisively influence how the workers are going to participate in their unions. The problem of maintaining membership is related to two things;

a) the present functioning of the union,
b) the method of signing on.

Both the phenomenal growth (and admittedly a paper growth), and my experience of the recruiting situation at a Pinetown factory, lead me to believe that the workers are press-ganged into joining these unions. Perhaps that is being harsh because workers do want to belong to unions. That, I believe, goes without saying. They are willing to be press-ganged, but they know not into what. The

union membership form is usually accompanied by a list of benefits and that is all. Even if workers pay up regularly, they would still constitute, in my opinion, paper membership.

4. "Financial control and the establishment of committees".

Here at least are some fruitful ideas. The idea of a 'local', run by shop-stewards, is an important contribution to the structuring of these new unions.

It is true that the power of Secretary has a lot to do with the lack of training and experience of the first executive committee; but it is also the product of a 'way of working', handed down. With both the original outside organiser and the typical desire of the 'white' organiser (graduate) to do things himself, the organisers that are trained by him tend to accept his method of working. At least that section devises a catalytic role for the 'outside' organiser.

5 and 6 are both problems that can be met by not alerting management until the union is strong enough both in leadership and in membership. It is also true to say that where the union is strongest, there it is also that the security police have the least influence on either management or workers.

7. "Problems of recognition".

What interests me here, is the question, "is it tactically better to approach the workers or the management, first?". This is a tactic only worth considering if the strategy is to organise outside the gates; recruiting your union individually as they enter or leave.

The alternative is posed, namely, that workers be recruited quietly. But it is taken no further. It is admitted that the meeting might be more successful avoiding the pitfalls of speaking with management and organising openly and therefore incurring managements' wrath. Surely, now, consideration should be taken of this particular view.

The whole way in which the problem is posed makes explicit throughout the whole article the tendency to value the union's relationship <u>to</u> other groups (in this case, management, other workers, police and homeland governments) over and above the relationship <u>between</u> the workers.

To summarise; The problems which have arisen have arisen because of the following attitudes and methods;

1. Organisational work is done almost exclusively outside the gates before and after work. It is necessarily done on an individual basis developing what I would term a <u>client/collection member-</u>

ship.

2. The accent turns then to mass memberhip and not to structuring and solidifying the workers. The union is really no less atomistic than the workers on their own.

3. The problem of victimization and recognition are both tied up with the fact that management are alerted before the workers have been able to bring themselves together in order to protect themselves against the stratagems of management. The fact that alternative forms of representation (for example, liaison committees) have been able to remain in the factories despite the open and hostile attacks made by the unions concerned, is evidence of this internal lack of structure.

4. The central man in the union becomes the'organisor' who collects the subscriptions, takes down the complaints, runs the union administration, negotiates with management, etc. This line of thinking ends in bureaucracy, because the staff of the union begin to develop their own interests at the expense of the workers. The central man of the union should surely be the shop-steward, the man on the shop-floor.

5. Instead of bringing workers together, organisers compete amongst themselves to show how many members they have signed on. I hear that in one union this was indeed, encouraged. Membership should be reluctantly extended. Training, discussion and organising should precede membership.

Dear Madam Editor, I hope that you accept these criticisms in the spirit in which they were written. I admire greatly what is being done, but I do not concur with all that is being done.

Black Ex-Trade-Unionist.
Umlazi.

AN AFRICAN UNION NEGOTIATES WITH THE INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL.

In July 1973 the Financial Mail organised a meeting of employers and trade unionists to discuss the question of african trade unions. Mr. Norman Lazarus, President of the Transvaal Clothing Manufacturers Association and Ms. Sarah Chi'ja, Acting General Secretary of the National Union of Clothing Workers, both spoke about the way in which the african NUCW has been integrated into the Industrial Council system. Their comments show the extent to which it is possible for employers to negotiate with african trade unions even within the present legislative framework. This shows how hollow are the claims of those employers who say they would be pleased to negotiate with african unions, if only the government would let them. Part of the discussion was published in the Financial Mail on the 19/7/74. The material printed here is taken from the full transcript, made available by the Financial Mail.

Lazarus: The Transvaal clothing industry employs about 18 000 blacks out of a total work force of some 25 000. By and large neither works nor liaison committees exist because there is an active trade union. We have always lived with it, and we intend continuing this way. An ogre has never existed.

Mr. Devlin (Industrial Relations Manager of Toyota's Motor Assemblies) is prepared to have discussions with a black union but not negotiate. This is using words. We have recently concluded 'discussions' (to be legally correct) with the (African) National Union of Clothing Workers as well as with the (White) Garment Workers' Union, but to my mind they were negotiations.

Every clothing factory has trade union officials, shop stewards, and so on as the recognised people to whom workers take their complaints. They then communicate directly with management or take the matter to their trade union representatives.

Our Industrial Council has a complaints sub-committee which is equally balanced between employers and employees and we sit in judgement on every complaint lodged. Probably more rulings are given against the employers than vice versa.

We have been saved from labour unrest, in fact from near strikes, by the african union. So there is no reason why african unions could not become standard throughout the country.

Financial Mail: The clothing industry has shown that it is possible for an african union to negotiate with the Industrial Council, so that what finally comes before the IC is an agreement reached by all parties involved. All that is legally required is that formally the IC itself does not include unions with African members. In other words employers can meet in Room A with the african, as well as with the registered, unions to bargain and reach an agreement. The employers and the unions who are members of the IC then retire to Room B and formally adopt the agreement reached in Room A and then submit it for ratification by the govern-

ment.

There is in law no reason why this should not be practised in South Africa - if one could persuade management that it is better than the committee system.

Lazarus: There is one theoretical drawback. At IC meetings an official of the Department of Labour is in attendance, technically to safeguard the Africans in the industry, and technically he would have the right to veto the arrangements made in Room A.

This did happen to us fairly recently: the african union requested permission to attend IC meetings as observers, but the Department of Labour took exception, and we took it all the way to the Minister, who would not allow any direct participation. However, with this one exception, what you say is perfectly correct.

Chitja: In our industry, our agreement as gazetted expires every three years. About six to nine months before the expiry date the different unions consult one another. The african union submits what it wishes to the registered union, the registered union in turn submits to us what it asks for. We meet and then the matter is taken to the employers.

One instance I can quote is that of a request by the african union for a holiday on the Thursday before Good Friday. It was granted for the whole industry irrespective of race. So, we are working in a very democratic way.

..... We believe the time has come for the african unions, which were all deprived of the right of belonging to the registered union movement in 1953, to be revived and those black unions must work parallel to the registered union and in close co-operation.

Financial Mail: By parallel you mean side by side, not under an umbrella organisation?

Chitja: Well, if whites and blacks are in one organisation it is regarded as communism. So we would rather work with a registered union, as we do in the garment industry, whereby we submit proposals which the registered union takes in for negotiations with the Industrial Council. We could work hand in hand with the registered unions provided they are prepared to extend assistance to their black colleagues in order to form bona fide trade unions.

..... The fear that existed amongst industrialists has been increased by the strikes in Durban which could not be settled because there was no trade union recognition. But in Johannesburg all the strikes were controlled because we unionists could

come in and say - "Look, fellow workers there is a law. The african worker cannot strike under this Act".

We live in a changing society. The African has adapted himself to industry. He has improved his lot but he has the right to advocate for better wages and improved conditions.

MOCAMBIQUE AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET.

It is now virtually certain that the next Government in Mocambique will be dominated by Frelimo. If this is the case it will have obvious political and economic implicatcns for South Africa. I will here examine some of the possible consequences for South Africa.

There may,for example, be significant repercussions on the South African labour market. In 1971 there were 132 000 workers from Mocambique employed legally in South Africa. There may have been anything from 5 000 to 30 000 additional illegal immigrants. The number of workers coming from Mocambique has slowly declined over the years, but in certain industries, mainly gold and coal mining, Mocambiquans still make up a large proportion of the workers. In 1960 the Froneman Committee estimated the total number of legal and illegal migrants to be 220 000; they constituted 22.4% of the work force in the gold mines and 45.3% in the coal mines. Approximately 20% of the workers employed at present in the Transvaal gold mines come from Mocambique. The supply of labour from Mocambique has always been an important help to the Chamber of Mines in keeping down wages, thus, if this source were to dry up, it could have consequences for the wage structure of South Africa as a whole.

Is this likely to happen? To answer this question we need to look at the reasons why these workers have come to South Africa, the problems facing the economy of Mocambique,and the political motives and likely economic policies of a Frelimo government.

1) Labour in Mocambique.

Why have so many workers from Mocambique come to South Africa to work? One reason is that the economy of Mocambique is itself underdeveloped, and the southern portion, from where most of the migrants come, is not very fertile and is fairly densely populated. The main reason, however, was the labour policies of the Portuguese authorities. In most colonial territories in Africa measures were taken to make sure that there was a large labour force available for the needs of mines and settler farmers. But in the Portuguese territories this policy was taken to its most extreme form. The policy was rationalised by a colonial minister as follows, "It is necessary to inspire in the black the idea of work, and of abandoning his laziness and depravity, if we want to exercise a colonising action to protect him ... A productive society is based on painful hard work, obligatory even for vagrants, and we cannot permit any exception because of race .... It is to be an unenlightened Negrophile not to infuse the African with the absolute necessity to work" (Duffy p182). What this meant in practice was that subsistence agriculture was dismissed as "laziness and depravity", and all Africans were obliged to either produce cash crops or else to be employed for at least 6 months each year. Those who satisfied neither of these requirements were either conscripted into government service or else 'assisted' in the signing of a contract with a private employer. This had two consequences. The first was to

ensure a surplus of labour which could be exported to South Africa. The second consequence was to make it possible for large scale abuses to occur. In the early days the system was virtually one of forced labour. A series of legal reforms had little effect on the actual practice. According to Duffy, "Although these labour laws could hardly be called models of an enlightened native labour policy, they have borne little resemblance to the reality of the last thirty years. The recruitment and use of african labour has been pursued with much the same callous indifference for the law and for the welfare of the worker that characterised labour practices in all the years before 1930. The complaints have been many: illegal recruitment, miserable working conditions, violent treatment of workers, underpayment or withholding of payment, unlawful extension of contracts, the use of child labour on Nyassa tea-plantations and Angolan coffee farms, and even the failure to return workers to their villages" (Duffy p185)

The system was reformed once again in 1962, and this reform certainly did away with the worst excesses of forced labour. But by then the Mocambique economy had developed in such a way that it was structurally dependent on the export of labour to South Africa.

2) South Africa and the economy of Mocambique.

The Mocambiquan economy is at present dependent on South Africa in a number of important respects. Mocambique does not produce enough to pay for its own imports. In 1972 there was a trade deficit; the value of imports was 3 000 million escudos greater than the value of exports. Much of this deficit was made up by:

a) the earnings of the transit trade through Lourenco Marques and Beira to Rhodesia and South Africa (2 000 million escudos) in 1972). In 1965 this amounted to about $70 million compared to $108 million in export earnings and $173 million in imports, and

b) of lesser, but growing importance, the earnings from (mainly white South African) tourism, which amounted to 500 million escudos in 1972.

Apart from this, the economy also benefits from the fact that a large slice of the earnings of migrant miners is payed to them after they have returned. Moreover, it is paid in gold, at the official exchange rate. The Portuguese government sells the gold on the open market, but pays the workers at the much lower fixed official rate. It is estimated that in 1973 R17.5 million worth of gold was sold on the open market for R40.5 million.

South Africa is also an important trading partner, second only to Portugal itself. In 1968 trade with South Africa accounted for over 10% of both imports and exports. The biggest item was refined oil from the refinery in Lourenco Marques.

South Africa is one of the largest investors in Mocambique. The most important project is Cabora Bassa. The ZAMCO consortium building the dam is composed predominantly of South African firms, with Anglo-American having the largest interest. Anglo-American also has investments in explosives, fisheries, cashew nuts and oil prospecting. Johannesburg Consolidated Investments has mining concessions in a 26 000 square kilometre section of the Zambezi valley. Other South African firms have invested in hotels, sugar refining, fertilizer plants and land. Iscor has a stake in the Moatize coal mine.

