10 Years of the

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

FOCUS: TRADE UNION AND CULTURE

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL NOTE

More changes. The Editorial Board welcomes Sarah Christie onto the Eastern Cape committee and Doug Hindson onto the Johannesburg committee (previously Doug was an ex officio member). Paul Stewart's membership of the Johannesburg committee has now been confirmed.

This edition deviates from the usual in part to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the SALB - but also inorder to capture the upsurge in trade union cultural activity, symbolised at the national level by the FOSATU EDUCATION WORKSHOP 1984. It has been suggested that these beginnings are part of an embryonic social movement. Whereas in the past culture and recreation have often been used to placate and control workers (eg. mines dance teams and company sports clubs) - the growth of trade union organisation has created the space and provided the resources for workers to assert an independent cultural practice. This is a new development with important implication for the future of the South African labour movement.

On a related front we publish an historical article, an interview and a survey on trade union education. The questions raised have been debated within working class movements for over 100 years (and for over 50 years in South Africa : see A.Bird in P.Kallaway (ed), **Apartheid and Education,** Ravan 1984.) - organisationally integrated education versus a service role; independent versus joint management or state-run programmes; the role of political education and taught skills; individual betterment versus organisational priorities. The questions are only raised here and we invite further contributions particularly from those who have not been represented due to space and time.

Acknowledgements to Kelwyn Sole for his contribution to the planning of this edition.

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CONTENTS page

PRAISE OF LEARNING

Learn the simplest things. For you
whose time has already come
it is never too late!
Learn your A B C's, it is enough.
but learn them! Do not let it
discourage you, begin!
You must know everything!
You must take over the leadership!

Learn, man in the asylum!
Learn, man in prison!
Learn, wife in the kitchen!
Learn, man of sixty!
Seek out the school, you who are
homeless!
Sharpen your wits, you who shiver!
Hungry man, reach for the book:
it is a weapon.
You must take over the leadership!

Don't be afraid of asking, brother!
Don't be won over.
See for yourself!
What you don't know yourself.
you don't know.
Add up the reckoning.
It's you who must pay it.
Put your finger on each item
ask: how did this get here?
You must take over the leadership.

Bertolt Brecht

ERRATUM : Avril Joffee, SAAWU Conference, 9.6, May 1984, page 22, paragraph 3, line 8 : no company in the Grinaker Group has entered into a recognition agreement with SAAWU. Talks are taking place between Grinaker Plant (Inland) and SAAWU in respect of the Brakpan Yard.

SALB Publication guidelines

The South African Labour Bulletin is a journal which supports the independent labour movement in South Africa. It is a forum for analysing, debating and recording the aims and activities of this movement. To this end, it requires contributors to the Bulletin to conform with the following publication guidelines:

- Constructive criticism of unions or federations in the independent labour movement is welcome. However, articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.
- Contributions to the Bulletin must not exceed the following lengths:

Analytical articles	8000 words
Debates, reviews, Documents	3000 words
Briefings	800 words

- Contributions must be written in language which is clear and understandable.
- All contributions to the Bulletin must be typed and where applicable include proper footnoting and references.
- Except in the case of public documents, all submissions to the Bulletin will be treated in confidence.

10 YEARS OF THE SALB 1974-1984

The origins of the SALB lie in the re-emergence of working class action and organisation in Durban in the early 1970's. On 30th May 1973, three months after the wave of spontaneous mass action by 100000 black workers, a group of sympathetic trade unionists, students and academics from the University of Natal (Durban), met in the James Bolton Hall in Durban to inaugurate the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE). Harriet Bolton, Secretary of the Garment, Textile and Furniture unions opened the meeting and explained how the project had come about. She said that workers lacked formal knowledge of trade unionism as they had neither the time nor the money to study. She said a school should be formed which would educate workers about their rights. Foszia Fisher, who was later to become the secretary of the IIE, then proposed:

a) that a correspondence course be established to help workers understand the social and economic situations in which they operated.
b) that a resource centre be established to provide the unions with background material and information.

It was from this second component of the IIE project that the idea of a journal on labour was to emerge. On 30th July 1973, the IIE sub-committee proposed that a newsletter be published "tentatively called Labour Bulletin - containing general information on trade unionism at home and abroad, book reviews, topical discussions and analyses of economic trends (like inflation)".*

On 11th August a Working Committee was set up consisting of Omar Badsha, Halton Cheadle, Foszia Fisher, Dave Hemson, Eddie Webster and Harriet

* Minutes of the IIE sub committee, 30th July, 1973. Private collection File B 1 p. 3.

Bolton, to run the day-to-day affairs of the IIE. It was this committee that was to undertake the initial planning of the Bulletin, appoint the first editor and solicit material for the first few editions. The SALB was, then, never conceived of as a mere academic exercise. It was directly linked to the emerging labour movement and was concerned both to record its struggles and serve its needs. From its inception it contained a tension; was it an instrument of the emerging unions or was its role that of independent critic? It was, of course, to develop a degree of independence over the years as it began to serve a wider constituency of persons concerned with understanding this movement. But it always retained those early links and continued to draw its material and audience from people sympathetic to that movement. It can be seen, in fact, as a mirror of 10 years of the workers movement in South Africa.

During these 10 years 78 editions of the SALB have been published. The content of these editions fall roughly into 5 phases - phases that mirror developments in the history of the emerging unions.

Phase 1.....

During this phase, which covers the first five editions, the SALB had close links with the day-to-day activities of the new unions in Durban and attempted to reflect their activities in its pages. The driving force behind much of the material was the banned political science lecturer from the University of Natal, Richard Turner, whose particular brand of theory and practice was to influence and shape the SALB during this phase. Appropriately the first edition of the SALB, published in April 1974, was on the case for African trade unions. At this stage trade union recognition, which had been denied under the Industrial Conciliation Act, was the central issue for these new unions. The next four editions

published regular reports on the organising activities of the new unions and accounts of struggles for recognition. The SALB was seen during this phase, as an important outlet for the viewpoint of these unions. Vol. 1 no. 3 and Vol. 1 no. 5 were "banned" by the Publications Board. The reasons given were that the SALB was "promoting worker unrest" and opposition to the government's alternative to trade unions for black workers, the liaison committee system. It is perhaps an indication of the close links of the SALB with these new unions that after the first few editions, the editors were to debate whether some editions should not be introduced in Zulu.

Phase 2.....

Within the first six months of the SALB's existence an intense debate over the relationship between education and organisation was to emerge. In essence, the new unions were struggling to survive in a harsh political and economic climate and saw the IIE as a resource that needed to direct its energies more concretely to building shop-floor leadership. The IIE was eventually brought directly into the educational work of the unions. The SALB, however, was to experience a different history as it carved for itself a distinct niche almost exclusively among university academics linked through education and research to the emerging unions. This can be seen in the changing nature of the content of the SALB. Vol. 1 no. 6, published in late 1974, carried articles on the early history of the ICU and reflected the intellectual interests of the new school of radical South African historiography that emerged in the early 1970's. However throughout 1975 the SALB retained the close links that marked its origins. For example Vol.5 no. 2 was banned for carrying an article on the struggle for recognition at Leyland.

This phase ended rather abruptly in December 1975

when two of the editors were arrested under the Terrorism and Suppression of Communism Acts. The state was in the coming year, to embark on a sustained offensive against the leadership of the new unions, which culminated in the banning of 26 unionists in November 1976. The SALB was to survive this period of repression by retreating into the university and becoming more of an academic journal.

Phase 3.....

This third phase could be categorised as one of retreat when the SALB established its independence from the IIE and became more firmly based in the universities. It was also a period of intellectual growth as labour became a focus of serious academic attention in the universities for the first time and the SALB widened its Editorial Board to include academics from Wits and UCT. Significantly these new editors brought into the SALB different perspectives and experiences making the Bulletin more of a national journal. During this period, from 1976 to 1979, the SALB pioneered the academic study of labour through editions on unemployment (Vol. 4 no. 4), the labour process (Vol. 4 no. 7) Industrial Health (Vol. 4 nos. 9 & 10) and International Labour (Vol.5 no 8). In 1978 the SALB brought out a book of 14 past articles on South African Labour History, as part of an attempt to meet this growing demand for material on labour. *

Phase 4.....

A new phase in the history of the SALB was to begin in late 1979 when working class militancy re-emerged in the post-Wiehahn period. A new editor had been appointed in mid-1979, Merle Favis, and she grasped the opportunity of redefining the SALB as a journal that would, once again, record the day-to-day

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* E. Webster (ed.), Essays in South African Labour History, (Raven Press 1978).

struggles of workers more closely. In September 1980 the SALB brought out an edition on the strikes at Ford (Vol. 6 No. 2 & 3) and in December 1980, the SALB began a strike series. The first edition (Vol. 6 no. 5) focused on the 1980 cotton workers' strike in Pinetown and the meat workers' strike in Cape Town. The second edition (Vol. 6 no. 6) focused on strikes in Putco, the media and Allied Publishing. The third edition focused exclusively on the Johannesburg Municipal Workers strike of 1980. (Vol. 6 no. 7).

The SALB's growing institutional autonomy led it, during this phase, to develop more clearly its role as an independent critic. This was most evident in the articles by Maree where he critically evaluated the organising activities of NAAWU in the Ford dispute (Vol. 6 no. 2/3) and SAAWU in East London (Vol. 7 no. 4/5). Both articles were to re-open the ongoing debate on the relationship of the intellectual to the workers' movement. Above all this phase of the SALB was shaped by the shift in state strategy towards black workers and the intense debate around the workers' response to this. The SALB had given 50 typed pages of evidence to the Wiehahn Commission in January 1978 and had carried a detailed critique of the Commission's findings in April 1979 (Vol. 5 no. 2). In November 1979 we received a memorandum from the Western Province General Workers Union strongly critical of the decision of some groups, such as FOSATU, to register. After considerable debate we published the memo in Vol. 5 no. 4 (Nov. 1979). This was to trigger off an acrimonious debate inside the SALB. Two positions were reflected in the pages of the SALB ; those who saw the decision to register as tactically wise (Fine, de Clerq and Innes in Vol.7 nos. 1 & 2) and those who saw it as surrendering to state control (Haysom and Hirsch, Nicol in Vol.7 no.39). This debate was to be a turning point in the SALB. Not only did the SALB provide the only written record of this important debate, but it was also to establish the SALB

as a genuinely independent forum for the emerging trade unions opening up a new phase in our history.

Phase 5.....

This new phase coincided with the Unity talks that began in August 1981 in Langa when increasingly support grew for a more united trade union movement. The wave of detentions of trade unionists in 1981, including our editor, Merle Favis, was to underline the need for unity within the labour movement. This commitment to a united movement enabled the SALB to play more effectively its central role of recording the struggles inside the movement and providing background information on issues of broad interest to the labour movement. This has taken a number of different forms:

a) In late 1981 we began a Briefing section in the SALB that has proved highly successful. In these briefings we have tried to capture key issues in labour in summary form.
b) At the beginning of 1982 we appointed a research officer, Jeremy Baskin, who, in the 15 months he was with us, transformed our coverage of contemporary labour by writing a number of in-depth articles. This side of the SALB's activities is now being expanded in an attempt to provide a more thorough monitoring of contemporary labour.
c) We have been able to run more articles of practical value to the labour movement such as studies that look at maternity agreements in other countries or compare different health and safety agreements.
d) In 1983 the offices of the SALB were moved under the direction of the new editor, Doug Hindson, to Johannesburg, separate from any trade union grouping, with regular funding and proper office equipment.

The SALB is now well placed to continue critically to reflect and serve the needs of the emerging trade

union movement. We feel we have fulfilled our intention, first stated 10 years ago, to help workers understand the social and economic situation in which they operate. We have not always done this in ways in which the trade unionists have agreed and certainly not in ways in which we foresaw when we gathered first to discuss the idea of a Bulletin on 30th May 1973. The role of the intellectual within the workers' movement is one of on-going debate.

A crucial question raised by this account of "10 years of the SALB" is the effect our increasingly institutional autonomy has had on our capacity to play a role within the worker's movement. Has the lack of direct union control made us too "academic" or has our independence from any specific union group, and the wider range of links that accompanied this, strengthened our capacity to play a supportive but critical role? We would welcome comments from readers on this question.

Our only regret, as we celebrate 10 years of the SALB, is that we do not have with us Richard Turner, who played a vital part in the foundation of the Bulletin. His untimely death by an assassin's bullet in the early morning of 8th January 1978, deprived us of a remarkable colleague. Our best tribute to Rick, and warning to the assassin, is that his ideas and commitment to a non-racial democratic workers' movement lives on in the pages of the SALB.

(Eddie Webster, Johannesburg, June 1984.)

SHARPEVILLE: WORKERS SOCIAL EVENING (19.5.84)

This event was organised wholly by the Vereeniging FOSATU Local. Most of the 250 who attended or took part were migrant workers and members of MAWU. Their songs and chants interspersed with the speeches and more formal presentations. Invited as guests were fellow trade unionists attending an education course and who came from all over South Africa.

The first group performed a Baca dance from Mzimkulu. These workers practice at their factory - Samancor (Meyerton). The second group were women and girls from the families of trade union members. This was the only group which was not made up of migrant workers. They performed a Southern Sotho Mokhibo dance learnt in the homeland of QwaQwa. It is a dance of respect usually performed for chiefs. The third group to appear were Zulu dancers, all union members from USCOR VAAL. They practice at their hostel.

The next to appear was a group of gumboot dancers. The group originated in Johannesburg where all the members were working for the municipality. After the 1980 strike they all lost their jobs. Even so they have kept the group going, practising at weekends. One member works in the Vereeniging area, whilst others are scattered over a wide area and as far away as Alexandra. The final attraction was Morakanyane, a Sotho praise singer and concertina player. He started playing in the old Topville location. From there the people were moved to Sharpeville. Morakanyane is the only one in the area left to keep up these traditions.

The performances were well received by the audience, some of whom commented on the high quality of the language used. It was an evening when migrant workers from different parts of Southern Africa were brought together by the union and traditional culture was presented by union members to fellow workers.

TRADE UNION NEWSPAPERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The number of independent and emerging unions bringing out their own newspapers is growing. This is significant both because a space has been created for the expression of worker views and because the union press provides a vehicle for the spread of information about worker struggles.

The establishment of this press has however, not been without problems. The most important problem has been the very limited resources - manpower, time, finance - to establish the newspapers with some regularity and continuity. Most unions interviewed admitted that while they try to produce the papers regularly this is often unsuccessful. In some cases this is the second or third attempt to establish a newspaper. In other cases unions are still in the process of revising their newspapers. SAAWU for example produced "THE WORKER" in 1980 and 1981, and is planning to revive it this year.

Another problem experienced is the irregular and low level of worker involvement both in writing and producing the papers. All unions interviewed expressed their commitment to encourage more worker participation but still feel dissatisfied at the low number of written contributions by workers. Shop stewards contribute to the paper by telling their "stories" or giving articles verbally to the organisers or editor who then writes it up. Notwithstanding these problems enthusiasm was present for the important role that the union press plays.

CCAWUSA NEWS (2nd Floor, Khotso House, 42 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg.).....
Content: CCAWUSA NEWS carries internal news as well as items on other trade unions, and articles covering matters affecting workers in South Africa. In addition an attempt is made to include at least one international news item per edition.

-Newspapers-

UNION	NEWSPAPER	FREQUENCY	LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF COPIES PRINTED
CCAWUSA	CCAWUSA NEWS	1 per 4 months	English	20000 (growing
DOMESTIC WORKERS ASSOC.	FORWARD WORKER	3 per year	English Afrikaans Xhosa (same edn)	15000
CLOTHING WORKERS UNION *	UNITY	1 per 2 months	English & Afrikaans (same edition)	-
FOOD & CANNING WORKERS UNION - AFCWU	FCWU & AFCWU NEWSLETTER	4 per year (1st issue)	English Afrikaans (same edition)	1000
GENERAL WORKERS UNION	GWU NEWSLETTER (Previously Phambili Basebenzi)	1 per 4 months	English Afrikaans (separate Xhosa Edition)	2000
MAWU - METAL & ALLIED WORKERS UNION	UMBIKO WE MAWU	1 per 2 months (& special editions)	English	5000
MUNICIPAL & GENERAL WORKERS UNION	ELETHU	1 per 3 months (1st issue)	Sotho & Zulu (same edition)	1000

DISTRIBUTION	SIZE (PAGES)	PRODUCED BY	WRITTEN BY
Shop steward structures, meetings	4	Mainly organisers	Mainly organisers & shop stewards
meetings	4	Editor meets with a group of workers and together they write and produce.	
	4	-	-
Branch structures	16	Mainly organisers	Mainly organisers
Factories through committee structures	12	Editor gets help from staff members	Editor & organisers get stories provided by branches.
Shop steward council & factory noticeboard	4	FOSATU Printing Unit	Mainly editor, have had stories from shop stewards
compounds	4	Joint Education Project	Union Executive Committee

-Newspapers-

UNION	NEWSPAPER	FREQUENCY	LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF COPIES PRINTED
MEDIA WORKER ASSOC. MWASA	KWASA	10 per year	English will start (including vernacular articles)	2-3000
NATIONAL UNION OF TEXTILE WORKERS NUTW	THE TEXTILE WORKER	Irregular	English & Zulu (separate editions)	varies
NATIONAL UNION OF MINE WORKERS NUM	NUM Newsletter (name will change)	1 per month (1st issue)	English (Plan to have separate Xhosa & Sotho Editions)	15000
CUSA	IZWILETHU	10 per year	English	20000
FOSATU	FOSATU WORKER NEWS	1 per 5 weeks	English & Zulu (separate editions)	67000

DISTRIBUTION	SIZE (PAGES)	PRODUCED BY	WRITTEN BY
Meetings branch structures other unions	16	Editor	Editor & Members & Officials
Factories	6	-	-
Branch structures	8	Jointly by organisers & Education Office.	Secretariat (considering an editor)
Union & Branch Structures	8	Externally	Mainly officials & part-time journalist
Branch structure & at Factory -level through shop steward structures	12	Editor	Mainly editor but have articles by workers as well as outsiders.

-Newspapers-

S.A. Co-ordinating Council of Inter-national Union of Food Workers	THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKER	4 per year	English Afrikaans Zulu & Sotho (same edition)	20000
YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS YCW	YOUNG WORKER	4 per year	English	10000

Aim: The main aim of CCAWUSA NEWS is to keep the general membership informed about CCAWUSA as well as the activities and progress of the labour movement in South Africa. According to a CCAWUSA official the newspaper and information it conveys is also always a potential vehicle for mobilising worker action.

FORWARD WORKER 507 Atlantic House, Corporation Street, Cape Town, 8001).....

Content: Apart from internal news, FORWARD WORKER concentrates on articles which cover the conditions of domestic workers, office cleaners, gardeners and caretakers of blocks of flats.

Aim: A central aim of FORWARD WORKER has been to inform workers about Domestic Workers Association, its meetings and their activities in dealing with workers' problems. This appears to have been successful in recruiting workers. Ms de Villiers of Domestic Workers Association said that in many instances, workers who were asked how they found the DWA replied: "We saw it in the newspaper".

Affiliates each union orders. To other S.A. unions & to International IUF members.	8 1st issue 16 pages.	externally	Plan for Editorial Board to get contributions from affiliates
YCW regions & groups Also to unions.	16	National Committee in Durban	National Publications Representative Editors & Staff members.

* Unfortunately numerous attempts to contact CLOWU were unsuccessful.

UNITY (Room 3, Kismet Supermarket Building, c/r Prince George Drive & Fifth Avenue, Retreat.).....
Content: The newsletter carries internal union news and news about the clothing industry. In addition articles dealing with broader issues affecting workers are included, e.g. GST, rising cost of living. Some editions carried letters from readers and the April 1984 edition had an advice column.
Aim: Unfortunately numerous attempts to contact CLOWU were unsuccessful.

FCWU & AFCWU NEWSLETTER (101/104 Centre Building, 18 Corporation Street, Cape Town.).....
Content: In addition to the internal news the first issue of the newsletter carried a feature on trade union unity talks, technical information on Section 10 rights and UIF for contract workers, the text of a speech on workers and TB, an article on workers in Chile. Two more unusual items were the Great Strikes series (the first one covered being the

Fatti's & Monis 1979), and an article entitled "Hester Adams Praat" - a brief oral history of the industry and her involvement in the union.
Aim: The main aim of the newsletter is to "bring the workers news about their union or about things that concern the workers".

GWU NEWSLETTER (1st Floor Benbow Building, Beverley Street, Athlone, Cape Town.).....
Content: In addition to internal news the newsletter has carried international items - e.g. on the British Coal Miners strike. Wider South African labour news is also carried, the last issue having a feature on trade union unity and the proposed Federation.
Aim: The GWU NEWSLETTER has three basic aims: to inform members generally about the union and the labour movement; to educate members about how the union works; to help organise new factories - for example if GWU wants to organise a factory in Durban in an industry they have organised in Cape Town, they would carry a feature in the newsletter about the struggles and progress in the Cape Town factory, in an attempt to motivate the Durban workers.

