

1. Side wet
Leov. Pa
2. PER WEEK

South African

LABOUR BULLETIN

June 1991 Volume 15 Number 8

Progress in SAMWU
Unions face economic challenges
Women workers in the Philippines

THE LIBRARY
1991-07-03
OF THE UNIVERSITY
WITWATERSRAND

the NOT FOR CIRCULATION
COSATU/ANC
alliance:



what does
COSATU think?

African Political Economy

REVIEW OF

AFRICA IN A NEW WORLD ORDER

Lionel Cliffe & David Seddon (Eds)

April 1991 £6.50/\$12

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

- THE THIRD WORLD IN THE 'NEW WORLD ORDER', *Noam Chomsky*
- NO ESCAPE FROM THE LAWS OF WORLD ECONOMICS, *Andre Gunder Frank*
- PERESTROIKA, THE SOVIET UNION & THE THIRD WORLD, *Igor Belikov*
- AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY IN THE GATT URUGUAY ROUND
Kevin Watkins

. . . . AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

- EASTERN EUROPE: CONSEQUENCES FOR AFRICA, *Eboe Hutchful*
- SALIM A. SALIM ON THE OAU & THE AFRICAN AGENDA, *Adotey Bing*
- RESPONSES TO THE GULF CRISIS IN THE MAGHREB, *David Simon*

THE DEMOCRACY DEBATE

- A NEW EUROPE: CONSEQUENCES FOR TANZANIA, *A. M. Babu*
- THE DEMOCRACY DEBATE IN AFRICA: TANZANIA, *Issa Shivji*
- NO SHORTCUTS TO DEMOCRACY: THE LONG MARCH
TOWARDS MODERNITY, *Jean Copans*
- A CRITIQUE OF MARXISM-LENINISM AS THEORY & PRAXIS, *Carol Pearce*

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- WHAT PROSPECTS AFTER MAJORITY RULE?, *William Martin*
- THE US AND THE WAR IN ANGOLA, *William Minter*
- THE END OF THE COLD WAR IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, *John S. Saul*

To order, send payment to **ROAPE Publications Ltd.**, Box 678, Sheffield S1 1BF, UK.
A 1991 subscription is for three issues: No.50 (A New World Order),
No.51 (The Scramble for Resources) and No.52 (Fundamentalism in Africa).

	Student	Personal	Institution
UK	£10/\$20	£14/\$28	£30
Africa (surface)	£10/\$20	£12/\$24	£30/\$60
Africa (air mail)	£19/\$38	£21/\$42	£39/\$78
Elsewhere (surface)	£10/\$20	£18/\$36	£40/\$80
Elsewhere (air mail)	£19/\$38	£27/\$54	£49/\$98

Important: Non-institutional orders must be paid by personal cheques; students must send proof of status to claim concessionary student rate. Orders may otherwise be delayed.

Payment must be in US dollars on US banks, International M.O., sterling or GIRO (No. 64 960 4008)

South African LABOUR BULLETIN

Volume 15 Number 8 June 1991

Published by
Umanyano
Publications c.c.
89/00595/23

700 Medical
Arts Building
220 Jeppe St
(cnr. Troye St)
Johannesburg 2001
South Africa

P O Box 3851
Johannesburg
2000 South Africa

Telephone Nos:
(011) 337 8511 - 4

Fax No:
(011) 337 9207

Managing Editor

Karl von Holdt

Layout and Production

Morice Smithers

Office manager

Marie-Hélène Bonin

Distribution

Sipiwe Kambule

Subscriptions

Sally Fincham

Table of Contents

Editorial notes	1
Letters to the Bulletin	2
Broadly speaking <i>Red Eye</i>	6
Labour Action ★ COSATU & MayDay 1991 ★ FITU ★ Maternity rights ★ NUM Congress 1991 ★ Mandela & the NUM elections ★ Workers behind bars ★ <i>Lael Bethlehem/Pat Horn/Karl von Holdt/Zolile Mtshelwane</i>	8
Features the COSATU/ANC alliance: what does COSATU think? <i>Karl von Holdt</i>	17
SAMWU - three years on the march <i>John Ernstzen</i>	30
SAMWU Congress <i>Howard Gabriels</i>	35
Economic focus Workers struggle against retrenchments <i>Lael Bethlehem</i>	38
COSATU Economic Policy Conference <i>Avril Joffe</i>	41
Summit on the mining crisis <i>Labour Bulletin correspondent</i>	45

Editorial Board

Cape Town:

Di Cooper,
Johann Maree

Durban:

Ari Sitas,
Ashwin Desai,
Imraan Volodia,
Thembeke Gwagwa

Johannesburg:

Amrit Manga,
Avril Joffe,
Eddie Webster,
Karl von Holdt,
Monty Narsoo,
Moss Ngoasheng,
Phil Bonner

Eight issues per subscription. A subscription form and a set of guidelines for contributors appear just after the Contents Page of the *Bulletin*.

The views expressed in the contributions are not necessarily those of the editorial board, of the *Labour Bulletin* or of *Umanyano Publications*.

Published since April 1974

Cover:

The crowds turn out in the Eastern Cape to greet newly-released Nelson Mandela

Photo:

Peter auf der Heyde

The National Minimum Wage Debate

Carole Cooper

48

New technology: new skills, new opportunities?

Dave Kaplan

51

Debates

Preparing ourselves for permanent independence

John Copelyn replies to Jeremy Cronin

55

Natal violence - "No space for the masses"

Sipho Ntshangase responds to Jay Naidoo

60

International

Grenada - the lessons of losing power

Barbara Creecy

64

Women workers' movement in the Philippines

Karen Hurt

72

Legal Notes

Participation on the NMC and other bodies

Centre for Applied Legal Studies

76

Economic Notes

★ VAT & the poor ★ New strike record ★
Company Profile: Murray & Roberts ★ Another economic plan ★ Inflation ★

Labour Research Service

79

Profile

Gwede Mantashe: a love of working with people

Interview by Morice Smithers

83



'Peace, jobs & freedom' march - 15 June 1991

Photo: Abdul Shariff

South African Labour Bulletin

Subscription form

✉ South African Labour Bulletin
P O Box 3851
Johannesburg
2000 South Africa

☎ (011) 337 8511/2/3/4
Fax (011) 337 9207

New Please open a subscription for me, starting with

Volume: Number:

Renewal Please renew my subscription, starting with:

Volume: Number:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Occupation: _____

Rate: _____

(see below)

Current rates for eight issues*

Please make cheques and postal orders out to: Umanyano Publications c.c.

	Southern Africa	UK/Europe S.America Rest of Africa	N.America Australia Asia
Workers and students (full-time only)**	R 24.00	\$ 35.00/£ 20.00	\$ 41.00
Salaried individuals	R 45.00	\$ 46.00/£ 26.00	\$ 52.00
Trade unions, community & service organisations	R 65.00	\$ 54.00/£ 31.00	\$ 60.00
Institutions	R130.00	\$ 90.00/£ 53.00	\$ 95.00
Companies	R300.00	\$200.00/£110.00	\$210.00

or equivalent

Please note the following:

* Overseas rates include the cost of airmail postage in all cases.

** Workers & students should say where they work or study & provide some proof (e.g. photocopy of student card, union card, payslip etc.)

For in-depth analysis of current developments in the South African labour movement, you need the *South African Labour Bulletin*. Started in 1974 with the re-emergence of independent black trade unions, the *Bulletin* attempts to reflect the constantly changing face of industrial relations in South Africa. Workplace issues, the political interface with unions, and international unionism - it's all in the *Bulletin*. Subscribe now!

South African Labour Bulletin Publication Guidelines

The *South African Labour Bulletin* is a journal which supports the democratic 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 to the following publication guidelines:

1. Constructive criticism of unions or federations 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.

2. Contributions to the *Bulletin* must not exceed the following lengths:

✪ analytical articles and debates	10 000 words
✪ reviews, documents, reports	5 000 words
✪ briefs	500 words
✪ letters	500 words

3. *Articles* should be submitted in a final and correct form and in duplicate. Some articles may be refereed where necessary; all articles may be edited by the *Bulletin*. In the event of the editors deciding that other than minor editing changes are required, the article will be referred back to

the author.

4. *Briefs* cover topical events and developments of concern to the democratic labour movement. They would usually appear under *Labour Action*.

5. *Reviews, reports and documents* are intended:

- ✪ to make important statements and information from the labour movement more widely available;
- ✪ for reviewing new literature or other material of relevance to labour;
- ✪ to make more in-depth reports and research available to readers.

6. Contributions should be written in clear, understandable language.

7. Contributions to the *Bulletin* must be typed and, where applicable, include proper footnoting and references.

8. Except in the case of public documents, all material submitted will be treated in confidence.

9. The editors reserve the right to recommend to the author of any material that it be placed under another category to that under which it was submitted.

For more details, please contact the editor.

In this age of computers, we request that, where possible, a copy on floppy or stiffy disk accompanies all contributions. We will make every effort to return such disks to their owners.



University of Cape Town

Labour Law Unit

Publications for sale:

O'Regan (ed): *Imssa Arbitration Digest* [loose-leaf, 233 pp]

Concise summaries of the leading arbitration awards conducted under the auspices of the Independent Mediations Service of South Africa. An indispensable handbook for all users of the labour arbitration process in South Africa.

[R102,90, including GST, packaging and postage]

Sephton, Cooper & Thompson: *A Guide to Pension and Provident Funds - Legal and Policy Considerations* [softcover, 104 pp]

A primer on retirement funds in South Africa with a discussion of legal and policy issues.

[R25, including GST, packaging and postage]

Forthcoming publication (available July 1991):

The Principal Labour Statutes of Southern Africa

Crossed cheque/money order (no cash, please) payable to the University of Cape Town to:
Administrator, Labour Law Unit, University of Cape Town, Private Bag, 7700 Rondebosch

Editorial Notes

Political urgency

There is a new mood of political urgency in the organisations of the democratic movement. Having forced the apartheid regime to come to the negotiating table, the democratic movement is now suffering from a lack of political direction. This has been manifested in the limited success of campaigns to mobilise the masses onto the streets or to rallies. Unless the democratic movement can develop a strategic perspective to guide it in the coming period, De Klerk will maintain his control over the agenda of political change, seriously weakening prospects for a fully democratic, non-racial society.

Accordingly, the focus of this issue of *Labour Bulletin* is on the alliance between COSATU and the ANC, and the critical views held by many of the unionists. We hope this helps further the debate about the role and nature of the two organisations, and how they should relate.

Economic debate

This issue also carries a range of articles on the economic challenges facing the union movement. The articles highlight the seriousness of the economic crisis in South Africa, and the poverty of business' response. The unions have some valuable ideas on restructuring the economy and forging a "new growth path" - but do they have the capacity to guide our society in a new direction?

To do so will require great organisational and intellectual resources - in short, it will require 'retooling' the unions. It will also require power. Which brings us directly back to the political question. If the democratic movement does not succeed in seizing the initiative and ensuring a thoroughly demo-

cratic constitution and society, the opportunity for the unions to test their economic ideas in practice will remain remote.

SAMWU - dramatic growth

This edition also contains two articles on an under-reported COSATU affiliate, the SA Municipal Workers Union. With a style of solid democratic grassroots organising, the union has laid a firm base for its dramatic increase in membership. It has now become the key affiliate in the public sector, with an important role to play in restructuring local government in a future South Africa.

Debates

In our debates section we carry SACTWU general secretary John Copelyn's response to Jeremy Cronin's critique of his original talk on the 'two hats debate'. The debate is opening up discussion on issues that are vitally important for the trade union movement: how best to safeguard union independence; the relation between unions and politics and between unions and economic policy formulation; the nature of the state; and what sort of 'post-apartheid' society we hope will emerge from the negotiations over our future. *Viva debate!*

We hope our readers enjoy this exciting edition!

Enzo Friso, not Denzil Fraser

It has been brought to our attention that the name of the assistant general secretary of ICFTU is not Denzil Fraser, as was stated in our last issue, but Enzo Friso. We apologise to Mr Friso, the ICFTU and all our readers for this unfortunate error. ☆

Letters to the Bulletin

Building socialism in South Africa

Dear Editor

I have read with keen interest the articles in the *SA Labour Bulletin* debating the crisis of socialism: what went wrong and how best to understand what socialism is. It seems, however, that the analysts have "interpreted (socialism) in various ways". This is important and enriching "...the point, however, is to change it."

I am trying to suggest that it is crucial and urgent to come up with ideas and ways of changing socialism, that is, building it on a firmer foundation. The bold and honest explanations and assessments of past approaches, misconceptions, mistakes, distortions and betrayals, have important lessons. It seems the lessons may be better applied to furthering the struggle for socialism if they are backed with strategies and tactics for building socialism in the present South African and international concrete situation.

The challenge is to restore and to enhance the mass inspiration and enthusiasm that were once the hall-mark of socialist movements in many countries of the world. To meet this challenge, socialists have to deal with the 'nuts and bolts' questions of building socialism. There are several questions that may be asked to illustrate the points at issue.

How should workers, and socialists in particular, approach such issues as the 'social contract/reconstruction accord'?

Some analysts argue workers will simply be incorporated into structures that entrench the dominance of the bosses. Is this valid?

How should socialists relate to the fears in trade union circles, whatever their foundation, that political alignment of unions is a recipe for their loss of independence?

There seems to be consensus that nationalisation does not necessarily equal socialism. Yet, what are socialist solutions to the problem posed by the twin processes of privatisation and rising unemployment? The last *SA Labour Bulletin* reports that the structures of industry are changing and new skills are required. What do socialists think this means for transforming the educational and skills-training systems?

What forms of struggle will be most effective in this situation?

Many communities are reported to have re-occupied their land and the government seeks to control both land occupation and use. What is the socialist strategy for resolving the land question in South Africa, and who will benefit?

What are socialist strategic perspectives on democratising South Africa? How are socialists to contest the basic issues involved in the "reform process"? Some analysts argue that change will come through "refolution": a combination of reform and evolution, rather than through revolution based on mass struggle. What do socialists have to say on this?

Will change be merely the growth and expansion of existing power-structures, and the incorporation of the oppressed and exploited into them without changing their substance?

Without suggesting that the socialist wheel must be re-invented,

I hope these questions will help focus attention on the need 'to take care of the socialist cents' without ignoring the pounds.

Fraternally yours

Sam Mkhabela.

We quite agree with you -
Editor

Dismissed worker puts his case

Dear Editor

I am a former worker of Kromberg & Schubert manufacturers of motor vehicle harnesses near East London and it is of West German origin. I was employed by this company as a despatch clerk.

On the 24th of May 1988 our shop steward was suspended without pay. In sympathy with him we decided to protest by organising some placards and displaying them.

We continued with our normal duties. Our demands were reinstatement of our shop steward and for the management to negotiate with our trade union which was NUMSA affiliated to COSATU.

The management refused our demands. At 12 midday we went to have our lunch which is half an hour. After lunch when we went to our working places the doors were all locked.

We sent some of our shop stewards to the management for an explanation. The answer we got was that we

were on strike and also doing a go-slow.

The dispute was referred to the Industrial Court after being out of the job for a year. We lost the case to our surprise. We felt that we were not given a fair trial though represented by lawyers from Bowens of Johannesburg (Advocate Eric Dane and Attorney Nick Robb). Furthermore we were told that we had no chance to



appeal.

This company, Kromberg & Schubert, showed hardline attitudes to the workers demands which exposed the hypocrisy of multinational companies pretending to promote sound labour relations in South Africa.

This company is a union basher. They were practising modern slavery. There was no sick leave, no maternity leave. A woman worked up to the ninth month. She gives birth today, tomorrow she must be at work or face dismissal. There were no loans even if your child dies.

I am asking for advice on behalf of my fellow workers. I am also asking for some addresses of some anti-apartheid organisations from

whom we can ask for solidarity, especially in West Germany and Ireland.

We were mostly women with children to feed their empty stomachs, some with no husbands and some only the sole bread winners. We have also houses to rent and some accounts to pay. We have been out of work for two-and-a-half years.

We also suspect that the company gives bad references when we apply for jobs at other places of employment. We contacted some organisations for assistance but in vain.

This company supplies harnesses for Mercedes Benz, Honda and BMW. Our trade union promised to ask for solidarity from the above companies, but did not do so. Please when publishing this letter please do not mention my name for fear of victimisation.

Yours faithfully

Bashed worker
Mdantsane

AUTOFLUG S.A. dispute settlement

Dear comrade

We salute and congratulate you for publishing our previous letters on Autoflug SA's union bashing tactics. We believe that those articles really changed the "heart" of Autoflug SA management in that on the 15 May 1991 at an arbitration meeting at IMSSA, NUMSA and Autoflug S.A. reached an agreement to resolve their dispute.

Settlement/Recognition

The parties agreed on monetary settlement concerning the case of Stephen Nhlapo (dismissed shopsteward chairperson) who is now employed as NUMSA organiser. The settlement is R4 000.

The company also agreed to recognise NUMSA representatives and shopstewards, and to allow the union access to company premises to hold meetings with shopstewards and general membership.

The parties also agreed that the present company disciplinary/grievance procedures will be negotiated and amended with NUMSA representatives.

In the light of the company management's previous refusal to both union and shopstewards of the above rights, we see this agreement as a step forward for the interests of both parties to start building a good and sound industrial relationship.

Viva NUMSA

Abissai Nkoe

There is a stainless steel plant in SA

Dear Sir

I have read with interest your article titled "Towards transforming SA industry" in the March 1991 SA Labour Bulletin Vol 15 No 6. However, I wish to draw your attention to an incorrect fact stated in this article.

This refers to the section on page 22 entitled "Manu-

facturing industry and the metal sector" where you claim that currently stainless steel is not manufactured in SA. This is not correct as at present Middelburg Steel & Alloys have a stainless steel plant producing approximately 110 000 tons per annum of stainless steel in plates, sheet and coils. Further, this company employs a large number of people, of which many are members of NUMSA. So where did you get the incorrect information from?

This incorrect information on something which is well known throws question on other facts in your article. Yours faithfully

*P R Hatty
Barlow Rand*

I thank Barlow Rand for pointing out my mistake, and apologise to our readers. I do however believe that my broad point still stands: the stainless steel produced by Middelburg Steel is a drop in the ocean of what could be produced. 75% of the world's chromium reserves are in SA. SA currently produces 40% of the world's ferrochrome, but only 1% of its stainless steel! Conversion of only 50% of SA ferrochrome into stainless steel in 1988 would have earned an additional R7 billion - and have opened up "a large stainless steel products sector", as I argued in my article.

*Karl von Holdt
Editor, SA Labour Bulletin*

Neocosmos is not convincing

Dear Editor

Neocosmos' response to the articles of WOSA (ie. Habib and Andrews) Jordan and Von Holdt in the SA Labour Bulletin (Vol.15 No.7) makes quite important points. However, his mode of thinking and his polemical style are hardly convincing.

Such polemical style not only stifles debate but also creates a moral atmosphere which is conducive to dogmatic, scholastic and doctrinaire attitudes. These attitudes make a creative approach to the problems of present-day socialism more difficult. We really have to avoid substituting name calling and jargon for healthy debate, whether with party or non-party activists.

Tolerance and respect for the other person's point of view does not mean abandoning one's own position. A sense of one's own dignity, respect for the feelings of others, and an ability to understand problems and people are a genuine adherence to principles that are inseparable from an elevated moral sense. Socialism can be saved only through the cut and thrust of constructive debate and not through labelling ways of thinking. If fruitful discussions are to become an active ingredient of progress, it has to be realised that neither in formulating nor in answering new questions does anyone hold a monopoly on the truth.

Theoretical weaknesses in classical Marxism

There is no doubt that there are some weaknesses in classical Marxism. None of the greatest figures in classical Marxism, with the partial exception of Gramsci, had tried to set out systematically the substance and specificity of Marxist political theory. Some of the most basic texts of the politics of Marxism are mostly unsystematic and fragmentary, for example: Marx's 'Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' and the 'Civil War in France', or Lenin's 'What is to be done?' and 'The State and Revolution'. Given their total engagement in political studies and the vital importance they all attached to theory, this is surprising and cannot be taken as accidental. This has in fact much to do with the state of Marxist theory today.

I am not, in the very least, trying to deprecate the works of these great thinkers and founders of socialism, but what I am saying is that, as regards theories of the State, politics and democracy, they did not finally complete these and set them down in formulations which, though perhaps subject to amplification, are not subject to questioning.

Neocosmos dismisses Von Holdt's contribution outright as being unsubstantiated. He does this on the basis of the presumed fact that Von Holdt did not read all forty-five volumes of Lenin's works, save the two most important works. How ludicrous and myopic this sort of an argument is!

Rather than reading the forty-five volumes of Lenin's works I would suggest that Neocosmos should thoroughly and critically study the two works Von Holdt has studied and see whether he will not come to a different conclusion than his present one.

Belittlement of theoretical work

Neocosmos accuses WOSA, Jordan and Von Holdt of belittling theoretical work. He boldly makes this charge yet he does not bother to demonstrate to his keen readers, in any convincing manner, how these intellectuals actually belittle theoretical work. I would have expected Neocosmos to have quoted some passages from each of these comrades' articles and show us in a systematic and convincing manner that they are guilty as charged. In the absence of such proof I find it convenient to dismiss his charge as unfair, unfortunate and misleading. In fact one would rather say Neocosmos himself undermines theoretical work by his style of argument.

This should not be taken as an indication that I agree with all that has been said by these three comrades in their articles which evoked such vicious attack from Neocosmos. To be sure, there are many points which I disagree with in WOSA's and Jordan's contribution - Cde Von Holdt is exceptional, I always find most of his articles to be of extreme theoretical importance. But I cannot on

the basis of my disagreement with them, then brand them Trotskyists and opportunists who belittle theoretical work. On the contrary, I find their articles informative, thought-provoking, and a contribution to Marxist theory.

It should be clear to every Marxist that any weakening of revolutionary theory, with the enormous intellectual capital it represents for humankind, has dire consequences and leads to stagnation not only in theory but also in the practice of the building of a new socialist society. The prime theoretical task of Marxist intellectuals today, one might say, is to help modern socialism to know itself. And of course this will not come about if intellectuals continue to go about in fear of touching on problems that were not covered in the classics of Marxism-Leninism, and venture no further than providing an uncritical commentary on those decisions.

Progression towards a new society is primarily the improvement of social relations, of course, on an appropriate material and spiritual basis. The task of theory is to observe and reflect not only the depth of these processes, but also the highly complex dialectics of the relationship between consciousness and practice and the general principles underlying the development of consciousness itself, both scientific and everyday consciousness.

Popo Maja
ex-Robben Island prisoner
and MK combatant, Soweto

Red Eye

Resistance at the Embassy

In May this year the British Embassy held a party to mark the departure of ambassador Robin Renwick. Many notables were invited, including comrades from the progressive movement and from some community projects that had been supported by the Brits (no, Red Eye wasn't invited!). Imagine our comrades' surprise when they discovered that none other than the Iron Lady was a guest of honour! Yes, Maggie Thatcher herself! Remember (it seems so long ago now, with apartheid having ended we can all be friends again), when Maggie was still powerful she was the apartheid regimes number one friend in the world, and the anti-apartheid movement's number one opponent...

Anyway, some of the comrades felt it was a disgrace that they hadn't been told Maggie would be there. So whenever an Embassy official came up to ask some of them to come over and meet Maggie, they would smile and agree. They would get up to follow the official across the floor... but, by the time the official reached the Iron Lady, the comrades had melted away into the crowd of party guests.

Redder than red = ultra-red?

Workers Organisation for Socialist Action recently held a successful congress (no, Red Eye was not there!). But apparently a small group of members was expelled for holding wrong views on the nature of Soviet society, and for having links with the British Socialist Workers Party.

Red Eye bumped into some of

the expelled comrades at a party (which was much bigger than their party!). They said they were pleased to have freed themselves from WOSA "sectarians" and to be able form their own organisation. When pressed for figures they admitted they only had 30 members. "One millionth of SA's population!" exclaimed Red Eye. "Remember the Bolsheviks," warned our left wing friends. Sounds like a threat to make the bosses shudder in their Sandton palaces...