The economy of Mocambique is entwined in many ways with that of South Africa. A Frelimo government in Mocambique might very well impose crippling sanctions against Rhodesia. Will it also attempt to use its links with South Africa to bring pressure to bear against this country? At first sight it might appear that Mocambique is far more dependent on South Africa than is South Africa on Mocambique. Lourenco Marques exists primarily as a port for South Africa. Ninety per cent of the port traffic is in transit to or from South Africa and other parts of the Southern African interior. The 150 000 workers in South Africa could not be easily absorbed into Mocambique's existing industries. Nevertheless, it seems that a more detailed consideration of the possibilities produces a different picture. An independent Mocambique would be a likely recipient of large-scale international aid. The very fact of independence will free the territory from the cost of the war and will also free it from economic exploitation by Portugal; for example, the profit of the sale of gold from migrants' wages went to metropolitan Portugal, rather than to the miners or the Mocambique colonial government. Although Mocambique is at present underdeveloped, it does have developmental potential. Much of the land is under-utilised. The Cabora Bassa scheme offers a plentiful supply of cheap power, as well as a possible valuable source of irrigation. Also it most probably has large, untapped mineral resources. According to the Financial Mail, "The irony of the situation is that the Portuguese, universally accused of the rape of the country's riches, have not even scratched the surface of Mocambique's resources. The Zambesi river basin has been described as a 'geological scandal' due to its astounding mineral wealth. It reportedly contains some of the biggest iron and coal deposits in the world" (19/7/74). According to a journalist writing for the Financial Times, the region also has copper and uranium deposits. Whether and in what way these resources can be developed depends to a great extent on the nature of the government in Mocambique.

3) Frelimo as Government.

Frelimo will probably continue to be hostile to white rule in South Africa. Having acquired power, by guerilla methods, it is probable that it will be sympathetic to the interests and aspirations of guerilla movements attacking white rule in South Africa. But will it be

both strong enough and determined enough to take action supportive of these movements? In all probability it will. Those who disagree with this view argue,

a) that the most probable outcome in Mocambique will be the development of a 'Congo' type of situation, in which the central government breaks down and there is widespread and disorganised violence. Under these circumstances South Africa will suffer marginally as a result of efficiency problems, but there will be no sustained campaign against white rule here. Or,

b) that the Government will, like most other african governments, settle down to de facto collaboration with South Africa where economic interests are concerned. The leadership will use a rhetoric of african socialism and anti-racism, but will in fact not change the existing social structure radically.

The first argument is sociologically naive. It is based on a complete failure to understand the crisis in the Congo in other than racist terms. The second argument does describe a possible course of development, but it seems that there is some reason to think that it is not the most likely course.

a) Another Congo.

This has been widely predicted by government spokesmen and by some sections of the press. But it is important to understand that the temporary break-down of order in the Congo after independence was greatly facilitated by the structure of Congolese society at that time. In a situation in which there was no organised political movement, it was relatively easy for an army to sieze power, and for local disputes of all kinds to break out. But the situation in Mocambique is completely different. There is a strongly organised nationalist movement with its own army, and also with a large supporting organisation which has been built up in clandestinity, where it had to be efficient in order to survive. There may well be isolated break-downs of order during the change-over period. It is also possible that revenge will be taken against some allies of the old regime, black or white. But a large-scale break-down of order would probably only occur as the result of a last-ditch uprising by white extremists, similar to the attempt by the OAS in Algeria.

b) A Neo-colonial Alternative.

We do not know very much about Frelimo and its leaders, so it is impossible to say with complete certainty what they will or will not do. But the conditions in which a party come to power do enable one to make some estimates of how it will behave. In most of black Africa independence was relatively easily won. The nationalist movements were usually led by the disaffected educated 'middle classes', who were opposed to colonial rule, but who were not aiming at changing the economic structure of their societies. The movements they led were not strongly organised. After independence

these movements quickly faded away, and politics became a struggle for power between competing elites in the capital city. These elites were only too happy to co-operate with foreign investors as long as they could be assured of a share of the spoils. Anti-racist and other forms of rhetoric became an easy way of establishing one's good faith without actually having to do anything about it. The call for african socialism which was based on the argument that there were no classes in traditional african society, was used to conceal the growth of new class divisions in the independent societies. Usually, 'african socialism' was indistinguishable from 'africanised capitalism'. But once more it is important to see the roots of this in the nature of the groups who lead the independence struggle, and in the nature of the struggle itself. The fact that Mocambique will have achieved independence in a very different way should lead us to suspect that it may well also have a very different post-independence period. Frelimo will have acquired power, or at least considerable influence, through a successful guerilla war, and such a war needs a certain kind of organisation, and produces certain kinds of leaders. In most african countries independence was gained largely by negotiating with the representatives of the metropolitan government. In Mocambique Frelimo has had to operate underground for 10 years. An organisation can only survive under those conditions if it can establish close links with the people. To do this it has to meet the needs of a substantial section of the population. Frelimo was in fact able to establish a considerable network of social and educational services in parts of Mocambique which it controlled. This means that it had to produce many people capable of carrying out such organisational work in difficult conditions. A social process was thus set underway which may be described as 'the logic of protracted struggle'. If an organisation is to survive such a protracted struggle it must organise and educate the people; at the same time the members of the organisation are themselves being re-educated by the process of the struggle. And it is important to stress that this struggle is essentially organisational. Acts of terrorism or military conflict always play a relatively minor role in guerilla warfare. Although they are what receive publicity outside, it is the organisational work which in fact occupies most of the time of the guerilla. So the successful guerilla is much more than a person who can plant a land-mine and hide. He comes out of the struggle with organisational skills and with an intimate knowledge of the needs and problems of the people. It is very important to make this point clearly, because South African reporting of guerilla wars tends to produce misunderstanding. It may be good politics to depict your opponent as nothing but a bloodthirsty killer, but it does not really help you to understand what you are up against.

It is possible to argue therefore, that the condition for success in guerilla war is the capacity to produce a large organisation of competent and strongly motivated individuals. One may expect, therefore, that Frelimo will be able to provide the leadership

and skills for a viable government. In addition, the process of radicalisation implicit in the conduct of a guerilla war is such that they will probably not be easily bought off by outside financial interests whether they are South African or any other.

Although Frelimo has not yet made any policy statements regarding foreign investment or other aspects of economic policy, it is probable that their policy will be 'socialism' of a radical kind. It is possible that they will lean towards the Tanzanian or even Chinese model, rather than towards the Kenyan model of neo-colonial capitalism disguised as 'african socialism'. In a recent Financial Times' article, Bridget Bloom writes, "The only real alternative to the present economic dilemma is a revolutionary one: a closed 'self-reliant' economy which would progressively cut back links with the south; probably nationalise existing industries and services; probably seek 'disinterested' aid from where it could; accept a drop in elite living standards and, above all, rely on a truly massive attempt to mobilise the rural areas". Frelimo might well have the mobilising capacity and popular support to carry through such a policy. From the South African point of view the importance of this is that such a policy could serve as the basis for a very rapid withdrawal of labour, and even possibly for a total cut-off of trade, although this is much less likely. Mocambique might then concentrate on absorbing its excess manpower in labour intensive rural development, based on land reform in the plantation sector, the opening up of new arable areas with irrigation, and more efficient use of the present subsistence sector. Financial loss from a hostile policy towards white rule might be partly compensated for by nationalising South African investments, and in particular, interests in Cabora Bassa. The importation of luxuries for the (essentially white) elite might be cut to help counteract the balance of payments. As has already been mentioned, the economic position will be improved by the end of war costs and by the ending of unfavourable trade links with Portugal.

Mocambique will also be well placed to receive foreign aid. To start with, it might, like Zambia, get compensation through UNO for the losses suffered as a result of imposing a boycott on Rhodesia. Frelimo has already established diplomatic and aid ties with the Soviet Union and China. Both will be anxious to strengthen these ties by giving development aid. Here again it is necessary to clear the fog created by South African reporting on Mocambique. There appears to be no evidence that Frelimo is anything other than a nationalist organisation. It is not run by either China or the Soviet Union. But the fact that it was supported by these powers while Portugal was never disavowed by her Nato allies means that Frelimo is unlikely to be very sympathetic towards the 'West'. There is probably no way in which either China or the Soviet Union can establish control over Mocambique, even assuming that they wanted to. But they will certainly be influential, and will have to pay for maintaining that influence with large-scale aid. The very fact that white rule in South Africa

is so unpopular throughout the Third World will be an encouragement to give aid to a country directly confronting South Africa. Aid to Tanzania secures influence and prestige primarily in Tanzania. Aid to Mocambique will bring prestige throughout Africa. For this reason the western powers will also be anxious to offer aid. So it might well be possible for Mocambique to turn confrontation with white rule in South Africa to her own financial advantage.

It is, therefore, likely that a Frelimo government in Mocambique will adopt a hostile political stance towards white rule in South Africa, and an economic policy which will enable her to disengage from South Africa. What will the consequences of this be for South Africa? The withdrawal of labour could have great impact. The mines are already having difficulty in recruiting adequate supplies of labour at present wage levels. The removal of 20% of the labour force would probably oblige the mining houses to increase wages even more rapidly than they have been doing over the last year. And the rising gold price means that they are financially able to do it; they can no longer argue that they cannot survive without cheap labour. A rise in mine wages will attract workers from other sectors, and will thereby increase the bargaining power of workers remaining in those industries. The effect is likely to be pressure for an all round improvement in wages. Exactly how these pressures will be structured cannot be predicted. But it is unlikely to be in a way which is detrimental to black workers in South Africa.

If the Mocambique government were to close Lourenco Marques to South African goods, this would have consequences which are more difficult to estimate. As I have suggested, this is less likely to happen. Mocambique can restrict labour migration without interfering with trade. Originally the agreement to ship approximately 50% of the Rand's imports and exports through Lourenco Marques was made in return for recruiting rights. But at the moment South Africa has no alternative, so she could not immediately stop using Lourenco Marques in retaliation for a ban on recruiting. Of course South Africa might well wish to lessen its dependence on Lourenco Marques, but this would take time. If, however, Mocambique itself were to take the initiative, then South Africa would be in trouble. It would not be easy to re-route goods quickly through the existing South African ports, as they are already overburdened. It would thus be necessary to speed up the development of Richard's Bay as an alternative. The government would have to take urgent measures to reorganise the transport system in order to overcome the dislocation. The necessary changes would be quite large, and would also have repercussions on the internal labour market, although these repercussions are much more difficult to evaluate than are those that would ensue from an end to recruiting in Mocambique.

A total boycott of this nature, associated with a rapid decline of the position of the Smith regime in Rhodesia, would be much more of a political problem than an economic problem. Even the economic problems have political implications. For example, Richards Bay

which is already a source of conflict between the central government and Kwazulu, would be brought further into the limelight. It is impossible to predict what solutions the government would offer to these political questions. All that can be predicted is that we are, as the Americans say, about to enter a whole new ball game.

NOTE: The factual material in this article is drawn from the following:

W.G. Clarence-Smith - "South Africa and Mocambique" in "The Societies of Southern Africa", Vol 3 (London University ICS)
J. Duffy - "Portugal in Africa" (Penguin)
Bridget Bloom - article in the Finanacial Times, 13/8/74.
Davi Martin - "Frelimo Blueprint", Natal Mercury 12/6/74.
Francis Wilson - "Migrant Labour in South Africa".
Financial Mail - 26/4/74, 19/7/74.

THE EAST LONDON STRIKES.