UMBIKO WE MAWU (c/o 302 SACTA House, 277 Bree Street, Johannesburg.).....
Content: Restricted to internal news, the content of UMBIKO includes summaries of national executive committee meetings and branch executive proceedings, points and comment on major disputes, and information on wage increases. Special editions focus on significant issues and union activities. For example this year two special editions dealt with the Industrial Council negotiations.
Aim: The aim of UMBIKO is to assist the flow of information in the union between factories and at branch level, so that workers are informed of the activities of fellow-workers but also so that they can get ideas from the struggles in other factories. Although written at a language level which the general membership could grasp (those who speak

English) the paper is aimed at shop stewards. According to the editor this is because the union can't afford to publish 35000 copies for general membership. The shop stewards however are encouraged to communicate the contents to members. In many cases this is done by posting UMBIKO on notice boards in factories where workers have easy access to them.

ELETHU (Room 202, Chancellor House, 25 Fox Street, Johannesburg.).....

Content: The first issue of ELETHU carried internal news as well as articles covering wider issues, for example on Section 10 1(b) rights and WRAB. Future editions will include coverage of community issues.

Aim: Mr Themba Mbandlwa and Mr Themba Nontlantane both of MGWUSA emphasised the central importance of the newspaper as a vehicle for informing workers about the union and its activities, clarifying confusion with regard to the bosses union, informing workers of their rights, and keeping workers informed of the developments between the union and the city council. The spokespeople explained that because the union is not registered it has no access to the compounds to meet with workers. The newspaper they explained would serve as a tool for mobilising and organising the workers.

KWASA (1st Floor, Khotso House, 42 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg.).....

Content: Started in 1979, KWASA carries internal news as well as items of general interest to the workers movement. The newspaper includes technical articles on for example, UIF, the duties of shop stewards. A special feature of KWASA has been the inclusion of articles submitted by other newspapers.

Aim: KWASA is distributed both to the MWASA general membership and to other unions. It serves both to inform and educate. The policy of carrying contributions from other unions has allowed for coverage of inter-union debate and comment on issues.

-Newspapers-

THE TEXTILE WORKER (5 Central Court, 125 Gale Street, Durban 4001.).....
Content: The newsletter carries internal union news at a factory and branch level. Recently the NUTW Brown Lung Campaign amongst cotton workers has been covered in some detail.
Aim: The central aim of the newsletter is to keep the general membership informed of events and activities relevant to the union.

NUM NEWSLETTER (P O Box 10928, Johannesburg.).....
Content: The first issue of the NUM newsletter carries mainly internal news but includes articles relating to the labour movement in South Africa and articles of general interest to workers. A spokesperson said that NUM's membership of the Miners International Federation gave them access to international news items which would definitely be included in the newsletter in future.
Aim: The newsletter has been started with the aim of informing and educating NUM members on union activities and the workers movement, and it will offer "a bit of political education", said Mr Maluka of NUM. Mr Maluka said that the response to the newspaper had been tremendous and members had submitted hundreds of suggestions for names.

IZWILETHU (CUSA - 3rd Floor Lekton House, 5 Wanderers Street, Johannesburg.).....
Content: IZWILETHU is aimed at CUSA's general membership and covers a wide range of issues. In addition to internal news and wider news related to the labour movement, IZWILETHU sometimes covers community and broader political news. The paper also carries international labour news as well as more "technical" articles, e.g. on registration.
Aims: The central aims of IZWILETHU are to communicate developments within CUSA to its members and also to conscientise its membership about local and international labour issues.

FOSATU WORKER NEWS (P O Box 18109, DALBRIDGE, 4014.).....

Content: For reasons of space FOSATU WORKER NEWS carries mainly internal news. However, broader issues that affect workers are covered, for example articles on inflation, GST, Health and Safety. An effort is also made to include international labour news and articles on the Polish workers, the British Coal Miners strike and the German Metal Workers strike have appeared. Recently the newspaper has started to carry a series on history.

Aim: The newspaper is directed at the FOSATU general membership. Parents are however encouraged to pass on the newspaper to their children, in the hope of fostering an understanding and support from students for working class struggles. According to the editor, Ian Bissel, one of the central aims of the paper is to break down inter-union barriers and feelings of sectionalism between workers in different industries. FOSATU WORKER NEWS attempts to encourage amongst workers a sense of themselves as a united working class.

Recently the editor started conducting a survey of the readership of FOSATU WORKER NEWS with the aim of assessing the comprehension of the language level in the paper. To date only the Transvaal results are available, where it was found that rather than language level the problem was "the lack of reading history" amongst workers. This means that on the whole only short selected parts of the paper are read. A big effort will now be made to encourage workers to read the whole newspaper. This will be done in various ways, including the setting up of reading groups in locals where workers can come together to discuss what they read. FOSATU WORKER NEWS will also start displaying posters highlighting the main features before the newspaper comes out to stimulate interest.

-Newspapers-

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKER (P O Box 6598, Johannesburg, 2000.).....
Content: The first issue of the SOUTH AFRICAN WORKER carried a wide range of articles. Many of these deal with the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF), its policies, and practices, and the paper includes a very interesting article on the occupation of the Coca Cola plant in Guatemala. According to a spokesperson, while future issues will continue to carry IUF and international items, the content of the paper will depend on the South African Coordinating Council of the IUF and what they see as important to cover.
Aims: The newspaper is envisaged as the collective product of the unions in the SACC of the IUF. One of its central aims is to break down sectional attitudes between members of the different unions and to spread information to the workers in the industry. Essentially the paper is seen as a potentially important vehicle for inter-union co-operation and as a forum for the SACC to express ideas about the problems facing its members. This is especially important given the range of unions affiliated to the IUF in South Africa.

YOUNG WORKER (P O Box 45106, Mayfair. 2108).....
Content: Young Worker focuses mainly on worker and student action. An attempt is made to limit the content to what is happening amongst workers in the country, unless YCW feels a wider issue is important to their members. The paper also carries technical articles, e.g. UIF, which are very well received. In addition international items appear - e.g. the May edition carried a feature on May Day.
Aim: YOUNG WORKER is directed at the mass of young workers to encourage worker action and feelings of solidarity. The paper is also seen as an important forum in which people can share their own experiences. For YCW Young Worker is a paper for young workers by young workers.

(Tina Sideris, Johannesburg, June 1984)

A.T. QABULA : WORKING CLASS POET

Songs occupy the throne in South African working class culture. There are the political songs, the mbaqanga songs and of late some reggae ones too; there are the religious hymns, the choirs and traditional festive or travelling songs, but then, where are the work-songs? They exist I shall argue, in their final retreat: the head. I shall proceed to explain what is meant here using examples from the performances of a very vibrant working class innovator in Durban : Alfred Temba Qabula.

Work songs - not after work, but at work - were the stuff of life. They gave communal work its rhythms, they bound the cooperative team into an organism at harvest and at pounding time. In African societies, they extended into the crafts : the Vha Venda iron craftsmen for example, were noted for their "Nando" song-cycles (Furnace songs). Culture was not seperate from work : "ukulima", to cultivate, is a word capturing both in the Nguni language. Song was part both of the productive forces of society and of its relations. In the last hundred years something occured which imprisoned the work song. This was, the intrusion of noise, a gigantic assault on the ears at work through the rise of machinofacture.

As pointed out by Viet Erlman, work-songs survive in labour intensive work, like in road-gangs, prison spans etc. and they are rich in socio-political content. In Natal we can add cane-cutters and women in the many little tailorshops as part of this survival. They are a poignant remnant in the world of machines. N. Walsh in a recent project returned to the "road-gang" songs adding some further insights: they (a) help dictate the pace at which a task is performed, (b) minimise the dangers of heavy manual work, (c) act as a safety-valve and (d) express resistance. The last aspect needs no further proof : hearing workers singing, "Inja

umlungu! Inj'umlungu" (whites are dogs) as they prepare to lift a heavy object; or that the white does not share his "ikuwfi"(coffee) "ngo damn!". For the majority of the population, however, work-songs at best become songs about work after working hours. And, given the arduous nature of work, its many indignities, most people find better themes to sing about during their short leisure time.

With industrialisation too, leisure time was invaded by two more rather vocal and musical characters : the individual composer-musician - perched on parapets, on street corners, in backyards, in hostels and township neighbourhoods we find the first one - the Zulu guitarist, the squashbox player or the fiddle player, and, through him we also find the arrival of many songs reflecting worker experience; the other we find in public places or venues, ever since the professionalisation of the pianists like the legendary hunchback Ntebejane, playing away, contorting his or her features, at a price. The former is of the people, the latter is for the people and both, the source of much working class creativity. Juluka and Abafana Bomoya for example attempt a combination of both traditions. These people, sometimes the carriers of culture and sometimes its innovators, function alongside the established collective songs of church choirs, union and political organisations, to make the townships vibrant concentrations of the oppressed. But is this all that is left of working class culture, tucked away for leisure time and this, contracted through transportation problems? This would presuppose that work is bereft of song.

But workers resist, they join trade unions, they fight over rights and negotiate formally and informally new ones. In the factory, in the modern production processes defining industry, workers are part of what is termed "collective labour" but simultaneously for the majority of their time, they are part of a "lonely crowd". They are

"individuated" but they become individuals of a special kind: if they sing they are not usually heard, if they persist in doing so, the grit and the dust usually inflames the throat.

Qabula.....

Qabula sees work as a place approximating Hell - the modern factory provides enough brimstone and fire - a place you learn to adjust to as part of a lonely crowd. His descriptions of the heat and the hardship in production conforms to some of the worst fears about factory life. But Qabula, in adjusting to his job has at the same time created a very special world. In his head. For the past ten years he has been composing songs there about everything that affects his life and the life of others. Over the last few months some of these songs have exploded on stage in mass trade union meetings and the response by workers has been overwhelming.

Qabula works as a "hyster-driver" (fork-lift driver) in a large rubber factory. He feeds the labour process of the milling department with raw materials. Unlike fixed and repetitive machine-work, his job has some variation. Speeding along, carrying the latest command for a chemical substance he is known by many workers on the way to the "base stores" and back. He in turn came to know very few people. Elevated above normal social interaction he saw bodies, machines and a general bustle of movement. When he conversed it was usually snippets of dialogue - for workers were trying to keep up with high production targets. He survived the working day by composing songs. These songs concerned both redemption and resistance based on his everyday experiences. "I would see something that hurts, that causes me pain and then I would spend the day making a song about it", he states. This has been happening for years and over time he has become an individual creator to stand alongside the two other leisure-time composers. The difference between them is that

-Qabula-

Qabula is of the factory and for a lengthy period a composer for no one but himself.

In 1980 he joined the Metal and Allied Workers' Union. He immediately became an active shop-steward in the mill. Many more songs were composed out of this experience. Then, he got involved in a workers' play - many more songs were composed for this experience. After the play he had a vision of what form his creativity should take. He embarked to do his own `plays' in order to perform his compositions. He asked another shop-steward, who had a little tailor-shop in the township, to tailor him a colourful costume which looked ragged and torn. From then on, he exploded onto the unions' mass meetings carrying a briefcase and tattered in colourful poverty, or better, he began pouring the contents fermenting in his head for others. He performs his compositions and incantations like a crazed imbongi. His performance takes on an epic form and the response has been overwhelming.

He has chosen three of his compositions to make up his play : the first is "Nona singa shada umteto uzese Hlukamiza". It is a song, a migrant's lament about broken family and love life due to the evils of the law which underpins migrancy and the contract labour system. The second is "Impilo le Phenduka". A lengthy song about the hurt of migrancy: starting from the countryside the central character of the song is chased away from TEBA's recruiters, from the labour bureaux and decides to enter the city without papers. Chased and hunted he experiences the miseries of city life. At the end of this torture appears a job, the paradise he yearned for. But this paradise is easily lost too after the experience of exploitation in the factory. The final composition is his lengthy oral poem\performance\chant, "Izimbongo zikaFosatu". It deals with the necessity of workers' unity through added and added and many a time newly improvised clusters of images. "It's the countryside tradition

invading the city", another shop steward commented after a performance in front of more than 2000 people. Could this be plausible?

There is no doubt that the words affirm the symbolism of the contryside: a tradition that uses nature in an anthropomorphic way. Here too landscapes and images from nature are used freely to express metaphors in the performance. The "forests" dominate the "Izimbongo"... piece: the forests come alive, the same forests where as a young man he was to hide during the Mpondo rebellion. The forests that become the metaphor for FOSATU, so that workers can hide in it, to fight from it, to use it as a shield. The forest again, the new federation of unions should become and unify all workers. The "mountains" in the "Noma singa" piece which separate the migrant from his beloved; they stand for the contract system, for the "hurt of influx control". They should make way so he can at least see her even at a great distance. But closer to the bone is the form his presentation takes. It descends from the imbongi tradition of praise and critical oral poetry. He appears on stage as a half-forgotten nightmare, a past most workers have left behind them with urbanisation.

One notes that oral performances are impressive in their magniloquence and communal wisdom whether they are lengthy narratives or short proverbs. These performances furthermore use words as sounds, or better, events of sound imbued with power. At the same time, a word in such performances may set off a chain of associations which the performer will follow into a cul-de-sac unless skilled and in control of his craft. Finally, like in the storyteller tradition the imbongi will be the storer of communal wisdom based on communal experience. The problem is, in my view, that Qabula's performances resemble the tradition or oral poetry but are informed by a broader set of cultural experiences. One witnesses a form that has undergone dramatic

changes through Qabula's range of life experiences. His world is not the close-knit community of the past.

Born near Flagstaff, raised and educated there, participating in local festivities and oral traditions a forest of influences marked his childhood: traditional ceremonial songs, imbongi recitations, hymns, and given his area's political history, political songs. Being musical he has absorbed most. But then however much his heart remained with the countryside, contract labour brought urban influences to him and the countryside: his step father was a miner - he died this year of lung disease. So is his brother and many more of his kin. He spent the first years of his contract life in Carltonville sharing construction and mineworkers' worlds. He came to know many miners' songs about the degredation of life, sikhalo songs, songs about homosexuality, about yearning. From Bantu Radio he also learnt songs that people cannot sing together. From there to Durban a new cultural, social experience and political tradition entered his life. The well of song and performing traditions that he draws from is too deep for simple countryside and urban divisions.

He represents rather a grassroots response that uses well rooted forms, organically linked to working class cultures and infuses them with new contents: now the contents of the factory experience, and the contents of a worker militant's beliefs. The forms are bound to change to accomodate the new experience. Working class culture at the moment is a wavering flame, fanned by winds of change; Qabula contributes with his songs another log to guarantee its soaring. In the meantime he continues composing at work in his head. The work song survives stubbornly in the midst of noise despite the fire and brimstone.

(Ari Sitas, Durban, June 1984)

TRADE UNION EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The following bodies responded to a SALB survey on educational provision: CCAWUSA (Transvaal Branch), NUM, JUEP (Joint Union Education Project which serves: GAWU, MGWUSA, MACWUSA/GWUSA (Pretoria), OVGWU, SASDU, SADWA, SAMWU, and SARMWU), CUSA, Boilermakers Society (SABS), Industrial Relations Unit/Univ of P.E.(IRU), Cape Town Municipal Workers Association(CTMWA), General Workers Union, FOSATU and A/FCWU. Further contributions from other programmes and trade union bodies would be welcomed.

Provision:.....

All the union bodies interviewed provide some basic education on the role of the trade union for rank and file members, although there is virtually no literacy training offered. GWU often uses general meetings for education. The most intensive provision is in the area of shop steward or shaft steward training. In addition union bodies usually provide specialist courses for organisers and officials, and ad hoc courses on specific topics, e.g. health and safety or legislation.

Participants:.....

Most participants attend by virtue of their elected positions e.g. as shop stewards or officials. Otherwise general members are largely recommended for particular courses through the structures of the union. NUM, CCAWUSA and FOSATU made the point that selected members are expected to report back and share what they have learnt.

Attendance:.....

Most courses especially for general membership are run in workers' free time. Exceptions include particularly the Boilermakers which pays out for time lost by members who attend residential courses. Despite being a large union this imposes a high financial burden on the education programmes. Many

of the newer unions have gained some success in negotiating with employers for time off with pay for trade union education.

Numbers:.....
Attempting to give statistics on those receiving trade union education is difficult given the varying length of courses, the differences in level and the ad hoc nature of some programmes:

JUEP: 20-30 people attend courses which are run on average twice a month.

NUM: 420 shaft stewards go through the course in 5 months.

CCAWUSA: +/- 70 attend weekend seminars at a time. Seminars are held monthly.

CUSA: In 1983 in joint courses with UTP 2747 attended 71 weekend seminars and 1191 attended 53 day courses (although not all these were CUSA members). Approximately 250 went through CUSA's own courses.

SABS: 1300 members p.a. go through union's education.

FOSATU: Last year 10 residential national courses involving 200 people. At regional level 20-100 people attend weekend seminars at least once per month. Within a region 4-500 shop stewards go through an educational programme each year (5 regions).In addition the member unions run their own parallel courses.

GWU: shop stewards education every 2-4 weeks.

Demand:.....
CCAWUSA and GWU stressed the difficulty in keeping up with demand for education. CUSA highlighted the demand for literacy and is investigating the possibilities. SABS however mentioned the difficulty of maintaining enthusiasm for education. CTMWA uses questionnaires to find out what members want as topics and demands are expected to change. NUM, FOSATU, and A/FCWU mentioned that training must be relevant to everday needs in the work situation.

Organisation:.....
Few of the programmes surveyed are financially self-sufficient at this stage although there is usually an input from union funds. GWU and A/FCWU particularly are self-financing. Most unions now have separate education committees. SABS said this was necessary since when education was under the direct control of the executive it was the first thing to be cut to save funds and in fact education all but collapsed as a result in the early 1970's. SABS now has an education department backed by a separate education committee. JUEP is run by a committee made up of reps from each member union. CUSA unions have their own education committees which liaise with CUSA and UTP. FOSATU's educational priorities are set through a process of interaction between regional committees which sit on the national education committee and the central committee; in addition regions and member unions run their own educational activities. CCAWUSA's education committee consists of 2 organisers and 3 shopstewards and this committee reports to the executive of the union. NUM is planning a national education committee consisting of two members from each region, together with education reps in each branch or mine. CTMWA's education committee is chosen from among shop stewards - with only one official - and is responsible for planning projects and conferences.

Obviously structures vary according to whether education is union or federation based, national or regional, jointly or individually provided.

Teachers:.....
Most use outside "specialists" to some degree, e.g. CUSA uses UTP and Sached Trust, and is also represented on the Wits Certificate Programme in Industrial Relations (although this programme has yet to be assessed and as a joint management course is felt by CUSA to be considerably watered down). IRU has provided courses to MACWUSA/GWUSA and SABS. The latter which also uses the Institute of Indus-

trial Relations points out that members have to go through the union's own programme to prepare them for exposure to joint management courses. Other unions have used worker oriented service groups: eg. Industrial Health Research Group has assisted GWU in training shop stewards on health issues.

In most unions organisers and officials play a role in education work as well as the specialist educationalists. CTMWA placed stress on the need to develop more worker speakers by giving background help to prepare. Indeed there is increasing stress on the need to "train trainers" from within the structures of the unions.

Methods:.....
In general, unions were moving towards structured or modular courses combined with a variety of participatory (e.g. discussion, role-play) techniques backed by media aids - obviously where resources allowed. GWU builds its education around current issues. SABS is toying with the idea of "mass" education along the lines of I G Metal's video training. Some unions see their newspapers/ newsletters as a way of extending education to a wider base.

Aims:.....
All unions stressed the need to impart specific information and particular skills - particularly for negotiating. This was felt to promote self-sufficiency and confident and assertive shop stewards. CTMWA added the need to inculcate a spirit of cooperation and discipline. The need to build a leadership in the workplace was stressed by many unions. Beyond this some unions argued the need to take up broader social, economic and political issues within the education programmes.

In general:.....
CTMWA'S philosophy was one of "learning through doing". Participation is part of the educative

process. Education is vital to democratic organisation to avoid domination by leadership. A/FCWU made a similar point; that education must not be seen as seperate from organisation. CUSA argued the need to move from "reactive training" towards "pro-active training" to prepare workers to take the lead. For SABS education is decisive if the union is to develop and not stagnate. As a multi-racial union, the education programme provides an opportunity to promote understanding and challenge prejudices. FOSATU sees the education programme as contributing to the development of a labour movement and workers' consciousness of their own distinct class interests. Not surprisingly the IRU define their objectives rather differently: to promote constructive collective bargaining between employers and unions by providing both parties with access to information and skills. They were aware that this non-allied position was not an easy one to maintain.