Honestly, though, Red Eye is amazed at the passions of the far left. Such dedication! Such energy! Such folly!

Can Marxism-Leninism recognise a woman?

Mind you, more orthodox communists are also so predictable. Two comrades wrote stinging responses to an article written by WOSA comrades and published in *Labour Bulletin*. They sneeringly addressed their remarks to "the gentlemen from WOSA"... Did it simply escape their attention that one of the two gentlemen from WOSA was actually a woman? Or is this simply proof that Marxist-Leninist polemic is a thoroughly sexist mode of discourse?

Our editor, peace-maker that he is, edited those revealing remarks out of the responses - but Red Eye thought our readers might be interested...

Cold war in the unions

Dan Gallin, head of the International Union of Foodworkers, recently wrote a stinging attack on the WFTU: "... the ultimately successful campaign against apartheid and

in defence of the South African trade unions... was entirely conducted by the ICFTU, its affiliates and the ITSSs, and the WFTU was entirely absent, except in print."

Really, Dan? Did WFTU affiliate SACTU not play some small role? And other WFTU affiliates such as the French CGT? And unaffiliated federations such as CGIL?

The pinstripe criminals of capitalism

Justice Minister Kobie Coetsee and DP MP Tony Leon recently slammed a "new type of criminal" "clothed in a pin stripe, who participates in boardroom meetings". They referred to Sol Kerzner who bribed the Transkei government with R2 million, the investment managers involved in massive fraud at Old Mutual, and other "fiddlers, fixers and fraudsters".

Leon said that this was the "ugly and unacceptable face of capitalism", which would allow the "ANC and other anti-capitalist radicals... to show that the free market is not the ideal vehicle... and to trumpet about the immorality of capitalism and its festering greed."

Your words, Tony. You also hope the government will use the full weight of the Companies Act to prosecute offenders. Isn't this state intervention in the free market?

No easy flight to freedom

Did you hear that President Sam Nujoma wants Namibia to buy him a presidential jet for \$35 million! This will cost each citizen about R80 - money that could be better spent elsewhere in that poor country. Mind you, if Namibia had an aeroplane factory maybe the workers would build him one...

Personally, Red Eye preferred the modest and humble style of Mwalimu Nyerere when he was president of Tanzania.

Realities - and rewards of power?

A group of African students and political exiles in London reflect on the setbacks to the hopes and good intentions of the victorious struggles for political independence across the continent.

One remarks how Tanzania's Chama Cha Mapinduzi, committed to self-sufficient egalitarian "African" socialism, put up sustained resistance to the pressures of the IMF. Sadly, note the others, by the late 80's, the Tanzanians were forced to submit to the IMF's 'structural adjustment' orders. Today, thirty years after independence, Tanzanians are experiencing the promotion of material self-interest, corruption and nepotism that they had tried so valiantly to keep under control.

"Well," another notes with pride, "it took fifteen years of a

devastating war of destabilisation to undermine Frelimo's commitment to popular socialist development in Mozambique!" Sadly the others reply, Frelimo too, ground down by the destruction of its economy, has had to turn to outside aid, and has accepted an IMF 'recovery programme'. Today, the social and economic ideals of the early years are giving way to 'private enterprise' - in legal and illegal forms! - and the promotion of new privileged elites.

"Well," remarks another, "with a much stronger economy in Zimbabwe, ZANU(PF) didn't even put up that much resistance - despite its Marxist rhetoric! Within five years of independence, corruption, nepotism and pursuit of directorship bribes from local capital were rampant. And now ZANU has agreed to the IMF's formulas to 'attract' international capital...and more lucrative company directorships for the elite?"

"SWAPO didn't even wait that long!" another exclaims. "Within five months of coming to power in Namibia, they were compromising with these forces, as the new ruling elite willingly accommodated to the 'realities' - and rewards - of power."

"That's nothing!" says the last, who has been listening to all the others. "The ANC in South Africa is preparing to make all these accommodations, and beginning to show all these tendenciesand they haven't even come to power yet!" ☆

Labour Action

COSATU self-critical on MayDay

Soweto, 1986: Thousands of workers and youth throng the Orlando Stadium. It was May Day, a day not recognised by the apartheid regime, but seized by workers, students and communities, who stayed away in their hundreds of thousands. It was the height of the period of mass uprising against apartheid. The mood was militant, determined. Union delegations marched around the stadium, and the stands were filled with chanting workers. Outside were parked scores of cars and buses filled with armed police, in a menacing display of force. Later teargas canisters were tossed into the stadium. The mood became tense, but the people were disciplined. Later, several buses were tear-gassed. The day was a massive victory for organised action, which the government was forced to acknowledge by later recognising May Day.

Soweto, 1991: Again it is May Day, again hundreds of police surround the entrance - but no-one pays them much attention. The singing is spirited, but the crowd is much smaller, relaxed. Now May Day is a public holiday. There are very few organised union delegations. Later, after the rally, terrible violence erupts in Soweto as Inkatha vigilantes attack communities. The police - so brave at the peaceful rally - do little to prevent them. The violence spreads over the Reef in the next days, leaving dozens dead.

So much has changed, so little

has changed. May Day is a public holiday. Political struggle has entered the remote arena of negotiations. Still people are killed, still the security forces are enemies of the people. Organisations have not yet learnt how to mobilise in the new conditions...

A COSATU report on the 1991 May Day rallies, jointly organised by COSATU, the ANC and the SACP, reveals concern that there was not a sufficient COSATU identity at many of the rallies. Shortcomings in the prior mobilisation, and the organisation and 'style' of the rallies are analysed. These and other factors are significant in the "disappointing" attendance figures.

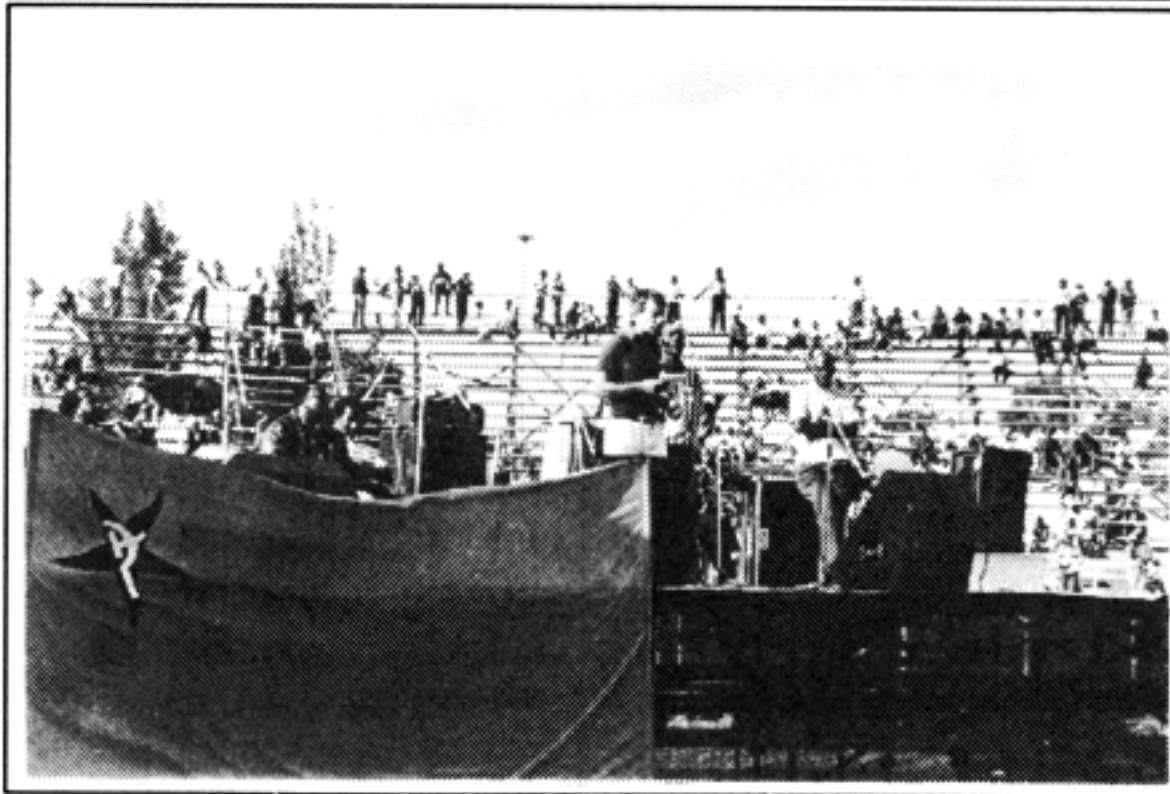
Disappointing attendance

Estimates sent in on attendance at 33 rallies in 9 regions (see box) show that a total of just over 260 000 people turned up. Attendance was very uneven. Wits, the largest COSATU region in the country in terms of union members, attracted about 4 000 workers, while one of the smaller COSATU regions, the

Attendance estimates at May Day rallies

(excluding 2 rallies from S.Natal and 4 in E.Cape)

Region	Attendance	No.Rallies
N.Natal	1000	1
Wits	4000	1
N.Tvl	8000	5
W.Tvl	10 000	1
Highveld	17 000	2
W.Cape	28 000	5
OFS/		
N.Cape	30 000	5
S.Natal	36 000	3
E.Cape	128 000	10
TOTAL	261 000	33



Empty stands at the joint COSATU/ANC/SACP rally - why?

Photo: Sipiwe Kambule/Labour Bulletin

Eastern Cape, had a total of about 128 000 people attending ten different May Day rallies. A similar contrast is evident between Northern Transvaal and the OFS, where the same number of rallies drew very different numbers of people.

According to the report, however, the overall attendance was not good. It argues that the threat of violence was a factor in people staying away in Wits and Northern Natal, but that it is necessary to "look beyond this for the explanations of poor attendance in what should be COSATU strongholds."

Centralised rallies

The COSATU document questions whether it is appropriate to have centralised rallies for as important an event as May Day. These fail to draw massive crowds because workers have to travel long distances. Decen-

tralised rallies, in regions such as the Eastern Cape, Northern Transvaal and the OFS, were better attended.

Style and content

A feeling coming in from many regions was that the approach to May Day rallies was not creative or dynamic enough.

In particular, workers got bored with long speeches and too many speeches. The failure to use appropriate language - and local languages - was also noted.

Where there was dynamic culture, sport and a festival atmosphere, the rallies were far more successful, and the political component more effective, as in the Eastern Cape and the Highveld. COSATU's conclusion is that there is a need for a change in style.

The issues that received the greatest attention in speeches across the country were the question of violence and self-defence, the April

30 and May 9 deadlines, and the demands for a constituent assembly and interim government. In rural areas, there was a strong response to criticisms of bantustan administrations.

Reports from the rural areas also indicate that there is a great thirst for organisation there. People respond well when rallies are organised and when leaders address them "showing that they are not only concerned with the urban areas."

COSATU's main themes for May Day 1991 - retrenchments, extension of the LRA, workers' rights in a future South Africa and socialism - "appear to have been overshadowed to a certain extent by the other issues" observes the COSATU report.

It adds that it is imperative for the federation to "find dynamic and creative ways of projecting COSATU's campaigns, and linking them to the national political issues of the day."

Organisation

Organisation at the rallies "ranged from very good and professional to very poor" says the COSATU report. In the latter are included criticisms of speakers - including even COSATU speakers - arriving late, or not at all, without informing the organisers. Another area of concern was the failure of COSATU campaign bulletins and posters to arrive on time, or at all. ❖

(Labour Bulletin correspondent)

Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITU)

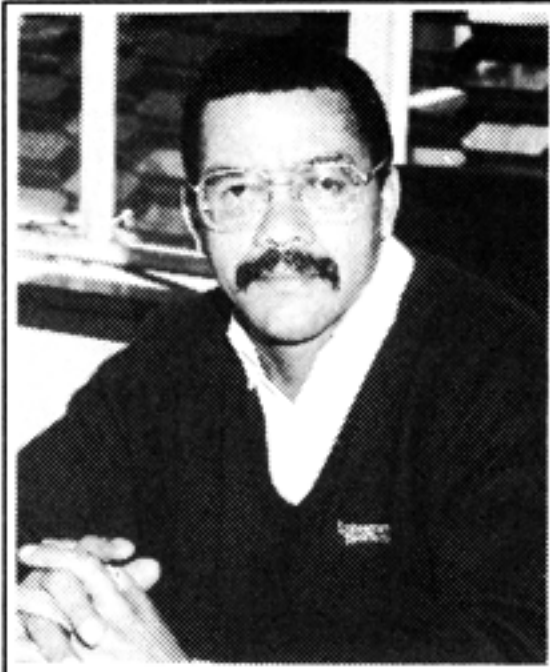
In September 1991, a new trade union body, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITU), is to be launched.

It will enter the arena of organised labour with the other union federations, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), the South African Confederation of Labour (SACOL), the Federation of Salaried Staff Associations of South Africa (FEDSAL), and the Confederation of Metal and Building Unions (CMBU).

Interviewed for the *Labour Bulletin*, the future general secretary of FITU, Freddie Swartz, said that the reason why they have established a new federation is because of political and other differences with the present federations.

He pointed to COSATU being part of the tripartite alliance with the African National Congress and the Communist Party, and NACTU being aligned to the Pan Africanist Congress; while SACOL links with rightwing movements are well-documented. He added that FEDSAL (representing white collar workers, who are mainly white) and CMBU (representing craft workers) tend to be conservative.

Asked how he would



Freddie Swartz, currently of the Transvaal Leather Workers

Photo: Abdul Shariff/Afrapix

describe the policies and objectives of the new federation, he replied that FITU is a-political. It believes in unions being trade unions first and foremost. They represent workers' economic interests and therefore FITU's concerns are for increased investment and job creation.

FITU's future general secretary said that his federation finds COSATU's pro-sanctions stand a contradiction to these aims. FITU's membership, he said, is interested in job security, economic growth, political stability, and access to educational, housing and other facilities.

FITU members

General secretary Swartz estimated that FITU has over 50 unions with a membership of about 200 000. Of this number, 10% would be white, and the rest would be split, more or less equally, between African workers on the one hand and Coloured

and Indian workers. The unifying factor would be that these workers would be either highly skilled or in supervisory positions.

It seems, however, that not all of FITU's members will be skilled or supervisory. The 'United Front' unions that attended the first meeting, in November 1990, towards the formation of FITU represent very different workers.

These included the Orange Vaal General Workers Union (largely farm and unskilled workers), the Black Allied Trade Union (railway workers), the Brick-makers Union, and the Black Allied Workers Union. The Federation of Commercial Retail and Allied Workers (FEDCRAW) also attended but later walked out of the federation talks.

Philip Masia, who is associated with the 'united front' unions, was asked to comment on the fact that his group of unions is obviously different to the more skilled unions going into FITU. He replied that COSATU and NACTU have neglected the sectors that his group of unions are involved in. The unions in these areas did not feel at home in either of the biggest union federations.

A second problem, he said, is that the clear political identification of those federations made it difficult to recruit and maintain members. For example, as the violence has escalated, unions have lost sections of their Zulu-speaking members

because they have been identified with the ANC.

A further problem is that, although COSATU and NACTU talk about non-racism or anti-racism, they have not made significant inroads into the ranks of non-African workers, whereas FITU unions cover those groups.

From the statements of both these interviewees, it seems that the majority of workers they represent are relatively secure, better paid as compared to other workers, and politically cautious. At the same time, a large proportion of FITU's potential membership are drawn from the ethnic minorities.

Politics and policies

It was precisely the labour organisations going into FITU that, in the past, had had a cosy relationship with the state and capital, although this has declined in recent years. Freddie Swartz is currently general-secretary of the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Workers' Union, formerly affiliated to TUCSA. Both Freddie Swartz and Philip Masia now state that, in the negotiations between COSATU, NACTU, SACCOLA, and the Minister of Manpower on the Labour Relations Act, other voices of labour must be heard.

Similarly, in regard to negotiations about a future constitution for South Africa, they fear that only one part of organised labour will have an input, whereas unaffil-

iated unions, who represent a substantial sector of workers, have up to now been on the outside.

FITU styles itself a-political, but feels it has a distinctive set of policies. This is also evident in FITU's views on the social contract. They say that labour and capital need to work out arrangements between themselves on a range of industrial relations issues. Capital must be made to see its corporate social responsibility. The state should merely provide the infrastructure. There may, however, be times when tripartite meetings take place, between labour, capital and state, to discuss the overall framework for economic development.

Finally, FITU feels that any relationship between unaffiliated unions and other bodies can only be effective if they are part of FITU. Separately these unions are too weak and dispersed to deal with the state, capital, and the other union federations. Furthermore, to gain access to greater funding, and attract other unions, they need a united structure with a coherent policy and political position. However, they plan to have a loose structure. They say that they will not decide policy for their affiliates, but operate on the basis of consensus.

There is much political flux at the moment and a centre or right-of-centre trade union body will attract a variety of internal political

and even foreign supporters. They even hope to attract some unions away from the other union federations.

The layer that FITU represents is that of the skilled workers, and their politics to a large extent reflect this base. In terms of numbers they may not represent a substantial section of workers. Their significance lies rather in the skills they have and where they fit into the production process. This could be their strength. ❖

(Monty Narsoo)

Maternity leave: is it outdated?

The majority of women workers are of child-bearing age. So employers do not invest resources in training them and most remain in the lower grades doing unskilled work. Without a maternity agreement, women leave work to have babies with no guarantee that their job will be kept for them. Very often after childbirth, if women are lucky enough to be taken back to work in the same company, it is in a different job, as a new employee, at a lower rate of pay. When hard times come and employees are retrenched, and the principle of LIFO (Last In First Out) is used, many women have the shortest service as a result of their broken service, and so they get retrenched first.

For women in industry, the root of the discrimination they experience is their child-



Maternity leave is for the mother to recover from childbirth
Photo: Gill de Vlieg/Afrapix

bearing function, and the fact that employers, much to their regret, cannot control this directly. As employers always tell women: "It's your choice - either you have babies or you have a secure job!" Men do not get punished in this way for deciding to have children - but women do. A maternity agreement is therefore an affirmative action programme essential to removing some of this discrimination.

The ideal maternity agreement is one which ensures that mothers who go on maternity leave forfeit *nothing* as a result of this. It contains the following essential components:

- ⇒ Job security and continuous service;
- ⇒ Provision for full income and continuation of pension, medical or any other funds;
- ⇒ Health and safety provisions.

Maternity leave must not be confused with parental leave. Parental leave is leave

which could be granted to fathers, mothers or adoptive parents, and is mainly for the purposes of child care. In fact, the more this kind of leave is taken by fathers, the more we start to break down the traditional and rather oppressive idea that child care is women's work.

However, because unions are fighting now for parental leave for fathers, mothers and adoptive parents, we sometimes forget about the separate need for maternity leave (ie for the health and recovery of the biological mother prior to and after birth). Or do we trade off maternity leave for parental leave?

With the first strides having been taken in the negotiation of maternity leave and parental leave, we already have the beginnings of some backlash. We hear smug assertions that parental leave is more *progressive* than maternity leave because it seeks to equalise the roles of men and women regarding

the responsibility for child care. This attitude creates the convenient side effect of glossing over the discrimination against *women* in the labour force as a result of their child-bearing function.

We should avoid this at all costs, if we do not want to end up reinforcing the gender oppression structured into the patriarchal capitalist occupational division of labour. We must always negotiate for *both* maternity leave and parental leave in our parental rights agreements. ♦
(Pat Horn - Chemical Workers Industrial Union)

NUM's 1991 National Congress

More than 600 delegates, representing over 260 000 paid up members, attended the four day Seventh National Congress of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in Johannesburg, at the end of April.

The delegates came with mandates from their respective regions. Their resolutions covered national political issues such as the demand for a constituent assembly, and international issues such as the maintenance of the sanctions campaign. The weight of the debate, however, fell on questions of internal union organisation, work place problems and on national economic questions.

The major concern of the mineworkers are the restructuring of the mining industry,

wages demands for the 1991 negotiations and, most immediately, the thorn in mine-workers' lives: retrenchments.

The opening address by NUM president, James Motlatsi, set the tone for the congress. He declared that "We intend to restructure the mines, to recreate them in a new mold which represents what we think is best for society, based on our experiences."

Motlatsi stressed that restructuring of the mining industry and the national economy must be based on peace and justice, non-racialism, workers' control and job security. He pointed out that South African society provides peace and justice only for the rich and the whites and, he argued, "We are asking only for that which ordinary working people all over the world are asking - a society in which we are treated as equals, in which we share the wealth of the country with everybody else."

Highlighting the necessity for workers' control, Motlatsi said, "We cannot escape from oppression, poverty, insecurity and racism unless we are in control of our own lives. We do not want hand-outs from party chiefs or managing directors. We do not want others to take decisions for us. We need to be part of the decision-making process at every level."

The succeeding debates on the biennial report section by section, and on the

resolutions from the respective regions, were very lively but never acrimonious. Almost all the regions participated equally in the debates.

The national economy

On the post-apartheid national economy, the NUM congress called on "the new democratic government, in consultation with the trade unions, to draw up a national development plan that will ensure new investment to provide jobs and meet the basic needs of the people."



James Motlatsi - re-elected president of NUM

Photo: P auf der Heyde/Afrapix

Delegates argued that an investment code needs to be developed that will compel companies in key sectors of the economy to pay a living wage to their workers, and that "those companies which exploit wasting assets, such as the mines, must be compelled to provide their workers with adequate housing, training and opportunities for promotion."

The delegates felt that

there should not be sweeping unplanned nationalisations, noting "the chaotic effects of landslide nationalisations in Africa and elsewhere, and the economic and social disasters created by nationalisation without democracy in Eastern Europe." However, the congress stated its belief in collective ownership as an essential component of building democratic socialism.

Capitalism and socialism

Debating the resolution on socialism, delegates were unanimous in their criticisms of capitalism in South Africa. Its failures were stated as "rampant unemployment, the lack of economic growth, the failure to educate people, lack of affordable housing and the failure to provide accessible health care." Earlier, the delegates had criticised the mining houses in particular for "dragging the mining industry down the drain because of their mismanagement, short-sightedness and narrow focus on their profits."

Rededicating themselves to "building socialism and to achieve full political and economic emancipation for the working class," the mine-workers affirmed their view that "socialism cannot be separated from mass-based democracy and structures of people's power". The resolution argues that socialism failed in Eastern Europe "because it became a bureaucratic dictatorship of the Party".

Socialism and democracy

The delegates confirmed their support for a multi-party political system "because socialism must be able to win the support of the majority, or dictatorship is inevitable." They called upon the NUM to convene a national workshop to "develop an approach that meets the needs of a democratic South African socialism", since "the socialism we are building must be based on the conditions here, not imported from anywhere".

The resolution concluded by calling for the basis for democratic socialism in South Africa to be laid by :

- engaging in mass education on socialism
- ensuring that the Workers' Charter is incorporated into the constitution of a democratic South Africa
- deepening democratic organisation in the mines, factories, communities, villages and schools
- entrenching the practice of direct mandate and the accountability of leadership

'Two hats' leaders

The resolution on the union responsibilities of NUM national and regional officials, while holding other political positions, caused the liveliest debate at the congress. The discussion was on a resolution which focussed on whether such union officials

should have to choose between their multiple roles. The weight of opinion was that they should not have to so choose, but that union affairs should take precedence over other commitments. Above all, union officials representing the unions in the tripartite alliance or other meetings should put the union's views over those of other organisations that they might participate in.

1991 wage demands

The wage demands for 1991 in the gold mining industry were framed to take into account the difficult situation facing the gold mines, but, at the same time, aimed to adjust unfair differences in wages paid by different mining houses. The union's existing wage policy for other sections of the mining industry - seeking to set a minimum wage of R750 for underground workers and similar wage rates for similar jobs - was endorsed.

Retrenchments and the future of the mining industry

The resolution passed by the congress on retrenchments* notes that the current crisis on the mines "is essentially a crisis of profit loss by the mining industry". The NUM's position on the crisis in the mining sector is that a major restructuring and (re)training programmes are demanded.