Between the 22nd of July and the 3rd of August, East London was affected by a wave of strikes by black workers. There were strikes at at least 21 firms, involving over 5000 workers in East London and also a strike of 3 500 workers in one firm in neighbouring Kingwilliamstown. We print as an appendix a table giving the information about each firm which we were able to glean from the reports in the East London 'Daily Dispatch'. I shall not attempt to discuss each strike in detail. The overall pattern shows remarkable similarity to the massive wave of strikes in Durban last year. Once the initial impetus has been given by a strike at a large firm, in this case Car Distributor Assemblies, the strikes spread in successive clusters through the various industrial areas. By the 30th, a strike of african bus-drivers threatened to paralyse the city, as most workers have to commute from the 'homeland'town of Mdantsane, about 12 miles from East London itself. But the bus-drivers strike was soon ended, and by the 3rd of August virtually all the East London workers had returned to work.

Most of the strikes were relatively long, compared with the Durban strikes. Some lasted a full week and nearly all the others lasted 3 or 4 days. In most cases there seem to have been fairly lengthy negotiations between worker representatives and management. In some cases the workers representatives were members of pre-existing liaison or works committees, while in other cases they were elected by the strikers. On the whole the strikes were peaceful, although there were two of quite large-scale violence or threats against scabs, and the police intervened with teargas and/or dogs to disperse strikers at three of the largest factories. However, no arrests were made, and no-one was seriously injured either by the police or by the strikers.

Unfortunately the nature of most of the settlements was not made public. In some firms there was adamant refusal on the part of management to make any concessions, whereas in others the workers made gains of the order of 10% or 15%. Several firms used the technique of 'negotiation by sacking'. All the workers were told that they were dismissed, but could re-apply. This technique now seems to be the main way in which South African employers convey their 'final offer' to black workers. The workers are still unable to sustain a strike for much more than one week.

If the overall pattern is familiar, these strikes also illustrate some elements of this pattern in a particularly clear way.

1) Wages and Relative Deprivation.

The overriding demand of the workers, in all but one of the strikes, was for higher wages. East London is a 'border area'; that is, an industrial area on the border of an african 'homeland'. As part of the Government's industrial decentralisation policy, statutory minimum wages are much lower in the border areas than elsewhere. The rationale is that the promise of low wages should offset some of the other cost disadvantages of siting the factory away from

the main industrial and market centres. For example, in terms of the current Unskilled Wage Determination, the minimum wage for a man over 18 years of age is R10 in East London, but R13 in Port Elizabeth, which is not a border area. According to the Productivity and Wages Association's 1971-1972 Wage survey, the average wage for african workers in the lowest grade of work in various towns is as follows:

	average wage	% of africans in lowest grade
Port Elizabeth	R12.31	39.83
Johannesburg	R10.53	30.73
Durban	R10.45	26.63
East London	R 6.57	45.24

These figures are of course now obsolete, but they do illustrate the impact of the border areas policy on wages. And in spite of the lower wages, there is very little difference in the cost of living. The most recent PDL figure for East London, as calculated by the Institute for Planning Research of the University of Port Elizabeth,is R76.73 per month as compared with R78.58 per month for Port Elizabeth, where minimum wages are 33 1/3% higher.

Nevertheless, a closer examination of the individual firms shows that the absolute level of wages is not in fact the most important factor. The minimum wages in the firms affected by the strikes varied from under R6 to R18. The minimum wage at Car Distributor Assemblies, where the strikes in effect started, was 42 cents an hour. This gives a take-home pay of approximately R18 per week. At Distillers Corporation,the minimum wage had recently been raised from R13 to R18 per week. In all factories where specific wage demands were made, these demands were,relatively speaking, very large. But the demands vary widely both in absolute terms and as percentages of the current wages. It would appear that virtually all african workers experience their wage levels as being far too low. This is born out by a very interesting discovery made by a research team from the UCT Wages Commission, which interviewed workers and employers in East London in January 1974. They asked the workers they interviewed: "What wage do you think you should be earning". In nearly every case the workers felt that they should be earning approximately double their current wage. This means that the workers earning larger salaries made bigger demands than those earning lower salaries. The Report comments; "There was also an alarming attitude of management at some firms that the PDL was a level to be set as a 'goal' and that once this goal is reached all will be fine. This attitude defeats the very object of a PDL which supposes to set (sic) a theoretical minimum below which it is impossible to live a decent and healthy life". (p4) If this is morally alarming, it is also sociologically naive. African workers are subjected to all the stimuli of a mass-consumption society. It will be a long time before they feel that

they are earning adequate wages.

The impression that there are probably no firms paying wages which satisfy their workers is born out also by one of the peculiarities of the strikes both in East London and in Durban. In 'normal' societies there is very little tendency for strikes to spread rapidly among factories in unrelated industries which just happen to be located near to one another. The fact that this does happen in South Africa would indicate that there is normally a high sense of impotence. But once one strike shows the possibility of action, the example may be very rapidly imitated by all those who see it.

2) Liaison Committees.
Works or liaison committees may sometimes be useful channels for minor grievances, but they do not seem to function satisfactorily when it comes to the question of wages. From the press reports it is not clear how many of the firms had functioning works or liaison committees before the strikes. What is clear is that to the extent that any such committees became involved in negotiations, it was only after the strikes had begun. The Wages Commission Survey comments as follows on the situation it found: "There appears to be considerable confusion amongst employers and employees alike about the differences between works committees and liaison committees. In most cases where committees exist, they appear to be liaison committees appointed by management and usually comprising supervisors and 'bossboys'. Such committees received no support from the workers interviewed. It was only in five cases that works committees were entirely elected by workers. Such committees received far more support from the workers interviewed".(p9)
This probably reflects accurately the situation in the strike-affected firms. The committees are either not sufficiently representative of workers to raise the issue of wages, or else do not feel sufficiently powerful to do so unless backed by a strike.

3) Homeland Governments and the Workers.
The growing involvement of homeland political leaders in the problems of workers in the white-controlled industrial areas was further accentuated. Mr. Lennox Sebe, the Chief Minister of the Ciskei, became, as the Daily Dispatch headlined on the 1st of August, the 'peacemaker'. He first became involved when the bus-drivers went on strike on the 30th of July. The general manager of Border Passenger Transport and the inspector from the Department of Labour both failed to persuade them to resume work. Then, on the initiative of the Divisional Commissioner of Police, Brigadier Prinsloo, they were taken to a police station where they met with Mr. Sebe, and he persuaded them to return to work pending negotiations. According to the Dispatch, "Brigadier Prinsloo said after the meeting that Mr. Sebe and his ministers were the only people who could bring the wave of strikes on the Border to an end".

On the following day Mr. Sebe had a meeting at the City Hall with

the mayor of East London, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, 25 industrialists and Brigadier Prinsloo and other senior police officers. It is not known what was discussed at this meeting, but later Mr. Sebe toured a number of the factories where strikes were in progress and met with representatives of the workers. He also took part in further negotiations between the bus-drivers and Border Passenger Transport. At Marine Knitting, african leaders from the Ciskei legislative assembly and from the Mdantsane Town Council also intervened to advise the strikers to return to work.

The precise nature of Mr. Sebe's role in this is not clear. Addressing illegally striking workers at a police station in order to persuade them to return to work, is at least, an ambiguous situation. Whose interests are favoured by a return to work? For the workers it may be that a return to work deprives them of their only bargaining lever. It is usually very difficult to restart a strike once it has been ended. Many of the strikers were aware of this and refused to return for as long as they were able. A worker at one factory explained to a reporter: "We have demanded an increase to 75c an hour, which management have refused to meet. They say they will only tell us how much our increases will be once we are back at work. We are not prepared to return to work until we know what increment we will receive".

However, the role of mediator does offer its own potential leverage, and it may be that Mr. Sebe was able to use the added legitimacy which he gained by being brought in as mediator to extract concessions which the workers would have been unable to achieve unaided. On the information we have from the press, it is difficult to assess this. But Mr. Sebe certainly made some strong statements about employers. He accused the industrialists of hypocrisy, and said that they were furthering labour unrest by taking action against ringleaders whenever there were wage disputes. He also said, "The calling of the police when things are very ugly does not solve the problem at all. In fact the industrialists make the police indirectly the enemy of the law-abiding workers. These situations could be saved if industrialist contact homeland governments immediately".

A further significant intervention was that of the Chief Minister of the neighbouring Transkei, Chief Matanzima. He said, "The time when black people were regarded as docile servants who cannot expect anything, has long since passed". All employers would have to realise they had to contend with the bargaining power of a people who had for decades endured oppression. "The black people have the same cost of living as the whites and therefore will not tolerate any discrimination in wages and salaries between black and white". The intervention of the police in matters between employer and employee was abhorrent when there was no threat of public violence. "The police attitude in applying tear gas and setting their dogs on peaceful strikers aggravates the already degrading relations between black and white".

These remarks illustrate the extent to which both leaders now take for granted the legitimacy of the strike weapon, in spite of its illegality.

Their remarks also illustrate one other important point; the fact that the strikes and the problems which they raise are an integral part of the whole problem of black-white relationships in South Africa. Thr right to organise and strike is part of the right to be a full citizen. The Wages Commission Report states that amongst the grievances expressed by workers, "There was also a consistent cry to be recognised as people, to be respected and praised for a job well done and not insulted and ignored". (p16) Each strike is also an expression of this fundamental demand.

DATE	FIRM	NUMBER	PRESENT WAGE	DEMAND	NEGO-TIATION	RESULT	LENGTH (days)
22/7	Kaffrarian Reinforcing (Gately)	90		none		some dis-missal	7
23/7	Car Distributors Assembly (Gately)	1600	42c hour (R18 take-home min.)	25%	yes	15%	3
23/7	Why Waste Paper (Wilsonia)	25					1
25/7	Dunlop Flooring (Wilsonia)	350	29c hour	+75c	yes	nothing	7
25/7	Kenbow (furniture) (Wilsonia)	160	R11.44		no		5
26/7	Cementile				no		several
29/7	Consolidated Textile Mills (Chiselhurst)	1100				all fired on 1/8	
29/7	Consolidated Fine Spinners (Chiselhurst)						4
29/7	North Manufacturing	70			yes		several
29/7	Cyril Lord (textile)	1000	women-R7.50 men -R9.00	+R10 +R9	yes		several
29/7	Regent Neckwear (Wilsonia)		women-R5.70 men -R9.50	+R5 +R5	yes	initial 10% offer	4
29/7	Gentner Manufacturing (Wilsonia)	100	R6.38	+R5	no	IC increase brought for-ward	4

29/7	Everite (Wilsonia)				yes		several
29/7	Marine Knitting	150	R11	R20min +30% for all	yes	paid off 2/8 return 5/8	
30/7	Border Passenger Transport	150		min R35 =59% increase	yes	increase	few hours
30/7	Langeberg Koop (canning)	150			yes		2
30/7	Kimber Construction						2 hours
30/7	Distillers Corporation (Wilsonia)		R18	R25	yes		several
2/8	Model Dairies	267		not money	yes		same day
2/8	H. Jones (canning)		women R6 men R8.50	+R5 +R10			3
3/8	Good Hope Textile (Zwelitsha)	3500	R9	+R15	yes		2

"UNLESS WE ORGANISE"

For those who think of the American working class as being thoroughly passive, the words of this song, popular among the coal miners in Harlan, a Southern town, will come as a surprise.

"Take a scab and kill it,
And put it in the skillet
Fry it up golden brown,
That's union cooking and it's mighty fine."

For 11 months 180 miners and their families have been on strike over the right to organise in the union of their choice, The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA); Brookside, the centre of the strike, is a small mine in a part of the American South where horses still drag ploughs scratching across dry fields, chickens pecking the dust and the jukebox plays solid, sad music.

It's also a part of the world where votes can still be bought for a five-dollar bill, where the bootleggers have bigger houses than the preachers and where blacks keep themselves to themselves.

But it's here at Brookside that members of a union which has only just begun to untangle itself from 20 years of rusting and twisting of its democracy, face up to Duke Power, a giant North Carolina based electricity supply corporation, the sixth biggest public utility in America, declaring this year profits of £26 million.

It's a battle with a history. For generations companies like Duke have come into the Kentucky mountains looking for wealth. They have taken the mountain people's coal and timber, their health and sometimes their lives too.

Those who owned the coal have controlled the police, the legal system and the schools. They are passionately anti-union and don't care a damn if miners go home battered and broken. For them mining is non-union or not at all. And when they fight the unions they do not use the velvet glove or the aristocratic embrace.