Evaluation:.....
Success is difficult to measure. The development of a modular, stepping-stone approach to education was mentioned as one practical way of measuring progress. Many unions saw the education programme as one way of identifying promising candidates for trade union office. Above and beyond this it was felt that education pays dividends on the shopfloor - even if only a fraction is absorbed. Most unions mentioned education's contribution in building organisational self-sufficiency and assertiveness at branch and local level. NUM use study circles, initiated by trained stewards, to evaluate progress made. CTMWA use follow-up questionnaires but find that the real "proof of the pudding is in the eating" - the degree to which involvement is increased and workers speak more at meetings.

(SALB, June 1984)

PLAYS, POETRY AND PRODUCTION: THE LITERATURE OF THE GARMENT WORKERS

Elsabe Brink

'n Werker se Wens
Kom Werkers laat ons almal saamstaan
Al is die dag nog so ver
Laat geeneen ons pad versper

O, workers let us stand as one
Though our day seems far away
Though our progress takes so long
Let no-one bar our way. (1)

Nellie Raubenheimer

Nellie Raubenheimer who wrote this poem on workers' unity was a garment worker. (2) She was a member of the Garment Workers Union (GWU) which drew its membership from the ranks of white afrikaner women who worked mostly as machinists in the clothing factories on the Witwatersrand during the 1930's and 1940's. These garment workers wrote poetry, plays, songs, short stories and novels and even jokes on what they knew best - the factory, the boss, the trade union and its struggles, and poverty at home. (3) Even though Nellie Raubenheimer was white and Afrikaans speaking, the worker's wish she expressed, transcends its own specific environment and resonates with worker's problems in other situations. The impulse to capture this experience in literary form, also parallels the current upsurge of black worker literature in which workers have taken their own lives and experiences and have turned them into a "potent cultural product". (4) It goes beyond the scope of this article to account for the development or absence of such literary activities in South Africa's divided working class, but an analysis of the cultural products of the garment workers allows us to take a first step along the road to suggest

some perspectives which may have a more general application.

What prompted the garment workers to engage in a literary expression of the issues confronting them in their daily working and home environments? Firstly,

> Like all literature, these tales emerge as an attempt of a group of people to make sense of their lives and give it, in their literature at least some imaginative coherence. (5)

Secondly, both the emerging black trade unions and the GWU instituted educational drives to teach their rank and file members the rudiments of trade unionism. (6) The GWU attached great importance to the education of their members to the extent that in the 1934 Program of Work, Solly Sachs, general secretary of the GWU stated:

> ...honest and loyal members should be trained to become union leaders and every facility be given to them to learn the theoretical and practical sides of the trade union movement. They must be taught to speak, to write, to organise and to lead. (7)

Thirdly, the volume of literature produced by the garment workers in particular could be attributed to a "passion for poetry": an enthusiasm for writing in Afrikaans which had gripped Afrikaners in the 1930's and early 1940's. (8) During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century several Afrikaans language movements were launched in South Africa with the express object to gain recognition for Afrikaans. (9) These movements were successful when in 1925 Afrikaans instead of High Dutch was recognised as an official language of the country. (10) The writers of the time set out to teach the "volk" how to read, to be aware of their common history and heritage as a cultural entity entirely different from the British cultural heritage. (11) The 1930's saw the rise of a new literary movement in Afrikaans called the "Digters van Dertig" (The poets of the Thirties), which included literary giants such as

the brothers N.P. van Wyk Louw, and W.E.G. Louw, Elizabeth Eybers, Uys Krige, I.D. du Plessis and G.M. van den Heever. (12) They set out to eradicate the feeling of inferiority and backwardness which they felt still clung to Afrikaans by the production of less apologetic work, and work which could be critically evaluated on intrinsic merit alone. (13)

The literature of the garment workers, for the greater part drew on the same set of cultural values and symbols and laid claim to the same cultural heritage as the writers of the mainstream Afrikaans literature. The Great Trek, the Boer War, the solidarity and strength of the Voortrekker women, were all claimed by the garment workers as a past which was their own and of which they were proud. At the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations the garment workers, although they divorced themselves from the nationalist organisers of the celebrations, staked their claim to this cultural heritage by sending an independent Kappie Kommando consisting entirely of garment workers to the celebrations at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. (14)

The literature of the garment workers, although it laid claim to a common Afrikaans cultural heritage, differed from the mainstream of Afrikaans literature. Whereas the mainstream literature addressed Afrikaners as a race quite apart and distinct from English speakers, the garment workers rather addressed their audience as workers. The literature of the garment workers was therefore an Afrikaans literature, by workers for workers and about workers. The women of the GWU writing about their own lives made an even more unique contribution to South African literature in general. Their's was an Afrikaans feminist workers' literature which focused sharply on the role of the working Afrikaner woman in the shaping of South African society. (15)

This paper will firstly discuss how, during the

1930's as part of the reorganisation of the GWU after their crushing defeat during the clothing strike of November 1932, a very definite program was followed to educate the women workers in trade unionism. Secondly, it will show that the fruit this education bore, exceeded the expectations of the GWU leaders, in that the women most effectively passed on the principles of trade unionism to their fellow workers by means of their songs, plays, and poetry and prose as published in the Garment Worker /Klerewerker, the official mouthpiece of the GWU.

I Education.....

In March 1933, a few months after their defeat during the 1932 strike, the GWU proposed to open a Workers Club which would offer classes in hygiene, first aid, and provide regular cultural entertainments for the workers. (16) A few months later, the union sent a circular to all members inviting them to a series of lectures dealing with the "history, struggles and problems of the working class". The first lecture to be held on June 2, 1933, was entitled "The History of the Labour Movement". A monthly prize of a guinea was to be awarded to the union member who wrote the best essay either in Afrikaans or English on the topic of the lecture of the preceding month. (17)

The 1934 Program for Work, outlined a more detailed strategy for the education of the workers. It was proposed to publish a pamphlet in both English and Afrikaans, explaining the necessity of a trade union to the garment workers, to establish worker cadres for the education of the workers in trade union matters and to set up training classes one evening per week. A library was to be established to make available the most important books dealing with the working class movement. (18) In September 1939 the Library Committee reported the majority of their 110 members read Afrikaans books, to the extent that the books in the Afrikaans section were falling to

pieces. By 1940 the Library was extended with branches in Germiston, Fordsburg and Potchefstroom. (19) In the same year the readers of the Garment Worker/Klerewerker (GW/KW) were gently reprimanded to look after their library books and return them in time, rather than not at all.

Lectures and a library service were not considered to be enough. In November 1939, the GWU announced that they wanted to form a workers' sports organisation, a choir, a dramatic section and wanted to bring the workers together on weekends and after work for "cultural enlightenment". Classes in physical education as well as hikes and picnics were organised. (20) The hike of December 9, 1933, which included a program of sports and the provision of refreshments, was advertised by a short poem:

> The machine, the boss, the noise and trouble,
> we will all forget on that day.
> We will hike together to Aasvogelkop, there a
> beetjie om te vry.
> (to neck a little) (21)

The 1934 Program of Work also stated that: "the social life of the workers should be taken in hand by the union more energetically." (22) Physical culture classes were usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays; the hiking club left the union offices at 8 am on Sunday mornings and the sports section offered basketball and dancing. The introduction of hockey and stagecraft was being considered as well. (23) By 1937 Germiston women workers were regularly attending the local Social Club for Factory Girls which also offered physical training classes. In 1940 a Mrs Bass was still giving these classes and a Mrs Jean Pretorius was giving music lessons in the evenings. Both Solly Sachs and Johanna Cornelius often remarked that it was most important to "keep the workers healthy". (24) In 1940 Miss Kotie Augustyn, vice-president of the Union, and an employee of S Malk's had mustered a basketball team who played but lost against the Voortrekker team of

Boksburg. She also organised a dance to collect money for the team. (25)

In 1938 an appeal was made to the workers to take an interest in the affairs of the union and to attend the evening classes on Fridays in the Union Hall. In 1941 these classes were still held and Nellie Raubenheimer, in an article in the Garmentworker /Klerewerker, urged the workers to attend and explained why these classes were so important. They explained concepts such as class struggle, the proletarian revolution, and capitalism to the workers. (26) Lively discussions were also held at the meetings of the Joint Factories Committee. At a discussion in February 1938 conducted in Afrikaans by Johanna Cornelius on "Confinement Allowances for Working Mothers", the women concluded by suggesting some amendments to the Factories Act in this respect. (27) At another debating evening, the topic "'n Vakunie is tot voordeel van die Werkers" (A Trade Union is to the Benefit of the Workers) was discussed. A daughter of Mrs S Nel of S Malk's sang and played the pianoforte; Miss Wilhelmina Smit also of S Malk's recited a poem, whilst Tina Niemand of Anglo African organised the factory's choir to sing and Rosie Gatton of the same factory brought a friend to demonstrate tap dancing and acrobatic dancing. (28)

In 1940 the owner of a farm some 10 miles from Johannesburg offered accommodation on his farm to the GWU to hold Weekend Summer Schools for the workers. The Millinery Branch of the GWU, established in 1941, appointed Mr E Weinberg to hold study classes on Saturdays at 1 pm to teach the milliners about trade unionism. (29) In 1942 about 13 members of the Central Executive Committee of the GWU offered to attend a series of 24 lectures on Labour Organisation held at the University of the Witwatersrand each Thursday from 18 June onwards. It was indicated that some Germiston workers too would be interested to attend these lectures. (30)

The wish to "elevate the social and cultural side of our lives" through the organisation of training classes, debates, choirs, dances, picnics, physical training, musical evenings and sports, formed an important part of the agenda of each year's organisation. In a circular of the Joint Factories Committee Hester Viljoen and Johanna Cornelius urged the workers: "We must educate ourselves to fight for the rights of our class." (31)

II Songs.....

Songs played an important role in the work of the GWU. They used the tunes of well-known Afrikaans folk songs such as "Sarie Marais" and "Bobbejaan klim die berg" to compose their own strike songs and songs for rallies. "Wat maak Oom Kalie daar", became the Strikers Song which was composed especially for the tobacco workers strike in Rustenburg which had been organised by GWU officials:

Wat maak die brandsiek daar? 2x
Die brandsiek ruik na vrotte vis
Die mense dink dis die Railway bus
O, wat maak die brandsiek daar?

(What are the scabs doing there?
The scabs smell of rotten fish
People think 'tis the Railway bus
O, what are the scabs doing there?) (32)

The "Answer of the Factory Slaves", composed to the tune of "Sarie Marais" especially for the meeting of March 18, 1941, ridiculed Ivan Walker and Walter Madeley, the Secretary and Minister for Labour at the time. To the tune of "Bobbejaan klim die berg", the garment workers sang:

O, moenie buk nie en moenie buig nie
vir slawerny en fasiswet
Ons moet verenig en almal saamspan
sulke lae lone is geen pret.

(O, do not bow and do not sway
to slavery and fascist law
We should all unite and together stand
Such low wages are no fun.) (33)

The two Cornelius sisters, Hester and Johanna, often collaborated to compose songs for the Union. In 1939 they suggested songs to be used as the song of the Garment Workers Union Guard and in 1940 composed the song "Stryk wyl die yster gloei" (Strike while the Iron is hot):

Hoe heerlik sal dit wees
As almal werk, geen werklose meer,
En ons geen honger ly.
Daar's rykes min en armes veel.
Ons regte is gesteel.
Maar ons laat staan die klaery,
Vaarwel aan slawerny.

(How wonderful would it be,
If all worked, no unemployed you or me,
And we no longer hunger any.
The rich are few and the poor many
Our rights have been stolen
Let us cease this complainin'
Farewell to slavery.) (34)

Internationally famous songs such as the International and the Red Flag too were translated into Afrikaans and sung at strikes, rallies and other gatherings:

Staan op! O, slawe van die wereld!
Ontwaak! wat dors en honger ly,
Kom help 'n nuwe aarde opbou,
Want die oue gaan verby...

and the Red Flag:

Die volk se vlag is rooi soos bloed,
Dit dek ons mense in die dood,
En eer hulle daar le styf en koud,
Word hulle bloed daaraan vertroud. (35)

-Garment Workers-

On February 22, 1940 a Trade Union Rally for a Living Wage was held in Johannesburg City Hall. At the rally the women claimed their place as workers for the future of their country:

Ons vrouens neem ook deel aan die geveg!
Ons werk ook, ons bou onse land.
Ons vrouens, die helfte van ons volk.
Veg vir die vooruitgang van Suid Afrika.

(We women too share in the fight,
We too, work, build our land
We women, half of our nation
Fight for the progress of South Africa.)

A pageant of unity was performed and the International, the Red Flag, the Transvaalse Volkslied were sung, as well as songs of the people, such as Loch Lomond, "Sarie Marais", "Stryk wyl die yster gloei", "Suikerbossie" and "Prices Rise", a satire on Three Blind Mice. (36)

The songs of the GWU therefore drew strongly on Afrikaans traditional folksongs in its efforts to promote solidarity, unity and cohesion. Its songs appealed to the women not only as workers but certainly as Afrikaners as well.

III Plays.....

The plays produced by garment workers deal mostly with the struggles of the women workers in the factories and at home and strongly expressed the women workers' point of view. These plays seemed to have enjoyed great popularity for they vividly portrayed the lives of their audience. In October 1939 the dramatic section of the Union under the direction of Maggie Kruger was already going strong. (37) Also in 1939 the Potchefstroom garment workers were practising a play. (38) In July 1940 Maggie Kruger produced a play which was first staged with great success in Vrededorp, making a profit of R3. In August 1940 it was staged once more with members of

the CEC helping with the refreshments. (39) On the 1st of May 1941, the play "Broers" (Brothers) as well as an English one act play "The Great Philanthropist" were performed in the Johannesburg Trades Hall. Later that year the English play as well as another Afrikaans play, "Unieseel" (Stamp of the Union), were performed at Kingston House, Pritchard Street, Johannesburg, at the request of the sweet workers. (40)

An unnamed play, most probably intended to be called "Slavin van Suid-Afrika" (Slave of South Africa), written by Hester and Johanna Cornelius relates the lives and struggles against poverty of six sets of women, both in the factories and in the rural areas. Act One finds young boys struggling to do the housework and preparing the supper whilst waiting for their mother to return from the factory. (41) The scene then moves to a factory where the young female workers comment on the misery and poverty in which they have to live. They resolve to unite all the (white) women of South Africa to fight for a better life for all (white) workers. They demand land for the farmer, higher wages for the worker and decent housing for all. In the later scenes other women, on farms, pensioned, pregnant, young shop assistants, all heed this call for unity:

> We women are the slaves of our country and of the system which oppresses us. The men who make the laws of our country, have so divided our nation with their political intrigues, that today we women and children have to die of misery and hunger. We women should for once wear the breeches, to save our country from destruction and ruin. We will follow in the footsteps of the Voortrekker woman who said, "Even if we have to cross the Drakensberg on bare feet, we shall not return to this country of oppression!" (40)

The play the "Trial of the 22", portrays another aspect of the life of a woman worker. Mary's

husband Jim, an unemployed dockworker in Cape Town, feels humiliated that he, the former provider and breadwinner of the family, is forced to be dependent on his wife for his daily bread:

> Jim: Ja, dankie! Ek moet nogal dankbaar wees. Jy werk vir my. I don't want your bread! (He throws the bread on the table, his wife picks it up.) (Thank you very much! I have to be grateful. You work for me!)
> ...This life...its better to be drunk or dead or maybe in jail...but to live like this...Yes I see! I must kiss the hand that feeds me.(47)

The plays "Eendrag" (Unity) and "Drie Spioene" (Three Spies), by Hester and Johanna Cornelius respectively, although they are not very remarkable as plays, deal with the struggles of women in the factories. "Eendrag" puts across the message that the workers, when they unite and confront the boss en masse, can improve their conditions. "Drie Spioene" relates how three members of the CEC of the Johannesburg GWU enter a Cape Town clothing factory in disguise and whilst working amongst the women convince them that they should strike and no longer tolerate the abuse and bad treatment which they have to suffer from their boss and his forelady. (44)

The play "Broers" (Brothers), which is incomplete, deals with the conflict and division in a family in which two brothers support two opposing ideologies, socialist and fascist. Their beliefs play an important role in the animosity and hatred between Jan, the striker, and Hans, his policemen brother. Their loving but grieving mother, sympathises with both, and fears for the safety of both. (She even hides her striker son's hat to prevent him from leaving the house to join the strikers.) Netta, Jan's girlfriend, an ardent trade unionist, argues with Hans who is convinced that absolute obedience to duty is the highest ideal in life. Netta accuses Hans:

> Only through betrayal can you get rid of your

> duty towards your class...when you let yourself be used to break a strike, it is nothing but treachery. That is all! (45)

"Die Offerhande" (The Sacrifice), is the only garment worker play to be published in their magazine. It was staged by the Germiston Division of the Volksteater, (Theatre of the People), on Monday, November 10, 1941, in Johannesburg and on November 17, in the Germiston Town Hall. It portrays the conflict between rich and poor; the heroine a pawn between two camps. Should she marry the rich man, Hans Botma, whom she does not love, and so save her family's farm, or should she marry her own true (but poor) love? True love wins, the family departs for the diggings in the hope of a quick fortune. The son, whose wife Werda, is an ardent trade unionist, turns to illicit diamond buying, and his mother dies on hearing of his crime. The play resolves in a call by Werda for all workers to unite:

> Shall we allow this rotten system to exploit us any longer and turn us into poor Whites? The workers, the farmers, the diggers are the victims of this system...On one sixth of the earth today millions of farmers and workers live under a new system, a system which has no boss, no rich farmer to oppress the poor... It is the Soviet Union. A country governed by the worker and the farmer. (46)

These plays seem to have features in common. Both the policemen, the boss, as symbols of oppression, and the "ardent trade unionist" tend to be rather unconvincing characters. Both types are drawn in caricature. The policeman as symbol of the forces of law and order and the state is portrayed as unsympathetic to the cause of the workers. Hans Botma, the ex-suitor turned policeman, in "Die Offerhande", is accused of being a "mean Judas" and a traitor like Hans in "Broers". The public prosecutor and policemen giving evidence against the strikers in

the "Trial of the 22" are likewise discredited and ridiculed by the council for the defense. (47)

The Boss and his henchmen (women), the figures of authority and exploitation in the factory are equally negatively portrayed. These characters are mostly portrayed as one dimensional caricatures and are called by nicknames such as "Ou Snoek" (a type of fish), and "Ou Geldduiwel" (Money Devil). (48) Devices such as making them speak in English and swear extensively alienate them even more from the other characters. (49) The bosses in both "Eendrag" and "Drie Spioene" are equally repulsive, in the latter Mr Kelly swears, assaults women on the factory floor and fires a girl who is in tears because of the death of her mother. (50) In both plays the foregirls who support the boss are not even traitors, they are the "brandsiek". (51)

The fear of employers is poignantly apparent in a joke about a machinist who works frantically all day because she mistakes her own coat hanging behind her for her boss spying over her shoulder to ensure that she works fast enough. (52)

The trade unionist tends to be rather one dimensional as well. Mary of the "Trial of 22", tells Hetty the "ardent trade unionist" who helps her to prepare her evening meal: "Hetty, you're too good...like a mother. What would I do, if you did not come here?" (53) Hetty is described as being a "lively woman, not very young anymore, but with a kindly smile on her face". (54) Minnie the "ardent trade unionist" of "Drie Spioene" also valiantly defends a young victimised worker. (55) In the short stories written by garment workers and published in their magazine, the "Garment Worker/Klerewerker", on their life in the factories and the role of the trade union in their lives, the trade unionist is portrayed in a similar fashion, to the extent that one trade unionist lovingly forgives an erring worker: "Not to worry child, it is nothing. We never become angry

with our workers". (56)

The antagonist and protagonist, the boss and the "ardent trade unionist" as well as the characters with whom they interact, are nonetheless portrayed in such a way that they fit in with the experience of the audience and readership. They are left with no doubt at all that the boss and his cronies are indeed villians, whilst the trade unionists are the heroines of the situation. The message comes across clear and unfettered by any form of nuance and therefore served to increase the appeal of the plays to a worker audience.

IV The Garment Worker/Klerewerker.....