Noting that the situation demands concerted national action, the congress decided to "intensify the call for a summit to be attended by all the mining unions, mine owners and the government to discuss the crisis facing the industry.** ♦

(Zolile Mtshelwane)

NUM elections and Mandela

It was an historic occasion. For the first time NUM's honorary president, Nelson Mandela, was able to address the union's congress. The ANC leader was serving life imprisonment in apartheid's jails when he was elected honorary president in 1987.

But Mandela's speech to the NUM congress in May this year was not uncontroversial. After his main address he returned to the podium and offered some advice to the delegates. He said that it had come to his attention that the position of one of the office-bearers was going to be contested in the leadership elections. Pointing out that the ANC and the democratic movement are under great pressure and need experienced leadership, he suggested those nominating the opposing candidate should withdraw the nomination. Not to do so could be divisive.

Sources say that workers were "shocked" at what they saw as an "intervention".

* See report on retrenchments elsewhere in this issue

** See report, p45, on the NUM Summit with the Chamber of Mines

They say that after Mandela had left, and just before the elections were to start, delegates from one region rose to say they "appreciated the words of Cde Mandela, but with reference to his intervention we want to know how he got his information, when workers themselves did not yet know who was going to be nominated."

The sources say a second region then stated: "We want to make the point that workers make their own decisions and elect their own leaders. There is no justification for any group to make an intervention. What happened must never happen again," they said to sustained applause.

The sources believe the response from worker leaders was healthy: it shows they will fiercely protect their union's independence, even from as respected a leader as Mandela.

However, NUM president James Motlatsi denies that workers were upset with Mandela's speech. "It is true that Mandela spoke on those issues, but that is perfectly in order. As honorary president of our union he is not an ordinary guest. He must be briefed on the internal dynamics, he must take these into account in his speech, and he must comment on them."

Mandela's speech does however raise broader questions about the culture of elections. It is true that in difficult times unity is important. But times can always be seen as difficult, and unity is

always important. This can easily become an argument for never contesting elections. Elections are not inherently divisive - they provide an opportunity for testing the views of membership and for *renewing and revitalising* the leadership and the organisation. We need vigorous debate, the clash of policies and views in open elections, not 'arranged successions' which stifle politics! ♦

(Karl von Holdt)

Workers behind bars

Political prisoners have been under the spotlight recently, as the state and the liberation movement battle over their fate. Trade union members are among those who have been arrested, tried and imprisoned under Apartheid. Workers whose actions

in the workplace have led to their imprisonment are among those who are waiting to be considered by indemnity committees.

Many of these imprisoned workers claim that they are political prisoners, and that they, along with their fellow prisoners from political organisations, must be released before there can be any acceptance of the state's willingness to engage in substantive negotiations over the future of our society.

Lucky Nomganga is one such worker. He was arrested in 1987 after a battle between mineworkers and mine security at the Western Holdings Gold Mine (see *Labour Bulletin* Vol 13 No 3). Nomganga was convicted under the "common purpose" doctrine although he himself had been shot in the conflict on the mine, and had not been involved in the events that lead to the death of two



Haggie workers on strike in 1988 - now their comrades are on hunger strike in prison

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

mine security guards.

The court found that because Nomganga was a leader of the NUM shaft steward's committee, he was responsible for the actions of other workers. Little account was taken by the court of the effect of dismissals and the violent compound system on the workers, or of the violence of the mine security and management.

Nomganga, like many worker prisoners, considers himself to be a political prisoner eligible for release under the Pretoria Minute. Although Nomganga's name has been submitted to the indemnity committee, he has received no news of his release. Earlier this year his sentence was commuted from the death penalty to a twenty year sentence, as a result of a petition which had been submitted to the State President before the indemnity committees began their work. He was transferred from Death Row in Pretoria to Grootvlei prison outside Bloemfontein.

This move by the government seems to imply that many political prisoners are simply being handled through normal criminal procedures, and that their status as political prisoners is not being seriously considered by the state.

This impression has been strengthened by recent government statements that no political prisoners are left in South African prisons. This has caused enormous bitterness among political prisoners like Nomganga.

In a recent letter from his Bloemfontein cell Lucky said that the "State President has insulted us political prisoners by implying that we are rapists or common murderers. He has no respect for us. We are not as bad as some Inkatha, CCB, and security forces who are still killing our people. Why can't De Klerk listen to the Pretoria Minute which he even signed?"

Some worker prisoners are also upset at being classified separately from members of the African National Congress, in the Pretoria Minute. "I am still strong in my spirit and there is no turning back at all," says Nomganga. "But I hope that the ANC has not forgotten about us workers and others in these dark prison cells. We are here because of the struggle, and the struggle must also ensure that we are released."

The plight of political prisoners in general and trade union members in particular was highlighted by the recent hunger strike by political prisoners in South African jails. The hunger strike started in May 1, the day after the expiry of the deadline for the release of prisoners set by the Pretoria Minute. The hunger strike lasted for up to 38 days, and was suspended after a call from Nelson Mandela.

Prisoners involved in the hunger strike included the "NUMSA 6" who refused food for 38 days and were hospitalised with MK members Jabu Masina, Ting-Ting Masango and Neo Potsane,

in the Johannesburg hospital. Five of the "NUMSA 6" are ex-Haggie-Rand workers who are awaiting trial. They were arrested seven months after a conflict between management and workers at Haggie Rand's Johannesburg factory. They were held without bail for 8 months. They only received their trial dates and indictments in January this year after a 19 day hunger strike, in which they demanded to be charged or released.

The six, Richard Ngobeni, Malvert Ngubane, Samuel Molepo, Jeffrey Mtshali, Malan Khumalo and Mdumesi Bhengu made the following statements from their hospital beds:

"We are political trialists, we should have been released before the deadline of April 30. So, De Klerk, Coetsee, Vlok, release us now so that we can also take part in creating the new South Africa. We have been in the apartheid jail for thirteen months. We are the political workers. Release all political prisoners and political awaiting trialists now."

The hunger strike ended without the release of many political prisoners. South Africans are accusing the government of going back on their word, and of holding prisoners as tactical hostages. And while this continues, members of trade unions and the African National Congress remain in the overcrowded, grey cells of the apartheid prisons. ☆
(Lael Bethlehem)



the
COSATU/ANC
alliance:



what does COSATU think?

by **KARL VON HOLDT***

"I am not too optimistic that the ANC will protect the interests of workers and that it will be in

favour of socialism when it is the government."
..... FAWU's Transvaal regional secretary in an

interview with *Labour Bulletin* some months ago (see 'Profile' in Vol 15 No 6).

* This article focuses on the ANC and its relationship with COSATU. I do not attempt to discuss the other partner in the tripartite alliance, the SA Communist Party.

THE COSATU/ANC ALLIANCE

The comment quoted on the previous page may sound strange, coming from an official in one of the most militantly Charterist of COSATU's affiliates. But over the past twelve months there has been increasing concern within COSATU over whether the working class has real influence

the difficulties of relocating from Lusaka to South Africa and building a legal mass organisation from scratch; being flung into complex and tricky negotiations with the regime; reorientating its politics to meet the needs of the new situation; responding to demands for consultations with every kind of organisation and inter-

action

- lack of an organising programme
- secretive negotiations, a poor negotiating strategy, and a willingness to compromise on major issues such as the demand for a constituent assembly
- lack of a strategic perspective
- lack of coherence and collectivity in the leadership
- leadership dominated by exiles with an inadequate understanding of mass organisation and action.

Two examples help illustrate some of COSATU's criticisms - the ANC's negotiations over violence, and the struggle for a constituent assembly.

The violence and negotiations

Violence has swept like a terrible plague across South Africa. Awful massacres and daily murders shatter communities and disrupt organisation. It has become clear that there is collusion between elements in the security forces and Inkatha vigilantes. The De Klerk regime has shown no inclination to take firm action.

The ANC has been unable to respond effectively to the violence. "The leadership was told to implement defence committees, but they have been unable to do this," says a unionist. "Before the ANC was unbanned we would have taken creative initiatives, and organised a series of campaigns around the violence," said another. "We would have



Peace, jobs and freedom march: COSATU influence on alliance campaigns

Photo: Abdul Shariff

within the ANC. At the same time, there has been growing anger about the ANC leadership's lack of consultation with its own members and with COSATU, and about its poor negotiating strategy. In the words of a leading COSATU figure, "The ANC has paralysed COSATU and other MDM organisations politically."

Despite these criticisms, the majority of trade unionists in COSATU see their task as supporting, strengthening and democratising the ANC, rather than distancing themselves from it. They point to the enormous pressures on the ANC:

est group; trying to develop policy on a wide range of issues; facing a campaign of violence from Inkatha and the security forces on the ground. It is, as NUMSA general secretary Moses Mayekiso says, understandable that the ANC should have problems.

But the problems which worry trade unionists cannot simply be explained by these pressures. Trade unionists refer to:

- lack of consultation with ANC allies, especially COSATU
- lack of consultation and democracy within the ANC
- lack of any programme of



Poor negotiating strategy, no programme of action... first government/ANC meeting

Photo: Benny Gool/Afrapix

used the campaigns to build branches, build the alliance, build the patriotic front. But the ANC seems ineffectual."

Towards the end of last year, strong feeling developed in the unions that the ANC negotiators were not being tough enough, and that negotiations should be suspended until the government brought the violence under control. In April this year COSATU began threatening a stayaway to put pressure on the government. Then suddenly in mid-April they were informed that the ANC had issued an ultimatum to the government to take seven steps to end the violence. Unionists were pleased that at last the ANC had taken a stand - but upset that COSATU had not been

consulted.

Some days later there was a joint meeting of the executives of the ANC, the SACP and COSATU. The discussion focused on a programme of action to put pressure on the regime. All three organisations agreed to go back to their structures to discuss the proposals. But before the COSATU executive could meet, they read in the newspaper that Mandela was to meet again with De Klerk. Later the ANC moderated the seven demands it had originally put to the government - again without consultation.

Unionists were angry. "How can you mobilise your mass membership for action around demands, when at any moment someone will go off and nego-

tiate with your opponent again - you don't know on what mandate, what demands, and what was agreed? It simply confuses people. They don't know what they are acting for, so they do nothing." Unionists felt that the ANC lacked negotiating skills, and that it showed no understanding of how to link negotiations to a programme of action.

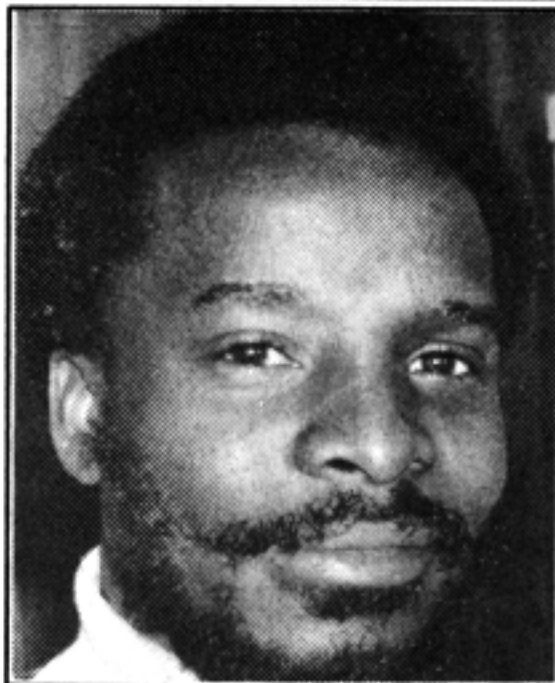
However, as the negotiating crisis deepened, COSATU was able to exert some influence. After two weeks, when its demands had not been met, the ANC suspended negotiations and announced that there would be a series of mass actions. Key actions were to be a stayaway, and a day of protest marches countrywide on 15 June.

The tripartite alliance had held consultations before announcing the mass action. Clearly COSATU's own experience and programme of mass action influenced the ANC, and gave it a series of events to mobilise around. The 15th of June had already been chosen at COSATU's national campaigns conference in March, as a day of mass marches by workers in support of COSATU's demand to end retrenchments. COSATU's economic policy conference towards the end of May formulated the slogan 'Peace, jobs, freedom!' for the marches. This slogan was then adopted by the ANC. The slogan combines immediate economic and political demands for an end to retrenchment and violence, with the broader political goal of freedom.

These events show how COSATU, with its working class perspective and experience of national campaigns, is able to help shape ANC programmes. But this potential has not been fully exploited.

The ANC and the demand for a constituent assembly

Towards the end of last year it became clear that sections of the ANC leadership were not committed to the demand for a constituent assembly (CA). Some of them believed that it was an unattainable demand, and should therefore not be put forward. They argued (and still do) that the CA is simply one mechanism among many for achieving a democratic constitution.



PPWAWU's Siphon Kubheka

Photo: Morice/Labour Bulletin

On the other hand, COSATU strongly supports a CA as the most democratic forum for drawing up a constitution. Because it is open and democratic, a CA would prevent secret deals and assure the working class of a powerful influence. At its Workers' Charter conference in November last year, COSATU reiterated its demand for a constituent assembly, and resolved to campaign for this. This position was bound to have some influence within the ANC leadership.

When the ANC floated the idea of an all-party congress in its important January 8 address to the nation, there was immediate suspicion that this meant the constituent assembly was being abandoned. When COSATU took this suspicion to the executive meeting of the tripartite alliance in February, the ANC "clarified" its position that the all-party congress was not supposed to be a substitute for a constituent assembly. Since then ANC spokespeople have been somewhat firmer in their backing for the constituent assembly demand.

Consultation and negotiations

While COSATU has managed to exert some influence, many unionists feel

COSATU has been treated as a junior partner in the alliance. COSATU was not consulted before the ANC raised the idea of an all-party congress or before it issued its ultimatum on violence. It was not consulted before the ANC agreed to suspend armed struggle, nor has it been adequately consulted on the progress of negotiations.

Unionists, with their years of negotiating skill, feel the ANC has been weak in its negotiating strategy.

PPWAWU's Siphon Kubheka expands on this: "The masses have been left in darkness. There are obviously heated arguments behind closed doors, but you only notice this when you read in the press that the Minutes have been breached, or the talks are suspended. Then we are called on to act without knowing the reasons or what is happening."

Several unionists criticise the secrecy of the 'talks about talks' and the joint working groups. "The government and the ANC reached agreement on the return of exiles and the release of prisoners," says COSATU vice-president Chris Dlamini, "but no-one knew what was entailed in these agreements. When the government raised new issues and said the ANC was reneging on the agreements, we were not sure who was giving the correct version. We were unsure what action could be taken."

Negotiations behind closed doors make it impossible for mass action to influence negotiations. "When we go into factory negotiations," says Kubheka, "we have constant report-backs. The people on the ground then assess the situation and say whether to advance or retreat, or prepare for a dispute. They are the ones that guide the process. But with the ANC it is the other way round."

"The people must feel they are setting the pace," says NUM president James Motlatsi. "Now it seems the ANC NEC is setting the pace."

Chris Dlamini echoes this. "Some comrades believe the regime is ready for change. They feel they are failing if they make no progress, so they are too willing to revise their positions. This has created confusion about what our bottom line is. The masses need to know the bottom line. If the regime refuses to compromise, then we should go back to the masses and debate action to force the regime to shift. We will make serious mistakes if we carry on like this."

COSATU general secretary Jay Naidoo compares the ANC's 'talks about talks' with COSATU's approach to the LRA negotiations. "The ANC often makes vague agreements which can be reinterpreted or changed later by the regime. This leads to confusion and conflict over what was agreed. It is unwise to simply rely on your opponents' 'integrity' and on broad agreement. For example, when we finally had the manpower minister at the

table we reached broad agreement on changes to the LRA within two hours. He got up to go. We said, no, that's not good enough. We kept him there until two in the morning working through our agreement clause by clause. That way there can be no confusion and no renegeing. The details must be spelt out in black and white."

No programme of action

The lack of a clear negotiating strategy is part of a bigger problem: the lack of a programme of action. According to Dlamini, "this is the key weakness of the alliance. We have no programme of action around the immediate issues in the talks about talks, and we have no programme around our demands such as an interim government and a constituent assembly."

"We require a programmatic approach to issues such as the violence," says Naidoo. "What are we trying to achieve? You cannot just turn mass action on and off like a tap."

While most unionists apportion blame to all three alliance partners, the ANC as the leading actor on the political terrain must clearly shoulder a large part of the responsibility. "COSATU and other MDM organisations have been politically paralysed," says a senior union leader. "They have had to stand back as the ANC moved centre stage."

However, Motlatsi argues that COSATU itself has made serious mistakes: "At the very

time when ANC was unbanned, we as NUM proposed that COSATU should join the ANC's negotiating team - but we were outvoted. Now we cannot blame the ANC. We could have brought our experience and corrected the problems right from the beginning." Many unionists now believe NUM was right.

Democracy

Worker leaders do not only criticise the ANC for failing to consult adequately with its allies; they also believe that it has failed to consult with its own members, and that the leadership are not accountable to their base. As an example, a union general secretary refers to the ANC's consultative conference in December last year. At the conference, delegates - many of whom were COSATU members active in ANC branches - criticised the ANC leadership for negotiating without consultation and report-backs. In his closing address Nelson Mandela criticised some of the positions adopted by the delegates.

"Criticisms were put forward constructively with the aim of building the ANC," says the unionist. "Then the NEC - through Mandela - stood up and told the whole world that we were inexperienced and did not understand negotiations. He was not debating this with us in closed session, but telling the whole world through the media in open session, when no-one would have dared to stand up and differ. In COSATU you would never hear Jay Naidoo

or Elijah Barayi do this. After the conference, even after all that criticism, the leadership continued as if nothing had happened."

Unionists, steeped in a culture of mandates and accountability, believe one of the chief weaknesses of the ANC is its lack of a democratic structure. "The ANC has enormous human resources in the branches and regions," says Kgalima Motlanthe, who is NUM's education officer and

which takes place every three years. "The constitution has to be changed," says Motlanthe. "There has to be much stronger representation from the regions, so that delegates are accountable to the base."

Many unionists (and other activists) agree with this view, and indeed the NEC's draft has been rejected by the ANC regions. After some resistance from the NEC, it was replaced with a much more democratic draft.

to understand that the democratic movement really developed its mass character, its working class orientation and its revolutionary experience in the mass struggles of the 1980s. But the current NEC is a different generation with different experiences."

"We comrades who were active inside the country thought the exiled leadership were without faults," says Kubheka. "We did not take into account the effects of exile, of being far from home, of working underground. When the ANC was unbanned we noticed problems."

The current leadership of the ANC is almost entirely made up of exiles and former Robben Island prisoners. "But the main core of the leadership should come from the MDM, as we are the ones with mass experience," says Alan Roberts, COSATU's Western Cape Regional Secretary and former FAWU organiser, and an SACP activist. "We used to romanticise the role of the exiles and the Islanders. But if we analyse it clearly, their particular skills and experiences placed limits on their contribution. ANC activists come from three traditions - the Island, exile, and the internal movement or MDM. The ANC has not analysed these different traditions and how to integrate them."

Kubheka adds: "We have to admit making some mistakes. When the ANC was unbanned we said it should immediately assume the leadership - and so we lost the culture that had been established between the



The MDM's defiance campaign in 1989: the ANC has not drawn on this rich experience of mass struggle

Photo: Rafs Mayet/Afrapix

also chairperson of the powerful PWV region of the ANC. "But it has not been able to tap those people."

The draft constitution put out by the ANC NEC did not inspire confidence in the ability of the leadership to address this problem. It increased the size of the NEC, and provided for most delegates to be elected from the conference floor or to be co-opted by the NEC. These delegates would not be accountable to any constituency except conference -

ANC leadership

If all of these criticisms are valid, if the ANC leadership does not consult, if it does not understand mass action and has no strategy, if it is undemocratic and produces such an undemocratic draft constitution, then what sort of organisation is it? Can one say that it is an organisation with a bias towards the working class? Can one call it a revolutionary organisation?

A leading COSATU figure answers this way: "You have

UDF and COSATU. From 1986 the two organisations had established a culture of consultation and struggle and mutual respect. Now we handed over leadership to comrades from the ANC without them having established roots. Although it is debatable whether it could have been done differently."

There is a strong sense among unionists that the leadership needs to be "revitalised". In Kubheka's words, "leadership should come from a constituency: we need strong organisational structures on the ground to give direction. We need to allow open constructive criticism, and there should be a practice of report-back and mandate." He acknowledges that this implies changing the leadership and the NEC's draft constitution.

Many unionists feel frustrated by a lack of coherence among the ANC leadership. "They keep giving different positions and changing their decisions," says one. The most recent example occurred on the weekend of 15-16 June, when a member of the ANC's constitutional committee said the ANC was flexible on the demand for an interim government, while Mandela reiterated an inflexible position.

Part of the problem is the personal power wielded by deputy president Nelson Mandela. He is a man of great personal strength and discipline, who can be both remote and charming. While he has

firm principles and integrity, his "imperial leadership style" does not encourage collective and democratic decision-making. Many of the NEC members clustered around him are ineffectual men with no independent base, who constantly seek Mandela's favour because he is seen as the source of power. Among those who *are* competent there are differing political views, so ANC policy at any given moment seems to depend on who



COSATU's Chris Dlamini

Photo: Afrapix

is articulating it. Mandela needs to be surrounded by a strong representative leadership to ensure that his strengths do not become weaknesses.

Not all unionists are confident that Mandela's understanding of democracy is the same as their own. But for many, "Mandela is still the greatest leader our people have produced," as TGWU president Sam Shilowa says.

Strategic perspective

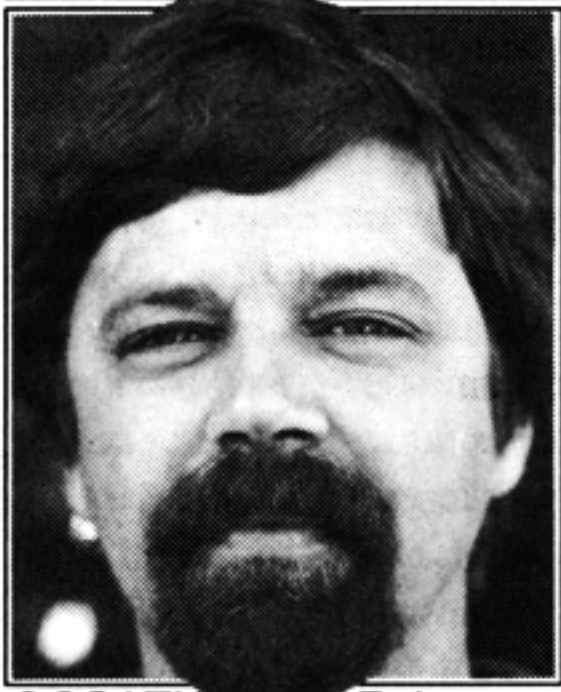
"The violence and attacks have stopped ANC from growing in most areas, and there is no strategy for recruiting new members," says Kubheka. "Since 2 February we cannot

claim that we have made any gains," says Dlamini, "whereas De Klerk has made gains internationally, and even in our communities. Some see him as a 'man of integrity', or a comrade." "We no longer seem able to influence the middle-ground," says Motlanthe.

The ambiguities in the ANC's approach to the constituent assembly and interim government demands, the conflicting statements from different leaders, the disjunction between negotiations and mass campaigns, all indicate that the ANC lacks an overall strategic perspective. Some complain that neither the Freedom Charter nor the Harare Declaration seem to be guiding the organisation.

There is growing concern that the democratic movement is losing ground to De Klerk. Roberts fears that "the ANC will lose support to the NP, which is more and more seen as the only force capable of ushering in a new South Africa." The violence is shattering ANC structures. Activists and their constituencies have become demoralised and demobilised. They feel they have no influence over events, and are disempowered by the ANC's manner of negotiating.

De Klerk is making ground internationally. He is increasingly able to present the NP as the only force capable of leading SA into a democratic future, and is winning support in the coloured and Indian communities, and among liberal whites, who were



COSATU's Alan Roberts

Photo: Benny Gool/Afrapix

previously sympathetic to the ANC.

Unless the ANC can develop a strategic perspective to guide the organisation and its members in the period ahead, it will be unable to regain the strategic initiative from De Klerk.