In the 1930s the wife of a union organiser wrote a famous song on the back of a calendar when the sheriff, J.H. Blair, ransacked her home. It's called 'Which side are you on?'

"They say in Harlan County
There are no neutrals here;
You'll either be a bosses' man
Or a thug with J H Blair.
Don't scab for the bosses.
Don't listen to their lies.
Us poor folks haven't got a chance
Unless we organise."

(Florence Rees)

Today the UMWA bumper stickers simply carry the question, 'Which side are you on?'

The strike is not about a wage increase. The contract put forward by the UMWA is more straightforward. It is about power, about the miners having some control of their union, their work and their lives.

Above all the strikers want a decent health programme which would provide good care for the family and modest but reliable pensions for retired miners, especially those injured by dust and accidents. They want a proper procedure for grievances and promotions. They want payment from the time they go underground, not the time they start cutting.

Scarcely extreme demands. But in Harlan, where corrupt company unionism and police violence has kept the miners on their knees for a generation, this would mean a small social revolution.

Take safety for example. First there are simply no decent local hospitals or doctors or public services. The old and not so old who come down with pneumoconiosis, 'Black Lung' the disease caused by coal dust, are left to fend for themselves without a guaranteed pension from either company or union. Even after an organised campaign over Black Lung which did much to revive the miners' union in the 1960s, only one in three of the Kentucky miners who apply have obtained a federal pension.

"Somebody said that's a strange tattoo
You have on the back of your head,
I said that's the blueprint left by the coal,
Just a little more and I'd be dead."
('Coal Tattoo', Billy Ed Wheeler).

Accidents are notorious in this area and the owners are proud of their indifference. A few years ago 38 men were buried at nearby Hyden and a federal investigation found that the explosion that killed them was caused by illegal mining practices which the company knew were unsafe.

Brookside is said to be so dangerous that even the rats stay away. Limbless men and crutches are common in these parts, although you never know whether its the mines or Vietnam. There's an artificial limb shop on Main Street, Harlan.

Safety inspections are a farce and enforcement worse. Violations remain outstanding for years. A miner told me he knew the very hour and the very day when the mines inspectors were coming; "The boss would say; 'Let's make it look pretty now.'"

Among the pretty sights recently recorded by the miners at Brookside were missing fire alarms, missing brakes on coal locomotives, areas of flooding which prevented inspection altogether, fire sprinklers that don't work and missing roof bolts.

But effective safety means effective organisation and that means

a continual challenge to management's absolute rights. Norman Yardborough, the mine boss, understands this well; "I'm not going to abdicate the right to any final say on safety because I'm the responsible party. Ultimately, it has got to be a management decision", he says.

"There's no such animal as a safe coal mine. It just doesn't exist."

The miners don't agree. "I don't want my son to go into the mines. But I firmly believe that by the time my sons are old enough to go to work, this mine could be organised so that it's as safe as any factory," says Jerry Rainey.

"There's a man in a big house
way up on the hill,
Far from the shacks where the
poor miners live.
He's got plenty of money, Lord
everything's fine,
And he has forgotten the
Mannington mine.

('Disaster at the Mannington Mine',
Hazel Dickens.')

The union would not be just something inside the mines. It is needed to change the whole way the miners and their families live. Houston Elmore, the union organiser, says; "We have to start to make the union work for the people of Harlan, people we've let down badly in the past. But it's not just about coal. The education system, the housing, the courts, and the political system have got to change if the miners are to get justice. The judge here, now he's a scab coal operator. So how can he be impartial? The teachers in the local schools, they are the sons and daughters of the owners because they are the only people who can get to college. It's sort of like a feudal system."

Brookside is laid out like a cross between a company town and a medieval village. Norman Yardborough's mansion looks out over his mine and his miners separated only by a row of pine trees, a two-lane road and a little hill. Just beneath his home huddle the smaller but still luxurious homes of his managers and foremen, arranged according to rank.

The miner's homes are wooden, temporary-looking shacks, in rows along dirt trackways. The wood is unpainted, the faces pinched, the teeth yellow. Their living conditions are a kind of grim joke. They have a colour TV but no lavatory. They have cars but no dentists.

Large families sit on the porch, father in white T-shirt rocking

backwards and forward, mother in a beehive hair do and kids bathing in the creek. Behind them the coal gleams and a canopy of fir trees overhang the mine shaft. It all looks quite idyllic from a distance.

Until you look twice and see that underneath the veranda is a heap of shit and toilet paper which is only flushed away when the creek floods once a year. And you find that everyone boils all their tap water because last time the Harlan County Health Department tested the drinking water it was 'highly contaminated' with fecal coliform bacteria (a count of 24, permitted level 4).

"In the summer time we didn't
have shoes to wear,
But in the winter we'd all get a
brand new pair
From a mail order catalogue.
Money made from selling a hog.
Daddy always managed to get
the money somewhere".
('Coalminers Daughter!,
Loretta Lynn.)

The schools are pretty foul too. When one of the strikers' children went to school with a UMWA button, it was torn off him. "When your father gets involved in the union, makes your brain go bad", drawls another miner who has conducted his own survey to prove militants' children have got mysteriously bad grades at school since the strike.

Miners are locked into a whole series of social relationships which keep them down. Jerry Rainey says; "Now Mr. Yardborough ain't no factory dresser. To look at him, he might almost be a miner. But he sure does want to stand over us. He wants to stand over us like a mule master with a whip he does. Well I ain't no mule hauling plough. Them's just slavery."

In this situation a union is both last hope and first chance.

Now the strike's main enemy is time. The miners have been out for 11 months. The pickets squat playing cards in the hot dust, listening to the car radio and building a heap of empty beer cans. At night people whittle round camp fires and play mandolins and banjoes.

But if the management try to pull a fast one, a whistle will summon 150 miners in two minutes.

The deadlock is tense. If they are beaten the pickets will have to leave for the auto and steel plants of the North. In a town where mining is the only work, the owner's blacklist is an order to leave.

They also know Duke is hungry for coal. Only two weeks ago the president of the 'yeller-dog' company union was photographed and taped attempting to bribe two strikers with 140 dollars in cash with a promise of a total pay off of 5000 dollars if the rest of the men could be 'persuaded' back to work.

Just underneath the calm and heat and the waiting is fear; Harlan is where the owners have always fought trade unionism with machine guns. It was in Harlan that miner's union reform candidate Yablonski was shot dead in his bed. So far during this strike the only shooting has been some high velocity bullets into the back of a picket van. The organiser has a revolver underneath his union briefcase.

"I can see the people stirring
through the valleys and the hills,
I can hear the people stirring as
I go, as I go.
I can feel the people stirring
through the valleys and the hills
Oh, I'm going home to Jesus,
bless my soul, bless my soul".

(Traditional)

To get up spirits, the strike committee has equipped an old station wagon with loudspeakers and this 'booster van' cruises between Evarts, Brookside and Harlan cheering people up and passing on the news and gossip. But it is demurely called the Brooklyn Women's Club which has been the most successful morale builder.

In September the male union members were prevented by a local court injunction from mounting effective pickets. This itself was a fraud, as a local doctor, himself active in the Black Lung movement snorted; "I am sick and tired of rule by injunctions, by the big money in this country. Do you ever see an injunction given in favour of a poor person?"

But while the men were banned, the women stopped the scabs. "At first they thought we were pretty funny, but finally they quit laughing," says Minnie Lunsford.

At first they tried talking but when a scab pulled a gun, all hell let loose. The state police moved in with squad cars and truncheon charges, the women retaliated with two-by-two clubs and hoe handles. One woman shouted at the police; "You can beat the shit out of me but you can't beat the union out of me".

Many women and children went to prison for two days. Other women picketed their court hearing. A woman told the judge; "You're a coal owner and I resent you trying me. And that clerk beside you, her son photographed union men at Brookside for the blacklist."

Their defence was clear; "We had to picket ourselves to prevent the coal-owners from getting round the law. We all know we doing what is right."

The strike has awoken new capacities and determination . "People listen better than they did before", says one striker. "We've met people who we didn't know existed on that picket line", says another. "Sure it's been worth it" says Minnie Lunsford. "It was just like a school, I've enjoyed every minute of it". "Sometimes I wonder if I knew anything before this strike". mused Betty Eldridge.

The strike has shaken the county up. The union idea is spreading. Employees of the Appalachian Hospitals have been out for union recognition. Waitresses in the town, including some of the strikers' daughters, are trying to form an association.

Personal relations have been changed too. Women who have won their husbands' grudging admiration for their courage on the picket line and their insolence in court are not going meekly back to the sink.

"I ain't got much money, not
much of a home.
We own our own land but the
land's not our own,
But if we all got together, we
can work it all out,
We'll take over the country and
run 'em all out",

('Black Waters', Jean Ritchie)

Newest of all is a sense of power. "When miners move together, that's really something", one striker said of the British coal strike in 1974.

American miners took a close interest in the British coalfields and are amazed that British miners actually forced a general election. The Brookside strike may not yet have Duke Power and Richard Nixon on their knees but it does show again that if the working class doesn't change the world, even the world of East Kentucky, then nobody will. "We got the cat by the tail now, can't go but one way".

Minnie Lunsford , of the Brookside Women's Club, who have been running the picket lines;

"Harlan got called Bloody when they started this union, when they started to organise. The owner then had his gun-thugs - he's pretty much like Norman Yarborough. He'd just get him a good bunch of

gun-thugs that weren't scared of anything.

They'd just come up to the organiser. They was wanting to get rid of him. They wasn't having no organising.

Three car-loads of thugs eased across the road and stopped in front of his house. They meant to kill. They just shot up the house. The bullets made big streaks about a foot long. All through the house.

The organiser's wife - they were good Christian people- she didn't realise what it was. She thought it was a drunk. Everything was quiet. She called out for her son whose name was Billy. She got her two daughters to be all calm and to clear up the dishes. She had got a bullet hole right through her wrist.

She called out, "Billy how are you?" His little brother said, "He went in the bedroom". She went in there holding her wrist. He was lying on the trunk with his head shot off.

They tried to get hold of the ambulance and the sheriff, the law you know. And they wouldn't come. They called up Harlan to come and get him. No possibility. People was afraid to go out to that house because the gun-thugs could have come back.

They'd do anything, those gun-thugs. They'd dynamite houses. They'd say, "Let's go up on the mountains to hear a ball-game on the radio". Next morning you'd hear on the news, so and so was killed. Shot. On the mountain.

Women's clubs didn't exist in the thirties. There was nothing. Hard times and starvation almost. We women had to stay in the house or near.

In the thirties, I saw people suffer. I suffered enough. Seeing my children, y'know. They didn't go too hungry but there's lots of things they needed that they didn't get. I suffered in that. And some others suffered more than me.

So now I'll go anywhere to get a contract, get a union, have it all nice and everything. Peaceable. Conditions right and everything. That's what I enjoy. Trying to do something, getting things to rights.

In what you might say is my last days I'm going to do something for others. Somebody said as old as me, how come you're going to be on the picket line? I said, "Age and looks don't count one bit. It's what you feel and what you have got in you and what you want other people to have, things that we never had. And what you believe in".

Me and my husband are up in years. If it hadn't been for the union

we'd not be here. We have children and they love us and would have helped, but it's through the union he draws his pension and we've got a good hospital card. And all those things. He's worked and slaved and now he's got this black lung.

So why shouldn't I feel? If I was a 90-year-old, I'd be out there. It's just how I feel about it. There's so many that hasn't got pension and hasn't got those cards yet."

RECENT STRIKES IN DURBAN.

In Durban five factories were hit by strikes in the last month; Paper Sacks SA Ltd., Flocon Products, Blaikie Johnstone, Hypack Products, Wire Industry Steel Products and Engineering Company (WISPECO)

FLOCON PRODUCTS.

On Friday, 19th July the entire workforce of 38 workers at Flocon Products, a concrete engineering firm,went to consult the manager about a wage increase. They demanded R5. The starting wage is R15.84.