With the publication of the poem "The song of the Shirt" by Thomas Hood in the Garment Worker/Klerewerker in December 1929, a first attempt was made to introduce the garment workers to workers' literature. (57) The magazine only reappeared in November 1936 and again in 1938 when it was brought out regularly with the aim of combating the extreme right wing ideas of the time. The magazine was in Afrikaans and English, each section comprising twelve pages and printed back to back. It appeared on average once every two months. The Afrikaans section usually published a wide variety of writings by members of the Central Executive Committee as well as rank and file members of the union. Only in 1945 did some literary works appear in the English section of the magazine. (58) The volume of literary work produced by the garment workers was remarkable. They wrote short stories, autobiographical sketches, reports, poems, translated serials, reminiscences, travelogues, union propaganda, speeches, political commentary, court cases in which the GWU was involved, and a type of back page column on the life of one "Valentine" who spoke a mixture of English and Afrikaans. (59)

-Garment Workers-

Several themes emerge from an analysis of the literature of the garment workers. Most striking is the vast amount of didactic literature either in the form of short stories or as discussions. The philosophy, aims, aspirations and task of the union are put across in the form of a play, poem or short story. Strikes, victimisation, taskwork, exploitation of the workers, underpayment, the need for unity amongst the workers as well as organisation not only in the Garment Workers Union, but in unions elsewhere were the main concerns of these writers. The contributions of Johanna Cornelius ranged from for example an essay "Hoe kan ons ons fabriekslewe aangenamer maak", (How to improve our life in a factory), to a poem, "Die Stryd in die Stad", (The Fight in the City), to a didactic tale on victimisation "'n Alledaagse Gebeurtenis" (An Everyday Occurence) to a play "Drie Spioene". (60) Hester Cornelius wrote as prolifically. She wrote the play "Eendrag", reported on her trade union work in Germiston as secretary of the branch and translated serials for publication in the magazine, e.g. "Noem my Timmerman" (Call me Carpenter) by Upton Sinclair and "Moord Gepleeg in Duitsland" (Murder Committed in Germany) by Heinz Liepman. The latter ran during the late 1930's and the former during the early 1940's. Sinclair was followed by "Die Kinders van Hitler", (The Children of Hitler) a translation of the film script based on a book by Georg Ziemmer, which "Shocked the world". (61)

Maggie Meyer's poem "Die Plig van die Vrou" (The Duty of the Woman), found inspiration in her trade union experience and background, as well as her general knowledge of South African history to paint a rather grand picture of the role of (white)women in South African history from the time of the Great Trek and the Voortrekkers' quest for freedom to the 1930's and the strikes in the clothing industry. "Capital" is portrayed as the destroyer of the women's freedom and happiness. This viewpoint differs considerably from the standard Afrikaans

approach where the conquest of the British rather than that of "Capital" was seen as the cause of the destruction of the rural idyll of the Voortrekkers.

Die vryheid het nie lank geduur,
Want wat eers soet was word toe suur
Toe Kapitaal die oorhand kry,
Was sy die een wat swaar moes ly.

In die fabriek van vroeg tot laat,
Daar leer jy kapitaal te haat,
Saam word daar 'n besluit gemaak
In 1932 gaan hul uit op staak.

As ons net saamstaan sal ons wen,
Die mans sal dit ook moet erken.

(Freedom did not last too long,
For what was sweet, then turned sour.
When Capital gained the victory,
She was the one that had to suffer.

In the factory from early till late
There Capital you learn to hate
Together a decision was taken
In 1932 on strike they would go.

If we stand together we shall have victory
The men would also have to agree.) (62)

The comparison between life in the rural areas and in the city forms an important theme in the garment worker literature. They tend to idealise the bygone rural life on the farm and regret having left loved ones, parents and relatives. "Rype Ondervinding", a two part serial by a garment worker, embodies many of these elements. Anna Cloete, the central character, a trouser machinist in a Johannesburg factory regrets leaving the Bushveld. Ever yearning for change, she had tired of the "eentonige plekkie" (dull little place) and wanted to earn money to care for her parents in their old age. Part Two finds Anna in a rented room in Fordsburg, preparing the

evening meal of some meat, bread, coffee and tinned milk. The interior is described as though the writer is personally familiar with such circumstances; the furniture included a tin bath, a table and two candle boxes as chairs and a cushion. (63)

As poor people the garment workers are doubly conscious of the differences between rich and poor. The poem, "Die Lied van die Armes" (The Song of the Poor), juxtaposes the rich and the poor;

Na vuil agterplase
is die armes verja
om rykes en dwase
se laste te dra.

(To filthy backyards
the poor are herded
to shoulder the burdens
of the rich and the idle). (64)

The playlet, "Kersfees vir die Armes" (Christmas for the Poor), gives an insight into the dreams and expectations of the poor, they yearn for the things money can buy - an escape from their drab existence. But they are disillusioned: "There is no Father Christmas for the poor. Remember that. He is not on our side". (65) Throughout the literature of the garment workers one finds a consciousness of "Die Werkendeklas" (working class); they are the workers and as such wish to organise themselves into a cohesive unity. The plays they wrote were "Werkendeklas dramas", and titles such as "Werkers Regeer" (Workers Rule) and "Wees Trots Klerewerkers" (Be Proud, Garment Workers) abound in the magazine. (66)

However the garment workers did not write totally independent, ignorant or contemptuous of the mainstream of Afrikaans literature. They were familiar with it, most probably through their education and setwork books at school. As an

alternative to the mainstream of Afrikaans literature, the writings of the garment workers do not create Literature or Art for the sake of it, but use the form of the play, poem or short story in an attempt to reach and convince workers. (67)

The garment worker poets and playwrights were mostly in good command of the form they employed. In the poems the principles of rhythm, rhyme, and metre were applied with ease as were those concerning the plot of a play or short story. Their literature was devoid of all forms of subtlety, such as metaphors, similes, or symbols, for it put across its message with a simplicity and clarity which would not cloud the central issues. They were intimately connected with and built on the cultural aspirations of their readers who could identify and participate in what they read and what they saw performed on stage. As Hester Cornelius remarked:

> Workers who participate in the theatre do it...to transform the working class struggle into drama, to present it to the workers and to suggest solutions to our daily problems.(68)

Conclusion.....

The literature of the garment workers therefore is important in three respects: Firstly, their literature was a feminist literature, which clearly depicted the position of the Afrikaner woman in her society and outlined a possible line of action within that society for its betterment. Secondly, this literature is written in Afrikaans. It developed independently from the mainstream of Afrikaans literature of the time and is still unknown in the Afrikaans literary context, and it dealt with themes that the mainstream of Afrikaans literature rarely if ever touched upon; the Second World War, trade unionism, worker consciousness, and a feminist consciousness which is evident amongst a cohesive and united group of Afrikaner women workers. Finally it is a literature about workers, by workers and for

workers. The "Garment Worker/Klerewerker" therefore very aptly remarked in 1939:

> Garment workers therefore do not only make gentlemen's and ladies' clothes, they can also sing, write, versify and do a number of other things in life as well. (69)

Footnotes:.....

1. The Garment Worker/Klerewerker (henceforth GW/KW), Jan/Feb 1941. Translation was done by the author, unless otherwise stated.
2. Nellie Raubenheimer - an employee of the Ideal Clothing Manufacturers - also published a poem called "Rus Alleen" (Repose Alone), GW/KW, April 1939, and an article "Werkers Regeer" (Workers Rule), GW/KW, Jan/Feb 1983, on the role of trade union education in the life of a garment worker.
3. From the early twenties Afrikaner women increasingly found employment in the clothing industry on the Witwatersrand. They actively participated in two major strikes in 1931 and 1932. After the split between the factory and bespoke sections of the GWU in 1934, the women began to feature prominently in the organisation of the GWU which constituted the factory section of the old union.
4. "Union Struggle on Stage", in SALB 8.7, Aug 1983, p72.
5. I. Hofmeyer, "Mad Poets - An Analysis of an early sub-tradition of Johannesburg Literature and its Subsequent Developments", Wits History Workshop, 3-7 Feb, 1978, p4.
6. See: "Lectures for Workers", SALB, 8.8 & 9.1 Sep/Oct, 1983.
7. Program for Work for 1934, by S. Sachs, to the Central Executive Committee of the GWU, 2/2/1934, CPSA, GWU, 8cfl.
8. D.J.Opperman, Digters van Dertig, (Cape Town 1953), p53.
9. J.C.Kannemeyer, Geskiedenis van die Afrikaans Literatuur Vol I, (Cape Town, Pretoria 1978),

p92,93.

10. T.R.H.Davenport, South Africa, A Modern History, (Johannesburg 1978), p200.
11. Kannemeyer, Geskiedenis, p265; Langenhoven's aim was to teach the volk to read. Langenhoven was extremely popular with the garment workers. His Ope Brief ann die Keiser van Duitsland, 1914" (Open Letter to the Kaiser of Germany) was reprinted in full in the GW/KW, Nov/Dec 1941. Extracts of his poetry and of his sayings were often quoted in the magazine, eg. GW/KW, Jun/Jul 1940, p8.
12. Opperman, Digters, Contents.
13. Ibid, p13.
14. H. Cornelius, "Ons en die Voortrekker Eeufees", (The Voortrekker Centenary and Us), GW/KW, Oct, 1938, p4; and M. Kruger, "Eeufees", (Centenary) GW/KW, Dec 1938, p7.
15. As yet neither the literature of the garment workers nor the writings of Hester or Johanna Cornelius, have been mentioned in any standard text on the history of Afrikaans literature.
16. Annual (Adjourned) General Meeting of the GWU, 30/3/1933, GWU, Bad 1.
17. Pamphlet, Educational Classes, GWU Tvl., 29/5/1933, 8cc 1.53.
18. Program of work for 1934 by S.Sachs, to CEC of GWU, 2/2/1934, 8cf 1.
19. 19th Meeting of CEC of GWU, 14 Feb 1940, Baa 1.
20. GWU Circular, 23 Nov 1933, Bbc 1.162.
21. GWU, Notice of Hike, 7 Dec 1933, 8bc 1.74. The poem is very appropriate, since about half of the garment workers were under 21.
22. Program of Work for 1934 by S.Sachs, to the CEC of the GWU, 2/2/1934, 8cf 1.
23. GWU to Miss Mavis Sharples, 6/3/1935, 8bc 1.52.
24. 43rd Meeting of the CEC of GWU, 31 July 1940, Baa 1; Minutes of Conference of Factory Representatives, 15/8/1940, Bad 1.
25. GW/KW, Aug/Sep 1940, and 44th Meeting CEC of GWU, 7 Aug 1940, Baa 1.
26. Annual General Meeting of GWU, 24/2/1938,

GWU, Bad, 1; and GW/KW, Jan/Feb 1941.

27. 4th Meeting of the Joint Factories Committee, 16/2/1938, GWU, 8cf 1.
28. 3rd Meeting of the Joint Factories Committee, 3/2/1938, 8cf 2.1. There is not much evidence of GWU choirs, probably because the ASAF choirs were so popular at the time in Johannesburg; see: E.L.P. Stals, **Afrikaners in die Goudstad**, (Pretoria 1978).
29. 16th Meeting CEC of GWU, 16 Jan 1940, Baa 1, and 4th Meeting CEC of Millinery Branch, 7 Oct 1941, Bbc 14.4.1.
30. 34th Meeting, CEC of GWU, 27 June 1942, Baa 1.
31. Joint Factories Committee, Circular, 21 Jan 1938, by Hester Viljoen and Johanna Cornelius, Bcf 1.
32. GW/KW, May/June, 1941, p7.
33. Ibid, March/April, 1941, p9, p12.
34. Ibid, Feb 1939, p14. The Union Guard was a uniformed guard established in 1939 to keep order at the GWU meetings. It consisted of young factory girls who wore a blue and white uniform and paraded in military fashion.
35. Ibid. May/June 1941, p7, and Program and Resolutions for Rally of 18.3.1941, Bcf 4. The translation of both songs were the ones used by the GWU. The tune of the Red Flag is also used in Afrikaans for the song "O Boereplaas".
36. GW/KW, Feb 1940, p7, and Program for Rally, 8cf 4.
37. 4th Meeting, CEC of GWU, 4 Oct 1939, Baa 1.
38. GW/KW, Oct 1939, p12.
39. CEC meetings of the GWU, 38th, 40th, 41st, 44th, in June, July and Aug 1940, Baa 1.
40. GW/KW, May/June 1941, p11.
41. Anon. Play, p1 Bad 1.2.
42. Ibid, Act 3; see: de Villiers, **Barrevoets oor Drakensberg** (Barefoot across the Drakensburg), (Johannesburg 1975).
43. Trial of the 22, p1, Bcd 1.2.
44. Ibid.

45. Broers, p6. Bcd 1.2.
46. GW/KW, Nov/Dec 1942, p5, and July/Aug 1942, The name "Werda" was a cry of Boer sentries during the Anglo Boer war, meaning "Who goes there?".
47. Trial of the 22, pp4-6, Bch 1.2.
48. "Ou Snoek" was used in "Rype Ondervinding" (Rich Experience), GW/KW, Feb 1940, p14, and "Ou Geldduiwel" (Money Devil) in Act 2 of the Anon. Play, Bch 1.2.
49. "'n Alledaagse Gebeurtenis" (An Everyday Occurence), GW/KW, Nov 1936, p6.
50. "Eendrag", Act 4, Bch 1.2.
51. The garment workers translated the English word "scab" to its literal meaning "brandsiek", i.e. the disease sheep contract and not to its proper Afrikaans rendition viz. "onderkruipers".
52. GW/KW, Sep 1938, p11.
53. Trial of the 22, p2, 8cd 1.2.
54. Ibid, p2.
55. "Drie Spioene", Bcd 1.2.
56. GW/KW, Nov/Dec 1944.
57. Garment Worker, 1929, Bcf 1.2. In May/June 1942 the GW/KW published an Afrikaans translation of the "Song of the Shirt" by one N. Beets.
58. Eg. "First Novel", and "You can't trust a woman" by M Hall, GW/KW July/Aug, and May/June 1945.
59. Valentine by Valie was published during the course of 1943.
60. GW/KW Aug 1938, p9; Dec 1939, p1; Nov 1936, p6; and Bcd 1.2.
61. Ibid., 1939 and 1941. The translator of "Kinders van Hitler" was not mentioned.
62. Ibid, Aug 1939, p8.
63. Ibid, Feb 1940.
64. Ibid, Nov/Dec 1944, p6.
65. Ibid, Nov/Dec 1941, pp5-6.
66. Ibid, Jan/Feb 1941; Sep 1939, p5.
67. D.J.Opperman, Digters.....p53.
68. H. Cornelius, Eendrag Teater (Unity Theatre), GW/KW, May/Jun 1941.
69. GW/KW, April 1939, p11.

BLACK LITERATURE AND PERFORMANCE: SOME NOTES ON CLASS AND POPULISM

Kelwyn Sole

Three major organisational initiatives have marked the last decade and a half of black political and economic life within South Africa. These are the growth of black working-class organisations from the early 1970's; the rise of Black Consciousness organisations and ideology from the late 1960's; and the resurgence of organisations of a non-racial, "progressive" orientation over the last four or five years. While these initiatives cannot ultimately be separated - they have engaged with, built on and changed, and generally interacted with each other - there are areas of cultural activity where their various ideologies and goals can be recognised.

I Black Consciousness.....

This period of organisational growth has also been marked by a burgeoning of black literature and cultural initiative generally. This cultural reawakening can largely be ascribed to the growth of the Black Consciousness movement, and the spread of its ideology in the townships, in the seventies. This movement, emerging among the radical intelligentsia of the black universities and theological colleges after a decade of political quiet, had a strong ideological and cultural component: black cultural revival, self-awareness and self-reliance, and the need for physical and psychological liberation from derogatory white images of black people. With regard to literature, the notion of the privatized, skilled writer or artist was attacked. Art and literature were seen as ways of raising social awareness and showing the need for a changed society, and black self-expression and control in the arts became a major preoccupation. Groups of students and intellectuals

promoted black theatre, poetry and music, often apocalyptic in tone, through a variety of cultural and student groups (Mihloti Black Theatre, Mdali, PET and TECON to name just a few early groups).

Despite the attempts made to forge community links (the formation of the Black Community Project in 1973 is perhaps the earliest of these) and set up worker organisations (such as the constitution of Black Allied Workers Union in 1972), Black Consciousness seems to have begun as, and up to now largely remained, an ideology particularly attractive to the radical black petty bourgeosie. This more privileged and relatively better educated class has historically been more susceptible to the pull of European culture: because of its distance from the means of production, it has also tended to rely heavily on ideology for its self-identification. This class also tends to oscillate in its support between bourgeosie and the working-class; and in South Africa the racial barriers to the social progress and economic betterment of the black section of this class has often led it to align "downwards" and seek the political support of the black lower classes, emphasizing a racial commonality.

A great deal of Black Consciousness art and literature bear out the above generalisations. There is a restated emphasis on the need for blacks to rediscover their cultural heritage and "roots" - a preoccupation which is more attractive to that class which has been the most culturally alienated. Much of the poetry and plays which have emerged gesture back to a highly idealized pre-colonial rural past, and stress the need to rediscover "traditional values". For instance, the poems of Ingoapele Madingoane, one of the most popular poets in Soweto after 1976, contain many images of an African past destroyed by the deprivations of man, capitalism and apartheid (often not distinguished from each other). This idealized, communal black past is then projected forward to imply a communal

black experience in modern South African society. Generally, it is finally concluded that all blacks in the country are equally oppressed, no matter what their class position. (1)

The desire of a more privileged and better educated stratum to align itself "downwards" can be seen in the insistence in the literature on performance and direct communication with an audience. Literature must be used to forge links with and mobilize the masses. As theatre, musical performance and performance-poetry were the literacy forms most amenable to this goal, they are the forms most common in Black Consciousness cultural expression until at least 1978. Performances took place in group contexts which reinforced the feeling of participation by the audience and unity between them and the performers: an improvised literature of public statement, ritualistic and didactic in effect, was the prevalent result of such situations. (2) Plays usually had a minimal text, and few plays were published. Despite the fact that a few of the better known individual poets published, publication of literature was minimal outside of Black Consciousness publications such as the **Saso Newsletter** until the advent of **Staffrider** magazine in the late 1970s. Publishing itself was frowned on by some younger writers as politically suspect. (3)

Black performers and writers still see themselves as the spokesmen, or conscience, of all black people. This goes hand in hand with an often passionate identification with "the people", and a belief that all art must be political in orientation and purpose. Writers show an impatience with any art that was not immediately relevant to political liberation. (4) The theatre of Gibson Kente and Sam Mhangwane, popular in the townships in the early seventies, was attacked for being commercial, escapist and not showing the oppressive nature of township life truthfully. Extravaganza like **Ipi-Tombi** were (and are still) attacked, as well as any

theatre which showed blacks as passive bearers of suffering, such as that of Athol Fugard. (5) An attempt must be made to reach, mobilize and learn from ordinary black people:

> The black poet does not write from an ivory tower for an elitist minority. He regards himself as a poet of the people, from the people, and uses words understandable by all.
>
> We have to go to the people..It is the man in the street - how he understands BC - that I feel we must listen to. (6)

After the Soweto revolt of 1976, the banning of at least two organisations which directly effected black literature (Medupe and the UBJ) in 1977, and the exile of many prominent black literary figures, a greater emphasis on actually publishing work was discernible. In this process Ravan Press and, particularly, **Staffrider** were central. While fictional and imaginative genres from black writers and literary groups (such as CYA, Madi, Bayajula, the Allahpoets and others) predominate, the pages of this magazine also show a desire to articulate the experiences and voice of lower class people in the townships - shown in its interviews with people who do not have the literary skills to place their own experiences on paper and in the photographs and visual images focusing on the predicaments of commuters, hostel-dwellers, squatters and others. (7)

The emphasis on black communal experience, nationhood and solidarity has however often resulted in class divisions within black society being conjured away. Rather than working from a premise that class and ideological struggle permeates South African society, and that all man-made institutions are an outcome of political and economic struggles for power, "oppression" is opposed to a "natural order", and the purpose of the artist comes to be to expose a transcendental "truth". In Madingoane's

classless, naturalized universe "Freedom is the law of nature" and "Justice is rooted in the universal order of things". The artists' struggle, according to one young playwright, is "a struggle to recreate a distorted reality...A good...dramatist is the one who is not anti-man but anti-evil". (8) In some cases, middle class blacks are regarded as "non-whites" (as in some of Mafika Gwala's poems) or all blacks are put forward as being working-class (as in Mutloastse's story "Hell in Azania"). Class therefore becomes an attitude of mind, and class divisions are seen as a fall from original "blackness". Capitalism and consumerism are often explained away as a simple degenerative force which should be resisted with black authenticity (black women should not wear makeup, for example). Even someone like Mtutuzeli who puts forward an economic explanation for the way South African society has been structured, falls as easily into uncritically humanist stances in his stories. In a few other cases there is a careful sketching of the divisions, foibles, strengths and weaknesses of the people who make up a township or community, as in Ahmed Essop's "Fordsburg", Njabulo Ndebele's "Fools" and Mongane Serote's "To Every Birth Its Blood", but in the lastnamed case at least the aim is to proselytize the need to unite as a community against political and social oppression.

Black consciousness literature has consistently stressed an anti-elitist stance and the need for relevance and direct communication in literature and performance, and can therefore not be dismissed simply as petty bourgeois literature. Nevertheless, the literature so far shows very clearly the limitations and contradictions in the world view of the writer/performers concerned. The fiction of an egalitarian pre-colonial era transmutes easily into the rhetoric of a classless modern South Africa, in which equality and liberty would be guaranteed if it were not for apartheid. The stress is on human nature rather than class

struggle as the major force of social change, and a distinctive African personality which lends itself to collective existence is constructed.