The alliance

"The alliance has made no vivid progress," judges Chris Dlamini. "We react to issues at the last minute, not in an organised fashion. COSATU has not had a visible input or influence in the alliance."

"Some of the actions of the ANC make a mockery of the alliance," says Sipho Kubheka. "You meet in the alliance and decide on strategy and tactics. While you are reporting to your members the next day you read a different thing in the newspapers."

"Our active shop stewards are becoming disillusioned and thousands of workers who should join the ANC are not," says Alan Roberts. "Workers have a real experience of negotiations, of real battles. They are used to assessing strategies

and tactics and actions. They shape the policy of negotiations. They can see the weaknesses of the ANC."

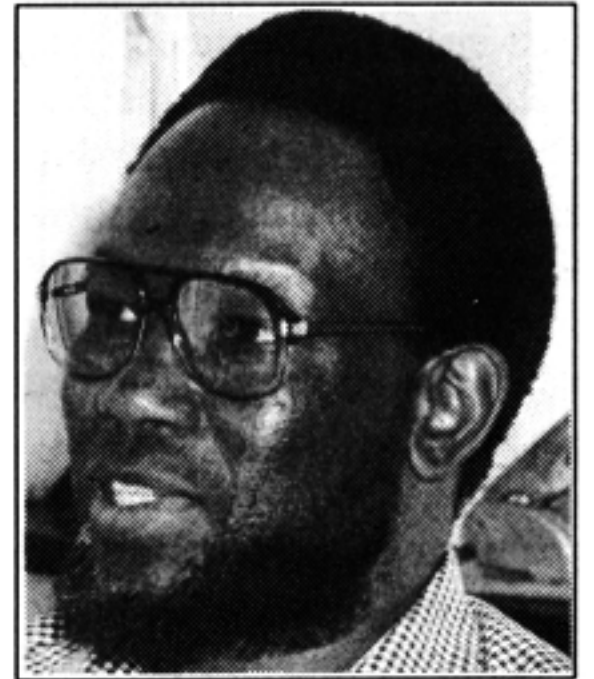
Many COSATU leaders acknowledge that COSATU itself is partly to blame. "It is a problem of all organisations in the alliance," says Moses Mayekiso. According to Kgalima Motlanthe, "COSATU has not prepared itself well for meetings of the alliance. We need to have proper discussions of all political issues in COSATU, so that we can go with a proper mandate." Jay Naidoo believes meetings have been unsatisfactory because "there has been a lack of preparation and follow-up." In Dlamini's view "there has been a lack on the part of COSATU. The ANC is not unwilling to listen, to take the part of the working class."

Despite these self-criticisms, COSATU has had some impact on the ANC, as argued above. But COSATU is seeking much more consistent influence in the alliance. Many unionists recalled COSATU's decision not to participate in 'talks about talks'. This, they said (agreeing with Motlatsi), was a "definite mistake". According to Naidoo, "We should have been there. Negotiation is a site of struggle. With our experience of negotiation and mass struggle, and of mandates and report backs, we could have helped."

SACTWU general secretary John Copelyn is not sure that the unions have that much to offer the ANC. "It is true to say that the problems by the alliance are to a large extent

the problems of the ANC as it tries to establish its positions and its coherence. We need to establish a more stable and structured way of making decisions.

"But the unions are a bit arrogant to suggest they could do that much better in negotiations. The state has tremendous power at this point, and I think the agreements represent the actual balance of forces. Don't forget, we're talking power, not talking clever - I doubt the unionists could do better. Moreover, the union movement itself is very weak and is often unable to service its members or negotiate adequately. I suspect the union is in



NUM's Kgalima Motlanthe

Photo: Abdul Shariff

much the same position as the ANC. If you took ten of the most seasoned unionists and seconded them to the ANC you would seriously weaken the trade unions."

This issue will be on the agenda at COSATU's congress in July. Affiliates are discussing two options: COSATU could participate directly in negotiations, or it

the Two hats debate

The emergence of leading national and regional COSATU leaders as leaders in the SA Communist Party, and of regional union leaders as ANC leaders, has sparked a sometimes heated debate as to whether it is desirable for union leaders to wear two or more hats (see Copelyn in Labour Bulletin Vol 15 No 6, Cronin in Vol 15 No 7, and Copelyn again in this edition).

Most COSATU affiliates have accepted their leadership may wear two hats if this does not affect their union work. For some it is a temporary arrangement: when the ANC and the SACP have become firmly established, and when apartheid has given way to democracy, leaders will have to choose which organisation to represent. For some, such as COSATU vice-president and FAWU president Chris Dlamini, and PPWAWU secretary general secretary Siphon Kubheka, this is because they expect the ANC to become the government.

"You cannot both represent and reprimand," says Dlamini. This view leaves open the possibility of dual leadership with the SACP.

NUMSA general secretary Moses Mayekiso disagrees. "We want the ANC to be biased towards the poor, the workers, even if it is the government. This will be very important for reshaping the society. You cannot only do this through the alliance. You need to be inside where policies and ideas are shaped. If you are then forced to resign from the union you will lose touch and no longer have a base to influence you." Mayekiso believes there are dangers - but only if the trade unions go blindly and without ideas about the future. "We must help drive the wagon, not just be

driven."

Kubheka feels the wearing of two hats is only necessary because there is such a shortage of experienced leadership. "It is an urgent task to create new layers of leadership," he says. Even in unions which do accept dual leadership, many unionists fear the union will suffer from overstretched leadership. This is believed to underlie the motion brought by the Secunda region of the NUM to their congress, demanding the end of dual leadership within 30 days. The motion was defeated.

NUM president James Motlatsi believes unionists should play a leading role in the ANC, but not as representatives of the unions. "They should not be pushed by COSATU - they should be chosen by their branches and regions because they are active members of the ANC. However, being from the labour movement we will push a working class perspective."

A minority of unionists in COSATU believe dual leadership should be banned immediately, not only because of overstretching, but because of a potential conflict of interests even in the current situation.

SACTWU and its general secretary John Copelyn have argued this position most forcefully. Although this is a minority position now, there may well be a majority in favour of placing some limitations on dual leadership of COSATU and the ANC if and when the later comes closer to forming a government. As for dual leadership of COSATU and the SACP, this may depend on how the party develops. If it succeeds in developing as a mass workers party with very broad appeal in the working class, dual leadership may become uncontroversial. ♦

could second skilled personnel to ANC negotiating teams. Many unionists interviewed seem to favour seconding skilled COSATU negotiators

to the ANC team. They point out that this would ensure COSATU influence, since such personnel would retain their links with the federation.

Hopes and fears

Most COSATU unionists believe the liberation movement is extremely important for the union federation. In Jay Nai-

doo's view: "The alliance is a very important vehicle for us to achieve our ends. The forces ranged against us are very powerful - big business, imperialism, a powerful state. We ourselves will need a powerful state orientated towards the working class - the ANC *has* to be strong..." Mayekiso says, "The trade union movement wants to change society, but it cannot do this alone. It needs to influence other organisations, it needs friends to push our aspirations."

Whether the state is weak or strong will affect the extent to which society is orientated towards the needs of the working class: "The question is how to intervene in society and the economy in a way that meets the interests of the working class and the people," says Naidoo. "It will be easier if there is a strong state, Although we cannot rule out progress in this direction even if the state is weak, as even the employers may realise a change is necessary. But the changes would not be as dramatic or radical."

Naidoo fears that if the ANC fails to "develop a programmatic approach to winning power, with a role for the mass of people," demoralisation may set in, and the ANC could lose elections. "We could then land up with the 70% marginalised / 30% privileged society which is the objective of capital and the state."

Sipho Kubheka hopes the ANC becomes strong and democratic. "This will allow the ANC to balance the de-

mands of capital and the demands of labour, but at the same time take a firm position on restructuring the economy with a bias towards labour." This means the unions would have to be prepared for hard battles against the employers in support of government programmes: "The government alone would not be able to force employers to do what it wants." If his hopes materialise, Kubheka expects a "march to a socialist order in the long term."

However, if the ANC is not



SACTWU's John Copelyn
Photo: William Motlala/COSATU

democratised, Kubheka fears it will be taken over by class forces "which will go against the interests of the working class." The ANC would then be under pressure to meet the demands of capital, and "we will have to face blows against the working class, as in Zimbabwe."

If these fears materialise will the tradition of militancy and mobilisation be lost? Kubheka thinks not. "Our experience shows that if leadership comes with a settlement that does not satisfy, the struggle will con-

tinue." He recalls that when he started working in 1972, and tried to organise fellow workers, "people were scared of unions and would not talk about the ANC." With a lot of work "we broke out of that shell". Then "we suffered the terrible blows of the state of emergency, but we survived." Now even if there are obstacles he is confident that the struggle will continue.

Naidoo is less optimistic: "The working class in Europe and in the Soviet Union had a history of militancy and revolutionary struggle, and that has been lost. Our 30 000 shop stewards could become trapped in bureaucracy and inaction. Our tradition of organisation and struggle could be immobilised. We are placing our hopes in the organisations of civil society - but a strong state would be an enormous help. The state defines the ways in which civil society is empowered."

Common perspectives in COSATU...

There is broad agreement within COSATU on several issues:

- *The need for the trade union movement to remain independent and powerful, both now and in the future.* While the unionists associated with the 'independent worker' position which was dominant in FOSATU, GWU and FCWU have always held this view, some of the unionists who come out of the 'national democratic' tradition have become more aware of the need for union inde-



A strong ANC, a strong state - necessary for restructuring the economy with a bias towards labour
 Photo: Afrapix

pendence following the collapse of communist regimes and the unbanning of the ANC. At any rate, one can confidently state that COSATU unionists across the spectrum support union independence - although they have different ideas about how to ensure this.

● *A critical assessment of the ANC leadership's understanding of democracy and consultation, and concern about its strategic and*

negotiating weaknesses. Once again there is probably broad agreement that these problems exist, but different views on the causes and solutions of these problems.

● *The alliance with the ANC.* There is broad agreement on the need for this alliance. Again, there are different views underpinning this agreement. Some unionists may not feel enthusiastic about the ANC, but do not see any alternative. No other

political organisation has the potential to end apartheid, become a government and at the same time have at least some sympathy towards the interests of the working class. Those unionists who have long been ardent supporters of the ANC remain loyal to the organisation despite their criticisms, believing that struggle within the organisation can ensure its mass character and orientation towards the working class.

... and differences

The majority view is probably expressed in the resolution on the alliance adopted at NUM's congress in May this year. The resolution notes that "decades of illegality has imposed serious limitations on the ANC" and argues that "building and strengthening the ANC will hasten the downfall of apartheid and enhance the attainment of votes for all"; that "the experience and leadership of the working class is an important element in shaping the policies of the ANC", and that the "accumulated experience of participatory democracy, accountability and mandates of the trade union movement must permeate ANC structures at all levels."

Mayekiso shares these views: "We need a strong ANC, an ANC biased towards the poor and the working class. Workers see the ANC as a vehicle to achieve their ends." He believes workers should strengthen the ANC both through its alliance with CO-

SATU, and through joining and working within it. "It would be proper for workers to have an ANC government."

According to Chris Dlamini, "the aspirations of the working class have to be reflected in the ANC. If it rejects or dishonours those aspirations there will be no need for us to be in an alliance with it."

Moses Mayekiso says that the problems experienced in the alliance have been raised and discussed. The alliance partners are now working systematically to solve them. Khubeka also says he is optimistic, although "it will be a long and painful process revitalising the ANC."

SACTWU's John Copelyn raises some very important reservations about this perspective. "In general it is quite appropriate for trade unions to enter into alliances with political organisations - providing of course that they operate under their own authority. But the key question is whether an alliance with the ANC will foster unity among our members or not. Our union's membership is quite distinct in COSATU. Whereas probably 90% of NUM's membership would support the ANC, I am not confident that the majority in our union would vote for it. This poses a special burden on our union to avoid divisiveness. We have 80 000 members in Natal, and 70 000 in the Western Cape - more than all the other COSATU affiliates put together. But they come from communities which are not bases for the ANC." This is a particularly



NUMSA's Moses Mayekiso

Photo: Afrapix

important point. Given that COSATU wishes to organise coloured, Indian and even white workers more effectively, the federation will have to examine SACTWU's experience carefully.

Copelyn believes an alliance of unions and political organisations within a broad patriotic front would be more likely to promote unity within the trade unions than the COSATU-ANC alliance. However, he does not see divisions within the unions posing a serious threat while SA is still governed by apartheid - "everyone supports the struggle for democracy". Once we have a democracy divisions would become more serious because workers would support different political parties. At that point an ANC-COSATU alliance could threaten splits in the union movement.

Copelyn argues that the focus of the alliance should be to struggle for a democratic constitution. "This is the key issue at the moment." What happens after that will have "depend on how things work out".

Copelyn differs from most COSATU unionists in believing that too much union influence on the ANC could

weaken the ANC. "COSATU is often intent on pushing radical demands within the ANC - such as nationalisation, or abortion. Are those demands feasible now, or will they alienate very big constituencies from the ANC, such as the church? There is no discussion in COSATU of what platform is appropriate for the ANC, of what demands are legitimate for it, given that socialism is not objectively possible now."

"The NUM resolution almost suggests that the unions should be building blocks of the ANC. But the ANC has to represent different sectors of society. Trade unions are very specific class-based organisations - are they sufficiently broad to represent this wide range of interests, as they would have to if they were building blocks for the ANC? Or would they simply narrow the base of the ANC? Anyway, would it be desirable for them to dilute their specific working class programmes in this way?"

Copelyn concludes that the unions could offer the ANC an understanding of mass democratic organising, but that they do not necessarily offer appropriate policies for the ANC, which needs to blend a range of class interests.

According to Mayekiso, the problems experienced in the alliance have been raised and discussed. The alliance partners are now working systematically to solve them. Kubheka also says he is optimistic, although "it will be a long and painful process revitalising the ANC."



Factory banners on 'Peace, Jobs, Freedom' march: increasing worker influence, but could it narrow the ANC's appeal?

Photo: Abdul Shariff

The struggle for working class hegemony

Despite the many problems raised by unionists, the overwhelming majority believe their main political task is to contribute to building and strengthening the ANC, as it is the only political organisation with the capacity to lead the struggle against apartheid and lay the foundations for a democratic SA. This will mean strengthening the alliance between COSATU and the ANC.

The July conference of the ANC will be a very important moment in the life of the organisation. It will probably take significant steps towards democratising the ANC and electing a greater proportion of COSATU and former UDF leadership into the ANC. This should allow greater working

class participation at all levels, and help develop strategic clarity.

But this would open up new strategic problems, some of which are suggested by Copleyn. Would an ANC that is strongly influenced by the trade union movement be sufficiently sensitive to the aspirations of a wide range of sectors in our society? How would an increasing expression of working class interests within the ANC be reconciled with the need to win wider layers of 'middle ground' support? In particular, could a militant ANC with a 'bias towards the (African) working class' at the same time present itself as a force for reconciliation, non-racialism and nation-building, overcoming the fears of a significant section of the coloured, Indian and

white communities? For if the ANC fails to do this it may well be forced to enter a coalition government with a political organisation that represents the majority of white, Indian and coloured citizens - ie with the NP!

Complex questions, enormous challenges - but they raise the central political task facing the South African working class: how to win hegemonic leadership within the broad struggle to build a new nation and establish a new democracy. The first step in this process will be for the unions to contribute some of their strength to the ANC, without trying to make it their captive. ☆

Unfortunately, attempts to interview the ANC on these issues were unsuccessful.



SAMWU

three years on the march

In the past three years the South African Municipal Workers Union has grown to become the biggest public sector union in COSATU. It has notched up considerable success in "combining stop-order quantity with organisational quality" because great emphasis has been laid on solid democratic methods of organisation. JOHN ERNSTZEN, general secretary of SAMWU, reports on the union's progress by early 1991.

SAMWU was born, on 24-25 October 1987, out of a merger between five COSATU affiliates in local government - the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (CTMWA), the General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU), the Municipal Workers Union of SA (MWUSA), the SA Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU).

Although following the COSATU principle of "one union one industry", the merger was not easily achieved. The five unions had different traditions and different organisational emphases which lead to misunderstandings and tensions. The CTMWA

and TGWU shared a commitment to strong trade union structures. GAWU, MWUSA and SAAWU were more general unions in the mould of the broad militancy of the early 1980's.

Mergers with other local government unions have continued since the launch of SAMWU. In the Cape Province, the Eastern Cape Local Authorities Association was taken into SAMWU's Port Elizabeth Area Council, the Munisipale Werkersvereniging merged with the Boland branch, and the Vredenburg-Saldanha Werkersvereniging went into the West Coast Area Council. A merger with the Western Province Local Authorities Association is being explored. In the Trans-

vaal, the Union of Pretoria Municipal Workers was absorbed into SAMWU's Pretoria Area Council. A merger involving the Durban Integrated Employees' Society (DIMES) is being finalised

Such on-going mergers and strengthening of structures are indications of SAMWU's organisational strength.

Organisational principles

SAMWU's constant and solid growth since its launch is due to the union's implementation of its founding resolutions. These specified the crucial importance of strong and democratic structures as an organisational strategy by which the prin-

ciples of non-racialism, worker control and unity would be secured.

SAMWU's strong commitment to democratic practice meant that union structures - largely under-organised at the time of the launch - were created slowly and painstakingly. It is of little use to the practice of democracy and establishing strong structures if branches and regions are based on fragile foundations.

Stringent requirements were set out by the launching congress regarding the formation of regions. These included allowing both formal and interim shop stewards' committees, Area Councils and Regional Executive Committees. The last-named were to be elected at Regional Congresses at which only formal and interim area councils or branches were represented.

SAMWU aimed for solid, rather than spectacular growth. However, the former has by no means precluded the latter. In 1990, SAMWU was COSATU's fastest-growing affiliate. At the time of its launch, SAMWU's paid-up membership was 14 892. Just over three years later, paid-up membership stands at 58 000 and signed-up membership at over 80 000.

Regional implantation

SAMWU's branches have emerged slowly, only after shop stewards' committees and area councils have proved to be working effectively, both administratively and organisationally. Re-



SAMWU members join in anti-LRA protests

Photo: SAMWU

gions have emerged even more slowly. The Western Cape region, for example, was only launched in 1990, after more than two years of building structures from Plettenberg Bay to the West Coast, and from Paarl to Upington.

Thus far, four regions have been formed: Transvaal, Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. Significant progress has been made in the formation of the Orange Free State/Northern Cape region. SAMWU's regions include over 160 municipalities, town councils and Regional Services Councils (RSC's).

Regions are perceived to be necessary co-ordinating structures in the national union - both to promote and maintain the cohesion of workers and to ensure a national perspective. The importance of the latter is evident when it is noted that SAMWU membership varies greatly from one local authority to another.

Regions are expected to meet their own running expenses and are accountable to Regional Congresses. Regional budgets are carefully worked out in relation to national budgets.

National and regional budgets

SAMWU determines its own financial priorities when members approve its national and regional budgets. Within the regions, the needs of each local group of members are considered, as well of those of the region as a whole.

SAMWU is rightly proud that the union became self-sufficient only two years after its launch. The resolution of the launching congress that SAMWU "work towards financial self-sufficiency in all respects" has already been fulfilled as far as running expenses are concerned.

There were enormous difficulties to overcome, not least of which was the uneven level of organisation

at the merger. It was felt at the time that structures could not operate effectively without financial self-sufficiency. Also, the strength of structures was reflected in their capacity for financial management.

SAMWU members, in approving the budget, are determining how members' subscriptions should be used. The decisions of regions and the national union regarding finances are members' decisions. Members can rightly assert that SAMWU is a union of workers, where workers decide how workers' money is to be used for workers' interests.

We must add however, that the rapid growth of the union, the range of COSATU campaigns, and the development of centralised wage bargaining, has compelled SAMWU to send representatives all over the country on many occasions to meet fellow workers and unions. This has created financial problems and will continue to do so. These are being addressed in SAMWU and answers will have to be found.

Difficulties encountered

The growth of SAMWU has not been without difficulties. SAMWU's members are drawn from geographically far-flung workplaces. Their employers are often racist and openly hostile to labour organisation. SAMWU also faces competition organising

in this sector where NACTU's National Union of Public Sector Workers is also active.

Some of the legal/organisational problems encountered related to:

● **Registration** The issue of registration caused considerable controversy during the initial unity talks. Some of the unions were of the view that registration was equivalent to collaboration with the state. However, by SAMWU's launching congress, unions involved with the merger felt this view to be simplistic.

SAMWU decided to become a registered union because of the practical advantages (such as stop-order facilities), and because it had become clear in the early eighties that the militancy of unions was not being curtailed by registration. Instead, workers used the space created by legality to strengthen union structures under worker control.

● **"Variation of scope"** Taking over the CTMWA registration, the new union had to apply for a variation of scope. As a national union, SAMWU's scope would obviously be different to that of the Western Cape-based CTMWA. This is causing problems of legal procedure which the state and local authorities have contrived to exploit. The present impasse regarding variation of scope is more of an irritant than a serious prob-

lem for SAMWU, but, understandably, one which the union hopes to resolve as speedily as possible.

● **Union recognition by local councils** Negotiations for union recognition are not by any means always conducted with self-proclaimed "liberal" city councils. During 1990, SAMWU members in widely-dispersed local authorities were engaged in more than 50 strikes, many of which revolved around recognition of the union. Most strikes were successful in that employers entered into negotiations with SAMWU and recognition agreements were won, or are being negotiated.

● **Right to strike in "essential services"** These strikes must also be seen in the light of the law relating to the prohibition of the right to strike in essential services. SAMWU calls into question the concept of essential services insofar as this concept restricts the rights of workers. The many strikes and work stoppages in 1990 indicate that our members do not recognise the curtailing of their rights. This issue is being taken up by COSATU as well.

Issues taken up

SAMWU is proud to be an affiliate of COSATU, the biggest federation of organised workers in South Africa. As every affiliate of COSATU

knows, affiliation to COSATU carries with it total commitment, both to the federation and to its constituent unions. COSATU expects every union to play its role as a COSATU affiliate.

SAMWU is currently re-evaluating its involvement in COSATU on regional and local levels. The union's participation in COSATU at a national level - NEC's, CEC's and congresses - has been good. SAMWU, however, believes that its participation on other levels can and must be improved. It is continuous participation in COSATU at regional and local levels which will determine COSATU's growth and its leadership of working class struggle in the future.

Broad workers' campaigns

These expectations of COSATU affiliates involve participation in national campaigns. To date, SAMWU has participated fully in the majority of COSATU campaigns, though this has been uneven from region to region.

Participation in broad campaigns affecting all workers - such as the anti-LRA campaign and the Living Wage Campaign - are of inestimable value in deepening workers' awareness of being a class in and for themselves.

Workers engaged - critically engaged - in the Living Wage Campaign learn that there are rights which they can achieve as a class. It is clear that this vital campaign

must be intensified, given the rapidly transforming political situation in the country.

It is surely not without significance that the Workers' Charter Campaign has been so prominent and fruitful, coming as it did after those other campaigns which, in defending the rights of workers, advanced their perceptions as workers.

Public sector campaigns

As a public sector union, SAMWU has conducted campaigns of its own, while also taking part in other "public sector" campaigns.

● **Privatisation** The Anti-Privatisation Campaign is the most immediately vital of these. This concerns the public sector unions probably more than any others, as it is the public sector unions which are most affected by deregulation and privatisation.

SAMWU has been engaged in an Anti-Privatisation Campaign of its own since 1988. It has become very obvious that so crucial an issue will require co-ordinated efforts by unions (and beyond) if privatisation is to be exposed for what it is - an assault on the working class.

SAMWU noted at its Second National Congress (November 10 to 12, 1989) that "We need to unite like never before - not only in SAMWU, but with our comrades in POTWA, SARHWU and NEHAWU to work out a national programme of

action against privatisation. And because privatisation is a threat to the interests of the whole working class COSATU needs to be part of that campaign."

The pattern of privatisation in South Africa has been such that in most local authorities work is contracted out. While restrictions are placed on local authority workers, areas which have been contracted out are subject to no restrictions.

There is a contradiction relating to state involvement: on the one hand, privatisation and deregulation are extolled as the loosening of restrictions and as structural models of the "free enterprise system"; on the other, the state restricts the right of workers to strike.