The workers, fearing victimisation,refused to elect leaders or to use the liaison committee for negotiations. The liaison committee has not been registered and is not recognised by the workers. According to a worker's statement, Mr. Peterson, the manager, told them that they could resign if they didn't like their wages. They had received two increases this year, a blanket R1 increase at the beginning of the year and R3 for some in March. He said that no more could be given if the firm was to remain a paying concern. They then returned to work.

This tactic having failed they struck on the following Monday. They refused to be signed off. Mr. Peterson warned that if they did not return to work the following day, they would be fired. The workers, feeling a need for outside representation, sent two representatives to the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund to get people to negotiate with management for them.

The following day the workers stood outside the factory gates, unaware of the fact that they had been fired and that Mr. Peterson had contracted 14 new workers from the Labour Bureau in Pinetown. The workers were unskilled and thus easily replaceable. An official from the Department of Labour attempted to persuade the workers to go back, saying that the manager would consider giving them a rise in a months time. Not easily fooled, the workers rejected this.

Two people from the G.W.F.B.F met with management and negotiated a deal whereby management would take back all the fired workers, would register and consult with the 5 member works committee, elected that day, and would discuss the issue of merit increases with them. He refused to give a blanket increase. Management wanted to take the workers back on a selective basis, but agreed to take all back and to work out firing procedures with the committee.

So the workers, having exhausted all possible means for arriving at a settlement, returned to work. Mr. Peterson said the 14 newly hired workers would remain as an extra work force because he intended firing some of the other workers who he regarded as 'loafers'. He claimed the strike to have been instigated by a

a few 'hotheads'. On Friday 26th two workers were fired. One of them was chairman of the newly elected works committee, the other also a member. So it seems that Mr. Peterson had agreed to the election of a works committee in order to sift out the 'hotheads', though the official reason was that they were unproductive. The workers however claim that the foreman told the works committee that the two were sacked for their part in the strike. The workers through the Legal Aid Clinic have lodged a complaint with the Labour Bureau for wrongful dismissal. All the workers have been charged for striking illegally. They appeared in court on the 20th August, their case being remanded to next month.

Management most probably believes that this repressive maasure will prevent strikes occuring in the future. Whether it does or not remains to be seen. But one can only be amazed at the stupidity of this solution. The attempt to prevent strikes is not synonymous with the eradication of their cause , dissatisfaction, which can be manifested in ways less direct, less manageable and more harmful for the profitability of the firm.

BLAIKIE JOHNSTON (TIMBER).

On Friday 26th July 700 african workers, the entire work force refused to start work. They demanded an immediate blanket increase of R5.

There are two departments at Blaikie Johnstone; a workshop and a yard. The workers in the workshop are covered by the Industrial Council for the Building Industry and receive wages from R17 to R19. The Agreement gave increases effective from June. The labourers in the yard are excluded from the terms of the Agreement, are covered by the Factories Act and receive R14 per week.

The workers stood outside the factory gates, watched by the police. Meanwhile workers' representatives met with management officials. They called on Mr. Ngobese, Urban Ambassador for the Kwazulu Government, to assist in the negotiations. They reached an agreement that day, with the workers agreeing to return to work the Monday. The terms of the agreement were that those workers not covered by the Industrial Council Agreement would receive a R1.50 per week increase. Those covered would not get an increase.

HYPACK PRODUCTS.

Hypack Products, a member of the Hulett group was hit by a strike on Thursday 25th July. 300 african and indian workers went on strike because they were dissatisfied with the nature of their wage increases. This increase was an attendance bonus of R1. Another increase of R1 in the form of an attendance bonus was given to them in January so that abscence for whatever reason would result in the loss of R2. They demanded that this be given as a blanket increase. One worker showed a Mercury Reporter his payslip which gave his basic wage and noted a R1 deduction, despite

the fact that the worker had produced a doctor's certificate.

The starting rate is R15.50 per week with an increase of R2 for 2 years service.

The next day management, officials from the Department of Labour and workers' representatives held a meeting. They refused to use the works committee. Management issued an ultimatum; either they return to work or they be fired. They decided to collect their pay packets that day, being watched by the police and members of the Special Branch as they did so. They were told that those who wanted to return to work on Monday could do so, and they would receive the increases determined by management. They would be re-employed on a selective basis.

On Monday, all the workers reapplied for their jobs. Some of them were fired.

WISPECO.
After the works committee had unsucessfully attempted to negotiate a wage increase, 400 labourers at WISPECO went on strike.

The basic wage rate ranged from 34c to 44c an hour for a 45 hour week (that is, R14.30 to R19.80 per week). The workers were expecting an increase ranging from 7c to 10c per hour (R3.15 to R4.50 per week) to be effective from August 1st. When they received their payslips they noted that increases ranging from 5c to 10c had been given (R2.35 to R4.50 per week). The manager told the works committee that he had mistakenly given them false information and that management was no going to remedy this by giving some the 2c expected.

They were told that if they had not returned by that afternoon they would be fired. The works committee, officials from the Department of Labour and management held discussions. Mr. Ngobese arrived and spoke to the workers. Management refused to speak to him. The official from the Department of Labour agreed to speak to Mr. Ngobese and after discussions addressed the workers, urging them to return to work rather than be fired. Mr. Ngobese also attempted to persuade them to go back to work saying that if they were on stike it was difficult for him to negotiate but if they returned to work he would be in a better position to do so.

The workers returned to work the following day, August 7th without having achieved anything material from the strike.

PAPER SACKS SA LTD.
The entire workforce of 317 african and indian workers went on strike on Tuesday 30th July. The minimum starting wage is R19.62 per week, the de facto lowest wage paid being R24.25.

The workers were dissatisfied with the terms of the wage increases

promised them from August 2nd. The increases ranging from 50c to R5.50 per week were based on merit and ability. A spokesman told of the manner in which management had informed the workers of the increases; "The promises for higher pay were made secretly on Friday when the managing director, Mr. A.N. Jordaan called the staff individually into his office and told them what they would get. We were told not to tell the others".. 12 of the workers learnt that they were to be excluded because, as manngement claimed they were either new workers or had a bad record. It was for this reason and the fact that they disliked the system of merit increases that the workers decided to strike. That is, they rejected as unfair the system of individual advancement. Two weeks before the strike, the indian and african liaison committees asked for an across the board cost of living increase. Management told them they were considering the matter. They had decided in June to review all wages and give merit increases. The workers were expecting a blanket increase similar to the R2 increase they received last year.

The manifest conflict was about the fact that 12 workers didn't receive an increase, the latent one was a conflict between managements' desire to breed competition amongst workers (demonstrated by the way they informed them of the increase) and the workers' desire for solidarity and group rather than individual advancement. Also, the increases were given in terms of standards and definitions of merit, the determinationof which were arrived at without negotiation with the workers. They thus had no control over the system. Mr. Peterson explained that the company had introduced a system of job evaluation for all black, weekly paid workers last year. Every worker was interviewed in December and given a job classification and wage rate applicable to his work, ability and experience. "This means that every wage earner is now tréated as an individual and has the opportunity to improve his position when the opportunity arises". He said that this system enabled individuals to develop seperately rather than as members of a group. He suggests that this is in the interests of the worker, neglecting the fact that the advancement of each worker in terms of working conditions generally can only be achieved by worker solidarity.

Mr. Jordaan met with the workers telling them that those who did not return to work the following day would be paid off on Friday. The workers who returned would not lose wages for time lost striking. This failed to persuade them. They refused to return to work on Friday. Mr. Ngobese met with management and the african and indian liaison committees. Management agreed to give wage increases to nine of the twelve men who had not received wage increases. But the system itself remained unchanged. On this basis the workers returned to work on Monday.

STRIKES IN THE TRANSVAAL AND O.F.S.

One of the larger and more protracted of the wave of strikes engaged in by workers on the Reef and in the O.F.S. during July,occured at Kros Bros. a furniture firm in Germiston. Here 750 african workers picketed outside their factory for a 20c an hour increase. There was apparently no scabbing and no physical confrontations were engaged in. The police confined their role to keeping the road outside the factory unobstructed. The workers refused to comply with management' demand that a negotiating committee be elected. They eventually returned to work having obtained a pay increase of 7c an hour, this being the settlement management had initially sought.

During none of the other strikes which occurred during the first half of July at approximately 14 factories and contract sites in the Free State and the Reef, and involving approximately 5 000 african workers did picketing occur and in the vast majority of cases settlements were obtained through immediate wage increases. In spite of a total lack of evidence in its support and much evidence to the contrary, the agitator theory of strike causation was again bandied about. According to Mr. Drummond, director of the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation, the strikes were "not entirely spontaneous ..... there was agitation".

On July 19, a two day strike occurred at Transvaal Metal Merchants, Jeppestown. Some 170 african labourers struck demanding R5 a week increase. (The day before the workers had obtained a R1 statutory wage increase). Again the workers refused to elect a negotiating team from amongst their ranks.

On the first day of the strike, whilst Department of Labour officials were addressing the workers, a lorry carrying scrap metal arrived. The striking workers told the driver to leave at once. When he refused the workers immediately accosted him and forced him to leave. A large contingent of police was present and on the second day of the strike the workers were addressed by Brigadier J. B. Wiese, District Commissioner of Johannesburg. The settlement eventually reached was that workers would obtain a R1 per week increase.

July 19th also saw strikes at another four firms, in Isando, Germiston, Alberton and Bedfordview. At Superocla in Germiston a 7c per hour increment ended a 3 hour strike of some 480 african workers. At Bohler Steel Africa in Isando managements' response to the workers' strike was to immediately introduce a new minimum wage of R25 per week; this meets the PDL computation of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce. It is interesting to note that the minimum wage laid down by the new Agreement in the Steel and Engineering Industry is only about R17.50 per week. At Union Flooring Tiles in Bedfordview however the 200 striking workers' demand for a 7c an hour increment was rejected and the 100 who refused to accept management's offer of R1.00 per week increment were immediately paid off.

Intransigent postures were also adopted by the managements of the National Chemical Products factory, the Banana Control Board (both in Germiston) and the Germiston Coal Company, where management apparently stopped strikes by threatening workers with instant dismissal. The Germiston Coal Company did in fact fire 140 striking workers.

In July there were also strikes at the following factories and plants; (details of settlements where disclosed and available in brackets after the firm's name) Germiston Fresh Meat supply, Germiston; Anderson Mavor (Pty) Ltd., Germiston; Sand and Co., Johannesburg; N.F. Diecasting (Pty) Ltd (20% increment from 35c per hour to 42c per hour); Rand Refinery, Germiston (increase of 56c per shift and charge of 70c per shift made for food and accomodation rescinded. The week before a R6 per week increase had been obtained). All the striking workers at these firms made demands for weekly increases ranging from R5 to R9. The disputes were all settled on the same day except for that at Abkin's Steel Corporation (settlement undisclosed) where workers were asked to wait a day until a meeting of the Ferrous Scrap Distributors Association, at which the future price of scrap would be decided, was held. Strikes of 250 and 100 african workers respectively occurred at the General Erection Company, Wadeville and in the electicity department of the Germiston City Council.

On the sixth of August the 400 strong african work force of the Vetsak factory in Bothaville demanded an increase of 7c an hour. The management of Vetsak apparently told the workers that in terms of the Factories Act, it was only possible for wage increases to be introduced on prescribed dates. Police then arrived at the factory and addressed the workers who subsequently returned to work. Three days later 400 african workers at the Prima Meat Factory in Doornfontein struck for one day. There too the police were appealed to and apparently were again successful in ending the strike. Company spokesmen refused to reveal the nature of the dispute.

On the 17th August the Palabora Mining Company confirmed that a strike by 100 white miners had begun at the mine, apparently in opposition to the quite legal employment by a contractor of three Coloured welders to work on a pipeline between the Palabora Mining Company works and Foskor. The chairman of the Palabora Mining Company reported two days later that the dispute had been settled, one of the conditions being that the strikers would not be prosecuted for what was an illegal stoppage.