Furthermore a great deal of literature focuses on the way individuals, often of a more privileged background, suffer oppression: and this is generalised as the experience of all blacks, of whom the writer/performer is one:

> It is immaterial whether the poet writes in the first person or the third person. The pronoun "we" sustains a communal bond, it is at the same time the voice of the poet as well as the voice of the people. Even when the poet uses the first person, it is not the assertion of the individual regarding to his individuality but he articulates the collective experience and communal spirit through the "I". (9)

A great deal of the literature is also in English, despite the efforts of some literacy groups (such as Mpumalanga Arts in Natal and Guyo Book Club in Venda) and some individual writers to write in African languages or use township slang. At best there tends to be mainly English texts with a minimum of Zulu/Sotho to give "authenticity" to the speech. This linguistic choice, of course, precludes an audience of lower class semi- or non-literate people, even if oral performance is used as a way of overcoming this problem. The literature of Black Consciousness does contain a greater diversity of technique and subject matter than many critics allow. It has been especially important in taking up political themes such as the degradation and poverty of the segregated townships, the plethora of apartheid laws which govern the lives of all blacks, deaths in detention, police brutality, bureaucratic corruption and so on. Yet there are many absences in its subject matter as well. Most of the literature shows very little focusing on the day-to-day experiences of lower class black people

within, or outside, the urban conglomerations where most of the writers live. Sustained interest in areas of working-class life does not seem to be high either, outside of a few individuals such as the playwrights Maishe Maponya and Matsemela Manaka (whom I will discuss later) and the prose writer Matshoba, whose stories describe such subjects as prison labour on farms and the difficulties of hostel dwellers or people in Transkei, albeit from the viewpoint of an outsider.

The issue of relevance to township life most frequently discussed is education, especially in the context of the 1976 and 1980 revolts. This is possibly not accidental: education, although of importance to all black people, is of particular importance to a relatively privileged class which see it as their only passport to "betterment" in a racially repressive society. The other township issue which one can find with some persistence is transport, especially the use of train journeys as a subject matter. Here, interestingly enough, this situation of travelling has frequently been used as a metaphor for the rootlessness of black people, who have not had access to property rights. Only in one or two cases do the intolerable conditions within the trains serve as the focus of the story. A few poems refer to hospitals - but again hospital conditions are used as a metaphor for subjects as diverse as praise of the fortitude of black nurses, the lack of sympathy of blacks towards each other and the need for unity. Other township issues such as rents and housing do not get much attention.

Given the volume of work which has appeared in the last decade, the absence of such subject matter (dealt with either realistically or symbolically) is surprising. Where working-class life is described, the feeling a reader gets is one of distance from these people on the part of the writer, who often describes working-class experience in rather abstract terms: shebeen queens on the train, mine

dancers, nightwatchmen, migrants, washerwomen are seldom given a life or reality of their own in the stories, but are used to stress racial identification, the need for unity or to make the obvious point that these people are subject to extreme forms of control and oppression. But attitudes to lower class people do vary, Mbulelo Mzamane's exposition of the resourcefulness of a rural cousin entering city life in his short story collection "Mzala" is a far cry from the mocking commentary on people with "ubugoduka" in some of Sepamla's poems.

Not only are township issues glossed over. Not many stories, poems and plays deal with the workplace either. Few exceptions to this generalisation occur: one would be Miriam Tlali's "Muriel at Metropolitan", which deals with the difficulties and racial prejudice experienced by an office worker. Another would be Gcina Mhlope's story of her brief career as a domestic servant. The pages of **Staffrider** have recently carried a few stories by new writers such as Bheki Maseko and Joel Matlou, who both describe workplace experiences as members of the working-class.

The form in which most work either written by or specifically aimed at issues which affect the black working-class appears is theatre. Of performance-orientated literature, theatre is possibly the medium most conducive to presenting situations, episodes and sequences which together most immediately constitute an approach to lived experience. Some black playwrights - such as Manaka and Zakes Mda - have made a point of presenting their plays at squatter camps, weddings and on other such occasions and concentrate on the lives of beggars, miners and so on. The multi-racial Junction Avenue Theatre Company's plays like "Security" and "Dikhitsheneng" deal with domestic labour and an unemployed man who gets a job as a watchdog, and their work has been disseminated to both theatre - and lower class audiences (such as

domestic servants). However, the play which stands out as most atypical is "Imfuduso", in that it was generated from within a working-class environment, and was conceived and created by the women of Cross-roads squatter camp to communicate their misery and daily harassment to a larger audience.

A growing awareness of the importance of popular literature and performance to demonstrate and deal with areas which affect the less privileged is apparent in the recent plays of Manaka and Maishe Maponya. They have both voiced a preference for non-commercial, critical theatre. Two of their plays, Manaka's "Egoli - City of Gold" and Maponya's "The Hungry Earth", centre upon the lives of migrants and mineworkers and the breakup of family life: Manaka's "Imbumba" gives a view of farm labour, while his "Pula" deals with resettlement. Maponya's "The Nurse" attacks conditions in a town-ship hospital. Manaka's gloss on "Egoli", however, shows that this is still an initiative to deal with these issues from the outside: his purpose is more-over still one of pan-class unification:

> Through our eyes we have seen the sufferings of the people. We have seen them being moved from fertile lands to barren areas, we have seen them starve in squatter camps. Through our eyes we have seen the life of our people assume various shapes of humiliation and suffering. Thus the continual struggle to create "Egoli"...we felt committed to focus our creative thoughts on the plight of the workers. (10)
>
> We have the literate and the illiterate, that is basically the black middle class and the workers. So it becomes the struggle of the dramatist to accommodate all the dispossessed people. (11)

There is still a strong Black Consciousness component in the work of both dramatists. "The

Nurse" contains the message that nurses must unite and unionise in terms of a struggle defined as blacks (nurses) against whites (doctors). "Egoli" contains strong use of Black Consciousness imagery (reference to ancestors, symbolic chains, traditional rural life around a fire etc.) and only occassionally uses or refers to workplace actualities (it can be argued, too, that the scenes of drilling and lashing are used partly because of their theatrical possibilities as gesture). The final message is that blacks must unite and, in particular, workers must politicise themselves as presumably the middle classes have already done.

II Non-racialism.....

Some black students, intellectuals and workers have however now moved away from a viewpoint which sees racial domination as the cornerstone of oppression in South Africa to one which places more explanatory weight on economic exploitation and a class analysis. While a few of these people have stayed within Black Consciousness organisations, others have switched allegiance to the non-racial, "popular democratic" organisations which have re-emerged in the past few years. In literature the most noteworthy example of this trend is perhaps Medu, a group formed by South African artists in exile in Botswana.

However, despite the ideological differences of opinion, the differences among black writers are at the moment more tendencies than absolute divisions. Many of the non-racial writers borrow from Black Consciousness thought (and have usually passed through a Black Consciousness phase), while writers who tend towards a cultural nationalism play at least passing regard to class issues (even if this remains a collapsing of all blacks into workers).

The writers who stress "anti-racism, national democracy and self-determination" (and, it must be said,

some writers in the left of Black Consciousness organisations also) advocate working-class leadership of the popular-democratic struggle in South Africa, and a changed economic system in any post-apartheid society. These writers and performers insist on the democratisation of culture as well: culture and art must reflect the hopes and aspirations of the majority of South Africans, and must further the struggle for a democratic society. Cultural equipment must be made more freely available and literacy must be extended to all. The priority of artists and writers, it is said, must be political art and the creation of a new culture which will destroy exploitation. (12)

Other frequently made points by this group are a dislike for commercial culture and the use of negritude in advertising, and an even greater emphasis on the need for artists to identify with "the people", using Fanon's adage that the artist must not only write political songs, but make these songs with the people. In line with this maxim, Medu for one has involved itself in community theatre in Botswana. Non-racialism and the structure of capitalist exploitation in South Africa are highlighted, at the same time as a unity (variously conceived of as among blacks and among all who dislike apartheid) is stressed, as in Serote's story of urban-rural solidarity "The Mosquito". A great deal of importance is placed on the history of organisational resistance in South Africa, rather than a more amorphous history of black nationhood: culture of resistance as handmaiden to this history is emphasised. There is also criticism levelled at idealistic notions of "traditional culture": Lefifi Tladi, at one point a member of this group, came under strong attack for sculpting African images of a "curio" type. (13) Instead, it is stressed that the values of previous African cultures will have to be sifted through and what is thought valuable selected and used. (14) Generally, it is said that writers and artists must use existing forms but

inject them with progressive content.

It is nevertheless not entirely clear how far commentators who accept a class analysis have taken the debate on the role and function of the writer/perfomer and literature forward from previous Black Consciousness assertions at this point in time. (Neither is a qualitative difference in the subject matter of their stories, poems and plays from previous Black Consciousness literature noticeable as yet, although it is perhaps too early to state this categorically.) Many of the arguments used are similar to what has gone before: the need for a culture of resistance to be built up inside the country (sometimes called "the national culture"), the need for unity and for artists to be active politically, as well as a necessary connection between art and politics. The phrases "the people" or "the struggling masses" are substituted for "blacks" or "black people", but the level of generality remains in many cases much the same. Politically orientated writers and performers of a more privileged class become unproblematically joined to "the people" again, this time in the guise of "cultural workers".

Obviously, the stress on popular support and unified action is seen as important by the "class" faction too, as is the need to create a consensus that the present State is inimical to the creation of a democratic society and any free, uncensored expression. Although there are important differences in ideology and programme, there are further similarities which can be noticed between Black Consciousness and "class-oriented" organisations and literature. In my opinion both the Black Consciousness and "non-racial" organisational initiatives are populist (or popular-democratic) in orientation and programme. That is, they both seek to mobilise and appeal to "the people" for support in a conflict with the power bloc. In the Black Consciousness programme, "the

people" are defined as blacks, "coloureds" and indians; while in the non-racial organisations "the people" include all those who oppose apartheid and the present political dispensation. In Black Consciousness, a supposed cultural unity of black nationhood is used by political groups, usually petty bourgeois, to mobilise a wide spectrum of black people to identify with and support their political programmes. The "progressive", non-racial organisations stress the need to build up a "culture of the oppressed" to use against the "culture of the oppressor". (15) In both cases, national identification is seen as culturally important, although the non-racial commentators more acutely see the need to give this nationalism a progressive, anti-racial content. In both cases, cultural and national identities belonging to "the people" are transformed into symbols for use in political conflict: in many cases these symbols can overlap (the assegai and the shield, the strong black matriach). In both cases too, writers and performers seek to identify and become one with a "popular consciousness".

The point must be made that "the people" are not entirely coterminous with the working-class. Popular struggle seeks to include individuals from different classes in a common basic programme. Therefore, popular-democratic organisations who advocate working-class leadership need to be aware precisely how they intend to put these goals into effect organisationally. Similarly, cultural activists of a petty bourgeois background who wish to extend communication and express a popular culture need to show how the cultural expression of working-class people is going to become an integral part of the popular culture/black culture they advocate. Without this clarity, there is a possibility that their populist conceptions will actually obscure some dimensions of social experience and struggle.

III Worker Plays. .....

In the light of this, the worker plays which have begun appearing over the last three or four years are noteworthy. One of the results of the growth of worker militancy in the early 1970's and subsequent growth of organised unions during the decade has been that political organisations have increasingly asserted the central role of the working-class in achieving political and social change in South Africa. However, little cultural expression from the working-class has been forthcoming from these organisations' cultural wings, as the "popular" culture aimed at has remained by and large the province of more privileged individuals and groups. It can, therefore, be argued that plays such as "Ilanga Le So Phonela Abasebenzi", the "Dunlop play" and "Ziyagika/Turning Point" (the first two involving participants from MAWU and the last from a CUSA union), mark a distint break with what has gone before.

Historically, the removals of blacks from inner city areas to segregated townships over the last fifty years, the creation of a male compound/hostel environment to house a great number of migrant workers, and the fact that a large proportion of the black working-class are still employed as contract and migrant labour have worked against the building up of a homogeneous working class culture, even within different regions. On the other hand, a common experience of workplace conditions and subservience to wage labour has served as a unifying factor amongst the working class. Working class cultural activity over the last hundred years has tended to play its major role in assisting their adaptation and survival in the urban environment - homeboy clubs, shebeens, self-help societies etc. - and has generally been of a more oral or ephemeral nature - sport, songs, music and dancing especially. The handful of migrant foundry workers who constructed "Ilanga", for instance, had little prior

experience of "theatre" or "literature" in the accepted sense of the word. Indeed, "Ilanga" arose initially out of the re-enactment by striking workers of their arrest and subsequent assault, to assist their lawyer when he was trying to take comprehensive statements on what exactly had happened. (16) What experience there has been of theatre by participants in these plays seems to have been almost entirely the less intellectual, less political theatre of Gibson Kente and others like him.

The black working class in South Africa has had less resources and leisure time to indulge in self-conscious cultural creation of the more "literacy" sort. On the other hand, many black petty bourgeois artists in this country are employed in jobs that either help, or leave an opportunity for, their artistic activity: journalism, advertising, publishing, administrative work, and so on.

The growth of organised unions, may, perhaps, open up the way and provide the resources for new areas of cultural activity to be explored by people previously denied access to culture. At the same time the few worker plays that have been performed so far have linked cultural expression in a unique way to the workplace. (17) For the worker-turned-actors in "Ilanga":

> Performing in the play was more than manifesting acting skills, it was a question of bringing their daily-life experience to the stage. They are faced with what it means to be a black migrant worker. (18)

These plays are noteworthy in that they all, to a large extent, reflect and comment on life on the factory floor. In distinction to most of the literature I have discussed above, the centrality of production and the work process as the principal site of exploitation in South Africa is acknowledged. (19) It is at the point of production, too, where class identities and

divisions are most apparent. The issues taken up in these plays are all issues crucial to the experiences and struggles of the black working class. Strikes, scabbing, accidents in the workplace, health hazards, hostel conditions, boss-worker relationships, the situation of foremen, overtime, the desirability of factory as against other types of work (such as domestic service), liaison committees, the need for unions, and the difficulties workers have in understanding the bosses' English or Afrikaans are all items which have emerged in these plays.

This insistence on the importance of working class issues and experience is not the same as the minimal use made of such subject matter in most previous black literature and performance, where work is often used as a metaphor for racial oppression and where all blacks are so easily seen as being workers. (20)

There is a strong didactic and mimetic quality apparent in these plays as well. When played before worker audiences, strong attempts are made to include the audience in the play - through the singing of union songs, and actors talking to and sitting among the audience. The emphasis is on putting forward situations which the audience can identify with, and also in interpreting the structures of oppression and exploitation in these situations for the audience. As one "Ilanga" actor said:

> We wanted to show our brothers who went back to work - and those who scabbed - the bad relationship between the boss and workers. Also some people don't know anything about the unions and we felt it was a good idea to explain it to them in this way. We wanted to show people that the foremen are on the side of the employers...(21)

The emphasis in these plays is on performance rather than a text, and the plays have been performed both

in front of workers (in venues such as union offices, hostels, schools and churches) and in other contexts (such as to university audiences). The desire to involve the audience, and the strong importance attached to the need for unity, show similarities to much Black Consciousness theatre. However, a different approach to this common subject is apparent. Matsemela Manaka's "Imbumba", for example, plays out the unity theme from a rather different perspective than a play like "Ziyagika". In "Imbumba", a "boss-boy" terrorises convict labourers on a farm until they unite and humiliate him, at which the demoralised boss-boy "swallowed his pride and confessed to them that he was no more baasboy but Zwelakhe. As he was fired...he led them in their escape to freedom." (22) I would argue that this stress on "renaming" and plea for more privileged blacks to unite with their lower class brethren (and then take on a leadership role in the fight for freedom) is a petty bourgeois conception of the course liberation should take. "Ziyagika", on the other hand, deals with a similar situation (an impimpi who wants to advance in his job, who then joins forces with other workers in a strike); but the whole play ends with a plea for trade union unity and working-class collective action as a means of struggle, rather than assigning to one individual a leadership position. As another example, "Ilanga" contains strong criticisms of a black SEIFSA representative who talks to the striking workers of their common brotherhood.

As a general observation, the use of an admixture of languages (English-Afrikaans vernacular) in a play like "Ziyagika" also foregrounds English less than, for example "Egoli". The use of African languages in plays aimed at communicating to worker audiences who have less command of English shows a less extreme divorce between performer and audience than the more self-conscious decision by the African Writers' Association to use these languages to "get back to the people". (23)

Conclusions.....

However, it would be mistaken to perceive these plays as unproblematically and spontaneously expressing a working class culture. While the traditional and communal bases of culture remain stronger among the working class (especially migrant and contract workers) than among a relatively privileged black elite, translating the direct experience of work and means of working class expression into "theatre" does contradict and alter some of the expectations and preconceptions of audience and actors. (24) Moreover, often cultural agents who are not working class seem to play an important role in transforming the workers' experiences into more aesthetically grounded theatre - the role of the lawyer in "Ilanga" is an example, as is the role of members of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company in workshopping both "Ilanga" and the "Dunlop play". These plays have also on occasion been taken out of the context of worker audiences and been performed at venues where they have striven to become theatrical performances in their own right: and some of the performers have shown a desire to become actors in a more conventional sense. This separation of working class performers (and writers) from an organic relationship with the culture which bred them is not necessarily unusual: there are few possibilities in South Africa and elsewhere of workers gaining access to the dominant culture's world of "drama" and "literature" which are not mediated by some form of patronage or outside technical assistance. (25) Theatre taken out of its context breaks the spontaneous relationship with its intended audience: and the necessity writers and performers face to have their work published or performed in more commercially viable forms in order to survive is an ongoing problem for all artists, not just working class ones (for instance, the recognised black playwrights who have most consistently stressed the need to communicate with "the people", Manaka and

Maponya, have built up their reputations considerably more with overseas tours).

The historical way in which capitalism came to South Africa has helped maintain a feeling of racial identity among black people: racist laws, the maintenance of a semblance of pre-colonial society in the Bantustans and segregation in the towns, facilitated the continuity of a racial and ethnic awareness among blacks even as they were urbanised and proletarianised. Furthermore, many townships do not have a discernible "geography of class", where neighbourhoods would tend to be mostly working class or middle class. Soweto, for example, contains people of various classes placed often in close proximity to each other (though some areas do seem to have some sort of "geography of class": parts of Dube are populated by the more wealthy, for instance), and experiences and attitudes belonging to different classes emerge to some extent in any subsequent communal cultural expression. In other townships, such as Mdantsane in the Cape and some townships in the Vaal Triangle and East Rand, it can be argued that the population is in the main working class, although other political and social divisions remain (between tenants and landlords; between hostel dwellers and those with permanent residency etc.). Life in the townships, in the rural areas and in the workplace can give a variety of possible identifications - class, racial, ethnic, sexual, regional - which may be used by people in different circumstances. Furthermore when people go home at the end of the day or at the end of a contract, they do not enter a completely separate sphere of existence: workplace and domicile experiences and identities exist in a relationship of interconnectedness and influence.

There is no pure "class consciousness" or pure "racial consciousness" among blacks (or any other group) in South Africa today. Black workers are aware of being oppressed as workers and as blacks;

while other classes, like the petty bourgeoisie, share a similar experience of racial oppression even though their class position modifies (and in the case of the petty bourgeois, alleviates) part of that experience. Therefore cultural identities of a racial or ethnic nature will constitute some of the basis for all black literature and performance. Moreover, references to "the people" or to "black people" within literature and performance has a very real experiential presence among some audiences, especially in a situation like South Africa where blacks of different classes are denied political rights because of their skin colour or where political support or condemnation of the present government is such an ever-present factor in everyday life. Nevertheless, the use made of these cultural identities will differ depending on how individuals and groups of writers and performers take them up and give them class expression.

Working class literature and performance is usually defined in relation to four factors: author(s), content, audience and "proletarian world view". The worker plays which have emerged recently can be defined as working class in the light of most of these factors, although they do contain some of the contradictions and inconsistencies which seem to surround all self-conscious cultural expression. These plays are a crucial complement to previous black literature and performance in that they have allowed a space for working class expression which has previously hardly existed in our literature and theatre. Whether these plays, based mainly on workplace issues and experience, are the forerunners of a wider use of literature by members of the black working class is conjectural at this point: but it must be pointed out that, in England at any rate, a great volume of what is called "working class literature" goes beyond the factory floor to cover problems around family life (abortion, father/son conflict etc.), unemployment and homelessness and other facets of working class experiences. (26)

The aim of what has been said above is not, however, to mechanistically deflate art and literature to simple class categories or abstract political messages. The realm of art contains powerful use of images and words which cannot be defined away so simply. Neither is it possible to dismiss Black Consciousness or other populist art as irrevelant: as the attack on elitist conceptions of culture and a dominant white liberal expression which Black Consciousness represents has cleared the way for further cultural initiatives among black people. Furthermore literature and performance which speaks to "the people" can, on occasion, deal with working class issues in a sympathetic and artistically cogent way. Nevertheless, in South Africa up to this time the dominant populist discourse among oppositional political groups hides the paucity of black literary expression with knowledge of, or by, black workers: a paucity easily forgotten in the prevalent rhetoric about "popular" or "mass-based" literature.