Unfortunately, our collective efforts have not been as efficient and co-ordinated as they should have. That is why a great deal more attention is being paid to this aspect of our work.

● **Local government restructuring**

There cannot be a democratic South Africa in which rich suburbs exist side by side with poverty-stricken townships.

SAMWU utterly rejects the racist and puppet structures created under the Group Areas Act. SAMWU's objective is "One Non-Racial City, One Non-Racial Municipality".

Residential areas and services should be desegregated at all levels. SAMWU believes this can only be

realised by means of a national solution. This is patently obvious.

Meanwhile, puppet town councils, racially-determined municipalities and RSC's continue to exist - in even less viable forms. Many have collapsed altogether.

SAMWU's approach to this problem is to set up interim structures in every local community. These should be acceptable to the people, should be non-racial, provide services and perform local government functions pending a national solution.

SAMWU does not reserve the right to prescribe what form these interim structures should take. SAMWU is firm in its conviction that interim local government structures should in no way prejudice national solutions. This, after all, is SAMWU's own organising principle.

Political principles

SAMWU bases all its actions and activities on some crucial political principles.

● Political alliances and workers' interests

It will be clear from the above that SAMWU is prepared to form alliances with anyone, provided that the independent interests of workers are protected. This is also SAMWU's position regarding political parties and movements. The issue is, however, being discussed within the union and by COSATU, and our position is not final.

"The man in the engine room"

John Ernstzen, in his own words, is a union leader who does not want to be "high profile" but "the man in the engine room". From that position he has played a key role in building up the South African Municipal Workers Union. In 1962, at the age of 22, he entered the service of the Cape Town City Council as a labourer in the Parks and Forests Branch and became active in the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (CTMWA). Interviewed in the Labour Bulletin in 1984, John Ernstzen recounted how a progressive group of workers ousted the bureaucratic leadership of the CTMWA in 1964, transforming it into an active democratic and non-racial union responsive to the needs of its members. Elected as shop steward for his work branch and Honorary Secretary of the CTMWA in 1965, Ernstzen went on to work full time for the union, becoming its first full time General Secretary in 1968. In the 1970's, the CTMWA, was joined by the new wave of independent unions. The CTMWA welcomed this development and was active in the unity talks that eventually led to the formation of COSATU in 1985. John Ernstzen was elected onto the first COSATU NEC and CEC in 1985 and, when SAMWU was formed on COSATU instructions in 1987, the CTMWA became a key component of the new union and John Ernstzen its General Secretary. ♦



John Ernstzen

Photo: SAMWU

● Union independence

No member is prevented from belonging to any political organisation of her/his choice. Unions should, however, remain independent of political parties and the state, even a democratic state. Such guidelines provide a basis for dealings with international organisations.

● Democracy

Democratic practice has been, and is being, built by worker discussion, decision-making and leadership accountability at every level, from the shop stewards' committee to the

National Congress. SAMWU believes that democracy is being built as the organisation grows and transforms itself.

For SAMWU, the realisation of democracy is uninterrupted by struggle, both within union structures and society as a whole.

When SAMWU included the word "democratise" in its slogan for the Second National Congress, the country was in the grip of a State of Emergency. It was no accident that the Second National Congress adopted the slogan at a time when

democratic practice was made intensely difficult by the repressive machinery of the state.

In this sense, the slogan was a dedication - that unity, organisation and democracy are fought for continuously, achieved with pain and against all odds. Simultaneously, the slogan was a commitment to democratise local authority structures.

Perspectives

For SAMWU, the 1989 Congress slogan "Unite, Organise, Democratise" was realised in practice in 1990. The strikes and work stoppages by SAMWU members proved their confidence, as well as an increasing determination to control their own lives. A highly significant development is that recognition and stop order facilities were gained at seven municipalities in the OFS during January 1991, and many more are being negotiated.

SAMWU is a young union of great vigour and sturdy growth. The union grew by 64 per cent between December 1989 and July 1990, with a further 22 per cent between July and November 1990.

It is the union's pride to reflect on all that has been achieved since October 1987. There have been serious setbacks and great difficulties. There has been hardship, victimisation and retrenchment, but the spirit of SAMWU members is strong.

SAMWU has also striven

to develop a self-critical stance and to learn from its mistakes. At SAMWU's Founding Congress, the union resolved to foster "honesty in expressing our views and ideas within the structure of our organisation, discipline when debating and the democratic right of constructive criticism". SAMWU has, in some measure, achieved these democratic practices.

SAMWU hopes that it will continue to embody the principles of democracy, as resolved at the launching congress, in the next decade of change. It trusts that it will continue to articulate demo-

cratic principles as struggles against privatisation and deregulation intensify, as the battle for a democratic society free of oppression and exploitation takes on new forms.

At all times, the union has sought to promote the interests of its members, organised workers and the working class as a whole. In so doing SAMWU - as a COSATU affiliate - together with other unions and other organisations committed to democracy, will help to create a society in which the "free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". ☆

SAMWU



Congress

by HOWARD GABRIELS*

About 400 delegates from local authorities across the country met at SAMWU's third national congress on 1-2 June 1991 in Cape Town. The theme of the congress was:

**"Our vision ... Socialism:
The road ... Democracy."**

Since its launch in October 1987 SAMWU's

paid-up membership grew from 14 892 to about 62 000. At present the signed-up membership is over 80 000. Because of the union's solid and careful organising style, SAMWU is beginning to mature into a very stable union with strong democratic structures, despite the normal problems of a fast-growing

* Over a period of ten years, former trade unionist Howard Gabriel worked as an organiser in the old General Workers' Union, education officer for NUM, and W Cape regional secretary of SACTWU.

TABLE 1	MEMBERSHIP GROWTH	
	YEAR	MEMBERSHIP
	1987	14 892
	1989	27 852
	1990	45 851
	1991	61 893

TABLE 2	MEMBERSHIP BROKEN DOWN IN REGIONS		
REGION	1989	1990	1991
W Cape	12 325	14 737	19 122
E Cape	3 010	3 929	8 288
Natal	2 091	10 741	10 873
Transvaal	9 887	15 966	20 546
OFS/NCape	539	478	3 064
TOTAL	27 852	45 851	61 893

union.

The president, Petrus Mashishi, reminded delegates of the last congress theme - 'Unite! Organise! Democratised!' - and thanked delegates for turning that theme into a reality which is evidenced in the growth of SAMWU. The office bearers elected at the congress were Petrus Mashishi as president, Sandile Mqaka as vice president, Sydney Adams as treasurer and John Ernstzen as general secretary.

The congress considered some 27 resolutions on policy. Some key resolutions were:

International affiliation

SAMWU decided to affiliate to the Public Servants International and to strengthen bilateral relations with other PSI affiliates. SAMWU hopes to secure greater facilities within PSI for interaction between unions in the

developing countries in order to build solidarity on a South-South basis.

Women and affirmative action

SAMWU resolved to take "positive action to equip women with the necessary awareness and skills that will build their confidence and enable them to participate fully in the union."

Issues identified as positive action are:

- to set up a National Women's Structure
- education on the real nature of gender oppression
- skills training aimed at women
- addressing practical problems such as child care which inhibit women from participating in union structures.

Political Policy

SAMWU supported the call for an interim government

and for a constituent assembly to draw up a new democratic constitution. The adoption of the constitution should be through democratic mass conferences and referendums. SAMWU fully endorses the call for the inclusion of basic worker rights in the constitution, in particular rights for public sector workers. To this end the resolution provided for the union to inform its political allies of its demands.

Local government restructuring

SAMWU has established a research group on local government restructuring and resolved to embark on an education programme on this issue. The union is clearly grappling with the dilemma that local initiatives are taking place in the absence of national guidelines having been established. It will be seeking to co-operate with its allies in the civics who are involved in negotiations with local authorities (see Erenstzen, p 33).

Industrial Action

In the past year SAMWU members were involved in over 50 major strikes. These strikes are particularly significant because municipal workers are employed in what are classified as essential services and therefore cannot strike legally. The strikes were primarily sparked by three issues:

1 Wages By far the biggest strikes were about wages and



SAMWU Congress 1991

Photo: SAMWU

conditions of employment. A large number of workers embarked on militant actions such as the strikes by 10 000 Cape Town City Council workers, 12 000 in Durban and 3 200 in Port Elizabeth. Significant progress appears to have been made in SAMWU's living wage campaign. Ernstzen says that wage negotiations were co-ordinated by the Special National General Council held in November 1990.

2 Recognition and

Stop Orders At present there is a big difference between paid-up and signed-up members because municipalities are reluctant to formally recognise SAMWU. The position is aggravated by the state's refusal to vary the scope of registration of the union because of objections by the all-white SAAME. A number of strikes occurred over both stop order facilities and recognition.

3 Political Demands One of the most significant strikes by SAMWU was at Lingeletu West (Khayelitsha) where 800 workers demanded the resignation of councillors. There were about six other strikes over the same issue in other parts of the country. The strike lasted for a month (14 November to 14 December 1990). Significant in the strike was the co-operation between SAMWU and the ANC.

One big public sector union?

According to sources the question of a single public sector union is a subject of serious debate within SAMWU and COSATU. However, this was not discussed at the congress.

COSATU's public sector unions (SAMWU, NEHAWU, SARHWU, POTWA) have experienced a wave of militant action over the last two years, and a

rapid growth in membership. They are battling to consolidate their structures, and it may make more sense for them to combine resources. Also, there is no affiliate which organises the vast civil service bureaucracy, and a single large union could facilitate this. If a merger were to happen SAMWU, as the biggest union in this sector and the one with strongest union structures, would no doubt serve as the core of a public sector super-union. Workers in this sector could be greatly strengthened.

Collective bargaining

In the past six months SAMWU has joined industrial councils in the Transvaal, Natal and the Cape. Most of the local authorities are members. In Natal and Transvaal the Municipal Employers Organisation negotiates on behalf of the local authorities and in the Cape the Cape Province Local Authority Employers Organisation negotiates on behalf of 112 local authorities.

These industrial councils have registered constitutions although the agreements are unpublished. The big cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town are not party to the provincial industrial councils, and either have their own in-house industrial councils or do not have industrial councils. ☆

Workers struggle against retrenchments

LAEL BETHLEHEM

“Negotiating retrenchment packages is the Union’s biggest activity at the moment,” said a NUM official recently. And mineworkers are not the only ones facing the devastating consequences, as the South African economy sheds hundreds of jobs each day. Workers around the country, in almost every sector of the economy, are fighting for their lives as retrenchments take their toll.

In 1990, approximately 70 000 jobs were lost through retrenchments. This means that almost 200 workers were retrenched each day. The trend has continued and intensified in 1991. It is unclear exactly how many jobs are being lost, but some estimates have put the figure at over 1 000 per day. SACTWU’s John Copelyn argued recently that 1 300 jobs are being shed in the formal sector on a daily basis, and if this trend continues, almost 500 000

jobs will be lost this year. Whether the figure is accurate or not, it is clear that retrenchment is one of the most serious threats facing the working class in South Africa today.

It is for this reason that COSATU has made its anti-retrenchment campaign the major component of its Living Wage Campaign for 1991.

Over the last ten years, trade unions have made important gains in curbing management’s power to

retrench at will. The Last-In-First-Out (LIFO) principle has been an important guide to union struggles. But many unions have gone beyond this, winning struggles and court rulings which have given retrenched workers access to severance pay, retraining, retrenchment funds and a promise of re-employment if the company re-hires.

In the mid-1980s, unions won important rights in the Industrial Court which compelled management to consult with unions before retrenching, and prevented the victimisation of union members through retrenchment. These gains were reversed by the 1988 amendments to the LRA, but reinstated this year following the COSATU-SACCOLA-NACTU negotiations.

Some unions, such as NUM have argued that in

certain instances, retrenchments can be avoided by changes such as a shorter working year. In late 1990, NUM succeeded in reducing retrenchments at Freegold South Mine from 8 000 to 1 800 by proposing that workers take three weeks additional unpaid leave.

But while unions have managed to limit the lay-offs, or to negotiate the form that they will take, they have been unable to prevent retrenchments altogether. In the current situation, where hundreds of thousands of jobs are being permanently lost in an economy battered by crisis, the defensive measures adopted by the unions in the past are clearly inadequate.

Cosatu launches campaign against retrenchment

COSATU believes it is impossible to fight the current retrenchment crisis effectively if the battle takes place at plant level only. The labour movement must develop ways of contesting retrenchments at an industry-wide and economy-wide level.

Retrenchments should be an issue for national negotiation between labour, employers and the state. Moreover, COSATU believes that economic, political, and industrial restructuring is necessary to fight retrenchment effectively.

It is in this framework that COSATU is developing its



Retrenchments - adding to the ranks of the unemployed

Photo: Abdul Shariff/Afrapix

programme of action. The federation's Campaigns Conference in March proposed that a campaign against retrenchments be launched as an integral part of the Living Wage Campaign. The Campaign would be called 'No retrenchment, jobs for all', and would centre on the demand for an end to retrenchments in all sectors.

The intention is to negotiate these demands with SACCOLA and the state. COSATU believes the fight against job loss must be guided by the aim of having a direct say in how the economy is managed and over economic restructuring. The campaign should be linked with demands for redistribution of wealth, state

intervention and a constituent assembly and interim government.

Delegates at COSATU's recent economic policy conference agreed on a list of demands to be taken forward to negotiations with employers and the state (see box on p 40). A key demand is for a moratorium on all retrenchments, and for SACCOLA and the state to enter negotiations on a programme to create jobs.

Job creation programmes should be used to meet the needs of the people, by building housing, schools and hospitals, and by providing running water, sewerage, and electricity for all. These schemes should be funded by the state and business. Companies should

be required to pay a levy towards job creation.

The demands for job creation and an end to retrenchment are accompanied by a range of other demands that, in COSATU's view, will begin the long process of orientating the economy to meet the needs of the people.

Can these demands be won?

COSATU is moving onto an entirely new terrain of negotiation. The ground has been prepared by national struggle and negotiation over the LRA. When the Laboria Minute was signed in October last year, SACCOLA and the Dept of Manpower agreed to negotiate economic issues with the labour movement in future. COSATU is now taking the first steps in this direction.

The risks are high. In his closing remarks to the economic policy conference, general secretary Jay Naidoo criticised COSATU and the whole democratic movement for its inability to mobilise their members and supporters at recent marches and May Day rallies (see p 8).

"The employers and the state will not simply agree to our demands without a struggle," he said. "If we cannot mobilise in our millions, we will not win our demands, and this could lead to great disillusionment and demobilisation. These negotiations *have* to succeed. We have an enormous responsibility - we are

COSATU demands for the first round of economic negotiations with SACCOLA and the state

- a moratorium on all retrenchments and for SACCOLA and the state to enter into negotiations on a programme to create jobs
- an end to privatisation, commercialisation, rationalisation and the sale of strategic stockpiles
- the government must avoid policies which lead to massive job losses such as the lifting of tariff barriers
- SACCOLA must support the demands of the people for:
 - an interim government
 - a constituent assembly
 - an end to the violence
- SACCOLA and the state must agree to a nationally integrated system for basic adult education and training
- the reduction of wage gaps
- old age pension changes including an immediate end to racial discrimination in pension pay outs, the reduction of the retirement age to 55 years for men and women and pensions for all those entitled to receive them.
- one provident fund per industry to facilitate the use of provident money for development
- COSATU should negotiate financial assistance from SACCOLA for a feasibility study on the conversion of hostels to single and family accommodation. SACCOLA must give time off for consultation with hostel dwellers.

COSATU will approach the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and other unaffiliated unions to be part of a union front in negotiations. The conference suggested that apart from SACCOLA, other key players on the employer front should include the Commission for Administration (the public service employer body), the Post Office and NAFSOC and FABCOS. The state should be represented by the Department of Economic Affairs, the National Manpower Commission, the state auditors, the Department of Manpower and the Reserve Bank. ❖

opening the way to further negotiations on economic restructuring and the struggle for socialism. If we fail now the consequences will be disastrous."

The conference decided on a series of mass actions to begin educating and mobilising members. Mass

marches on 15 June - originally planned by COSATU's campaigns conference, and also included in the ANC's programme of action when it suspended negotiations in May - were seen as crucial. The conference proposed the slogan 'Peace, Freedom,

Jobs!' to capture the key issues of the day.

This campaign can be seen as a campaign to shape both the present and the future in the transition period. Workers are saying that they cannot wait for a new government before they begin to demand the restructuring of the economy.

If COSATU's demands for job creation are met, it will be a significant victory for the working class. But the campaign against retrenchment and unemployment cannot stop there. The economic forces of crisis and stagnation are deeply rooted. According to Bankorp's chief economist, Nick Barnardt, unless the next "economic upswing" lasts longer than any other in the last twenty years, then "unmanageable unemployment" will occur in 1994/5 (see Andrew Levy & Assoc).

Only profound economic restructuring and the forging of new strategies for growth and development will solve these problems. COSATU sees the current negotiations as the beginning of this process. This is why the development of COSATU's longterm programme for economic restructuring is so important. In this context, a union programme to change the structure of the economy as a whole is crucial to workers survival. ☆

Reference:

Andrew Levy & Associates,
Retrenchment Report: 1989/90

economic focus

COSATU

Economic Policy

Conference

COSATU's first economic policy conference was held in May. Three hundred delegates discussed the crisis in their industries, debated long-term proposals for restructuring the economy, and formulated immediate demands to be negotiated with employers and the state. AVRIL JOFFE* assesses its significance.

"Twelve years ago we were fighting for recognition. Now we are preparing economic policy that will shape the future of our country. COSATU is playing a central role in shaping the economy, and in shaping the policy of the ANC. This is a major step forward for the working class. It is also a major responsibility."

Jay Naidoo, COSATU General-Secretary

COSATU's three day conference on economic policy had two broad aims:

- to prepare an economic policy for COSATU to adopt at its annual con-

gress in July;

- and to finalise certain demands, including job creation and ending retrenchments, for negotiations with SACCOLA and the state.

* Avril Joffe is on the editorial board of *Labour Bulletin*, lectures at Wits University, and is a member of the COSATU-commissioned *Economic Trends* research group

ECONOMIC FOCUS

The conference was highly significant for three reasons. For the first time it brought together a large number of worker leaders from all COSATU affiliates (except CAWU) to debate economic policy. It started the process of formulating COSATU's policies for economic restructuring,

industry is to preserve the status quo.

Employers are keen on the idea of a social contract which is seen by several COSATU affiliates as a mechanism to reduce working class power. Employers would also like to separate economic issues from constitutional negotiations. COSATU needs

and 8% of employment in the manufacturing sector, and it imports more than it exports);

- the clothing industry has only experienced growth in the bantustans where wages are low;
- the textile industry is facing closures in the face of cheap imports;
- the metal industry is facing declining orders and tough international competition.

These sectoral reports revealed a national economic crisis. Neither employers, their organisations nor the state have a global vision of how to increase competitiveness, create jobs or restore growth to the economy as a whole.

Most affiliates reported that employers respond with wage cuts, threats of massive job losses, and unilateral attempts to raise productivity. It was clear from these reports that employers are motivated by a short-term view of profitability rather than any long-term perspective of development.

By contrast, COSATU seeks an economic framework that emphasises *growth through redistribution* and which links immediate policies with the *struggle for socialism*.

Growth through redistribution includes a job creation perspective, training and industry-wide career paths, productive investment such as beneficiation, laws to limit wealth, a view of nationalisation as a weapon to be used strategically, and a



Waiting to start COSATU/ANC anti-retrenchment march
Photo: Abdul Shariff/Afrapix

which are likely to have a far-reaching impact on our future. And it drew up a set of economic demands for immediate negotiations with employers and the state.

COSATU must intervene

Delegates were unanimous that COSATU should intervene in the process of formulating economic policy for South Africa. They referred to current state and capital strategies of privatisation, decentralising power, maintaining current income distribution and retaining private ownership. They argued that the agenda of capital in restructuring

to develop policies to counter these economic strategies of capital and the state.

Many of the affiliates reported on the impact of global economic restructuring on their industries, and of the potential dangers of this for the union movement. The theme running throughout these reports was the economic crisis, lack of growth, and dangers of widespread retrenchments.

For example:

- the goldmining industry is in crisis;
- the chemical industry faces an uncertain future (it accounts for 41% of capital investment, 20% of output

critical look at forms of ownership and control in industry. The guidelines for job creation schemes and the need for affordable and quality goods and services are linked to the most urgent needs of communities, such as housing, infrastructure, building and repairing schools and hospitals.

This broad economic programme - which concurs with that of the ANC - is beginning to be complemented by detailed in-depth research by affiliates into the nature of their sector and proposals for how it can be restructured to meet the needs of such an economic programme.

These issues are increasingly finding their way onto negotiating tables, where employers are given concrete proposals about their particular sector of industry. In the mining and auto sectors forums have already been set up - at the initiative of NUM and NUMSA - to negotiate these issues. NUMSA has also tabled demands in the metal and tyre sectors, as has FAWU in the fishing and bread industries and CWIU on state policy in the chemical sector.

The vision of socialism which began to emerge at the conference is one which emphasises a good quality of life through providing basic goods and services, ensures democratic control of how decisions are made, demands a strong role for the state, and considers forms of ownership that are in working class interests. To give substance to

this vision, it was suggested that COSATU organise a conference on socialism.

Issues confronting COSATU

To the observer there appear to be four key issues confronting COSATU as it begins to formulate economic policy.

A first issue is *why COSATU has become involved in economic policy formulation*. Why, given the alliance between COSATU, the ANC and the SACP, is it necessary for COSATU to engage in this process of formulating economic policy?

John Gomomo, second vice-president of the federation, explained COSATU's approach to economic policy at its March campaigns conference: "We are moving from resistance to reconstruction. We need to move away from sloganising. We must make concrete proposals on workers' rights and reconstructing the economy. We, the organised working class, must determine the pace and direction of the political and economic developments in South Africa..."

COSATU believes that workers organised into unions need to develop their own policy for economic development, and not simply leave this to political organisations. In a previous edition of the *Labour Bulletin* (Vol 15 No 6, p 31) SACTWU general secretary John Copelyn argued that "it is

not enough to simply adopt an ideology of independence. We will also have to map out an alternative vision of a just society..."

While there are some precedents for union federations becoming involved in economic policy formulation (such as the Australian and Swedish labour movements), it is not usual for trade unions to enter negotiations at this level. However, there are some strong reasons for COSATU's involvement in negotiating a macro-economic reconstruction programme:

- Its members are the direct producers of the economic wealth of this country
- The federation can build on the bargaining forums created for negotiating a new LRA with SACCOLA and the state, and take the initiative to develop a national economic strategy to negotiate with these bodies
- The affiliate unions are developing a sound understanding of the industries in which they organise. This has been deepened by research and development groups made up of worker delegates in some of the larger affiliates; in-depth studies of work organisation, new technology and productivity issues undertaken by independent researchers and the commissioning of a large industrial strategy project for the manufacturing industry to be completed in the next two years.

- The federation has established sound democratic practices for report-backs and education to back up the process of collective bargaining. The big question is whether COSATU has the capacity to negotiate economic policy successfully: are all the affiliates able to keep up with the increasingly complex procedures, the schedules and agendas? Are the constitutional structures of the federation themselves adequate to ensure democracy, worker participation and control?
- The federation has a commitment to increasing the competitiveness of South Africa's industry, to meeting the demand for basic goods and services for the country's people and to long-term growth.

Negotiations and mass struggle

A second issue is how to ensure the success of the negotiations. Delegates were very clear that negotiating with SACCOLA was not enough. Negotiations should be accompanied by a range of strategies to strengthen the capacity of the unions. Delegates argued that it was necessary to link negotiations to ongoing mass struggle. Suggestions included mass action and education of the members of each affiliate through workshops and general meetings. This should proceed in parallel with the negotiation process. As delegates repeatedly explained:

"It is not how clever we are in negotiations; it is how well organised we are on the ground".

Deadlines were set for affiliates to discuss a variety of issues of importance to the success of these campaigns. COSATU's July Congress will assess the first round of negotiations - the tabling of the demands - and will adopt longer term policy positions on the economy. On the basis of this, the congress will decide the future direction of what are potentially the most significant negotiations ever undertaken by a trade union grouping in South Africa.