The 400 african women workers at Turnwrights sweet factory in Johannesburg who struck in the third week of July came out again on August the 21st. As before the workers who were still receiving wages from R11 - R12 demanded a R5 per week increase. In the July strike management had negotiated with the liaison committee.

In the presence of the police liaison committee members attempted

with only partial success, and amid shouts of "more money", to persuade the workers to enter the factory and to listen to addresses from the members of the liaison committee. Mrs. Thelma de Klerk, the Gerneral Secretary of the Sweet Workers' Union, a white and coloured workers union, also spoke to the workers and promised to negotiate with management on their behalf. The workers, however, wished to be represented by the Black Allied Workers' Union. During July this union had attempted to represent the workers but management had been refractory.

On August the 23rd the management of Turnwrights issued a pamphlet to the workers which stated that the striking workers had broken their contracts and were thus no longer legally employed by the company. However, were the workers' to immediately cease striking they would be re-employed. In addition management promised to review extant wage scales in consultation with the liaison committee. The workers vociferously rejected this approach and marched en bloc to the headquarters of the BAWU. Mr. Cecil Fanekiso, Acting General Secretary of BAWU, who had earlier distributed pamphlets to the workers which detailed the functions of the different types of in-factory committes and explained the advantages of committees linking up with trade unions, was asked by the police to address the workers and request them to disperse. This they did. Later Mr. Fanekiso met liaison committee members in his office. According to a spokesman of the Sweet Workers' Union, Turnwrights pays its workers the lowest wages amongst the sweet factories in the Johannesburg area. At the time of writing this dispute was unsettled.

Of course no convincing attempt can be made to cull society wide or even localised generalizations from such sparse, fragmentary evidence as is here presented. However, widespread dissatisfaction with wage levels is patent as is the fact that this is an important reason why workers strike. Another persistent fact is the short duration of the strikes which reflects the current, very unjust weakness of black workers as a social group and is in turn a function of both a shortage of material resources and the fact that black workers lack strong trade unions.

BOOK REVIEWS.

Richard Hyman: "Disputes Procedure in Action. A study of the Engineering industry disputes procedure in Coventry." Heinemann Educational Books.

At a time when strike action by workers in South Africa is increasingly being used to voice grievances and make demands, a book on disputes procedure is quite relevant. This book is particularly interesting because it describes a disputes procedure which has been set up outside the statutory industrial relations system. This makes it of particular relevance for african trade unions who operate outside the Industrial Conciliation Act, but it should also be interesting for registered trade unions who find the disputes procedure in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act cumbersome and legalistic.

The Engineering disputes procedure in Britain, unique as an employers solution for worker's grievances, has gained a fair degree of acceptance from progressive trade unions and even militant workers. The procedure originated from two national lock-outs in the industry, and was introduced through negotiation as a flexible form of solving disputes. There is a high rate of reference of disputes to conferences mainly from the two large unions in the industry; the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundary Workers (AEF). The disputes procedure involves continuous collective bargaining rather than legal interpretation, in comparison to procedure in South Africa. In essence the engineering system is a form of employer conciliation.

Hyman describes the main features of the procedure. A worker with a grievance approaches management. If he meets with no success then the worker and his organiser approach management which is aided by an agent from the employer's association. This has come to be called the Works' Conference. If the issue is not resolved, a Local Conference, at which an 'employer's panel' reviews the case, is held within seven days. Again, if there is no resolution the issue can chen be referred to the monthly Central Conference meeting. Throughout the procedure no recourse may be taken to a partial or general stoppage of work, according to the agreement. Interestingly, there is no explicit reference in the agreement to shop-stewards which are a very potent force in the engineering industry, particularly in Coventry.

The conciliation covers different groups of workers including apprentices, staff employees, and manual workers. At all stages the conciliation conferences are chaired by an official of the employers' association.

This is rather a severe condensation of the procedure outlined by Hyman, but in its essential features, would appear to be highly one-sided in favour of the employers. It could be expected that

the employers would claim that their decisions were an exercise of their managerial prerogatives and were not the proper subject for discussion, as has been the case with so many disputes in South Africa. In fact employers have demanded 'managerial functions' (that is the right to introduce changes without consulting the union or the workers) in principle, but have agreed to consutation in practice.

This is a most important point which exposes the vast differences between procedure in South Africa and Britain. The engineering procedure functions because of the right of workers to strike, and the willingness of workers to exercise this right. As Hyman puts it on page 84: "It is the readiness of the union members to take action (in breach of procedure) in each situation which sets the practical limits of managerial prerogatives; and this readiness will naturally vary (and not always, it may be supposed, in ratio to the merits of each particular case)." Workers consolidate their rights during periods of full employment, and fight defensive battles during slack periods.

Although the trade unions have always complained of the inadequacy of the conciliation procedure, there has been a sharp increase in the number of references (grievances which cannot be settled in the factory) to conferences in the 1950s, and the grievances are taken more often to the Central Conference. The increase in references has been particularly high from staff employees in the 1960s, an aspect totally missing from the South African scene. From the description of the procedure and the higher incidence of references it is obvious that conciliation must take up a considerable amount of the time and energy of the trade union officials.

The TGWU and AEF make virtually all the references to conferences. The smaller unions (of which there are many in the British engineering industry) are mostly involved in references concerning three or more unions. The big unions have some men in every department or workshop and so are likely to take up a greater variety of issues, but the craft unions (the small unions) object in principle to involvement in procedure as they contend that grievances should be solved by the shop-stewards alone. Representing skilled workers, the shop-stewards have more power.

How does the procedure work in practice? Workers have easy access to the procedure with most unions. With the TGWU the officials do not attempt to set limits on the subject matter for references, and the district office will arrange a Works Conference for any issue which cannot be solved by the worker and his shop-steward. The AEF is more formal and deliberate; the applications for a Works Conference going step by step through various stages. But in both unions the Works Conference can be called virtually automatically. The issues brought to the Central Conference, do however, tend to be more selective.

Most references to Works Conferences come from larger firms, particularly those with over 1 000 workers. This has arisen, according to Hyman, because larger factories have less job satisfaction and more conflict, because decisions are made right at the top, and because the shop-stewards are still a phenomenon of the larger firm.

What is the function of the procedure? A disputes procedure has been described as many things; "a face-saving device, a power instrument making deals, a judicial system, or a laboratory for developing negotiating issues, leadership skills and political alliances." In the engineering industry, Hyman finds three functions for the system:

1. It acts as a safety valve against domestic disputes spreading throughout the industry;
2. It recognises the negotiating rights of the trade union at the workshop, yet brings pressure against misuse; and
3. It brings the conciliatory forces outside the factory to bear on a situation.

In this sense then, the procedure is a form of disguised bargaining.

What are the issues? The references which are 'disposed of' (not necessarily solved) are not often questions of interpretation of the agreement or facts of the issue. Hyman finds questions of fact and law are rarely at issue as these are usually sorted out at the earlier stages. Most of the issues, as one could have guessed, are wage problems or claims, and more wage claims are taken the next step further than other issues. The emphasis on wages has lead Hyman (p43) to conclude that the "handling of domestic disputes has become a form of local wage negotiation."

The emphasis on wage claims proves that the procedure is a form of disguised bargaining.

Why do the unions use the procedure? Hyman does tell us that the unions are not happy with the procedure but continue to use it even more frequently. He gives us three reasons:

1. The unions are under a formal obligation under the national agreement to exhaust the procedure before striking;
2. The unions have profited from successfully making wage claims;
3. The unions feel that change in the procedure is possible.

There are significant gains on wage issues, although the results are limited in non-wage references.

Employers, on the other hand, find that the procedure is "valuable in removing the pressure of industrial action", and hope that many issues are perishable, that is, that the men won't strike several weeks after the event.

Just how effective is the procedure? Hyman gives us considerable statistical documentation on this (and other) points. The effectiveness of the system is evaluated in terms of the 'disposal rate'. This rate differs sharply between manual and staff employees. While only 4 to 6 percent of manual references ended in complete failure, a much higher proportion of staff references exhaust the procedure without resolution.

Hyman finally gives us a set of case studies ranging from straight pay claims for time-rated workers, questions of grading, to payment by results systems. Staff references cover salaries, hours of work, holiday arrangements, and redundancy issues. These case studies are highly illuminating, bring out the atmosphere of bargaining, and help chart the steps in the procedure.

This book is important for South African trade unionist and employers for it emphasises a system of disputes procedure which operates quite independently of legislation. Far too many of the problems of South African industrial relations, such as recognition of african trade unions and formulas for solving disputes, are treated in a completely uncreative manner. Virtually all participants appeal to the state to make the appropriate regulations. The trade union movement appeals to the government to make a law providing for recognition of african trade unions, and employers insist on enforcing liaison committees as they are part of a legislative enactment.

Both parties stand helpless while the state refuses to bring about changes. In fact legislation on industrial relations in South Africa could make things a lot worse, and crystallise a racist labour relations system. Hyman's book gives us an idea of a dispute's procedure which operates independently from legislative control and yet is highly operative. You don't need an army of lawyers to make it work.

William Brown: "Piecework Bargaining".
Heineman Educational Books.

"Piecework pays the workers according to the number of items that he produces; although payment is normally related to a worker's output, piecework is primarily intended to reward labour input". (p4) The object of this particular system of paying wages is to ensure productivity, and in some cases, through incentive, to further productivity.

The problem that immediately confronts one is, just how a fair and equitable pay system could be worked out. While management attempts to calculate this 'scientifically', the author shows that whatever system is put into operation, it can never be "insulated from bargaining pressures".

In a carefully worked out argument, Mr. Brown shows how the mechanisms of rigorously (this is more correct than 'scientifically') implemented work studies, drift into the bargaining area. He lists three autonomous mechanisms;

1. The subjective and intuitive nature of work study itself, Even the most accomplished work study engineers do not claim to be within 95 percent accurate. Workers may be able to confuse them during their work; if a piece rate is too 'tight' the workers will definitely complain, in which case it will probably be rectified; if, however, it is too slack, it will be very difficult for any management to enforce a reduction of earnings.
2. Technical innovation and alteration are facts that could increase a worker's earnings within the old rate.
3. The third source of anomalies is what he terms the phenomena of the learning curve. It is generally regarded that one improves one's skill with the passage of time and the accumulation of experience.

Over a period of time the seemingly minor anomalies tend to create the impression that the system is no longer 'fair'. "As anomalous earnings emerge through the autonomous mechanisms, the scatter of individual earnings tends to increase and the connection between pay and effort becomes weakened". The whole process of fixing piece work rates becomes a bargaining matter.

This brings us to the central problem that the book attempts to answer,namely, "that of understanding wage determination, when the operation of market forces is transferred of obscured by the exercise of bargaining power". And this involves the study of the role of the shop-steward vis a vis management in determining piece rates. Since the unions negotiate nationally, very little explicit or formal negotiation takes place on the shop-floor, though this is something that the author feels would be beneficial to the workers . The disintegration of piece-rate systems, while it shifts control of the piece-rate from management

to the worker, is a shift to the individual worker, and not to the workers as a whole. The development of unequal rates, of different sets of interests, serves to weaken the collective bargaining power so necessary to preserve the rates that protect the workers in their relationship to management. Such rates would for instance be : "no-one may be transferred with a loss of gross earnings" and "rate in existence cannot be changed without a change of method or material".

While the heading of the book is general, the contents are very specific, namely that it refers to the Engineering Industry in Great Britain. This all makes it necessary for the reviewer to relate what aspects would be important in the South African context, the first of which must be the general framework of the book.

The book deals with economic control explicitly, but leaves political control implicit. The South African context for piece-work bargaining, for any effecteve industrial bargaining is severely limited. Not only by the limitation of the right to strike, but also in the history of trade unions. But the book shows clearly that piece-work gives the workers on the factory floor some measure of control over their earnings; this is relevant for South Africa where the african workers have absolutely no say in Industrial Council Agreements or Wage Determinations. The piece-work system gives some leeway for these workers to gain some control over their remuneration. It is clear however, that the workers concerned will have to be organised together in order to gain such control.