The lesson these plays serve to derive is that any attempt to conceive or analyse an oppositional "national culture" in South Africa (at the moment on the agenda of some writers and artists) will have to take notice of several facts. One, that for such a culture to be truly representative it will have to include working class expression as a major constituent. Two, that the conception of English as a lingua franca which usually accompanies the "national culture" idea does not address the problem that many people in this country neither speak English fluently nor are fully literate. Three, that rather than pointing the way to a few artists and writers speaking on behalf of "the people", it is perhaps more important that working class culture be given the place to develop as a major constituent of our cultural life on its own terms. For:

> A politics that addresses itself to people's felt difficulties, hopes and aspirations, actually needs to know what these are rather

than assume them from some pre-conceived programme; working-class writing, in all its forms, provides an invaluable range of understanding of the dominant forms of oppression and division, and is therefore an integral and central part of an active and participatory working-class politics. (27)

Footnotes.....

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THE INSTITUTE FOR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION AND WORKER EDUCATION

Johann Maree

Worker education is of immense importance to trade unions, but there has often been intense dispute over the way in which it is to be provided and to whom. This was the case with the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) which was founded with the express purpose of providing african workers with education after the mass strike in Durban in 1973. The IIE emerged at about the same time as those african unions that combined together to form the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC). These unions eventually formed part of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). Although the IIE worked closely with these unions, considerable tensions and conflict arose between them.

The conflict was basically over the form of the worker education that the IIE was to provide and the relationship between the IIE and the emerging trade unions. The conflict manifested itself over three issues: firstly, the question of who was to control the IIE: whether it should be a relatively autonomous body or whether it should fall firmly under the control of the unions. In effect it boiled down to whether intellectuals outside the unions or organically linked with the unions should control the IIE. Secondly the contents of the education to be provided became highly contentious: it was disputed whether it was to be aimed at the broad upliftment of the black working class as a whole or whether it should be closely tied to organisational needs of the trade unions. Out of this arose the third issue: which workers were to be educated? Should the courses of the IIE be open to all workers or should they be limited to workers from the TUACC

unions only?

This article examines the disputes between IIE and the TUACC unions. In particular it focuses on the roles of intellectuals in these bodies because the conflict was really fought out between them with workers playing a passive role.

Origins and Structure of the IIE 1973.....

The roots of the IIE, as those of the unions, lay in the Durban strikes of 1973. The strikes revealed a need for workers' education. At the inaugural meeting of the IIE on 30 May 1973 Harriet Bolton, who was secretary of a number of registered trade unions and who had done a great deal to help african unions get started in Durban, explained the need had arisen to establish an institution to cater exclusively for the education of workers:

> during the strikes the trade unions and other interested bodies were appalled by the lack of knowledge displayed by the workers, the employers and the general public, about the rights of workers. While the employers and the general public could easily remedy their lack of knowledge by making use of educational facilities at their disposal, the same does not apply to the workers. The workers have neither the time, nor the money, nor access to these facilities. (1)

The IIE was founded by intellectuals who were either providing services for the emerging african unions or directly organising the unions. Effective control of the IIE was vested in the hands of a relatively small Working Committee although an elaborate umbrella body was created as a protective shield. Like the trade unions, the IIE was operating in a hostile political environment. The Working Committee was dominated by a few individuals including Harriet Bolton, Foszia Fisher, Halton Cheadle and David Hemson. Fisher was particularly

active in the formation of the IIE and was subsequently elected the first chairperson of the Working Committee. (2) She received considerable support from her husband, Richard Turner, a political science lecturer who was banned in February 1973. Although she acted autonomously and was in no way dominated by Turner, they discussed IIE matters together to the point where Fisher became protective of an idea thinking of it "as our idea and wanting to protect something that I thought was Rick and mine". (3)

The umbrella body of the IIE consisted of its Council as well as an Academic Advisory Panel. The Council, which had very limited powers, consisted of representatives from worker organisations as well as people and institutions who could make constructive contributions to the IIE or potentially shield it from state repression. These included the Chancellor of the IIE who was Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, two other representatives from the Kwazulu government, one from the South African Institute of Race Relations and two from the Academic Advisory Panel. The Panel consisted of academics from the University of Natal in Durban who were to play an advisory role in the preparation of teaching material. Considerable efforts were initially made to retain the goodwill and involvement of TUCSA, but TUCSA rapidly turned against the IIE. (4) The IIE also registered under the Correspondence College Act of 1956 as a protective measure. (5)

In its early stages, the Council went through rather elaborate procedures to launch the IIE, but it did not do much more than endorse the decisions already taken by the founders and the Working Committee of the IIE. They decided that the IIE would offer a Diploma in Industrial Relations in 1974 as a correspondence course.

The founders of the IIE also planned to produce a

"newsletter which was to report on general problems of the Trade Union Movement in South Africa and elsewhere". The "newsletter" was called the South African Labour Bulletin and was published at intervals of seven to eight weeks. The policy of the Bulletin was placed in the hands of its Editorial Board which was initially composed of the entire Working Committee of the IIE. The target readership of the Bulletin was clarified by Fisher at a Working Committee meeting. She stated that it was aimed essentially at trade union officials who were in need of more detailed analysis on issues that they came across daily. The Bulletin was also peripherally aimed at academics for financial rather than educative reasons, but it was not aimed at rank and file worker readership. (6)

Struggle for Control of IIE 1974-75.....

In 1974 the IIE commenced its education by means of a correspondence course. It enrolled a total of 139 students virtually all of whom were african workers from Durban and Pietermaritzburg: only 9 lived in other centres. The IIE was aware of some of the drawbacks of the educational method it had adopted. To try and ensure that the written material it produced was more or less at the right level, some workers "proofread" the first drafts of the material which were then amended in the light of the criticisms. (7)

The IIE initially operated as a relatively autonomous body although it was linked with the trade union movement by having trade union representatives on the Working Committee as well as on the Council. It also operated from the same premises as the unions in Central Court which gave it an organic link with them. However, the tie with the unions was considerably loosened when Halton Cheadle and Dave Hemson, who were two trade union representatives on the Working Committee were banned in February 1974 and were not replaced on the

Committee. (8) This meant that the IIE no longer had effective trade union representation nor participation of the unions' intellectuals in its activities.

This situation led to increasing dissatisfaction with the IIE on the part of intellectuals in TUACC, particularly John Copelyn and Mike Murphy, who were opposed to the existing role of the IIE.

> We felt it should be union controlled, that it should be oriented exclusively towards the specific educational needs of the actual organisations we had and that the correspondence technique was pretty much irrelevant; that what was needed was to develop BEC programmes, shop steward programmes, organiser programmes, and to work on a different level. (9)

Support for this position also came from workers in the unions. As a result the executive body of TUACC, the Secretariat, made a move in October 1974 to bring the IIE under its control. They decided that they would not elect two union representatives onto the IIE Working Committee until the TUACC Council, which consisted of the Executive Committees of all the unions, had formulated "the desired nature of relationship with the IIE". The Secretariat wanted the IIE to become a sub-committee of TUACC because they objected to the independence of the IIE as this enabled it "to take its own decisions and formulate its own direction". There was also resentment on the part of TUACC with the IIE's reluctance to co-operate with it in their fundraising efforts with the British Trade Union Council.

In agreeing with these criticisms Eddie Webster, the Academic Advisory Panel representative on the Working Committee, pointed towards a different relationship between education and organisation. He maintained that:

> it was vital to prevent a sharp dichotomy

> between education and organisation. The mistake of the IIE was that ideas were formulated by intellectuals isolated from the workers and the trade unions. Ideas were not located in practice... As a service body the IIE had to satisfy the needs of the trade unions. TUACC should provide direction and the IIE implement it. (10)

Although some members of the Working Committee tried to prevent a polarisation between the IIE and TUACC, these attempts proved to be futile. This was largely due to the political and ideological differences between the intellectuals. At the one end was Fisher supported by professor Lawrence Schlemmer, chairman of the IIE Council. This grouping showed liberal leanings and placed great emphasis on the need for african workers to engage in black community struggles. On one occasion Professor Schlemmer stated that his view on the role of the IIE was that `it was conceived as an organisation concerned with social change on a broad front. More particularly it was seen as directing its effort towards the needs of leaders in the working class who were outside the unions as well as those in the unions.' (11) At the other end were the intellectuals in the TUACC Secretariat such as John Copelyn and Mike Murphy who perceived african workers' struggles as predominantly a class struggle and considered trade unions to be the most suitable vehicles through which to mobilise the african working class.

The political and ideological differences between the two sides was shown clearly at a Council meeting in July 1974 when professor Schlemmer proposed that the IIE should introduce a Diploma in Community Studies. He motivated the proposal on the grounds that there was a need to train laders in Black communities, that a workers' organisation needed to have a leadership with knowledge of community problems and an awareness of the organisation's rela-

tionship to the community. Copelyn opposed the proposal on the grounds that it was not related to the needs of the trade unions and that priority should be given to establishing trade union structures in the factories. He felt that the IIE should be a trade union school training shop stewards and should not distance itself from the factory. (12) The issue could not be resolved at the Council, but Community Studies was in fact never taught by the IIE. The resistance from TUACC was too strong and conflict between the two sides over more fundamental issues soon overshadowed the proposal.

The first move from the TUACC intellectuals came in December 1974 when they successfully increased the number of trade union representatives on the Working Committee from two to four. This considerably strengthened their voice on the Working Committee as the union representatives then constituted approximately half of the Working Committee's membership. In addition, TUACC also succeeded in redirecting the IIE's educational focus for 1975 to conform more closely to the organisational needs of its unions. At the same time they persuaded the IIE to share its financial resources with the unions on the grounds that the IIE had only succeeded in raising a grant of R18000 in December 1974 from the TUC because of its links with the TUACC unions. TUACC negotiated with the IIE to introduce an additional course exclusively for ten union organisers, eight of whom were to be appointed by the unions, and the remaining two by IIE. The ten organisers would however all be remunerated by the IIE and were to divide their time more or less equally between organisation and education. (13)

The outcome of negotiations between intellectuals on TUACC and the IIE at the end of 1974 appeared to be a compromise that could have left both parties satisfied. The Diploma in Industrial Relations correspondence course was to continue in 1975 with priority of place given to TUACC members, while the

organisers' course was specifically introduced to meet the needs of the unions. The reality however turned out differently and 1975 was a year of considerable turmoil for the IIE. This was because fundamental disagreement remained over the form of worker education the IIE was to provide: the TUACC intellectuals were insistent that the education had to be linked to the unions' organisational requirements while Fisher and her supporters tenaciously clung to their goals of running a general correspondence course with some degree of relative autonomy for the IIE.

Problems were encountered with both the correspondence and the organisers' courses because neither side of the Working Committee was willing to co-operate with the other side's objectives. A total of 92 students enrolled in the correspondence course in 1975. Fifty-nine of the students were TUACC union members of whom 23 were shop stewards. At the suggestion of the union representatives on the Working Committee, it was decided to run a shop stewards course that would be closely linked to the correspondence course. It was however up to the unions to get the shop stewards groups organised and it was not until mid-year before this part of the correspondence course began to operate.

The organisers' course generated general dissatisfaction on the Working Committee. (14) It was argued by Fisher that the organisers were under too great a pressure from union work to have sufficient time for theoretical studies, but it was also the case that Fisher was only willing to put work into the correspondence course.

The organisers' course was in the process of fizzling out by April when a proposal form Copelyn successfully put some life into it. He suggested that the organisers should be given a course on South African Labour History.

> The motive that he had in putting forward this suggestion was his feeling that the major weakness with the organisers generally was their inability to abstract themselves from their work-a-day situation and so to attempt to understand and reflect upon the nature of the movement in which they were involved. (15)

The proposal met with general approval and a successful organisers' course on South African Labour History was run for the organisers by Eddie Webster and Luli Callinicos. This was followed up by an Industrial Sociology course that examined issues like oligarchy and bureaucratisation in trade unions. The latter course generated some dissatisfaction with the TUACC intellectuals as they felt that it subsequently exacerbated tensions within the TUACC unions as discontented groups used the concepts and arguments of the course to argue that TUACC had become oligarchic.

The TUACC intellectuals continued to work towards the incorporation and subordination of the IIE to TUACC. At the Secretariat meeting in July it was decided to present a memorandum to the IIE that it should become a TUACC sub-committee and that it should allocate fewer financial resources to the correspondence course. The memorandum also proposed that the South African Labour Bulletin should affiliate to TUACC as an interested party. (16)

The IIE Working Committee called a special meeting to consider the TUACC memorandum, but did not come to a definite conclusion. (17) The memorandum was raised at an IIE Council meeting a week later on 10 August where it was discussed from many sides. From the unions' side it was stated that the "crux of the problem remained that of linking education to union organisation". Fisher maintained that the Industrial Relations correspondence course was aimed at providing:

> general education and to train the union

> organisers in how to best make use of the information for their shop steward groups.

But the unionists saw little merit in the IIE running open correspondence courses that could even include black personnel managers when there was a real need to build up and train shop stewards.

Fisher presented the basis of the dispute as seen from her perspective as follows:

> On the Working Committee, the union representatives are wanting the IIE to spend less time on the Industrial Relations Course, maybe to do away with it altogether. But this course ...has been the basis for IIE's existence. (18)

The Council meeting was also inconclusive, but matters were finally brought to a head at the next Working Committee meeting when it was decided to take a vote on the issue. They voted by five votes to two in favour of the TUACC recommendation that the IIE should link its education to the organisational needs of the unions and that the correspondence course be given a secondary status. Fisher expressed a strong desire to carry on running the correspondence course, but her position had become incongruent with the reorientation of the IIE. She was pressurised into resigning and stepped down as chairperson in October 1975. Other than assisting in the final preparation and production of IIE Handbooks, she and her supporters took no further part in the educational activities of the IIE. (19)

The S A Labour Bulletin: Autonomy Increased.....

By contrast the South African Labour Bulletin had gradually increased its relative autonomy not only with regards to TUACC, but also with respect to the IIE. The process by which it happened was through step by step changes as the Bulletin's Editorial

Board responded to new situations facing them. As early as July 1974 it was decided that not all members of the Working Committee would serve on the Editorial Board, but only those who were actually involved and contributed to the Bulletin. This was because people were being held accountable for what appeared in the Bulletin even though they had no say in the matter whatsoever. A separation was thus made between the Editorial Board of the Labour Bulletin and the Working Committee of the IIE. At the subsequent IIE Council meeting it was explained that this gave the Labour Bulletin more freedom. This differentiation between the two bodies entitled the Editorial Board to formulate its own policy: at a subsequent Working Committee meeting a controversial article which was due to appear in the Bulletin was discussed. The question was raised whether or not decisions of the Labour Bulletin's editorial policy could be taken at an IIE Working Committee meeting. After discussion it was agreed that the Working Committtee could not take policy decisions and the matter was left to the Editorial Board. (20)

A further step towards the autonomy of the Labour Bulletin took place when the Working Committee agreed to delegate to the Editorial Board the right to co-opt members to the Board who were not officially linked to the IIE. The IIE Council also granted the Board the right to open an account in the South African Labour Bulletin's name. The reason for the changes was that the Editorial Board had perceived the need to expand to a national level. The Editorial Board accordingly finalised a constitution in December 1975 to operate autonomously with editors from three major industrial centres. (21) Because of the growing self-reliance of the Labour Bulletin it was not subsumed under TUACC as was the IIE. It nevertheless continued to co-operate closely with TUACC as officials of the Secretariat carried on serving as Board members for a number of years.

Demise of IIE 1976 - 1977.....

Early in 1976 the IIE effectively bacame a sub-committee of the TUACC after the resignation of Fisher. Alec Erwin became chairperson of the Working Committee and Copelyn full-time trade union education officer of the IIE. He was assisted by Mbu Dlamini. (22) Their major activity was to design and run organisers' programmes. The courses were aimed at improving the organisers' abilities to analyse their factories, to know the laws that were applicable and to provide the organisers with a wider and deeper understanding of the political economy of their society. They ran a number of courses for organisers with the direct participation of Erwin as well.

However when two organisers of the National Union of Textile Workers were detained in May 1976, Copelyn started assisting the union in Pinetown. At the same time he and Dlamini also assumed some responsibility for organising the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union which was in a state of collapse. As a result of such pressing organisational demands Copelyn came to the conclusion that:

> to be involved with the IIE was a luxury. There was just too much organisational work to be able to sit back and design programmes. (23)

The same pressures operated on Dlamini who was drawn into the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union as a full-time official in mid-1976. (24) In addition the TUACC unions faced serious organisational problems in 1976 and 1977 due to the deteriorating economy, an external counter-offensive and an internal schism. Consequently the IIE's educational programmes were severely curtailed and failed to carry on successfully. Another factor that accounted for the demise of the IIE was the federation talks that TUACC entered into in March 1977. It became clear to TUACC representatives that the IIE

would have to cease having a separate institutional existence. The only educational efforts that were working well were the weekend residential seminars. (25) Although broader theoretical issues were touched on, the seminars were primarily geared to training workers to deal with organisational issues they faced in the factories. Such training was perceived to be the primary needs of the unions at that time. Increasingly the intellectuals employed by the unions and TUACC rather than the IIE also took over the planning and running of these seminars. Because of these developments the IIE started losing its educational role. Due to the earlier efforts of Fisher and its link with the unions, the IIE had been highly successul in fundraising overseas. In the first half of 1975 it raised R9335 and in 1976 no less than R3Ø693. (26) The IIE was therefore able to fund other projects within TUACC, but in the process it had lost the key educational role that its founders had envisaged for it.

Conclusion: An Appropriate Form of Worker Education

At the time of its inception the IIE fell between two potential roles: either being an educational wing of the trade unions, or being a voluntary association with the aim of educating workers generally, but outside the trade union movement. Both tendencies were represented within the Working Committee. (27) Vacillation of the IIE between the tendencies continued up to the end of 1975 when the TUACC unions wrenched control of the IIE away from Fisher.

The TUACC unions were then caught in a dilemma of their own making. The intellectuals in the unions were convinced that worker education could only play a constructive role if it took place under the close supervision of the unions. However, the organisational demands placed on intellectuals in the unions during this difficult period from 1976 to

1977 were too great to enable them to devote sufficient time to worker education. For this and other reasons the IIE was therefore pushed into the background and eventually folded up. Broader worker education in the TUACC unions thus had to take second place to the training of workers to cope with the immediate organisational demands of the unions. Although this did not include a comprehensive analysis of the political economy, the training was still political in the context of worker organisation. It was only a number of years later when the unions were well-established and confident that general worker education could commence again.

In evaluating the IIE's role in worker education it has to be borne in mind that the IIE came into existence before the TUACC unions were well enough established for worker representatives to be in a position to assert effective control over the IIE and its educational programme. The two key issues that were at stake were the form of worker education and the relationship between an educational institution and worker organisation because they determined the effectiveness of the worker education in strengthening the trade union movement. The different experiences of the IIE on the one hand and of the South African Labour Bulletin on the other indicated that varied resolutions were sought. These issues were not finally settled with the demise of the IIE: the search for the most suitable form of worker education and its relationship to organisation commenced afresh with each new stage of development of the trade union movement.

Footnotes.....

Abbreviations used:
Comm - Committee
Int - Interview
Min - Minutes

1. Min of Inaugural Meeting, 30 May 1973.

2. Min of AGM of the Working Comm, 11 Aug 1973
3. Int Foszia Fisher, Durban, 16 Dec 1979.
4. Min of Working Comm, 29 Aug, 23 Oct and 6 Nov 1973.
5. Min of Report Back Meeting, 1 Aug 1973; Int Fisher.
6. Min of Report Back Meeting, 1 Aug 1973, and of Working Comm, 29 Jan and 3 June 1974.
7. Foszia Fisher, "The Institute for Industrial Education", Reality 7,1:19, 1974.
8. Int Fisher.
9. Int John Copelyn, Durban, 28 Nov 1979.
10. Min of Working Comm, 31 Oct 1974.
11. Min of Working Comm, 9 Sept 1975.
12. Min of IIE Council, 27 July 1974.
13. Min of TUACC Council, 1 Dec 1974, and IIE Council, 21 Dec 1974.
14. Min of Working Comm 18 Feb, 18 and 24 March 1975; Working Comm Report for IIE Council Meeting, 10 Aug 1975.
15. Min of Working Comm, 14 Apr 1975.
16. Min of TUACC Secretariat, 14 July 1975.
17. Min of Working Comm, 3 Aug 1975.
18. Min of IIE Council, 10 Aug 1975
19. Min. of Working Comm, 9 Sept, 28 and 31 Oct 1975, 2 Feb 1976.
20. Min of Working Comm, 9 July 1974 and 3 June 1975, and IIE Council, 27 July 1974.
21. Min of Working Comm, 3 Aug 1975, and IIE Council, 10 Aug and 6 Dec 1975.
22. Min of Working Comm, 5 and 20 Jan and 29 Feb 1976.
23. Int Copelyn.
24. Int Mbu Dlamini, Durban, 20 Nov 1979.
25. Min of Working Comm, 13 Sept, 11 Oct and 22 Nov 1977.
26. IIE Income and Expenditure Account for period 1 Jan 1975 to 30 June 1975; IIE Financial Statement for Year ending 31 Dec 1976.
27. Min of Working Comm, 7 Aug 1974.