The third issue confronting COSATU is *what is the relationship between COSATU's framework for economic reconstruction and its vision of socialism?* There is clearly a tension between the immediate need to negotiate economic policies with employers and the state, and COSATU's commitment to the goal of socialism.

Many delegates were concerned that the goal of socialism should not lose out to a revitalised, more efficient form of capitalism where the benefits of economic and industrial restructuring are enjoyed only by a few - even if it includes the organised working class. Some felt that COSATU's involvement in negotiating on these issues would be more likely to result in social democracy than socialism.

The entire conference dedicated itself to linking the

development of economic policy to the struggle for socialism. Nonetheless, it is clear that the question of how to do this has not been resolved. Part of the answer must surely involve empowering the working class at the expense of capital and the state. This means building powerful representative organisations in civil society, with clear policies and a strong democratic tradition such as that of the trade unions. It also means establishing appropriate institutional forums and the power to give effect to these policies.

These issues are likely to be debated throughout the 1990s, but there is no doubt that COSATU is well placed to participate as a key player in these discussions and negotiations.

The fourth issue is whether the appropriate institutional forums exist for COSATU to enter negotiations on economic and industrial restructuring: are the existing institutions - the industrial councils, the NMC, regional development forums, the forum with SACCOLA and the state - adequate for the task at hand? Do they need to be restructured, extended or built up to cope with these sorts of negotiations? This is important, for as one delegate said, "Are we negotiating or are we drinking tea with the employers?" The emphasis is on negotiation and hence the concern with appropriate forums. ☆

Summit on the mining crisis

A 'new era' of 'co-determination' in the mining industry?

An unprecedented summit took place in Johannesburg on 3 June between mine-owners, miners unions and the government in response to the crisis facing the gold mining industry in South Africa. Hailed in the press as the opening of a "new era" and the beginning of "co-determination" in the mining sector, this "ground-breaking" process is analysed by a Labour Bulletin correspondent. *

Nearly one hundred participants met at the Mining Summit, on 3 June 1991: from the Chamber of Mines representing many of the mine owners, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the white Council of Mining Unions (CMU) and officials' associations and, for the government, the Department of Mineral & Energy Affairs.

They were gathered together, on the initiative of the NUM and the Chamber of Mines, in response to a major crisis facing the gold

mining industry in South Africa. With international gold prices declining, more than 100 000 black miners have been laid off in the past three years. Possibly 200 000 more face retrenchments, as some 14 'marginal mines' face closure.

Immediate defensive measures

The immediate measures the NUM proposes include protecting gains achieved by its members, so that the threat of unemployment is not used to erode wages and working conditions. As another defensive measure, the NUM is calling for retrenchments "with a human face". This includes a national guaranteed - tax free - basic severance package, assistance with job-seeking for retrenched miners, and/or income-generating projects, especially in affected rural communities.

Medium-term closures strategy

In order to manage impending mine closures "in the best possible manner for

mine owners, government and mineworkers", the NUM proposes temporary state subsidies, - mainly in the form of 'tax pay-backs' and a new tax formula - to prolong the lives of marginal mines. This would provide for an "adjustment period" of five years during which each mining house should produce a detailed down-scaling programme "with a view to finding alternatives".

A coordinated programme of mine closures should also include an industry-wide training and retraining scheme. This will enable ex-miners to carry useful skills with them, rather than simply being dumped on the scrap-heap of unemployment by the mines once they are no longer needed.

Such a training programme would also help to make the remaining miners and mines part of a more productive modern mining industry, with wages, hours and conditions comparable to the developed world. Thus, these proposals for the immediate crisis also carry

* Unless indicated otherwise, all quotes are from Mining Summit documents

implications for the longer term future and development of a viable mining industry in South Africa.

Longer-term restructuring

It is, in fact, in its longer-term perspectives on the mining industry that the NUM makes its more far-reaching proposals. It insists that gold is facing not just a 'cyclical downturn' but a fundamental shift in the world economy that poses a threat to our national economy.

The decline in South Africa's gold earnings will reduce its foreign exchange income, as well as government revenues. Decline in mining will also have knock-on effects on many other sectors of the economy: energy and water, construction, engineering, iron and steel, timber, transport etc.. Unemployment will be aggravated all round.

Thus, the NUM argues, the mining sector must be sustained, but it adds that it must also be restructured. The basic problem with mining - and for the communities and social structures that grow up around the mines - is that mines have a finite existence. When the minerals run out or become too difficult to extract, the crudely profiteering mine-owners simply withdraw, leaving entire communities devastated, housing and other infra-structure abandoned or dismantled, and valuable human and material resources wasted.

National mining policy

A mine is always a 'wasting asset' but a rational - and humane - national mining policy, is based on planning coordination and investment with these perspectives in mind. *Social responsibility* demands broader investment in the mining communities. Other sustainable economic activities, that will survive any eventual mine closure, have to be set up on, and around, mines. Regional planning for mining towns is essential.

A nationally responsible programme of restructuring of the entire mining industry in South Africa demands expansion and diversification through the development of mineral processing and manufacturing industries (so-called beneficiation) both for export earnings and for internal use to stimulate other sectors. It would also include planning, research, new technology and training for higher productivity, and better work organisation and management methods benefitting from the miners' knowledge and experience.

Urgent joint response

The NUM argues that an urgent "joint response" is needed by all involved in mining, and proposed the setting up of a Permanent Mining Commission "with powers to intervene in the national interest."

The response of those present at the summit was to agree to set up a "Steering Committee" to create

working groups to "give ongoing attention to a variety of issues" (including the lifting of sanctions). Whether these will be more than the "talk shops" that the NUM does *not* want, will be measured by their practical results. This process may a "promising beginning," but it also carries challenges and dangers for the NUM.

CHALLENGES FACING THE NUM

The miners union calls for a "process of consensus" amongst all involved in mining. The prospects of an easy consensus are not good. The President of the Chamber of Mines made sonorous declarations, in his address to the summit, on the mine owners' "willingness to talk about the future...share views. and reach under- standing." But he also made it clear that a co-ordinated programme of mine closures "could not but be rejected by mining industry management", because it clashes with private enterprise competition.

"Co-management of the crisis"

The "mechanisms to work jointly", welcomed in the communique at the end of the summit, refer to the working groups set up. These are not "co-management" bodies. If there is to be "progress towards co-management of the crisis" (Weekly Mail), the mine-owners still have a long way to go in changing their

attitudes. They make reasonable statements that "management is prepared to talk about the future share of each participant in the industry.. (but) ..consistent with the appropriate exercise of managerial authority". This is not co-management.

Phrases such as "shared concern...shared views... discussion ...participation" are liberally scattered around the Chamber of Mine's President's speech. Such terms are used loosely and interchangeably, and associated terms interspersed to give the impression that more is being discussed or promised than is actually the case. In fact, he explicitly rejected coordination of mine closures as "a form of command structure."

"Co-determination of the mining industry"

By a similar process of association, suggestions are made (Business Day) of a "new era" opening up of "co-determination of the mining industry", but this implies a sharing of power between mine owners and mineworkers, and there is little evidence that the mine-owners are ready for that.

What mine management is ready for is its own 'restructuring' plans involving cost-cutting, increased productivity, mine 'rationalisation' and down-scaling. This is to be based on a new industrial relations system employing a "new leadership style..new supervisory structures...new workplace

order." In this new order, explained the Chamber President, "discussions have to be entered into between employees and their representatives...on cutting employment levels or employment costs...choices have to be made." This type of intermediary role for union representatives is the "foundation on which a new partnership in our relationship with labour can be laid." This is co-option, not co-determination.

Tripartite restructuring

There are clear dangers of co-option of this kind for unions entering into 'social contacts' with management. But it seems that the partnership the NUM is arguing for is not a bilateral relationship with mine-owners, but a joint effort between mine-owners, trade unions and the government.

The Chamber of Mine's response to a tripartite plan, is to reject state assistance which "leads to ruin", preferring "partnership with labour rather than patronage by government." It may well be that the mine-owners prefer "discussions entered into between management and employees" because the latter are easier to deal with than "obligations imposed from national command" by government.

They need not fear such "national command" because the government does not recognise its responsibility in the crisis or in the economy. It refuses to grant tax relief or

subsidise a mines closure programme. Its experts hardly recognise that there is a crisis, arguing that the closure of 13 more marginal mines will cause 'only' 77 000 job losses (when retrenchments already exceed 100 000!). The government accepts continuing South African dependence on fluctuating international gold and other mineral prices.

"Restructuring for a democratic South Africa?"

The theme for the NUM's 7th National Congress this year was "Restructuring the Mining Industry for a Democratic South Africa." Neither the present government nor the mine-owners are showing the national responsibility or social consciousness necessary to the kind of national mining strategy needed for the new South Africa. This suggests that a different government, and different forms of ownership of the mines will be necessary to develop a modern mining industry integrated into a national economic development strategy.

The NUM may feel that it has to continue with interim "consensus" discussions to deal with the immediate crisis in mining and the livelihoods of its members. But it would seem that it is a democratic South Africa willing to take on the mine-owners that is the fundamental condition for the restructuring of the mining industry, not the other way round. ☆

the
National
Minimum
Wage *debate*

CAROLE COOPER reports on the major views in COSATU*

The question of a national minimum wage (NMW) was widely debated within COSATU during 1990. The call for a NMW has a long history: it was contained in the Freedom Charter; in 1985 at its inaugural conference, COSATU called for a 'legally enforced national minimum living wage for all workers'; and the Conference for a Democratic Future in December 1989 endorsed this.

The question of a NMW was fully discussed at COSATU's first campaigns conference in May 1990. The conference agreed that there should be an NMW, and that a campaign for such a wage would bring together organised and unorganised workers and would be important for workers in low wage industries. The living wage committee (LWC) was asked to establish what the

NMW should be, to develop a programme of action to achieve such a wage and to submit its recommendations to the second campaigns conference.

However, the second campaigns conference, held in September 1990, did not lead to the setting of a national minimum - instead the entire question came under renewed scrutiny.

The LWC, in preparatory documents for the conference made a strong case for a campaign for a NMW, which it set at R700. It said that the union movement should urge a new democratic government to introduce a NMW, but in the meantime unions and their members should demand this in their negotiations with management.

The main point of the committee's demand was that the NMW could provide the

'basis for a wage solidarity campaign to raise wages of the lowest-paid workers in all sectors of the economy, and in the process can build working class unity'. In other words, its value lies in its force as an organising tool. Workers who had achieved the national minimum would still be able to campaign for further progress towards the 'living wage'.

Turning to why there should be state control of minimum wages, the committee put forward three reasons:

- Some workers are especially vulnerable to exploitation and need protection (particularly domestic workers and agricultural workers);
- It is impossible to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in living standards without setting

* Carole Cooper is a senior researcher at the SA Institute of Race Relations

- lower limits to wages;
- Low wages have a bad effect on the growth and productivity of the economy.

Setting the figure:

In setting the figure for a NMW, the LWC said it should be based on trade union perceptions of workers' realistic needs and should ensure workers of a reasonable standard of living. It argued that a large number of low paid workers should benefit from the NMW and that it should therefore be set not far off from the average wage (which according to the LRS was R667 per month in the second half of 1989). The committee said that it should be a credible demand in any negotiation - ie that employers should take it seriously. In addition, it should be set at a level which every union and every sector would find useful in its wage campaigns. High wage unions would use it as a floor or safety net for wages, while in low wage industries it could be used as a goal. Lastly, it should not be so high as to be confused with the living wage.

The committee argued that the upper point should be half of the average wage for all races according to government statistics, ie R750 per month, while the lower point should be above 'the bosses' poverty datum line of R550 per month'. The committee suggested R700 as a realistic level, this being slightly higher than the average wage for general workers according to

the database of the Labour Research Service (LRS). It said that R700 was higher than all the average wages for general workers in most sectors, excepting paper and printing, metals, and motor and auto. It pointed out that, even in those three sectors, there were many companies which were paying far less than the proposed NMW.

Union responses:

The proposals were debated intensely at the September meeting. The main support for the NMW came from the NUM, which has argued strongly for a NMW in the context of a broader wage policy within the union movement. It is the only union so far which has adopted a wage policy for its industry. Support for the proposal was also given by the Transport and General Workers' Union.

SACTWU, however, strongly resisted the proposals and the union circulated its own pamphlet at the conference in which it outlined an alternative position. One of the union's main criticisms of a NMW was that it undermined collective bargaining. It argued firstly that employers would resist collective bargaining until they knew what the minimum was.

Secondly, according to the union, in Zimbabwe, where there is minimum wage legislation, collective bargaining is not accepted by employers and "there are no serious negotiations between the unions and employers who comply with the mini-

mum wage." Critics of this position suggest, however, that the failure of collective bargaining there may have more to do with the weakness of Zimbabwean trade unions than with the introduction of a minimum wage.

SACTWU, in its pamphlet, criticised the NMW further on the grounds that it would have a detrimental effect on higher paid workers. Employers would use the argument that workers were already getting more than the minimum to stop paying them more. The union argued that the introduction of a NMW would in all probability lead to bankruptcy in low wage regions. This view has also come under fire.

According to the LRS, a survey of 1 200 employers reported that only 4% believed that minimum wages created unemployment. The LRS has also argued that whether the NMW will drive companies out of business depends partly on the level at which the minimum is set. In addition, however, it queries whether a company unable to pay the national minimum should be allowed to continue to exist.

A further SACTWU criticism was that workers who are employed in low wage industries and sectors, such as on farms, in the domestic sector and especially on the mines, would immediately face huge retrenchments. However, it could be argued, in the case of domestic workers and farmworkers, that because of the problems

of unionisation, these are the sectors most in need of statutory minimum wage protection.

Indeed, elsewhere in its pamphlet, SACTWU seems to acknowledge the necessity of certain sectors receiving state protection: "In every society there are some sectors which seem to remain unorganised. It is sectors such as these where the state should determine the minimum wage that can be paid to a worker. In such cases the workers' right to bargain is not being undermined since the union is unrepresentative."

SACTWU's alternative proposal to the introduction of minimum wage legislation was for the government to encourage collective bargaining by passing laws that force employers to negotiate industrial council agreements with representative unions. It is through negotiations on these councils that minimum conditions and wages for all workers in a particular industry will be laid down. Thus, rather than a statutory national minimum wage the union supports sectoral minimum wages gained through collective bargaining.

What about the other views within COSATU? According to a campaigns conference report, the CWIU position expressed at the meeting was close to that of SACTWU. On the other hand, PPWAWU, FAWU and SADWU all agreed that there should be a campaign for a national minimum wage. However, they felt that R700 a month was too low

for two reasons. Firstly, they said that workers would become confused between the living wage demand and the national minimum wage demand. Secondly, employers would take advantage of the proposal and "say we are contradicting ourselves when we demand a living wage which is higher than R700'."

NUMSA argued that it would not make economic sense to introduce a NMW in the current economy as this would lead to job losses and inflation. A NMW should form part of a campaign for a better economy, which, among other things, would include full employment. At the same time collective bargaining should be strengthened. There should be a simultaneous campaign for all workers to be included under the LRA and for national bargaining in all industries.

No minimum wage campaign

The conference decided, firstly, that to address effectively the question of wages unions should fight for:

- the protection and strengthening of trade union rights and the bargaining power of workers;
- the establishment of centralised, industrial-level bargaining; and
- the extension of the LRA to all workers.

Secondly, it was agreed that the demand for a NMW needed to be made in the context of the federation's demands for the restructuring

of the economy and in relation to the problem of unemployment. Finally, it was agreed that fixing an amount of R700 would at present cause confusion in the bargaining situation and the LWC was asked to reexamine the question of the NMW in the light of the discussion, identify other aspects of a programme against low wages and refer the issue back to affiliates.

NMW & economic policy:

What the above agreement reflects is the growing view within COSATU that questions such as the introduction of a NMW cannot be decided upon in isolation and that they form part, not only of a broader wage policy, but of the larger issue of the restructuring of the economy.

At present, the question of the development of a broader economic policy is high on the agenda within COSATU and it seems the debate on the NMW will take a back seat until a clearer direction has been gained on this. ☆

Sources

The National Minimum Wage Reader, COSATU, June 1990, p17

Report of the Campaigns Conference 7-9 September 1990

What are the alternatives to minimum wage laws? *SACTWU Media*, 28 August 1990

Young, Gordon: *A National Minimum Wage for South Africa*, November 1990, p12

In the next edition of Labour Bulletin, Carole Cooper writes on wage policy.

new **technology:** *new* **skills,** *new* **opportunities?**

DAVE KAPLAN* describes the new technology which is being or will be introduced in many companies. He argues that this will open up new opportunities for workers, especially in terms of skills and training. He suggests broad principles the unions should adopt when developing training policies.

The old technology and the new technology

Most companies in South Africa use the old technology of mass production. Each firm specialises in a very few products. It standardises its products in order to cut down costs of production and sell cheaply. This allows for dedicated machines - each designed to produce a specific part of the final product.

To complement the specialised machinery, operators are also specialised. Each operator is trained to operate his/her particular machine.

Under the old technology, management defines jobs very narrowly. Each job is relatively easy to learn. Workers are easy to replace

with others who can be quickly trained. When the firm does badly it does not hesitate to fire workers. New workers can be employed when times improve and can be quickly trained.

The pioneer of this kind of production was the Ford factory in the 1920s. That is why this system is often called Fordism.

But now a very different kind of technology is being introduced in many industries. The new technology enables each firm to produce a wide variety of different products. Companies now attempt to compete not so much in terms of the price of the product but much more in terms of the variety and quality of the product. Henry Ford once

said: "You can have any colour Model T Ford as long as it is black." Today, a Toyota model in Japan is said to be available in over 10 000 variations - different colours, different features etc.

Why has this change happened?

There are two basic reasons. Firstly, there have been changes in the world market. As incomes have risen, consumers increasingly want variety and quality. The new technology enables companies to meet these demands. Secondly, and most important, the new technology is more efficient. This allows management to reduce costs and increase profits.

The new technology is to

* Dave Kaplan is the Director of the Economic Policy Research Unit at UCT and a member of the COSATU-linked Economic Trends group. This article was first delivered as a talk at a NUMSA workshop for shopstewards, as part of a programme to develop union strategies for training.

	Old Technology	New Technology
Product	Standardised	Many Variations
Machinery	Dedicated	Flexible
Workers	Single - Skilled	Multi - skilled
Competition	Price	Quality, Variety

management's advantage. This does not mean, however, that it has to be to the workers' disadvantage - as I shall argue below.

The new technology

In the most industrially advanced countries, firms are now attempting to compete through providing a wider variety of products, or better quality products.

Management uses new technology, new work organisation and worker participation to achieve this.

Firstly, in place of dedicated machines which each produce one product, management is introducing new machines that are flexible, ie which can produce a variety of products. Most of these machines are computer controlled. They can be programmed and reprogrammed quickly to do a range of different tasks.

Secondly, management is reorganising factories into cells which are responsible for producing a range of products, or doing a range of processes, and therefore has an almost full range of equipment. A cell is almost "a factory within a factory." This facilitates much more group working. Group supervision replaces the old system where supervisors

check each individual's work.

Thirdly, and most importantly, operators need to be able to operate a number of different machines, re-set machines to produce different products, and do maintenance. In Toyota in Japan, the time taken to change the dies in the body press fell from 8 hours to 2 minutes. This is only possible if the operators are also able to perform the tasks of changeover.

Another important change is that workers are being made responsible for quality, in order to ensure there are no defects. This is known as quality-at-source, and it differs from the old system where a specialised quality control department checked the goods as they left the factory.

But, more than this, if management want to constantly improve the products, they need to involve the workers. Workers can be a very important source of ideas for improving production and products, and improving quality. The Japanese call this kaizen. For example, Sharp Corporation told its workers that unless they could get a 30% saving in materials, they would have to lay off workers. The workers made 30 000 suggestions, the savings were made and there were no

lay-offs. At Toyota, employees made one and a half million suggestions in one year - an average of 32 per worker.

So the new technology consists of new machines and changes in the way in work is actually organised. In fact, it is the changes in organisation that are more important, rather than the introduction of the new machines. For example, General Motors in the US invested over \$50 billion in the best of the new machines. But they introduced no major changes in work organisation. As a result the machines were poorly used, workers did not have the right skills and were angry about not being consulted - and the massive investment led to very little increase in productivity.

Challenges

Many companies in South Africa are introducing new technology and new methods of organising work. But they will not be successful unless they can win the active participation and co-operation of the workers. So if management wants the new technology to be successful, it will have to make sure

- that the workforce actively supports the changes
- that the workforce is trained in a broad range of skills so as to be adaptable and flexible in their tasks, but also creative with new ideas.

This means management will have to change its attitude to labour. Labour will have to be seen as a

resource (a resource for new ideas and improvements) and not simply as a cost (a cost of production which it is constantly seeking to minimise through low wages and retrenchment).

These changes can be a source of greater power for workers in the workplace, since management requires their co-operation.

Many unionists fear that new technology will reduce the level of employment, and therefore they oppose its introduction. It is true that these new technologies often do lead to a loss of jobs in the firm where they are introduced. But if unions do succeed in blocking the introduction of new technology, they may find that they lose jobs anyway. This is because the company will probably become uncompetitive, lose business or even go bankrupt.

New technology may in fact help to create a healthier, more competitive economy with more chances to grow. This can increase jobs in the following ways:

- Lower production costs and lower prices mean consumers can buy more goods. This increases demand and leads to more jobs.
 - New industries are established to supply and service the new technologies.
 - More competitive products lead to greater exports, which means more jobs and wealth for the whole economy.
- It is also important to

Training & career under old & new technologies

	Old Technology mass production	New Technology Flexible specialisation
Job Categories	Narrowly defined by machine characteristics	Broadly defined by process or skill level
Training	Once-off skills acquisition	Continuous skill-enhancing
Career Path	Nil (supervisor or seniority)	Progression to higher skill-based categories

stress that the introduction of new technology will not automatically lead to more skills for workers. It can *reduce* workers' skill and *increase* management control over workers. In West Germany the introduction of computerised machine tools was generally accompanied by up-skilling for workers. In Britain, on the other hand, this was accompanied by deskilling. Whether the new technology benefits workers or not depends on management's aims, and also on workers' power.

Let me take an example, the introduction of Computer Aided design (CAD) in South Africa. Draughtsmen are in short supply and firms introduce CAD to allow for greater output of existing draughtsmen. But another route would be to upgrade skilled machinists to use CAD. If skilled machinists were trained in CAD, they would be able to make use of

their knowledge of manufacturing to participate in the detailed design and specification of products.

The new technologies provide important opportunities for workers because management now can compete on the basis of a better quality product or faster introduction of new products. This requires the workers' co-operation and support. Skill and education play the key roles.

How should the unions respond to the introduction of new technology?

National technology agreements

There are national technology agreements in a number of European countries. These agreements require employers to inform workers about the economic, social, financial and technical implications of new

technology before it is introduced.

However, national technology agreements have not been very successful in improving worker participation in the introduction of new technologies. They do not question management prerogatives to decide on what technology to introduce, but they do provide some framework for negotiation over the introduction and impact of new technologies.

If it wants some control over technology, the union movement has to gain far more knowledge about technology and work organisation. In some countries unions have established their own research centres and developed co-operation with the universities.

Training

Studies show that in countries where on-the-job training is provided, such as West Germany and Japan, workers have the flexibility and the skills to respond to rapid change in technology and in markets. In Germany, there is extensive apprenticeship training to develop general skills which can be used in different industries. In Japan trainees are given a range of assignments and work in different factories.

Trade unions should ensure that training programmes are based on on-the-job training. They should also ensure that training develops general skills, not only skills for specific jobs, so that skills can be put to many different, and

most importantly, yet unknown future uses. Training which imparts both generalised skills and company-specific skills makes workers more mobile. This will encourage companies to hang on to their workforce if they possibly can, even when times are tough, rather than retrenching them.

New principles for training

Training must embody certain new principles that will benefit workers. These principles will require other changes in the way the firm operates.