As industry is becoming mechanised and capital intensive in South Africa, there is going to be an ever increasing reliance upon such payment systems. Trade unionists will have to be up to date with sophisticated methods of work study, until such time as the trade unions themselves employ 'work study' personnel to check and counter management work study proposals. The officials themselves will need to be well-versed on the subject. This book, while not dealing with the work study as such, gives the basis of a critique in one's arguments with management about piece-rates.

While a lot of the book is quite technical, it is not beyond one's comprehension and it would certainly do to concentrate and assimilate it.

Norman Herd: "1922 The Revolt on the Rand".
Blue Crane Books, Johannesburg 1966.

The 1922 revolt was unquestionably one of the most important events in South African labour history, with profound implications for the structure of politics and of labour relations in South Africa. It was the climax of 25 years of militant trade unionism and the prelude to a new system of labour relations which ensured that white workers would share with employers in the exploitation of black labour. These historical dimensions are missing from Herd's study. But then he is not aiming at giving such an account. He is interested in the revolt as an event, and most of his book is a detailed description of the revolt itself, focusing mainly on the fighting between troops, police and strikers. This he does well, and it is important that it should be done. The extent of organised violence employed by both sides in the strike, is not widely known.

The revolt arose out of a strike by white mine workers in defence of the colour bar on the mines. When deep mining first began on the mines, the necessary skilled labour had to be imported from overseas at high wage rates. The first strike by whites was successfully organised to prevent the Chamber of Mines from reducing wages. By the exercise of trade union and political power the white skilled miners were able to turn their initial scarcity value into a permanent and large wage gap, which came to have little to do with skill, and much to do with skin colour. Certain crafts had been reserved for whites by law for a short period under Kruger's government, but it was not until the British had conquered the Boer republics that job reservation was introduced on a large scale. After the war the mine-owners cut wages drastically, and few Africans were willing to come to work on the mines. The Milner regime imported 50 000 Chinese indentured labourers in order to keep the wages down. In 1907 whites struck in protest against a proposal by the mine-owners to permit African and Chinese workers to perform skilled work. The strike was broken by replacing the skilled, immigrant mine-workers with unemployed Afrikaners. To placate worker-hostility, many jobs were reserved for whites. After Union this job reservation was perpetuated by regulations issued under the Mines and Works Act of 1911. These regulations were actually of doubtful legal validity, and after the failure of the 1922 strike were successfully challenged by the mine owners. But for the meanwhile they suited the owners well enough. During the 1914-18 war, the white mine-workers were able to entrench themselves even further by obtaining a guarantee that the ratio of black to white workers on the mines would never rise above 8.5 : 1. In the boom period just after the war, with the price of gold soaring, the employers were willing to accept this. But by 1920 the post-war boom in Europe was already faltering, and the price of gold began to drop. With their profit-margins threatened, the mine owners began to look for ways of cut-

ting labour costs. There was no economic reason for the gap between white and black wages. There were many african workers fully able to move into the reserved 'white' jobs. The white workers claimed that it would increase the dangers of the mines to give these jobs to 'primitive natives', but could produce no evidence to support such a claim. Government enquiries established that the black mine-workers were quite capable of doing the jobs.

The mine-owners pointing to the decline in gold price from 127/4d per ounce in February 1920 to 97/4d in December 1971 said that many of the marginal mines would have to cease production, threatening thousands of jobs, unless labour costs were cut by a revision of the 'status quo' agreement which had established the ratio of black to white miners. They notified the trade unions of their intention to end the agreement, and to pay off over a short period, about 10% of the white workers, about 2 000 men.

The white miners resisted the attempt to relax the colour bar at their expense. After the strike was over, the Strike Legal Defence Committee dressed up their action in moral terms as "a deep-seated and righteous objection to the extension of the slave labour system which is known as compounded native labour". But this apparently did not mean that they wanted the african workers to be free from the compound system. Indeed, they wrote; "The mere fact that the Negro submits to be compounded is, in itself, sufficient to make it impossible for him ever to be an associate on equal terms of White men, whose ancestors have fought their way to freedom". (quoted by Herd, p16) So a system imposed upon the africans by force became a hereditary defect of the africans which excluded them from the rights of other workers.

On the 2nd of January, the coal miners, who had already received retrenchment orders, went on strike. On the 10th they were joined by engineers, power station workers and the gold miners. Negotiations between the Chamber of Mines and the South African Industrial Federation made some progress. The Chamber offered a new guaranteed ratio of 10.5 : 1. Then, 10 days later they offered to abrogate the status quo agreement only in the marginal mines. But at the same time the Prime Minister, General Smuts, issued a statement calling on the workers to return, pending an inquiry, on the Chamber's previous terms. The SAIF was only willing to agree to a return on the pre-strike conditions pending a government inquiry which "might make recommendations as to any method alternative to the status quo agreement and the 'colour bar' regulations for the more adequate protection of the white workers in the industry". But this was the end of negotiation. Attitudes were hardening on both sides. The Chamber felt strong support in the government. The SAIF was losing control to more radical elements.

From the beginning of the strike the workers had been recruited into commandos. Herd gives the following account of the origins of this system, "The commando system, Labour's military wing, had

its origins in the general strike on the Reef in 1914. By mid-January 1914, the government had posted in Johannesburg, thousands of armed burghers, troops and police. At that time the militant union leaders agreed on the need for well-drilled and mobile units to disperse scab labour and to meet force with force. The lessons taught by the quick-manoeuvring Boer commandos in the South African war had been well learnt. With large numbers of rural Afrikaners entering the ranks of urban labour, the borrowing of Boer fighting tactics to support the industrial struggle was almost inevitable". (p24) There was, labour leaders claimed, a second reason for the creation of the commandos. This was the fear that the african miners might take advantage of the dispute between whites to cause 'trouble' of their own. It is claimed that the police encouraged the formation of the commandos in order to have help in such a situation.

Whatever the reason for the creation of the commandoes, they rapidly became, together with a radical group of trade unionists associated with the Communist Party, an alternative source of leadership for the strikers, and eventually took over entirely from the SAIF.

The political motives of these various leaders were confused, as is well illustrated by the notorious slogan, "Workers of the World Unite and Fight for a White South Africa". Many of them were Afrikaner nationalists who saw the mineowners as agents of british imperialism, and who wanted a return to a Boer republic, with nationalisation of the mines. The National Party saw the strike as being a weapon with which the Smuts government could be destroyed. In the early days of the strike a mass meeting in Johannesburg unanimously carried a motion from a Labour M.P., "That this mass meeting of citizens is of the opinion that the time has arrived when the domination of the Chamber of Mines and other financiers in South Africa should cease, and to that end we ask the Members of Parliament assembled in Pretoria tomorrow to proclaim a South African Republic, and immediately to form a provisional government for this country". (Herd p34) The National Party majority at the meeting referred to were not willing to act thus illegally, and the matter ended there. But the republican motivation remained strong amongst the commandos. The Communists had more mixed motives. On the one hand they were to some extent aware of the fundamental conflict between the communist goal of a brotherhood of all mankind and the actual racial aim of the strike. On the other hand they could not but approve of the militancy shown by the workers. They compromised by persuading themselves that the struggle itself would educate the strikers to see the necessity of a genuine socialist society not based on race discrimination. The Labour Party leaders more singlemindedly wanted white socialism. It must be remembered that the principle of separate development originated with the white labour policies of the Labour Party.

For the average commando member the motives were probably even

more confused, although the main weakness of Herd's book, and of all other studies of 1922, is that it provides very little insight into the motives which lead these rank and file miners into a violent revolt against the state. Herd suggests that, "he had no ambition to destroy the system of government and set up an industrial workers' republic .... the ordinary striker remained a confused individual; he joined in the fighting to demonstrate his objection to being pushed around, having his pay-packet meddled with and his livelihood placed under threat. He was putting up a show". (p181-2) Unfortunately he is unable to offer any evidence either way. In any event, by the middle of February the commandos were picketing all the mines, and dealing brutally with any miners who tried to scab. Some of the commandos were armed with guns, many of which were military issue weapons which they held as reservists, but most were armed only with a variety of blunt instruments. The government had promised police protection for scabs, and the police began to arrest the pickets. From the 22nd of February the strike pickets were banned, and the scene was set for battle.

On the 23rd of February a campaign of sabotage against railway and power lines was begun. On the 27th the police attacked a commando near Boksburg, and later the following day, fired on a crowd of commando members who had gathered round the jail to sing the Red Flag to their imprisonned fellows. Three strikers were killed, and on March the 2nd a funeral procession 2 miles long accompanied them to the grave, while along the Reef, carts flew red flags at half mast. The strikers were now even more intransigent. When the SAIF attempted to re-open negotiations with the Chamber of Mines, and were coarsely rebuffed with the remark that the Chamber would not waste time negotiating with people of "your mental calibre", it was an easy matter for a more radical Council of Action to take over from the SAIF and to call, unsuccessfully, for a general strike. This take-over occurred on Monday the 6th of March. During the rest of that week the situation deteriorated quickly. On the 7th there were reports of commando attacks on Africans. By now, according to police reports, the commandos were armed with bicycle chains attached to short stocks, old swords and bayonets, spears, assegais and bludgeons, poles barbed with spikes or hooks, and a variety of firearms, (see Herd p48)

Previously General Smuts had been willing, as he said in Parliament on the 1st of March, to "let things develop". Now he seemed to be satisfied that they had developed enough, and prepared to intervene to break the strike. During the week the military forces on the Rand were reinforced, and ACF units were mobilised. There were more acts of sabotage and orders were issued for aeroplanes to disperse crowds, by gun-fire if necessary. But the commandos were by now not prepared to be so easily dispersed. They attempted to seize the Witwatersrand, as a prelude to an overthrow of the government.

According to Herd very little is known of the actual organisation

of the rebellion. Herd suggests that the leader may have been Percy Fisher, a member of the Action Committee, who was killed, or committed suicide, on the last day of the fighting. All the other Committee of Action and Trade Union leaders had been arrested immediately martial law was declared, leaving the commando leaders in charge. There clearly was a strategic plan, although,perhaps owing to communication difficulties, it was not very well executed. By the morning of the 10th the commandos already virtually controlled some major towns such as Springs nad Benoni. On the Friday a move began to extend this control. The essential feature was a pincer attack from the stronghold of Fordsburg, in southern Johannesburg, aimed at seizing Johannesburg itself. This plan involved three movements. A force drawn from the Newlands, Maraisburg and Langlaagte commandos was to capture the police station at Newlands, and then to sweep around Brixton Ridge and join up with another unit occupying the north eastern slope of the ridge. The Fordsburg commando was to march directly on the centre of Johannesburg and link up with the other two groups. They would then take control of the municipal services and communications. The Newlands police station was duly captured,as was a relief force, after two hours of shooting. But finally a troop armed with Maxim guns was able to hold the commando up until a larger relieving force arrived on the Saturday.

Nearer in to Johannesburg, the second unit successfully occupied Brixton Ridge. A number of other police stations were captured on the Friday and Saturday morning. By Saturday evening the Fordsburg commando had captured about 50 policemen , but had failed to make the break through to link up with the other units. The bloodiest battle of all occurred at Ellis Park, where the Jeppe and Denver commandos managed to attack the Imperial Light Horse as they were assembling. The ILH lost 40 men killed and wounded in the first few minutes of the attack. However, three attacking groups had failed to co-ordinate, and the troops were able to recover and drive off the attackers. As they withdrew, one major claimed, "I counted 47 dead Reds in one street in Troyeville"; (Herd p120)

Meanwhile, the commandos controlled Springs, Benoni and Brakpan, but had been easily defeated by a police charge in Boksburg. The revolt on the West Rand had failed completely. On Saturday morning the commandos nevertheless still held the initiative in Johannesburg and much of the East Rand. But they could not hold it much longer. They inexplicably failed to press home their advantages in several areas, and by Saturday evening General Smuts had arrived from Cape Town, and, what is more important, troop reinforcements were beginning to arrive in large numbers. Before the revolt, Fisher had been assured that commandos from the country districts would join, but they failed to arrive. With minor exceptions citizens force units mobilised and quickly joined the fighting on the side of the government. Troops converged on the East Rand from Pretoria, from Johannesburg itself, and from the farming towns of Bethal and Ermelo further to the east. The com-

mandos managed to ambush and slow down a troop train coming from Pretoria, and succeeded in inflicting heavy damage on a battalion of the Transvaal Scottish approaching Benoni by train from Johannesburg. But the beleagured train was relieved by a police column and able to withdraw. Reinforcements continued to pour in, and Benoni fell early on Monday morning. Brakpan, and a few mines which the strikers had occupied, fell in the course of the day, and by early Tuesday morning the fighting on the East Rand was over.