WORKSHOP PLAYS AS WORKER EDUCATION

Astrid von Kotze

The need to express oneself artistically becomes all the more urgent, when (a) access to cultural reproduction is denied largely, and (b) the working population is condemned to drudgery and long-distance travelling as in the structures of the South African apartheid system. Worker organisation in South Africa is increasingly becoming a social movement apart from a political and economic necessity. In this it brings together large numbers of people who initially related to each other according to immediate problems at the factory, according to campaigns and strategies - in short: they related primarily as workers and only secondarily as men and women with creative potential. It is this which has prompted the trade union movement to incorporate plays, musical groups and choirs as an extension of it's education programme.

The so-called theatre experts and critics in the country focus largely on happenings inside institutionalised play-houses and the great shrines of the stars erected by the government, and while local plays increasingly portray working-class life and problems they fail to come to grips with the dynamics of working-class culture. Emerging worker-plays are not meant for a consumer public, and they are created and performed within the perimeter of working-class leisure time - and space. The need to investigate these developments in order to encourage and co-ordinate activity amongst worker groups prompted this article. It's intention is further, to describe how workshop plays are events of a different kind, obeying and evolving their own laws of development.

Towards Community Theatre: SECURITY.....

Responding to a union call for support in 1979 some of the members of JUNCTION AVENUE THEATRE COMPANY set out to do a workshop play. Within three weeks, working almost daily after their "regular" jobs they devised and rehearsed SECURITY. This 45-minute play depicts a man, who, unable to obtain work due to a tight labour market takes the job of a "watchdog" outside a factory. He is equipped with kennel and collar - jokingly admits, it might not be a "white-collar job" but a "dog-collar" one - and is trained by an aspiring middle-class clerk under the super-vision of Mr Fatman, the boss. Through a gruelling process of learning to walk, sit and attack like a dog and unlearning speech he finally turns out to be no more than the "underdog" he was initially. The play was performed in community halls, churches and yards outside "white" Johannesburg mostly at weekends - this being the only time when working-class audiences could attend. This experience set the participants on a course of alternative theatri-cal exploits. More than the previous plays of the Company, SECURITY focussed on the dramatic present-ation of cause - and effect relationships as they effect the exploited and oppressed peoples of this country; moreover it was the first step towards performing (a) outside established theatrical venues, (b) within the leisure time of the working-class, rather than the traditional evening shows, (c) at spaces, where people were already gathered for some common purpose, rather than inviting them to come specifically to see a play. For these reasons the format of plays would have to allow for the changed conditions of performance, but not only that: the plays themselves should be made and per-formed by the very audience they were meant for - working people.

After SECURITY the link with the unions became stronger and work on the first project in the new "mould" began. Three members of the JUNCTION AVENUE

THEATRE COMPANY joined workers who were currently involved in dismissal disputes in the dense industrial areas of the East Rand outside Johannesburg. They met nightly for three months and produced ILANGA LIZOPHUMELA ABASEBENZI (The sun rises for the workers). The play depicts the recent dispute at the factory, showing it's history and causes and analysing the conflict by making the underlying structures visible. Active audience participation was inculcated into the play - the play in fact had different endings, depending on suggestions from the audience - and songs played an important role in costituting the framework of the play on the one hand, creating a common sense of solidarity on the other. The problems with making the play were enumerate, ranging from financial (since workers had been dismissed they had no income and often could not afford the busfare to come to workshops - this play, as all the others, was not subsidised in any way), to political (workers were endorsed out of the area of Johannesburg and sent to their "homelands" due to the illegal strike), to communicative (most participants were basically illiterate which made production of written "scripts" impossible - people had to rely on memory; in addition there was a wide range of languages spoken by the various participants, and the workshop co-ordinator could only speak English). Responses to the play were enthusiastic, and since it has been videoed ILANGA has been seen by thousands of workers throughout the "Republic". This in the final instance was very useful, because future workshop members could have explained what a play is and might look like by reference to ILANGA.

Workshops with women workers from a textile factory ensued. The economic and personal problems of these women were so severe however, that the project finally collapsed - leaving, however, a number of songs which shall be mentioned later again. Another play in the line of SECURITY was made; DIKHITSHENENG (In the kitchens) deals with the exploited position

of domestic workers, who live in the backyards of white Johannesburg. It was shown particularly on Thursdays ("Maids" "day-off") in suburban church halls and often "madams" and "maids" attended together, throwing furtive glances out of the corners of their eyes.

A description of the most recent play done and performed by workers shall serve as an example of this type of theatre, and a brief discussion of its educative values follows.

An Example of Workers' Theatre: THE DUNLOP PLAY

Project.....

After having moved to Durban two members of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company were approached by the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) with the request to workshop a play with some newly organised MAWU members from the Dunlop factory. The play was to be performed at the Annual General Meeting of the union some three months later. Meetings and subsequent workshops with workers from the plant were held at the union offices twice weekly after hours, i.e. in between the first shift knocking off work and the night shift. The time factor proved to be a major difficulty because the longest time span at any one point, when all final 13 members of the group could be present was approximately one hour, the play in its final state however was longer. Never once, therefore, could a full run-through of the play be achieved before performances. The workshop locality - a room of four by three metres - was another obstacle particularly when it came to more physical action and during the initial stages of workshops, when sometimes up to 25 people participated. However, there were advantages too - transport problems which the co-ordinators had been faced with in previous projects did not exist due to the close proximity of the factory; occasional interruptions of workers coming to speak to shop-stewards

about problems and grievances avoided the establishment of a play-reality outside the reality of work; in addition, the group got used to operating within a very limited space which proved useful for later performances as will be shown.

Participants.....

The 13 participants, ranging in age from 20 to about 55, are all fairly well versed in English, they had a common language: Zulu and they are literate. Most of them are second generation township dwellers, i.e. they grew up and live in the segregated locations around the broader Durban area and spend up to two hours daily travelling from their homes to the factory.

Others grew up in the "homelands" Transkei and Kwazulu and came to Durban as migrant workers. Their immediate families still live there while they board with relations or live in hostels. Their previous exposure to the theatre was as varied as their backgrounds: while some had participated in school or church plays or seen plays by the township author and director Gibson Kente, some had no experience of institutional theatre at all. In order to explain the nature of a play to them reference to ILANGA LIZOPHUMELA ABASEBENZI was made, and thus an approximate mind's eye vision of a possible finished product was created. The overriding common denominator they all shared was the experience of being a black worker in South Africa and more specifically at Dunlop.

Workshop methods: The making of a play.....

This common shared social and working-life basis served as the point of departure at the first meeting. Each man in turn introduced himself to the group by first saying, in which part of the plant he was employed and then miming his routine basic motions performed daily. To this was added an

acoustic imitation of the machine noises around him - and when "switched on" simultaneously the group in the end produced a lively and descriptive image of an assembly line type work-process. Any verbal altercations were recorded on tape and these tapes were subsequently transcribed. Since the language used during improvisations was Zulu, and the workshop co-ordinators however did not speak Zulu, the transcriptions had to be translated, so that the material could be edited and arranged into a script. "Scripts" were handed out as scenes emerged and except for those parts acted out in English the participants translated the script back into Zulu. Written scripts were thus a base for continual improvisations.

To describe the process of workshopping more fully the first scene of the play, which was created at the first full workshop, shall serve as an example. It was noticed that the old man, who has been working for Dunlop for 37 years, was wearing a gold watch. He explained that it was a gift from the company to acknowledge its gratitude for 25 years of service. He proceded to describe a ceremony at which he and others were honoured and presented with their gifts, some meat ("Which was tripe, really"), some beers ("We were told to drink it there and then but not to get drunk - we were not allowed to take them home") and a little cake for the children at home. After the story had been told the group split up into "managers" and "workers". Suggestions as to how the white managers should be portrayed were tried out to the great amusement of everyone, and, judging by the laughter and enthusiasm, the most authentic presentations were mimes of great stomachs, an assumed air of superiority and the allegedly typical "stuck-up" way of walking. At the performance stage pink half-masks or just noses were added. The group quickly decided who should play the managers, and while they "rehearsed" their roles and prepared speeches the rest of the group arranged themselves as an audience behind the worker, who was

to be honoured. A "cheerleader" was chosen and he practised signals for studied laughter and applause; meanwhile the old man prepared his part: he became a shuffling embarrassed worker, who wrung his hands, pulled up his shoulders and bowed his head in submissiveness. For performances later he wore an oversized pair of boots which further enhanced the sense of acute embarrassment. The enactment of the ceremony followed; it was run through twice to give the different "managers" a chance to make a speech. These two speeches when transcribed and translated were made into one and subsequently split up between two actors. Equally, the various ideas from the two improvisations were gathered, the best ones chosen and edited into the speeches. This first workshop was so successful that no further work on the beginning of the play was necessary until the rehearsal stage.

The second workshop was dedicated particularly to the creation of songs. The group was split up into three, with the task of creating the lyrics and tune of a song depicting working life at Dunlop. After 30 minutes all met again and each group in turn performed their song. As in the speeches the lyrics of the three suggestions were contracted into one and a particularly musical participant was given the "homework" to improve the tune and fit the newly incorporated words into it. Songs played a vital role in workshops - they served to draw the group together as a whole at the outset of each meeting, they provided an essential warm-up exercise and a useful lead into further work on the play. Their role and function within the performance will be discussed further later. Equally, the participants were particularly conscientious about "homework" - at the end of each workshop suggestions about the content of the next meeting were put forward and without fail some members would arrive with a few notes and ideas both for new scenes and additions to old ones.

A series of workshops on the production process in the various factory floors and departments followed and participants created a scene depicting their lunch hour - for this they swiftly made a board and gathered some stones, so they could play a game of "checkers", which is very common and popular in factories. This became the framework for a later scene in which recruitment to the union and a discussion of the importance of unionisation were presented. In order to get different viewpoints from those held by all the participants they were asked to improvise a home scene in which a father, mother and various sons have a fight about unions. This method proved very useful for educative and creative purposes as will be shown later. The improvisation started with two people: a husband who comes home from work late due to a union meeting, and his disgruntled wife, who accuses him of seeing other women. Not believing his explanations she launches into an attack of what his late coming means for her in terms of the household. He tries to convince her of the importance of unionisation and worker solidarity, she cites her problems with the domestic functions he should share. As the conversation slackened the workshop co-ordinators "sent in" another participant as a homecoming son. The son, being more conservative, takes up the side of his mother but from a different point of view: being a union member is dangerous, the father might get sacked, police harrassment and unemployment are pointed out. Against the ever increasing onslaught the father has to defend himself with yet stronger arguments, and, to assist him, another "son" is sent to join the scene. This improvisation was continued until the topic of unionisation was explored sufficiently. For the play the role of the mother became that of the "impimpi" (traitor; lackey), who openly adopted the side of management and taunted workers in order to report on them later. The dramatic tension of a scene like this is obvious, the humour it generated due to workers modelling themselves as actual "impimpis" and supervisors

provided the necessary entertainment, saving the scene from heavy-handedness.

This humour which was recognised as an essential ingredient of all plays was further played out in a subsequent scene. During the course of discussion the "impimpi" progressively lost ground, and when the others broke out into a song celebrating the strength of unity he was visibly shaken. Just at that moment the workshop co-ordinator sent in two "policemen" to break up the meeting and arrest the leaders. As they entered the workers changed the tune of their song and turned it into a hymn, picked up "bibles" and pretended to be gathered for religious reasons. The impimpi now showed his change of heart by becoming the leader in the game of deception. This conceit was arrived at in debate about which forms of gathering were legal and "innocent"; it was also pointed out, that during the political campaigns of the late 50's these tactics were indeed used.

The way in which to present 25 years of service at Dunlop caused the biggest problem to the workshop, since the method of story-telling would be too lengthy and inappropriate given the large audiences. The workshop co-ordinators suggested the use of a "crancy" - a device used particularly by the agit-prop groups of the 60's and 70's: onto a roll of paper or canvas continuous or individual images are painted, this roll is clipped onto a large frame and by means of a handle or "crancy" the roll is slowly unwound. The device is like a super-simple movie screen and lends itself for the presentation of a progressive time-lapse. After explaining the structure, use and method of a crancy ten historical moments were singled out to be portrayed as signal-type pictures and dates. To arrive at those ten moments each workshop member was given a piece of paper on which he wrote those occurances between 1958 and 1973 most prominent on his mind. The participants then singled out the ten most important

ones in terms of their bearing on workers. The mid-60 s which were relatively uneventful in terms of worker militancy were marked by the memory of the old man: he remembered the "man on the moon" - and in the later play he enacted a fictional coversation with Armstrong on the moon, where working conditions were different...

While half of the workshop then worked on brief introductions to each of the historical frames on the crancy - these were spoken by the old man as a retrospective following his "25 years service ceremony" - the other half worked on drawings for the frames. The making of the crancy generated a lot of debate about the role of the visual arts in working-class culture in South Africa, because it became obvious, that due to very minimal exposure there is no established code of signs and signals one could rely on. The traditional comic-strip representation of a prisoner in striped pyjamas with a large number, for example, will not be read by a worker audience as signifying prison, and the workshop members insisted on a more realistic rendering of images of people.

To further dramatise the 25 years some of the ten events were presented in short sketches or just tableaux - like a man with an umbrella chasing a worker with a broom who swept the "big flood of 1965" off the stage. The final result was a multi-media presentation which utilized fully all acoustic and visual means at hand.

How were the structure and content of the play established?.....

While individual scenes on a given topic were created spontaneously, swiftly conceptualising the play as a whole was a major difficulty for this group. At this point the co-ordinators had to assist with structuring and scripting more than at any other stage. They put forward various alternative

possibilities concerning the overall "story-line". In discussion it was decided to show a worker's history from him entering employment at the Dunlop plant during days of political turmoil through to the present, focusing on the one hand on specific developments within the plant as regards the various worker-management structures up to the present day recognition agreement between MAWU and Dunlop, and relating this development on the other hand to the greater labour movement in South Africa.

THE DUNLOP PLAY.....

The play opens with the cast entering from the audience, singing the MAWU song. They launch straight into the first scene, in which the old worker is honoured for long standing service;

Manager (addressing workers and audience alike):

> Welcome to this great occasion, the 25th anniversary of some of our Dunlop workers...We are here as a big company because of your devotion to us...The people we are celebrating today are the people who bear foolproof to what I am mentioning right now: they should be an example to you all...

After being presented with an outsize paper-mache golden watch the old worker steps forward and replies:

> They gained my sweat. They made money out of my sweat. I am sick and poor. Today we shall tell you of these 25 years that we gave away and what we got in return.

The old man becomes a young worker who emerges from the audience and mimes looking for work. He enters the stage and is sent from production manager to supervisor to "boss-boy"; each in turn explains to him what work at the factory is about and what is expected of him:

Supervisor: This is your machine. What's this?

Worker: This is my machine.

Supervisor: Wrong, you idiot.

Worker: But you said this is my machine.

-Worker Plays-

Supervisor: Don't interrupt. This is your wife.

Worker: Ho, my wife, this thing? Aikona, this might look like your wife, my wife is back home and...

Supervisor: Forget about your wife back home, you won't see her for a long time. Here at work this is your wife. You are married to her now. You treat her right and she will treat you right too. You be nice to her, she will be nice back. But you mess her up, boy, and she will mess you up good and proper. Start work.

By instructing the young worker the audience gets familiarised with working conditions and routines at the plant, and some of the problems such as health hazards are introduced. The scene moves into a mime of the work process, interrupted by sirens which divide up the shift. As the sirens accelerate in frequency so does the speed of work - the end is a chaotic impression of bodies and tyres. The young worker is left exhausted:

> I was tired that day; tired of work and tired of tyres. Twenty-five years of working for this firm while life by-passed me outside.

He walks to the cranky and starts to turn it, revealing the first image. During the following sequence of images, sketches and introductory comments by the old man - turned narrator the group sings a song of working life. The 25 years end with an image of strikers, denoting the great Durban strikes of 1972 and the strike at Dunlop of 1973; actor-workers assume a threatening pose, holding knobkerries (sticks) and shouting "Usuthu!" (a traditional war-cry). The young worker turns "impimpi" and is manhandled as scab-labour:

> Send him down to the Mines! Scab! Impimpi! When everyone has downed tools, you join in, understand!

The general call for the manager is intercepted by

-Worker Plays-

the old man who turns narrator:

> And so we got to speak to the boss. He made all kinds of promises and then came up with a new idea: a liaison committee.

The setting up of a liaison committee, the brain-child of the Department of Labour is ridiculed in a scene in which not even the bosses are quite sure as to the structure and workings of such a body. Workers in turn are not fooled by the proposed management-appointed representatives and only reluctantly draw up a list of grievances and demands:

> I want to stop nightshifts!
> I want a car like the manager!
> I want to share the profits!
> I want all the tyres back that I made in 5 years!

At this point the audience is invited to contribute demands and thus drawn into the dispute. The list of complaints is subsequently discussed in a meeting between managers, appointed worker-representatives and the boss-boy, who functions as a go-between and interpreter. He abuses his position of power and deliberately distorts facts in "translation". The entire scene is played in English, since the workers are capable of communicating in the manager's language, but the fact that they are subjected to the whims of the go-between renders them even more ineffective and becomes a sign of their voicelessness in negotiation processes.

Foreman (reads): They want an increase.

Manager: Increase? Now, gentlemen, there's been a slump in production lately...

Foreman: All the scrap you've been making. Scrap, scrap, scrap.

Manager: Ask them, who pays here.

Worker: You pay, but we work.

Foreman (to workers): Are you getting cheeky again?

(to manager): They say they understand. They do not want an increase.

-Worker Plays-

Worker: What are you saying, man? (abuses in Zulu)

Foreman: Now listen here: You must start thinking for the firm - you are not here to represent the workers.

The old man - narrator tells the audience the obvious:

The liaison committee achieved nothing in its 8 years at Dunlop.

Meanwhile the work process is re-constituted and interrupted by the lunch-hour siren - the signal for a scene during which some workers discuss the need for effective unionisation while others play "checkers". Those members of the audience who are not members of a union can identify with the viewpoints of the hesitant and sceptical worker who claims: "The union just takes your money", but is immediately instructed:

Our contributions and membership fees...

and a string of examples, how the union helped to fight a member's case. Informative pamphlets are handed out and just as the cast breaks into song the scene is interrupted by "police" - as outlined in the description of the workshop above.

Management, to whom the talk of unions is reported by the "impimpi" calls in their personnel manager. He suggests to start an in-house union: The Durban Rubber Worker's Union (DRWU) with its offices in the factory in order to stamp out "outside" influences.

The personnel man, now a DRWU organiser sets out to recruit members on stage and in the audience but he is heckled. A battle of words begins: DRWU and MAWU compete with each other, shouting arguments through megaphones:

DRWU: Think for the firm. The union does not want trouble. MAWU wants to break the firm, they want you to loose your job. MAWU will get you into trouble.

-Worker Plays-

MAWU: We believe that workers should be recognised as people. We believe in democratic control. We demand a living wage...

Yet again the bosses are called to arbitrate - they ask the workers which of the 2 unions they want. The call for MAWU is a unified one and as a final "triumph" the boss-boy changes sides and joins his brothers from MAWU. At this stage the play re-enters the reality of the larger union meeting and the audience joins the cast in a victorious song celebrating unity.

Performances and Responses.....

The premiere of the DUNLOP PLAY was in Durban, April 1983, at the AGM of MAWU, which was attended by some 1000 people. The hall had a small narrow stage which housed a long trestle table and chairs for union officials. These were cleared away and the play's only "scenery" - the cranky and a pile of tyres, which functioned as chairs, tables and factory products in turn - were set up. The audience of only about 400 - clearly did not know what to expect of the announced "play" and tensions were high. The play's opening song resounded in the corridors outside long before the players actually entered and squeezed their way through the extreme congestion, and by the time they had found their way onto the stage the audience was joining into the chorus of the song. Some confused and agitated spectators even followed the cast onto the stage and gave a brief impromptu song-and- dance performance. The acting area was a bare 2 by 3 metres, there was no exit from the stage due to crowding and the players had to work on vertical rather than horizontal movements. The natural lighting and the poor acoustics of the hall had to suffice.

Throughout the performance audience participation was lively, interruptions frequent and consequently a number of improvised responses were incorporated.