The first principle is that there must be *continuous skill enhancement* for all workers at all stages of their career. In Sweden, for example, workers are entitled to four weeks of paid leave per year for further education throughout their working lifetime. Companies have to pay 10% of their profits into a training fund. Training schemes have to be agreed on by both management and the workers.

The second principle is that job categories will need to be made far more broad. In the past, job categories have been defined very narrowly. The new technology is breaking this down: workers are becoming multi-skilled. Operators are maintaining their own machines or administering quality control procedures, for example. Using more broadly based job categories, based on workers'

skills and training, is called *skill broadening*.

Jobs should be classified and paid according to the degree of skill that they entail, rather than the kind of machine the worker operates. There should be a ladder of jobs with increasing skills.

This skill broadening and the establishment of a ladder allows a career structure for workers, so that they can advance continuously through the additional skills/training that they acquire. Previously, the only route up for many workers was either to become a supervisor or to leave his/her job and train at something else. So, the third principle is to link training and skill acquisition to a *new career path or structure*.

Problems

There are major obstacles in achieving these objectives in South Africa. The most critical obstacle is that many workers have very poor basic education because of Bantu Education. There are also dangers that the new technologies can very easily benefit the more highly skilled workers, and widen the gap between these workers and the rest of the working class who have little or no access to such technology and training. The introduction of new technology and skills upgrading schemes should therefore be examined by the union movement both in relation to their own membership and in a wider context. ☆

Preparing ourselves for permanent *independence*

In the last edition of Labour Bulletin, leading SACP member Jeremy Cronin criticised SACTWU general secretary John Copelyn's views on trade union independence and the 'two hats' debate. In this article, JOHN COPELYN responds.*

Cronin argues that I used our debate about wearing two hats to "brief personnel managers" on an internal union issue.

I did not in any way discuss details of this "debate" with employers at the time. However, if we are to debate the 'two hats' issue properly in *Labour Bulletin*, it seems appropriate to do so now.

"Using our debate"

The so-called "debate" developed in the following way.

The SA Communist Party secretly approached a number of leading COSATU figures and told them the central leadership of the SACP wanted them to serve on the Internal Leadership Group (ILG) of the party,

which was to be announced at its 29th July rally.

Either this was done very late in the day, or all comrades concerned were asked not to discuss the matter in the union movement until very late in the day. Whichever way this happened, there was no debate whatsoever in COSATU Executive structures prior to 29 July. The NUMSA Executive was advised of the development the day before the rally.

We were forced into a situation where several very prominent unionists were announced as SACP national leaders without any discussion on whether this was advisable. This debate was immediately made known to personnel

managers, the state, and of course other COSATU leadership through the national press the same day. In other words, there was no internal debate before it was made public!

From there, the matter raised itself for the first time in about September or October at a COSATU Exco** meeting. The Vice-President of COSATU (who to all intents and purposes is the most senior and public worker leader in COSATU) informed the meeting as a courtesy that he would be representing the party in the first meeting of the political committee of the COSATU/ANC/SACP alliance. This committee - with seven delegates from each organisation - is the key

* see John Copelyn, 'Collective bargaining: a base for transforming industry'

** Exco consists of COSATU national office-bearers plus two delegates from each affiliate

structure of the alliance, its politburo in fact.

It was argued that COSATU had no right to interfere with the party's choice of delegation, unless COSATU had itself chosen the comrade to represent it in the alliance meeting before the party made its choice. To make matters worse, it was by then clear that the majority of delegates who had been appointed at an earlier meeting to represent COSATU in this alliance structure, were now members of the SACP ILG. The person who should have been our leading spokesperson was now to represent the party in its dealings with us. And our actual representatives who were to represent us in all our dealings with the party, were at the same time on the ILG of the party!

When this was challenged it was argued that the Exco did not have the power to change the COSATU appointments to the alliance meetings. The reason advanced for this was that the appointments had been made by the COSATU Central Executive Committee (a higher body) in July, even though it had not been known at the time of their appointment that, in the next week or two, it would be announced that they were part of the SACP leadership.

This is obviously not an acceptable way of:

- Debating issues
- Respecting the independence of trade unions
- Running an alliance

Small wonder that several unions in COSATU began



SACTWU's John Copelyn
Photo: William Motlala/Afrapix

expressing real concern at these developments and began adopting resolutions attacking the whole idea of national union leadership conducting itself in this way.

According to Cronin, however, this concern is just a personal ideological quirk. Worse, simply offering an opinion to an Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) conference that such opposition would probably grow into the dominant position within the trade union movement, is a betrayal of the internal character of "our" two hats "debate"!

On infantile leftism

Vilifying people in the movement as traitors is unfortunately a long-standing tradition of many activists around the world. While the SACP says it is changing its approach to debate, it is really disappointing to find one of its leading spokespeople falling back at the earliest opportunity on the classic Stalinist techniques of smearing

individuals and alleging they are guilty of some breach of a duty of secrecy.

In response, I would simply point out there were several people from the ANC and COSATU other than myself who addressed the IPM conference, including Thabo Mbeki, Marcel Golding and Tito Mboweni. None of us were acting treacherously. I was acting with the full knowledge and approval of my union and I am sure others mentioned were acting likewise on behalf of their organisations.

In addressing major industrial relations conventions of employers, unionists do not "sell" the union movement to the class enemy. They simply seek to influence employer opinion on issues they feel are important to the union movement.

In my case, I was putting forward arguments that we should encourage centralised bargaining in each industry and negotiation between the trade union movement and capital on broad socio-economic issues. Both these issues are central objectives of the trade union movement presently and it is quite inappropriate to suggest the paper was some devious "trade off" or "generous sharing of information" with employers.

In part, I am not surprised that this is how some party people think. It comes from years of 'democratic centralism' practice where the only debate a good comrade engages in is inside



the Party. Let me quote a more extreme example of such intolerance towards different views.

A few weeks ago a trade unionist at a COSATU Eastern Cape Regional Congress put forward some difficulties with the functioning of the alliance in the context of discussion about dual leadership. Raymond Mhlaba, chairperson of the ILG responded curtly: "We have had an alliance for decades. Those who challenge it are mischief makers and need to be brought before a people's court."

This approach is what needs changing in the party if it is to emerge from the years of illegality and become part of open and vibrant debate.

Are union members from other political tendencies welcome in COSATU unions?

Having mercilessly slain several red herrings, Cronin discusses whether it is desirable for union leaders to double as SACP leaders. Essentially, he claims the wide experience of SACP leaders doubling as ANC

leaders is likely to guarantee that union independence will not be threatened.

Unfortunately things are not this simple. The trade union movement has drawn into its ranks tens of thousands of workers who don't support the ANC and even more who don't support the SACP. We cannot ignore lessons from other union movements which have operated among workers who were politically divided.

In Italy, for example, a united union movement was split into opposing ideological components because union leadership doubled as leadership of political parties. While they have in the end come to adopt detailed "rules of incompatibility" for union leadership, which essentially say "no two hats", the damage has already been done (see *SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 3).

The question confronting union leadership is not how many hats can they wear without confusing their membership about where they got a mandate from. The question is: what is the best way to build a united trade union movement confident in



its ability to advance the interests of all its members?

The first and foremost requirement is to ensure the union engages independently in the formulation of worker demands that unite its membership, notwithstanding the political division among such members. Second, it is essential that union leadership is seen by the union membership to represent all sectors of that membership, including those who do not support, for example, the SACP. Clearly this is not possible where the key union leadership doubles as SACP leadership!

Italian worker now have the privilege of *three* union federations, divided according to political tendencies, each operating in the same industry. This sort of divided labour movement is utterly unnecessary in South Africa. There is every prospect of uniting workers into a single union movement, provided the unions are led in a manner which ensures that loyal union members with different political views feel comfortable within a broadly-based union.





Does alliance politics imply dual leadership roles?

Photo: Abdul Shariff

Alliance politics - or dual leadership politics?

But there is a further problem with dual leadership. What if a fundamental disagreement arises between some organs of civil society (such as trade unions) and a political party?

If one assumes that the party has a monopoly of political wisdom and correctness, such disagreements either cannot arise, or would constitute 'false consciousness' on the part of the trade unions. If this is the case, holding dual leadership positions in the party and in the trade union would pose no difficulty.

If, on the other hand, one does accept the possibility of such fundamental disagreements between party and trade unions, the question is: which position would an individual holding two leadership posts promote in public debate, in the media and among the workers with whom he or she works?

Political parties, unlike trade unions, contest for state

power on behalf of their constituents. Trade unions, however, do not abstain from politics. The enormous contribution which the trade union movement has made to the collapse of apartheid bears testimony to this.

But the way unions become involved in politics is important. Trade unions from time to time choose to support political organisations whose policies would benefit organised workers. Such support will come after a process of internal discussion in the union movement, involving wide layers of workers. This is classical alliance politics, ie two separate and independent organisations, while retaining their separateness, co-operate on some specifically defined joint goals. Proper alliance politics is based on trade unions retaining their independence. Some of the principles of trade unions in an alliance are:

- Proper mandates from the members
- The maintenance of unity

among members

- The independence of union structures and decisions

If trade union leadership is at the same time the leadership of political parties, there cannot be a genuine alliance. *The real choice is therefore between real alliance politics, or dual leadership politics.*

On the role of the state

Cronin accuses me of believing that the role of the state in society as a whole is simply to rubber stamp agreements reached by trade unions in negotiations with employers. His accusation is highly misleading.

Of course, on those matters which trade unions negotiate and which become the subject of agreement, I do argue for the state to play an enabling role. That is, the state should pass into the law (and defend with its power) such gains made through trade union struggle.

But a trade union movement cannot tackle all the enormous challenges in

society - such as housing provision, basic educational facilities and public health care - which a new state would need to address. In all societies, the overall framework of economic development - such as taxation policies, monetary policies, the pattern and extent of public spending programmes, the role of the public sector - are a primary responsibility of the state.

A speech which seeks to promote new possibilities of trade union activity, and does not pretend to define the activities of a future state, can hardly be attacked on the grounds that it sees no role for the democratic state in transforming society!

No doubt there are significant differences between Cronin and myself on whether revolutionary opportunities exist in the current transition. I am pessimistic of those prospects materialising in circumstances where the economy remains a stable source of employment for millions of people (despite all its weaknesses) and the army remains absolutely unchallenged in its repressive capacity. I do not believe the working class will be in a position to decisively eliminate wage labour in the near future.

These underlying disagreements are not illuminated by forcing some Reaganite conception of the state onto my speech. My speech simply argued that it was desirable for bargaining institutions to be developed

further to deal with broad socio-economic issues as well as the content of laws governing labour relations. I suggested that these institutions should freely determine the functioning of the industrial court and the appointment of industrial court judges.

It is true that these ideas were not expressed in revolutionary terms. To do this would have utterly defeated the purpose of the speech. I hope even Cronin will accept there is no purpose served in addressing a convention of personnel managers on Marx/Lenin's conception of a bourgeois state. Nevertheless, I would have hoped that any party which champions the rights of the working class would strongly support the rights proposed in the speech, even if it thinks attempting to persuade employers on such matters is naive.

Unless the working class struggles vigorously for such bargaining rights now in the process of transition, the opportunity of securing real defences for the trade union movement will slip away. This is unnecessary and we will not easily allow it to happen. Trade union struggles for such forums have advanced too far at too high a price to simply shrink back and pin all hopes on achieving a revolutionary state formation, which in the near future will render unnecessary self-protection by organised workers.

Such bargaining rights are

important to the working class and they are achievable. Cronin feels this simple statement means I am "fixated with preparing workers for permanent opposition to an ANC government". It doesn't. It means simply that there is more to protecting the rights of the working class than just building the ANC or SACP. We have to build many other institutions besides those ones.

Critical among these civil institutions are broadly-based national trade unions. People engaged full-time in such tasks are not collaborators, they are independent trade unionists. Those who fail to distinguish between the two invariably wind up attacking trade unionists and undermining the strength of trade unionism despite their very revolutionary rhetoric.

Irrespective of the character of the state in a post-apartheid South Africa (whether it is of a capitalist or socialist orientation), society's interests will, in my opinion, best be served by having a trade union movement capable of articulating worker demands with which the government of the day may or may not agree. *This is not "preparation for permanent opposition"; it is preparation for permanent independence.*

Without such independence, workers are stripped of essential tools of democracy, and are driven towards the very same kind of empty democracy Cronin and all independent unionists are so concerned to avoid. ☆

“NO SPACE for the MASSES”

A response to Jay Naidoo

In *Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 6, Jay Naidoo (SACCAWU) analysed the peace process in Natal. An ANC activist in the Natal midlands, SIPHO NTSHANGASE, argues that Naidoo's article is misleading on the source of the violence, and politically misdirected on the role of the masses.

Jay Naidoo's contribution, and of course any contribution on the subject of ending the violence in Natal is to be welcomed. However, this article has very serious problems that should not go unchallenged.

In a previous paper Naidoo argued for a multi-party conference. He now claims that the agreement reached between Inkatha and the ANC on 29 January is a step in that direction. However, the agreement of January 29 is not a multi-party agreement. It is an agreement between two parties.

It cannot even be argued that it is one step towards a multi-party agreement, because an agreement between the ANC and Inkatha that the security forces must act impartially is not in any way binding on the security forces.

Conception of peace

Naidoo's conception of the peace in Natal is also problematic. Underlying his approach is the notion that there is a mutual interest between all the parties (the ANC, Inkatha and the government) to bring an end to the violence. These parties cannot have common interest in peace. The ANC wants a democratic South Africa, whereas the South African government is looking for new ways to destroy the ANC and the democratic movement in the country. Inkatha can only obtain a place at the negotiating table through coercion, given its own history of being unable to organise outside of the structures of apartheid.

It is important to understand what type of peace we are talking about, as well as to understand what

type of peace Inkatha and the government are talking about. If "peace" be the objective of all:

- the government want a peace process which will result in a divided and weakened ANC;
- Inkatha, for its part, has shown that it only wants the kind of peace which will catapult it onto the negotiating table as an equal partner to the ANC;
- the ANC wants peace so it can mobilise and organise in the legal space created by its unbanning in order to hasten the dismantling of apartheid.

Naidoo's conception of the peace process is also riddled with contradictions. If the violence in Natal is an apartheid war, as Naidoo says, and Inkatha is the agent of the apartheid state in Natal, as Naidoo himself

points out, how then can an agreement between Inkatha and the ANC bring about peace without the government being part of this agreement? Not only are the government and the security forces absent from the agreement, but there is no indication of how the state is going to be engaged as the "owner" of this violence.

Conception of Inkatha

Naidoo's conception of Inkatha is also misleading. To begin with, it is inaccurate and misleading to simply characterise Inkatha as representing African middle class interests and those of traditional chiefs. In fact, over the years, Inkatha has alienated large sections of the African middle class. It has clashed with NAFCOC, the National African Chamber of Commerce. There have been massive demonstrations and even strikes by KwaZulu teachers and nurses. Also, a growing section of KwaZulu civil servants are members of NEHAWU, an affiliate of COSATU.

In actual fact, the social composition of Inkatha is increasingly resembling that of other bantustan ruling political parties. These parties represent the tiny section of the top bantustan bureaucrats and a diminishing section of African traders. But Inkatha seems to increasingly represent the interests of monopoly capital and imperialism - forces whose agenda has over the years continued to undermine the interests and aspirations of



What exactly is the role the security forces are playing in the violence?

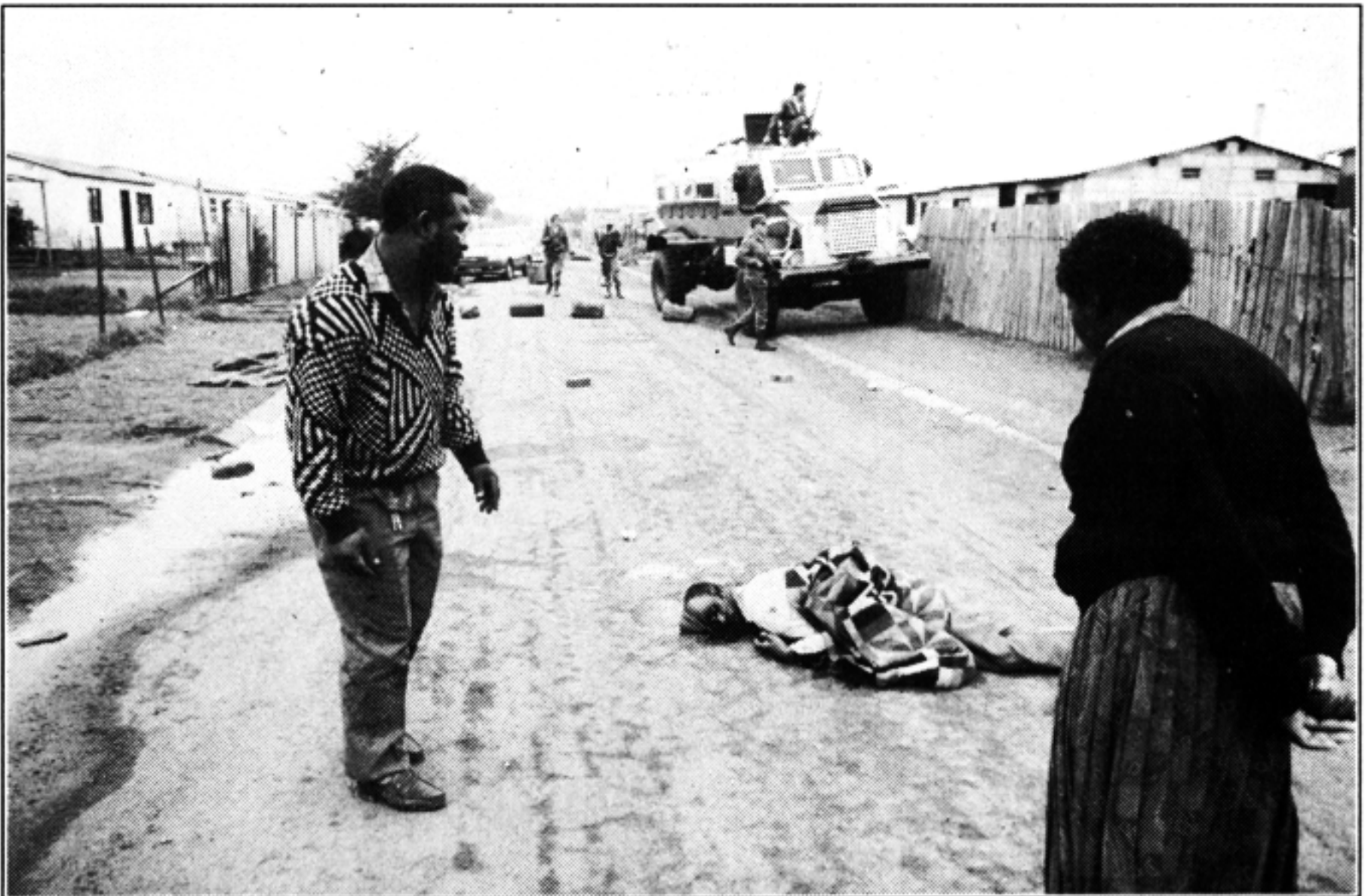
Photo: Anna Zieminski/Afrapix

large sections of the African middle class.

Inkatha cannot even be said to be simply representing the interests of chiefs. The relationship between Inkatha and traditional chiefs is much more complex than just representation. Rather, it is the chiefs who seem to be serving the interests of Inkatha. And they are tied to a repressive network of intimidation and patronage. Furthermore, the existence of

Contralesa and chiefs like UMntwana Mcwayizeni kaZulu, Chief Molefe in Nqutu, Chief Mlaba in Camperdown, and the late Chief Maphumulo - just to mention a few - seriously put into question Naidoo's rather sweeping characterisation of the relationship between Inkatha and the chiefs.

If we are entering into an agreement with Inkatha, we should know exactly what kind of an organisation it is. Peace talks and agreements



The violence continues. A victim of Inkatha violence lies dead in a township street

Photo: Brett Eloff/Afrapix

should never replace correct and informed analysis. Inkatha actually operates as the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, the KwaZulu government, the Zulu Police (ZP's), the chiefs as well as the custodian of the "Zulu nation". Inkatha slips in and out of these forms as the situation demands. Naidoo argues that "... Inkatha as an organisation does not always have a capacity to discipline its own members", because they operate as these other structures. He overlooks the fundamental point that these structures are in fact Inkatha in another form.

Portrayal of the violence

Naidoo does an injustice in stating that "subjective weaknesses on the part of the democratic movement have

also contributed to the causes of the violence". He says this without any analysis whatsoever of the objective conditions facing the democratic movement over the past five years: the successive states of emergency, the government's active support for the vigilantes, the arming of the warlords and the total failure of the government to prosecute these warlords.

Naidoo seems to follow what has become a fashionable tendency. He portrays the violence as criminal activity and cycles of revenge attacks. Such an approach ignores the fact that crime itself has been politically exploited by the regime to smash the democratic and the national liberation movements. For instance,

groups like AmaSinyora, Ninjas and A-Team are known to have been working with the security forces in eliminating activists.

Also, Naidoo gives the impression that the violence at local level is now dominated by two groups attacking one another. To ascribe the continuing violence to cycles of revenge is a distortion of what actually happens on the ground. Not a single community has been forced to flee or suffer displacement at the hands of ANC members or its supporters. The reality is that ANC-supporting communities are being massively displaced almost on a daily basis. For example in the Seven Day War (March 1990) in Pietermaritzburg, more than 20 000 people were displaced. The overwhelming

majority of these refugees were actively identifying or associated with the ANC, and only less than 100 were associated with Inkatha. In Richmond, Umgababa, Ndwedwe, Empangeni, Maqongqo and Port Shepstone, the pattern has been the same.

The way forward

I do not necessarily disagree with Naidoo's proposals to take forward the peace process. But his framework has four major weaknesses.

1. His approach is technical and bureaucratic. He largely sees the way forward in terms of "codes of conduct", "binding the security forces", "monitoring mechanisms" and "development projects". There is no notion of mass struggle and mass participation in the peace process.

2. Directly flowing from the above is the fact that there is no place in his proposals for the masses as an active and dynamic contingent in ending the violence. The masses only feature when the peace agreement has to be communicated downwards, and for the masses to be gathered and addressed at mass rallies as passive listeners. In other words the masses are seen as recipients of peace agreements rather than makers and defenders of peace. This is a fundamental departure from the strategy of the democratic movement up to 2 July 1990. The period prior to this date was characterised by mass action

around violence and direct pressure on the De Klerk regime. It is imperative that we be openly critical about the fact that, in the present period, peace delegations have effectively become a substitute for mass action on the violence.

Even where Naidoo talks about campaigns to end the violence he is silent on the form that these campaigns should take. It is not adequate to simply say that there should be campaigns to make Inkatha comply with the peace agreement, because the path to peace lies in the nature of the campaigns that we undertake. These campaigns should be directed at the De Klerk regime, since this is an apartheid war against the people. Such campaigns must also aim at exposing De Klerk's double agenda, that of talking but at the same time terrorising and weakening the ANC and the people as a whole.

Campaigns should also aim at dismantling the apartheid structures that sustain the violence, particularly the hostels, community councils, and more particularly the bantustans, including, and especially, the KwaZulu bantustan. There is no contradiction between such campaigns and sustaining the 29 January peace agreement, in that we must not sacrifice our strategic objectives in the process of trying to make peace. That amounts to surrender. A campaign to dismantle the KwaZulu bantustan will also expose

Inkatha, in that it cannot claim to be fighting for a new democratic South Africa while at the same time it is protecting the ZP's and benefiting from the bantustan system.

3. The third weakness in Naidoo's way forward, which is also a weakness of the current peace initiatives, is to separate the peace process from the key demands and struggles of the day: for an interim government, constituent assembly, return of exiles and release of political prisoners. It must be clear to all that violence will not end until apartheid is dismantled. Our failure to connect the campaign to end violence with the demand for a constituent assembly makes these demands rather abstract. It is important to give these national campaigns a regional character because of the terrain upon which we are waging these struggles. People in Natal, for instance, should know that a constituent assembly and an interim government mean an end to bantustan rule. That would mean an end to harassment by ZP's and an end to control by KwaZulu of essential facilities such as schools and hospitals.