In Johannesburg it lasted only a little longer. Brixton Ridge was initially occupied by a commando force of 1700 men, under the leadership of Piet Erasmus. On Friday they subjected government positions to heavy fire, but made no move to take more ground. By Sunday the army had brought up more troops and heavy guns. The Cottesloe school, which the commandos were occupying, was an excellent target and was soon destroyed. Planes dropped personnel bombs along the ridge. The troops attacked in two groups. A detachment of 26 men attacking along the Braamfontein side of the ridge was beaten off with 23 casualties, but the main force found the commandos already demoralised by the artillery and bombs. This left Fordsburg, where the commandos, led by Fisher, had surrounded their headquarters with trenches and barricades, and were preparing to resist. By Tuesday morning Fordsburg was surrounded by troops on all sides. At daybreak an aeroplane dropped thousands of pamphlets over Fordsburg, warning that all civilians should be evacuated by 11 a.m., when guns would open fire. 30 minutes before the attack was due to begin an envoy arrived at military headquarters from the strikers, asking to negotiate terms of surrender. The General demanded nothing short of unconditional surrender by 11 a.m. On the hour the 13 pound guns opened up on the strikers headquarters. 20 minutes later the assault troops began to move in. Against heavy fire, it took them more than an hour to get within close range of the headquarters, but by 2 p.m. the commando was surrounded, but still refusing to surrender. "The shooting of the bitter-enders was selective and accurate. Scores of them had fought in the recent war, and they were seasoned fighters" (Herd p156). But they were outnumbered, and the building was soon taken. Fisher and his friend Spendiff were found upstairs, dead. Whether they had committed suicide, been killed in the fighting, or been captured and murdered is still in dispute. But the revolt was over.

The strike was also over, and the employers and their spokesman in the press began to call for revenge against what the press, with classic disregard for the truth, labelled as a bolshevik plot. One journalist wrote, "Today Johannesburg is only dimly beginning to know that it has escaped from the foul conspiracy which siezed on the strike as a means to Bolshevism .... As an individual who witnessed the growth of violence, who has seen the attitude of the Bolshevists, who has seen the mob defiance of the police, who has witnessed the attacks on Natives .... and who has day by day wondered at this plague of unredeemed tyranny and unredeemed brutality

of men and women, I say that there was a calculated desire to repeat on the Rand the unnatural outbreak of crime in Russia which has horrified the entire world" (quoted Herd p19). In fact there is no evidence that the Communists played a central role in the violence, and no member of the Communist Party was among the 953 people charged. There was brutality and looting by both sides. The trials after the revolt were perhaps of dubious propriety, but, if, as is still claimed, the wrong people were sentenced, the acts for which they were sentenced were real enough. Hostages, civilians and suspected spies were executed in the course of the uprising, and there were attacks on african workers. The casualty figures, disputed as they are, illustrate this. According to the government figures, there were a total of 687 casualties, including 72 killed among the government forces, 39 strikers, 18 European and 24 Non-European civilians. The Strike Defence Committee claimed that the number of deaths during the 5 days of fighting was higher: 78 strikers, 78 of the government forces, and 62 non-combatants. During the whole period of the strike about 30 Africans were killed.

The owners got their revenge by achieving a 24% reduction in the wage bill. The Press got its revenge through a series of trials, leading to 4 executions and many long prison sentences. But the white electorate was not happy with the flow of blood, and gave the white workers their revenge against both Smuts and the employers by throwing Smuts out of office in 1924, and replacing him with a Labour - National Party Pact government which entrenched job reservation on the mines so surely that it is still there 50 years later.

The confrontation of 1922 produced strange bedfellows. The Nationatlist Party supported the strikers on the basis of its deep populist mistrust of international capitalism, harking back to Kruger days; the Communist Party tortuously decided that it was more important to raise white worker consciousness by attacking the mine owners, than to support black workers, for this would lower the standards of all workers to that of the 'kraal'. "A realist", said Eddie Roux, "one not obsessed with Marxist doctrine, might have pointed out that the white miners earned ten times as much as the blacks, that many of them employed servants in their homes ... Such was the reality of the situation which the white workers understood very well". Only Abdurahman, of the African People's Organisation, put forward a clear, articulate position on behalf of the black workers. White miners, he said, were sheltering behing the colour bar, scabbing when the black workers went on strike, yet living off his labour so that they had become mere overseers and parasites, and no longer deserve to be called workers.

Of course, the intention behind the strikes was the defence of the job colour bar. Yet, it was in the first instance an economically based class conflict. Let us not forget that last year's Carlton-

ville massacre was sparked off, according to Mr. Oppenheimer, by workers' objections to the narrowing of the wage differential between skilled and unskilled - and the workers were all black.

The difference in outcome between the tragedies of 1922 and 1973 is, however, precisely a power one. The white miners were able to take the conflict as far as they did because of their racial privileges. The white worker had access to political power and therefore to economic privilege, and a vested interest in the perpetuation of the system. Furthermore, the white worker had easier access to means of violence. By 1922, 75% of the white miners were Afrikaners, with a tradition of armed rebellion, and many of whom had had actual experience of commando warfare, as Herd points out. Smuts recognised the strength of this tradition when he hesitated to resort to martial law, until he had lost control of events.

Then, too, the mine owners were already adjusting their brand of capitalism to a South African idiom. It has too often mistakenly been assumed that the mine owners tried to end the colour bar in 1922, implying that they were more a progressive force than in fact they were. But, as Rick Johnstone points out, there is a crucial distinction between the job colour bar, over which the white workers fought the mine owners, and the wage colour bar, which was the system of discriminatory measures designed to secure and maintain cheap african labour. The closed compound system, the Master and Servants Act, together with the mine owners' monopoly of labour recruitment and their collective agreement not to allow african wage rates to rise above a certain low maximum, secured minimisation of labour costs and maximisation of profits along racial lines. The Communist Party's reluctant support for the white miners' defence of wage rates (and hence the job colour bar) is perhaps more understandable seen in this perspective.

Let me now turn to the weaknesses of Herd's book. It leaves three main questions unanswered.

1) What was happening in the rest of the country while the climax approached on the Rand? Why did the call for a general strike fail utterly? If the country was sufficiently sympathetic to the strikers to vote against Smuts in 1924, why did white workers elsewhere not support the strikers in 1922? Why did the burgher forces ride in to defend Smuts and the Chamber of Mines? What were the pressures within Smuts' own government? To what extent was it realised what the consequence of Smuts' policy would be?

2) What was the real condition of the mines? Was the mining industry really threatened by rising costs. If so in what way was it threatened, and why did the mine owners choose to meet the threat in the way in which they did?

3) What was going on in the minds of the ordinary strikers as

they prepared to fight the army? What were their aims? What was the source of the bitterness which made them ready to kill? What made some falter and others carry on to the end? What made Taffy Long, Herbert Hull and David Lewis continue to sing the Red Flag up to the last? - "As they stood on the trap-door the hangman came forward trembling. Taffy Long paused in the singing to ask him why he trembled. The he rejoined the others and they were still singing when the doors swung open beneath their feet".

An adequate analysis of the 1922 strikes remains to be written. Meanwhile white South Africa suffers from a 'collective amnesia! in not bringing into popular culture that peculiar tradition of the white working class in the first three decades of this century before they were incorporated into the white power structure. Norman Herd has done us a service by putting on record that crucial event in the making of a white labour aristocracy.

REFERENCES:

Eddie Roux - "Time Longer Than Rope".
F.R. Johnstone - "Class and Class Conflict on the Gold Mines".
Eddie Webster - "The Making of a Labour Aristocracy - Class and Colour on the Gold Mines".

IIE NEWS.

The second IIE weekend seminar was held over the weekend of the 20-21st July. It was attended by 38 students. On Saturday afternoon and evening we played a simulation game designed to use the information on factory economics covered in the first seven lessons. The game involved attempting to negotiate a wage increase.

The players were divided into three groups: workers, works committee members and union officials. The union was provided with information about the firm and general economic indicators. The current balance sheet, the annual turn-over figure, the profits and dividend payments for the last 5 years were provided, as well as some comparative figures for the firm taken from the Financial Mail Top Companies Survey. This information was supplemented with data on industrial profits in all the main industries for 1973, Consumer Price Index figures for 1965-73, and PDL figures for 1971-74.

The procedure of the game was as follows;

1) The works committee members met with the workers for 1½ hours to discuss the agenda of the meeting, and to decide how the various points should be dealt with. The trade union group met to discuss its relation to the works committee, and to analyse the figures at its disposal.
2) The works committee, or rather one delegate from the works committee met with the union, while the others continued their discussion. This meeting lasted for ½ an hour.
3) The works committee, consisting of employers and workers representatives, then met the workers putting forward a demand for R5 a week wage increase. This was argued about for ¾ of an hour. The works committee members used arguments about the effect of low wages on productivity, but at this stage still had not got the profit figures from the union. Deadlock was the result.
4) During a half hour break in negotiations the works committee members consulted first with the workers and then with the union officials. At this point the staff intervened for the first time to criticise a number of points, namely;
a) that the works committee had not made many use of the available figures on the firm's profit and growth potential to substantiate their arguments,
b) that they had not received sufficient help from the union,
c) to support their arguments on the social effects of low wages, they should have made use of the PDL figures and the Cost of Living index, and
d) that neither the works committee nor the trade union had made use of the resource people available.
5) Negotations were then resumed for a further ¾ of an hour during which the works committee members made better use

of the figures. The employers conceded the wage increase.
6) A general discussion was held for a short while.
7) The following morning the participants were broken up into small groups and presented with specific questions about the game. After an hour of discussion in these groups, they all reported back to the plenary session.

Our general comment on the game was that it was successful in that it synthesised the information in the lesson books in a very concrete way. It helped the students become aware of the way in which the material printed in the lessons hung together. The main weakness from the point of view of the design of the game was that no historical background to the negotiating situation had been given. This made it more difficult for the various groups to orientate themselves to each other in a realistic way. What emerged clearly from the game was that the students found it difficult to deal easily with figures and percentages. Students tended to use emotional arguments rather than factual arguments. What they need to learn is to use the former to support the latter.

The students were able to make use of what they had learnt but they could only do so in specific instances that resembled the situation described in the lesson books. They had not absorbed the information sufficiently well to use to effectively. This was due to the fact that they were by and large tending to crystallise and fix information from one book in the section they had found it originally, instead of selecting information out of the various books similtaneously to support an argument. They were able to handle the information at the general level discussed in the lesson books and at the specific level of their particular factories. But to handle both the general and the specific in an entirely new situation, was something they found difficult to do.

Having more simulation games on various aspects of the course should serve to solve this problem of the compartmentalisation of knowledge.

For the rest of Sunday we worked on examples of legal problems. The first problem involved continuing the previous game under the hypothesis that the wage increase had been refused, and the workers had decided to hold a legal strike. This was very useful as it became clear that the terms of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Amendment Act were not well understood. This was followed by a number of problems involving dismissals. The workers broke up into groups, and each group was given a different dismissal incident, and told to use the legal handbook to determine whether the dismissal had been properly handled or not. Each group then reported back to a plenary session. Most groups had the right answers but not always for the right reasons. The workers felt that the issue of dismissals was particularly important, and regretted that we had not been able to spend more time on it.

In a general discussion it was decided to supplement the quarterly weekend seminars with monthly Saturday seminars also using simulation games.