The old man deviated from the script to incorporate a special introductory address; the "impimpi" who was booed and hissed at played up to the occasion by threatening not only the player-workers but the workers in the audience as well; the "manager" excelled in his role and, requested to do so by the audience, repeated part of his speech routine for their amusement. In short, the play emerged not only as it was scripted but with additions and modifications to suit the occasion. This was the case of future performances also, and certain parts of the play which needed re-working were altered - making it a "work in progress". After the final triumphant song the players were lifted off the stage and carried shoulder high like celebrated soccer players.

The Dunlop worker-actors gained such popularity, that it was not surprising to find them being elected shop-stewards at the next election. Invitations to perform the DUNLOP PLAY poured in from all over the "Republic" - due to lack of funds only five, involving travel and taking off work could be accepted. The response generated was always enthusiastic and encouraging (apart from one celebrated South African authoress who found the play "boring" - needless to say, she does not speak Zulu thus had to rely on an understanding gathered from the visual elements). Now, a year later, the play is still being performed and cited as an example of workers' theatre, more of which should be done.

Evaluation.....

"Workshops are good. They bring people together. I didn't know anybody at the factory before. They knew me, because as a hyster driver I go all over the place - but I never saw them and never spoke to anybody." Themba reflects the extreme isolation of his job and his sense of isolation which was increased by him being physically elevated above

everybody else. Through the workshops he met some of those people and established strong links which have turned the workplace into a better place: "If you see someone at the meeting and then at work you can speak to him." Firstly, then, the workshops brought different people together as workers on the one hand, as men on the other. Given the opportunity to share some of their experiences in discussion and enactment drew them together and established a sense of solidarity with each other. While more casual meetings at the union offices and the like might have established a kind of empathy and intellectual understanding of the common ground for their grievances the workshops made them come to grips with the roots of their dilemmas and provided insights into the causal relationships: "I understood, why and how I am being taken advantage of". The experience that alienation and isolation at work could be overcome to some extent was very valuable and in turn, it became one of the aims of the play to tell the audience: "We must be together and fight together like the men in the play."

Secondly, each participant emerged from the workshops with a newly established sense of self-worth and self-confidence. Within the discipline of mass-production, where the worker is "Annexed for life by a limited function", where he is but a "fragment of a man"* - and in addition within the specific South African context there are few channels open to a black man to stand up and be heard. The stage-fright of most of the participants was considerable. They overcame their fears with the confidence, that what they had to say was worthwhile and that it was important that they said it. The newly acquired skills of performance also came in useful during worker-management confrontations and negotiations: "Even now, I can stand up to my

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*K. Marx, Capital I, p523,799: quoted in N. Geras, Marx and human nature: refutation of a legend, (London 1982), p86.

supervisor and look into his face and tell him what I think", sums up Bongani. The worker-actors have emerged as leaders.

Thirdly, parricipants learnt about the other sections of the plant - and apart from acquiring knowledge about the manufacture of tyres they gained insights into the working conditions and hardships of fellow workers on different shopfloors: "You share the problems that hurt you and you can see what a man feels when he goes to work. I also saw that in some sections of Dunlop the dust and the smell and the heat is really bad - people get sick from it." More generally, workers learnt to articulate their insights through discussion, and the younger members of the group were familiarised with parts of worker-history they didn't learn about before; this arose particularly around the workshops dealing with 25 years of social and personal history. The fact, that so many of them did regular "homework" between workshops showed very clearly that they remained preoccupied with the topics and issues raised at individual sessions.

Fourthly, the workshop technique of assuming roles and arguing different view points mentioned earlier for having been very creative was also very useful from the educational point of view. It brought to light attitudes which were questioned as prejudiced and often unreflected, and frequently it led to confrontations between the older and the younger members of the group - but however deep the generation gap might be, they shared the basic premise: being workers at Dunlop - and as such they had to unite. Another important issue raised was that of the position of women in their double exploitation as workers and mother/housekeepers. Roleplay has been equally sucessfully employed in labour studies courses run for shop-stewards, with the specific aim to train participants in negotiation skills.

Fifthly, it has been mentioned, that songs play an important role in workshops and performances. In order to fully appreciate the position of music and song a brief note on indigenous forms of culture is necessary. Theatre as an institution has a thin base in the working-class life of South Africa. Where it occurred it was introduced through the churches and mission schools to promote their brand of education. Needless to say, the orientation was more to the established traditions of Europe rather than any local forms. Traditional forms of culture survive as oral literature mainly, but "story-telling" incorporates mimetic and re-enactment qualities akin to theatrical forms. This is where songs and dance-routines and much-celebrated individual performances come in. At any union meeting - and this was the framework of most of the performances of the DUNLOP PLAY - songs serve as an introduction as much as commentary on speeches. The call and response technique inherent to many of the worker songs - where one singer will introduce the song and ad lib any number of new verses, while the rest of the gathering falls in as a chorus - could be easily utilised by a play to achieve audience participation, and indeed, the DUNLOP PLAY closed with such a song. This song which had a strong rhythmic quality was taken from the play into the meeting, connecting the two and thus integrating the play into the larger context of the gathering.

How big a role songs in workshops play was demonstrated by three songs created during the workshops with women textile workers on the East Rand, two years ago. Although the workshops never resulted in a total play the songs survived: at one of the union meetings during which the DUNLOP PLAY was performed I was surprised to suddenly hear a familiar tune and words sung by the entire audience during the "warm-up" before the beginning of the meeting. It was clearly that song about "impimpis" which we created then - and two others followed: they have now been incorporated into the

general canon of worker songs and their origins will only be recognised by those who made them.

Sixthly, much has been said and written about the difficulty in measuring the effect of plays on social reality. It might have been coincidental, but at the same time as the scene about the potato boycott of 1958 was improvised, Dunlop workers went on a canteen boycott, as a result of which the canteen has been closed permanently. More directly related to the making of the play is the formation of a "cultural group" which incorporates members of the workshop as well as workers from other factories. They have begun to share and criticise their creative writings in regular meetings and one of them has written various play-lets and sketches in the tradition of "story-telling" and performance as well as the beginning of a novel. Similarly, other groups at other factories have begun to make plays as vehicles to voice their grievances and educate fellow workers about their rights and the need to stand united in their struggle.

This then is also the final statemate of the DUNLOP PLAY - the struggle portrayed and the victory gained - albeit only in the play has become an inspiration for those workers who have seen it; let us stand together like those men in the play and we will win recognition. Plays like the DUNLOP PLAY have been nurtured in working-class experience and cultural practise in the South African labour repressive economy, and they reflect the political and moral considerations of an embryonic grassroots working-class movement.

BRAITEX CHOIR : SINGING FOR WORKERS

The SALB interviewed Ms Khosi Maseko, Administrator with the National Union of Textile Workers (Transvaal) and co-ordinator of the Braitex Choir(8.6.84).

SALB: How did you become involved in trade unions?

Khosi: I was working for Telephone Manufacturers of South Africa at their factory in Springs. There was a TUCSA union there but we didn't know the organiser or the shop steward and there was no one to take up grievances. Anyway there was a strike after the company dismissed three guys and all of us in the department were fired. Some MAWU (Metal and Allied Workers' Union) organisers arrived to help and this was my first introduction to FOSATU. The strike failed and workers were selectively re-employed. I did not go back. I studied some commercial subjects and then took a temporary job as administrator with NUTW which was later made permanent. My brother-in-law who is a shop steward at the Braitex factory in Springs is a member of NUTW.

SALB: And when did you become involved in music and singing? How was the Braitex choir formed?

Khosi: I have been singing in choirs since I was at school and then in the church. Our choir visited the USA. The Braitex choir is very different. The church choir was much more formal with training in musical scales. It was classic music and with no dancing. The Braitex choir draws on more traditional styles and singing is more energetic and uncontrolled - although we do use hymn tunes as well. For most of the choir members this is the first time they have sung in a choir since being at school. At first we thought of forming a FOSATU-wide choir but this would have been too scattered. Rehearsing would have been impossible. So after discussions I contacted Tiny Mabena, a shop steward

at Braitex and she recruited the singers for a choir. She knew who the best people were - those who could just stand up and start a song during a meeting. All the members work at Braitex except my nephew who has a very good voice and has been accepted by the other choir members.
The choir was limited to about twenty. Church choirs are much larger - up to 120. But there you have to stand still and if you try to dance it is chaos. To start with we obtained tapes of union songs and together with Patti Henderson we practised in a garage in Kwa Thema.
We first performed publicly at the NUTW AGM at Durban and then for the FOSATU Labour Studies Course and the NAAWU AGM. To prepare we were forced to practice more during the week - not just weekends. There are other worker choirs as well: Pretoria Auto plastics, which was the first; Frame choir; and Simba Quix choir.

SALB: And what are the aims of the choir?

Khosi: We sing for workers; preach unionism in song. Nearly everybody likes music. Some people just come for the tune but before each song there is an introduction explaining the meaning of the song. Music draws people in and holds their interest more than speeches.
In the choir everybody is a leader - and has to introduce a song. I co-ordinate the invitations to sing - but then I give the details to Tiny - the choir discusses it - and then she phones me with the decision.
We perform only to workers. A manager at Braitex wanted to make a video of us. The members rejected this. We are not performing for employers.
When we perform we wear a uniform and NUTW T-shirts.

SALB: Where do your songs come from?

Khosi: There are many different sources. We sing international songs such as "Solidarity for ever",

-Interview-

"Ballad of Joe Hill" and "The working folk of this country rise again". We have used songs by Junction Avenue Theatre Company - like a song about mineworkers who die under bad conditions. We also compose our own songs, sometimes using old tunes. We sing mostly in English and Zulu and we have just composed a Sotho song. We have prepared new songs for the FOSATU Education Workshop. One is a greeting song where we sing: "Even if I die I will still remember FOSATU". Another song is about GST and income tax. The choir sees the recent exemptions as proof of the power of the unions. Also we wrote a song about workers unity.
We try to bring new songs to the workers. We avoid performing popular songs. People just get bored with this or simply join in - and a large meeting of workers will sing much more powerfully than the choir anyway. Some of our songs have been taken up by workers and are sung in meetings. We have to work harder looking for new songs and composing ones.

SALB: Will you describe some of the songs?

Khosi: The first is an invitation song. Translating into English, we sing: " We are building a strong union so come and join us". Then the chorus: "We are waiting for you so you can come and join us." Second verse: "We are members of FOSATU come and join us." Then the chorus. Then:" More members makes us to be strong." Chorus again; then the last verse: " You will be left alone when we have conquered."

Sakha inyonyana enamandla (invitation song)

Sakha inyonyana enamandla
woz' ujoyine X 3
Chorus: Sikulindele woza ujoyine
Singamalung'e FOSATU
woz' ujoyine X 3
Chorus:
Wonke amalunga asenza
siqine X 3

Chorus:
Uzosala wedwa thina
singobile X 3

Another song is called "Grievance Procedure". The song describes a struggle at Braitex when a woman worker - Roseline Moeketsi - was sacked after she questioned her rate. The manager abused her and then fired her. The shop stewards took the issue up but the company refused to reinstate her. The union took the matter to court and won a court order to re-instate her with back pay.
The last verse of the song refers to an earlier victory at Braitex in 1982 when some 74 trade unionists were sacked. In January 1983 the company refused to collect stop orders and workers were very discouraged. By threatening legal action the union secured R40,000 compensation for workers, all long-service workers were re-instated immediately and the others were guaranteed the first option on vacancies. So in the last verse we sing: "You have forgotten the R40,000? We are going to show you. Do you think you can stand against FOSATU? "

Grievance Procedure
Mr Wandhoff ngikwenzeni ungibandlulula phakathi kwabasebenzi baseBraitex.

Hey Roselina don't tell me bull sheet, if you don't want the rate you are getting then fuck off.
Wavela laph' uvela khona wena Rosochacki
Wamamel' u Wandhoff ekutshela manga
Waxosha u Roselina ngob' ehlakaniphile
Awufun' ukulalela ama shop steward
Awufun' ukulandela ' igrievance procedure

Sizokubonisa thina usukhohliwe nge R40,000
Ucabang' ukuthi ungamelana ne FOSATU
Sizokubonisa thina usukhohliwe nge R40,000
Ucabang' ukuthi ungamelana no Cheadle.
Amandla,
Wabuya u Roselina e Braitex
Isikhwama sakhe sesine back.

THE FOSATU EDUCATION WORKSHOP AND WORKER EDUCATION

The SALB interviewed Alec Erwin, National Education Officer of FOSATU, 25.6.84.

SALB: What is the Education Workshop about?

Alec: The idea of the "Education Workshop" emerged two years ago when we found that we were running a number of national courses at the same time - bringing a lot of people together. Then, last year this coincided with a new direction we were taking which involved a greater cultural dimension to our educational programme. So we experimented by combining courses, lectures and cultural events. This year we have slightly modified the programme: there will be national courses running over the two week period (7-20 July). Then on the Saturday, the 7th, there will be a meeting internal to FOSATU to discuss major policy issues which we feel should be looked at. At this there will also be lectures given by workers from different areas and regions within FOSATU. Then on the 14th, the main event will be "Open Day" which will be really a festival of events: plays, choirs, dance groups, story-telling, children's events and videos. As much as possible, workers from FOSATU are involved as creators and performers in this event. We brought in some musical groups who we feel give a worker view of the world and have some relationship to the working class. Overall, the Education Workshop is an event designed to look at the world through worker eyes. It will also be a family event with activities for children as well.

SALB: How did FOSATU's educational policy develop and what are the priorities?

Alec: I would say the major priority in FOSATU's education programme has always been to establish worker leadership as such. The basic leadership we

are talking about are shop-stewards and organisers. We want to equip these people with the sort of skills that would make them effective worker leaders within their union and within the wider society. Both in the short and long-term we are giving people skills to deal with grievances, negotiations, to deal that is with the internal workings of their trade union. At the same time we are conducting political education so they can develop a perspective on events around them from a working class position in society. We also see these people as spreading their knowledge through our factory-based organisational structures.

The bulk of FOSATU's educational work has taken place within its regions and within affiliated unions. From 1981 onwards we began building up national courses. Our thinking here has been that it was important to bring together leadership from different areas so they get a national perspective of their organisations and to build national linkages. The first course, which still runs, the "Labour Studies Course" has proved very successful. Around that we build other courses at a national level dealing with basic organiser training, political issues, international trade union issues and labour law. The thinking, the cosmic thinking behind it, is to give people a sense of belonging to a national worker organisation. I would say, that the cultural dimension has come into it because in FOSATU's eyes, education is class-based: it is designed to reinforce a sense of working class identity, to reinforce working class confidence and counter the kind of anti-worker propaganda that prevails in general education and the media.

SALB: Trade union federations in other countries can undertake education related to specific organisational goals, knowing that the society provides for a more or less competent general educational curriculum. Here, given the discriminatory educational system, does this force trade unions to

undertake wider educational programmes?

Alec: What we found is that to carry out the goals and objectives I have outlined a few minutes ago, we actually have to provide wide-ranging education anyway. For example when I mentioned political education, a lot of it has to be history, a lot of it has to be geography, a lot of it economics. It is the kind of subject-matter that another social system would have given people in schools, whereas here, they either didn't get it or got it in such a distorted way that it is totally unsuitable for the kind of worker leadership we need in our organisation. Certainly since I have been a full-time educational officer I have become fully preoccupied with the difficulties and challenges of educating worker leadership where you first have to break through all the bad habits and bad teaching methods inculcated by our educational system, where any critical faculty is stamped out, where learning is a matter of repetition or rote, and where the quality of teaching is poor. Workers in fact learn to separate entirely what they were taught at school and what was in front of their eyes. Their school experience is something separate and largely disregarded. To create that link-up again, to be able to integrate education and your real experience into one whole is a great challenge. The major method we use in FOSATU, we don't know whether it's a perfect one, but we know it is the most successful for us, is an interactive one: it involves discussion, asking, talking and working in group-type situations. This is what we loosely refer to as a seminar.

I think that education should be linked to the actual activities that worker organisations are carrying out. We tie our educational programmes to the concrete struggles our membership is involved with. For example, in the "national courses" we try and deal with actual issues that have arisen out of such concrete struggles of our membership. We feel that this kind of an educational approach is the

best way of doing things. We are less enthusiastic about courses conducted outside our actual working environment under the auspices of a service organisation. Our view is that there is a great danger of the unions' being swamped by a whole host of educational activities where the union has no real propects of integrating such education into their day-to-day organisation. A related danger is that particular individuals who participate in outside course-work develop skills that immediately distance them from organisational priorities.

Another area of such specialist courses involves basic health and safety. We believe that we must be careful: such issues have to be dealt with as an organisational problem. FOSATU has already had the experience of embarking in 1981 prematurely on a health and safety campaign when our unions were not ready to tackle these issues on an organisational basis. The example of such service courses are endless: one gets them from specialised accountancy training to literacy. Our approach is to rely less on outside "experts" and attempt to take up issues on an organisational basis, and use only such outside services when the organisation needs them over specific issues and here there is no doubt that well organised groups are very useful.

SALB: In terms of the overall educational policy of FOSATU what would the criteria of success be?

Alec: To measure success or failure in the task we set ourselves will prove very difficult. If people who participate in courses begin to play an effective role in the factory, in their union and in society than this would be a measure of success. But also the question of whether these leaders in their own right become teachers for workers at a general level would be another criterion.

SALB: What educational provision is there for the general membership?

Alec: Apart from the development of worker leadership, we have always been aware of the necessity for a general education process for members and even outside of that, for non-members. This we see as the task of the shop-stewards themselves. At every meeting, big or small, shop stewards should take initiatives to make it into a broader educational experience for the general membership. We then see our publications fulfilling this role too: booklets, books written by workers, arrangements like the joint Ravan Press labour book. In this we see FOSATU WORKER NEWS playing an absolutely crucial function: as far as possible it should provide more than news; it should include an educational dimension as well - for example, the series on the history of the working class. The newspaper is distributed widely to about 60000 workers throug hout the organised factories of FOSATU. Finally we see plays and other cultural activities both nationally and regionally as a further dimension of this educational process.

SALB: What is FOSATU's approach to the educational priorities of the new trade union federation?

Alec: FOSATU has always seen education's role to bring people together, to mobilise them. So we will strongly favour some co-ordinated education programme to take place within the new federation. We also believe that the best educators are the people within the organisation themselves. This doesn't mean, as I mentioned, that we don't draw on "outsiders" but we draw on them for particular needs and requirements. We would also try and put across a view that we hold strongly: we are not in favour of joint management-labour education programmes. Management can do whatever education they want, but there should be independent educational activity within the trade unions. We find that people are in broad agreement that education should be given considerable priority in any future federation.

WORKERS UNITE - DON'T VOTE

The following is taken from a FOSATU leaflet:

The New Constitution is:

UNDEMOCRATIC

Democracy means an equal vote for all in the ONE SOVEREIGN PARLIAMENT of the Land. This constitution:

* Denies the vote to 72 percent of the population.
* Sets up three parliaments.
* Makes sure that none of the parliaments control the country making a mockery of those votes that can be cast.
* Leaves real power with the President, the President's Council and the Cabinet Committees. So joined by a few sell-outs, the generals, bureacrats and the businessmen who now control South Africa will continue to do so.

RACIST

The people of South Africa remain divided by race. In fact the Constitution is designed to protect separate racial interests. This is none other than apartheid. Instead of removing the hated apartheid, it will only sink its evil roots deeper if this Constitution succeeds.

ANTI-WORKER

We, the workers, are the most oppressed people in South Africa. It is us who suffer poverty wages, dangerous working conditions, long hours of work and the destruction of our family life. We know from our struggle that those problems can only be overcome by unity and organisation. The aim of this Constitution is to deepen the racial divisions between workers because they know that this will weaken our organisation in the work place. They are not only trying to divide white, so-called coloured and Indian but also African workers by putting them in separate bantustans.

RAVAN WORKER SERIES: The Sun Shall Rise for the Workers (Ilanga Lizophumelo Abasebenzi).

> I tell this story to remind you of your life. I tell this story so you will remember your struggle and the story of the struggle we fight.
>
> Mandlenkosi Makhoba

The first book in the RAVAN WORKER SERIES, will be launched at the FOSATU Education Workshop on 14 July and is published jointly with FOSATU, to which the author's union is affiliated.

Mandlenkosi Makhoba is a metal worker on the East Rand where he has worked for twenty years. He told this story to a friend who recorded it on a tape recorder and then wrote it down. After many months the story was completed and put into this book.

"Ilanga" tells how Mandlenkosi joined the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the struggles metal workers fought in the hostels and factories on the East Rand. It is only a small part of the story of the struggle of workers in South Africa today. We hope this first publication in the Worker Series will encourage other workers to send us their stories which will be published, if accepted, jointly with their union.

This series is to make available stories by workers, for workers, to give the workers' point of view. While we intend distributing the books as widely as possible we hope that all unions will assist in distributing them to their members.

As from July 1984 "Ilanga" will be available in bookshops at R2.95 per copy or can be ordered from Ravan Press, P O Box 31134, Braamfontein, 2017, at R1.50.

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