4. Naidoo has failed to situate properly the question of defence within the peace process. It is merely presented as one factor in a jamboree of other factors. Yet it is the key to the ending of violence. Our own experience has taught us that where our defence has been strong, peace prevails. ☆

Lessons of losing power: Grenada's New Jewel Movement

In October 1983 a US force of 80 000 marines invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada bringing to an abrupt end the five year revolutionary experiment of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) led by Maurice Bishop. Although condemned by anti-imperialist and progressive forces world-wide, the American invasion was apparently welcomed by wide sections of the Grenadan population. DIDACUS JULES, Deputy Secretary for Education in the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of Grenada, 1979-83, spoke to Barbara Creecy* about the lessons of losing power in Grenada.

For 25 years prior to 1979, Grenada was governed by Eric Gairy who assumed leadership of the 1951 revolution when the masses rose against the bad working conditions they faced. Although he was initially popularly elected, Gairy degenerated into a despot using repression and superstition to remain in power.

In the early 1970s, the Caribbean, influenced by the upheavals in the United States, was swept by a wave of Black Power. To many young Caribbean intellectuals, Black Power meant more than just putting black faces in office. For them, it had a class content which involved



*Grenada in the Caribbean
in relation to the USA*

questioning who were the black faces in office and whether they were serving the interests of the black masses.

There were a number of independent community-based militant youth organisations. One such was the Movement for the Assemblies of the People which had a black-power-cum-socialist orientation, partly influenced by Tanzania's Ujamaa socialism. There was also an organisation called the JEWEL (Joint Movement for Education Welfare and Liberation).

These were pressure groups raising critical questions about the path of development in the country,

* Barbara Creecy works for the Human Awareness Programme (HAP), in Johannesburg, coordinating a project which trains education officers in trade unions, community and political groups.

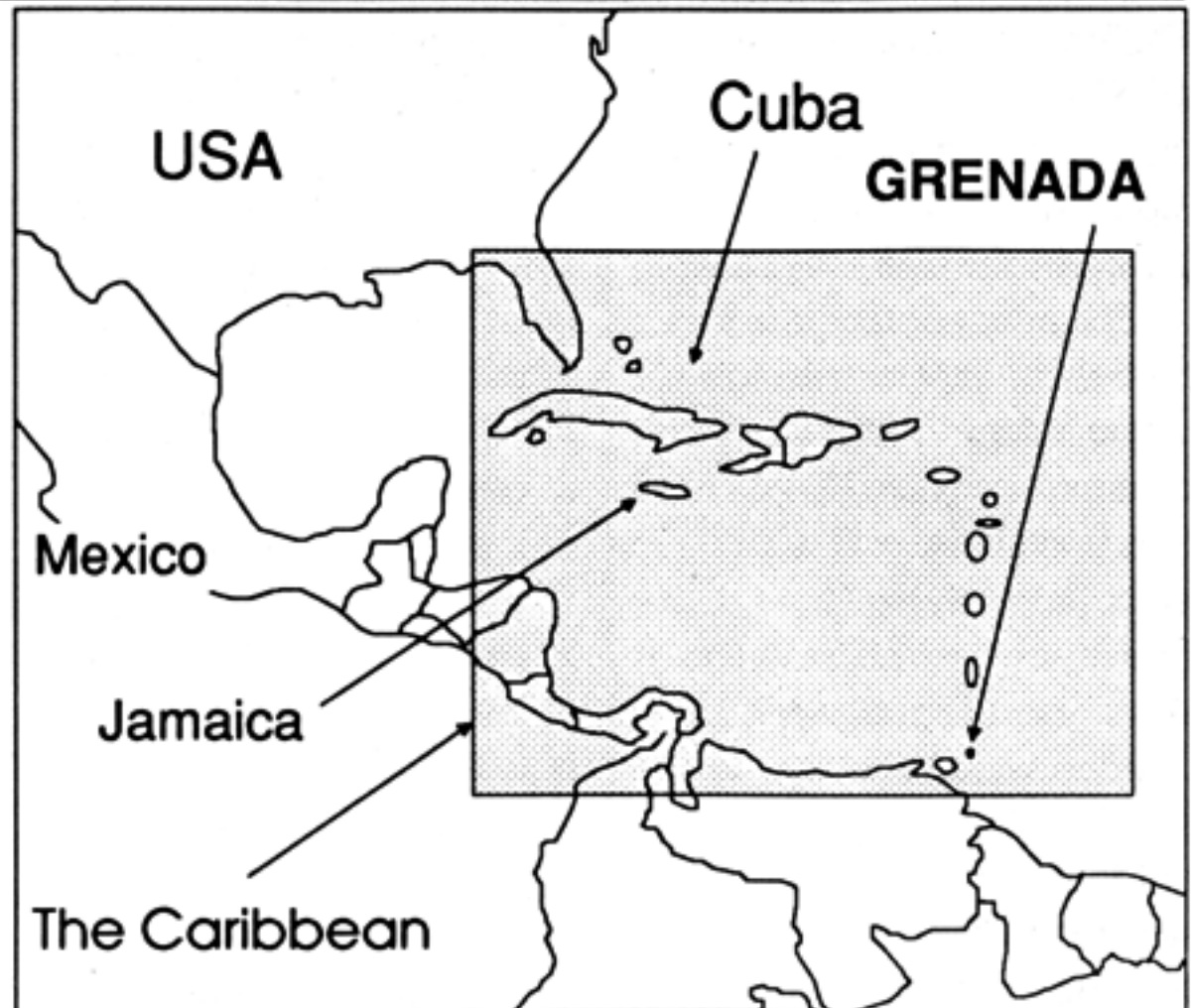
and looking for answers based on a nationalist pro-black majority perspective. Disturbed about foreign control of the Caribbean economies, they were also anti-imperialist. These organisations finally merged, in 1970, and called themselves the New Jewel Movement (NJM). The NJM took a more overtly political role by beginning to oppose the Gairy regime.

Rise of the New Jewel Movement

The movement articulated the need for a broader democracy, the widespread demand for social services, and an economy that was in the hands of the masses. The NJM rapidly gained a great following in the country. It also had a fearless leadership which was prepared to oppose the repressive forces of the regime.

In 1973 the New Jewel Movement won a number of seats in parliament and Maurice Bishop became the leader of the official parliamentary opposition. The Gairy regime reacted by further eroding parliament as a forum for democratic expression. When parliament was arbitrarily suspended, the NJM prepared to carry on the struggle on all fronts, including an armed seizure of power, if necessary.

In the early hours of 13 March 1973, the NJM attacked the army headquarters and the radio station. It issued a call for the masses to come out into the streets, to take control of their com-



Country profile

Grenada is a small country, 200 sq miles in area, with a population of about 110 000 people. A further 300 000 live outside Grenada, seeking employment in other Caribbean Islands [see map], the United States, Canada and Britain.

The economy of the country is based on agricultural production, with three main crops for export - bananas, nutmeg and cocoa. It is thus vulnerable to changes in international commodity prices at any given point in time. It is also very vulnerable to natural disasters, such as hurricanes.

Grenada has the largest peasantry in the English-speaking Caribbean. There is almost no industrialisation (except a few assembly-type factories) and the largest plantations are foreign-owned. Nonetheless, foreign penetration of Grenada has not been as deep as in other parts of the Caribbean. ❖

munities, arrest agents of the regime and ensure the surrender of police and military posts in their communities. The people responded, and that led to the consolidation of the revolution.

Achievements of the revolution

The New Jewel Movement established a broad-based

revolutionary government that immediately put into effect certain decrees. It promised the speedy return of the country to democratic elections and guaranteed the protection of human rights. Particular attention was paid to the rights of women workers and to women's democratic participation in the affairs of the country.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government also immediately repealed the most repressive laws that had been passed by the Gairy regime.

The effect of the post-revolutionary decrees was to create a certain amount of democratic space. People felt free to organise and to express themselves. These initiatives were encouraged. A number of spontaneous initiatives were taken by the people. For example, people got together in a collective way to clean up their communities, and to repair public facilities and roads.

Democracy was an important promise of the government. The policy of NJM was that the British parliamentary system should be transformed into a more participatory system of government. They believed that the people should have a more active say in the formulation of policy.

The New Jewel Movement began setting up 'zonal' councils in the regions where the people could discuss problems of their communities as well as national problems, and hold dialogue with the leadership.

In the councils, the people expressed many needs which later became concrete programmes of the revolution. There was a strong call for transformation in education (especially the upgrading of teacher training and the organisation of a national literacy campaign) and the creation of a national transport service.

Democratic consultation on economic planning

Following the inherited British tradition, the budget was a national secret until presented in parliament. One of the big changes made by the Grenada revolution was to completely change that procedure.

Firstly, the Ministry of Planning prepared a review of the national economy based on information they had collected. That review, together with certain guidelines, was sent to the cabinet for its consideration so that it could follow up some of the different options.

The review was then discussed in a number of workshops, using the village and zonal councils. People at

this level thus had the same opportunity to hear about the condition of the national economy and what the government was considering for the coming year. The people had the opportunity for feedback on these options, and to make further recommendations and suggestions.

There was then a National Conference of Delegates on the Economy where every sector was represented - women, youth, and other mass organisations - as well as community representation. In the third year of the revolution, there was even representation by age with specific representation of senior citizens.

At the National Conference of Delegates on the

Economic strategy of the New Jewel Movement

The economic policy of the NJM was constrained by the reality it inherited. The Provisional Revolutionary government declared the economy to be a mixed economy with the state sector dominant. It was felt that this was the only realistic way the country could go because it needed foreign expertise and investment. Three hundred years of colonial capitalism had not produced an answer to underdevelopment.

There were three aspects to the NJM policy. The first was the creation of a strong state sector, reserving for the state national transportation, utilities, and the banking sector.

The second aspect was the promotion of the private sector within certain limits and within a published investment code. This gave priority to local investors over foreign investors and provided concessions for labour-intensive projects which made extensive use of local investment.

The third was the encouragement of a co-operative sector especially in agriculture. To make this a reality, the government created the National Agency for Co-operative Development which provided finance and training for young people wanting to go into agriculture or into the formation of co-operatives. ♦

Land and agricultural policy

During the 60s and 70s, the Gairy regime had seized large estates claiming that it was going to give land to the landless. This did not happen. The land was kept by the regime or given to its supporters. After the revolution, all the land that had been seized by the Gairy regime was taken over. There was no need to appropriate further land because the state had enough land.

The revolutionary government established a land reform commission whose task was to go around all the communities in the country, looking into the availability of land and identifying idle land. The PRG then passed a land reform law which called for all idle land to be put into production. Failure to do so would result in the government leasing the land from the owners and sub-leasing it to producers. In certain cases the law allowed for land expropriation. This was a cautious approach to the land, but one which allowed for idle land to come into production. The slogan for this campaign was "idle land plus idle hands equals production."

There was a discussion on land nationalisation. It was felt that this does not necessarily lead to the results hoped for, because you need people with experience in running farms. Greater yields from the land are wanted and this requires expertise not just from the managers, but from the workers themselves. This was one of the tremendous weaknesses that we had.

The basis of the Grenadan economy was agriculture and we needed to export agricultural products to earn foreign exchange. So we could not afford to alienate the most productive farmers. One of the programmes which the PRG had was to provide encouragement to local farmers to produce more.

At the same time, there was a need for land for the landless and justice for farmworkers. To do this, the government tried to progressively ameliorate the conditions of workers by establishing a minimum wage for agricultural workers, ensuring the right to unionisation, and combating the exploitation of women on farms by establishing equal pay for equal work. The government also set up a commission of enquiry where conditions on farms were considered intolerable.

About three years into the revolution the Centre for Popular Education planned to give all workers on these farms accelerated agricultural training and improve their technical capacity. One of the things that the government did on the state owned farms was to encourage a system of profit sharing. Once a farm was able to break even, a third of the profits went to the workers, a third went to the national treasury and a third was re-invested in the farm.

The demand for nationalisation was based on the need for employment and a better quality of life. Once people saw that these were being met, they no longer saw that nationalisation was that necessary. ❖

Economy, a draft budget was presented based on the zonal discussions. The national conference delegates discussed and make further recommendations, so that by the time the national budget was finalised, a very large cross-section of the country had had a chance to make an input into that debate. All the recommendations were then compiled by the ministry and submitted to the cabinet for its final consideration.

Because the budget is such an important instrument of political and economic policy, people had an opportunity to make an impact in a real way. As a result, many things that became part of economic policy were recommendations from the people. One example was taxes on luxury goods, an increase in the welfare allowance and tax relief and exemption for old and retired people.

Sectoral mass consultations

In addition to these regional consultations, the New Jewel Movement also had sector-specific forums: women, youth, workers and farmers councils where these people could express their needs according to their sectors.

Before the revolution of 13 March, trade unions were the main form of mass organisation in Grenada. But these had become ineffectual under the Gairy regime. The Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union, for example, was Gairy's creation. It did

INTERNATIONAL

express the wishes of agricultural workers and other workers in the 1950s, but by the 1970s that union had become a shell of its former self and was simply a lackey of the regime. There was a need for autonomous unions that could defend workers from a rapacious black bourgeoisie. In that context, the NJM moved to organise

workers.

They made a significant breakthrough in organising workers into the Bank and General Workers Union. However, official recognition of the union was never granted until after 13 March.

Youth and women's organisations were non-existent before the revolution. The NJM had tried to

start youth and women's organisations before the revolution but, because of the repression, this was very difficult to get off the ground.

It was limited to only the most militant sectors of those social groups. So mass organisations only blossomed after the revolution. ♦

The revolution commits suicide

These radical experiments in new forms of popular consultative democracy, economic change and educational reform, were watched with interest by progressive groups elsewhere in the Caribbean. They also caused concern in the ruling elites that had developed in the Caribbean islands after independence. Above all, imperialist interests were soon accusing the NJM of turning Grenada into 'another Cuba' in the Caribbean. The United States was looking for a pretext to overturn the Grenadan revolution. Unfortunately that opening was provided by developments within the New Jewel Movement itself. Didacus Jules explains.

There are many views on what went wrong and even those of us who were involved in the process are really not sure exactly which analysis is correct.

Generally speaking, what happened during 1983 was that disagreements existed for some time within the Central Committee of the NJM. However, even members of the party were unaware of the existence of these problems.

These disagreements led,

some time later in 1983, to a proposal within the Central Committee for the establishment of a joint leadership structure.

The feeling was that Maurice Bishop, excellent a Prime Minister as he was, had certain weaknesses which should be counter-balanced by the appointment of a co-leader within the party. Bernard Coard, his Deputy Prime-Minister, who was widely seen within the party

as being the main ideologue, was proposed as joint leader.

Agreements were reached and then broken over the question of the joint leadership. Some people see the whole thing as a conspiracy by the Coard faction to assume control over the revolutionary government. In some quarters it has been compared to the so-called Escalante Affair in Cuba.*

What is clear is that Maurice Bishop accused

* On the other hand, another perspective was that there was no real conspiracy but that what happened was the escalation of an internal leadership conflict which assumed crisis proportions.

Tribute to the resistance of Grenadan soldiers

There was very stiff resistance to the American invasion by soldiers of the Grenadan revolutionary army. It took a long time for the US to occupy Grenada. Over 80 000 American marines were involved in trying to conquer a small country of 110 000 people, with a fighting force which was reduced, by then, to 2 500 soldiers using obsolete weapons against an advanced super power.

Despite what happened on the 4 October, history should record the fact that Grenadan soldiers defended the sovereignty of their country. We must pay tribute to the bravery of these young Grenadan soldiers who did not necessarily believe in what the Central Committee had done, or what had happened on the 4 October, but who thought it simply wrong that an external power should land its forces on their shores. Many died for their bravery. ❖

members of the Central Committee of wanting to have him killed. Because of his enormous popularity amongst the masses, the reaction of the people was immediate. This led to Bishop being placed under house arrest by the Central Committee.

That agitated the masses further. So a stalemate developed between the Central Committee on the one hand, who had by then assumed control over the armed forces; and Maurice Bishop, some followers and the masses on the other hand.

Neither side would compromise on their respective positions. On 4 October 1983 the people moved in a decisive way to free Bishop from house arrest, declaring that the will of the people should supersede the will of the party. He was freed from house arrest and

proceeded with some supporters to occupy the main military installations in the capital. A battalion from the army came to regain control and in the process many people were killed.

Again there are many versions of this tragic event. One version is that the army fired first on the people. Another version is that the people fired first and the army responded. Whatever the truth of the matter, a massacre took place on the 4 October and Maurice Bishop and several key supporters were taken alive, lined up against a wall and shot.

That evening a broadcast was made by what was known as the Revolutionary Military Council, consisting of several members of the former Central Committee of the NJM. They claimed that

Maurice Bishop and several followers had been killed in the cross fire.

They also instituted a 72-hour shoot-to-kill curfew. At that moment the Grenada revolution had effectively committed suicide because they had totally lost sight of who the enemy was.

These events gave Washington the pretext it was looking for. Within days, the United States had staged its invasion of the country. Ironically, many Grenadans welcomed the American invasion. Many people wonder how that could have been. How could there be a popular revolutionary process in place for almost five years, and the masses of the people welcome an invading counter-revolutionary force?

The truth of the matter is to understand, I think, the trauma that the Grenadan people had experienced in October. They had gone through a fundamental experience of betrayal by leaders whom they had trusted, believed in and followed. So that even those who had been labelled enemies of the people by those leaders could then be seen as the saviours of the people.

They saw no future in the Revolutionary Military Council. They knew that the revolution had been destroyed. They saw the brutality that took place on the 4 October and they really feared for their future. In that context one can understand their welcoming the Americans.

The main errors of the NJM

Didacus Jules argues that there are a number of reasons for the ultimate failure of the New Jewel Movement. The rejection of parliamentary democracy and the failure to establish an alternative democratic constitution meant that the rule of the party became the law of the land. The people were consulted but they did not hold power.

Rejecting parliamentary democracy

The first thing was that the NJM made a serious miscalculation in imposing an ideological model which did not take account of some of the traditions of the people themselves. By that I mean that there had always been a very strong critique in Caribbean left circles of the inadequacy of the British 'Westminster' type of democracy.

But, in criticising the British model of parliamentary democracy, the NJM failed to recognise sufficiently that parliamentary democracy was not just something that had been imposed by the colonial power. The parliamentary system was based on universal adult suffrage (one person one vote).

This was a result of the struggle of the Caribbean working people for the right to representation.

So, while there are many criticisms that can be made of the Westminster parliamentary model, the fact of the matter is that the right to vote and to choose their own government was something that was won as a result of very intense struggles by the Caribbean people in the 1950's.

One could not sweep that experience under the carpet and get rid of the whole parliamentary democracy system, without putting in its place a superior form of democracy which maintained some of the better features of parliamentary democracy. Although the people of Grenada were very happy to be part of the zonal councils and the new forms of democratic expression, the fact of the matter is that people still wanted to maintain the right to elect a government of their choice.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government was criticised by many people in the region, including the Caribbean council of churches, for its failure to hold elections, and that contributed to the problem. There is no question from anyone, even opponents of the revolution, that if the PRG had held free and open elections, the NJM would have won hands down. There was a plan to have an election for a constituent assembly after the completion of the constitu-

tion. But there was never that opportunity.

"Dictates of the party became the law of the land"

What happened was that the dictates of the party became the law of the land in practice. Although the party created democratic space and there was a lot of democratic expression amongst the masses, the fact is that all of these expressions did not become fixed or channelled as the supreme law of the land. In effect it was a one party state.

The one other party which did exist was the Grenada National Party (GNP) which had not actively campaigned against the Gairy regime before the revolution. The result was that, after the revolution, the people did not support them and chased them off the platform. They said that - now that the revolution had come - the GNP were taking advantage of space that they had not helped to win. This was also one of the errors of the NJM in not deploring that kind of behaviour. They should have allowed for a political pluralism that would permit the expression of alternative views.

Failure to institutionalise participatory democracy

In retrospect one of the great mistakes of the revolution was that the party did not do more to draw up a constitution that would institutionalise the role and

powers of the new democratic bodies. The zonal structures did give suggestions for laws which were passed by decree. For example, equal pay for equal work, and maternity leave law were things which came from the demands of women. However, the structures in themselves were not law making structures.

The procedure for law-making was through decree by the revolutionary government. This is what I mean when I say that these structures were not law-making structures. They were only consultation structures, with no power above the party to make laws.

This meant that, when the crisis came in 1983, there were no procedures in place to deal with differences which emerged at the top level of government. So that, although the experience of the Grenada revolution was very rich in terms of experimentation in democratic forms, the failure of the process was that, when it really mattered in the end, this process was not used to resolve the conflict.

It was the aim of the revolution to institutionalise these structures but this had not happened by the time the crisis erupted. In August 1983, Maurice Bishop announced the formation of a constitutional committee which was to look at the experiences and experiments of the revolution and draw up a new constitution after consultation with the mass organisations. The process

had begun but it was overtaken by the crisis itself.

One of the lessons of the Grenada experience is that revolutions need to move to institutionalise participatory democracy in the shortest possible time. Even though we recognise that the quick institutionalisation of a system will not necessarily yield the best results, we need to recognise that democracy is a system which can only improve on itself. The more opportunities people have to have a say, the more democracy becomes strengthened and the better the form of democracy that will eventually evolve. The people themselves, through their participation, will have had a say over the shaping of the final form.

Fratricidal strife within the leadership

The other aspect is that one has to recognise that the Grenada revolution effectively committed suicide by its handling of the events in 1983. The fact that the revolution degenerated into fratricide meant that it created a very traumatic experience for the people. The confidence of the people was destroyed.

The left in the Caribbean, as a whole, has taken a lot of blows because of that. I think that, while people have had that taste of a new type of democracy, they are still cynical of the way in which what they see as an external ideology degenerated and yielded such a result.

The fundamental promise

of the revolution had been broken, namely that the army would never be used against the masses and that the weapons would never be turned against the people. The will of the masses, which had been spoken about so much during the whole of the revolutionary process, and which in many other instances had reigned supreme, was clearly flouted. It was subordinated not just to the will of the party, but to the will of a very powerful minority within the party.

An "advanced vanguard" should never "supersede the will of the people"

There are certain lessons which need to be learned from the Grenadan revolution. No matter how wonderful a leadership may be, no matter how democratic they may be in allowing expression of ideas, the important thing is that there must be procedures and structures that allow for the people's voice to be heard. The will of no party should ever supersede the will of the people in the country.

No matter how politically advanced a vanguard may think they are, if they are too far ahead of people then they degenerate into ultra-leftism. They take decisions which are not agreed on by the people, and which lay the basis for their alienation from the people. In that case, they cease to be a leadership, and that leads to the demise of the revolution. ☆

Tackling gender oppression

Women

workers'

movement in

the Philippines

Women workers in the Philippines have formed a separate organisation, called the KMK. The KMK is affiliated to the progressive trade union federation, the KMU. KAREN HURT* reports.

Asking the question whether women should organise separately frequently elicits fierce debate, argument and emotion within the progressive movement in South Africa, and in many countries throughout the world.

Some people argue that separate structures for women constitutes reverse sexism and divides the struggle, or that separate structures create organisational ghettos for women. Others argue that separate structures will ensure that women build organisational

“Working class women, we believe, have separate problems, and women are suffering from gender oppression. Only by organising women workers separately can women be liberated. Although there are unions, women’s issues are not taken up. KMK makes sure that women’s issues are taken up by the unions.”

- Cloefe Zapanta

strength, skills and leadership which they are unlikely to gain in organisations that are dominated and controlled by men. Separate structures are seen as a forum where women can decide on the issues they want raised in general organisations. They can develop the skills and confidence to make sure that these issues are not only put on the agenda, but discussed and acted on as well.

There are similar debates and arguments about organising women in the progressive movement in the Philippines. But what is very different is

* Karen Hurt is on the editorial staff of SPEAK, the South African women’s magazine. She visited the Philippines last year

the strategy that women workers have adopted there. In 1984 they formed a militant women workers' movement, called the Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK). KMK's role is to organise working class women both inside and outside the trade union movement.

The main objectives of KMK are:

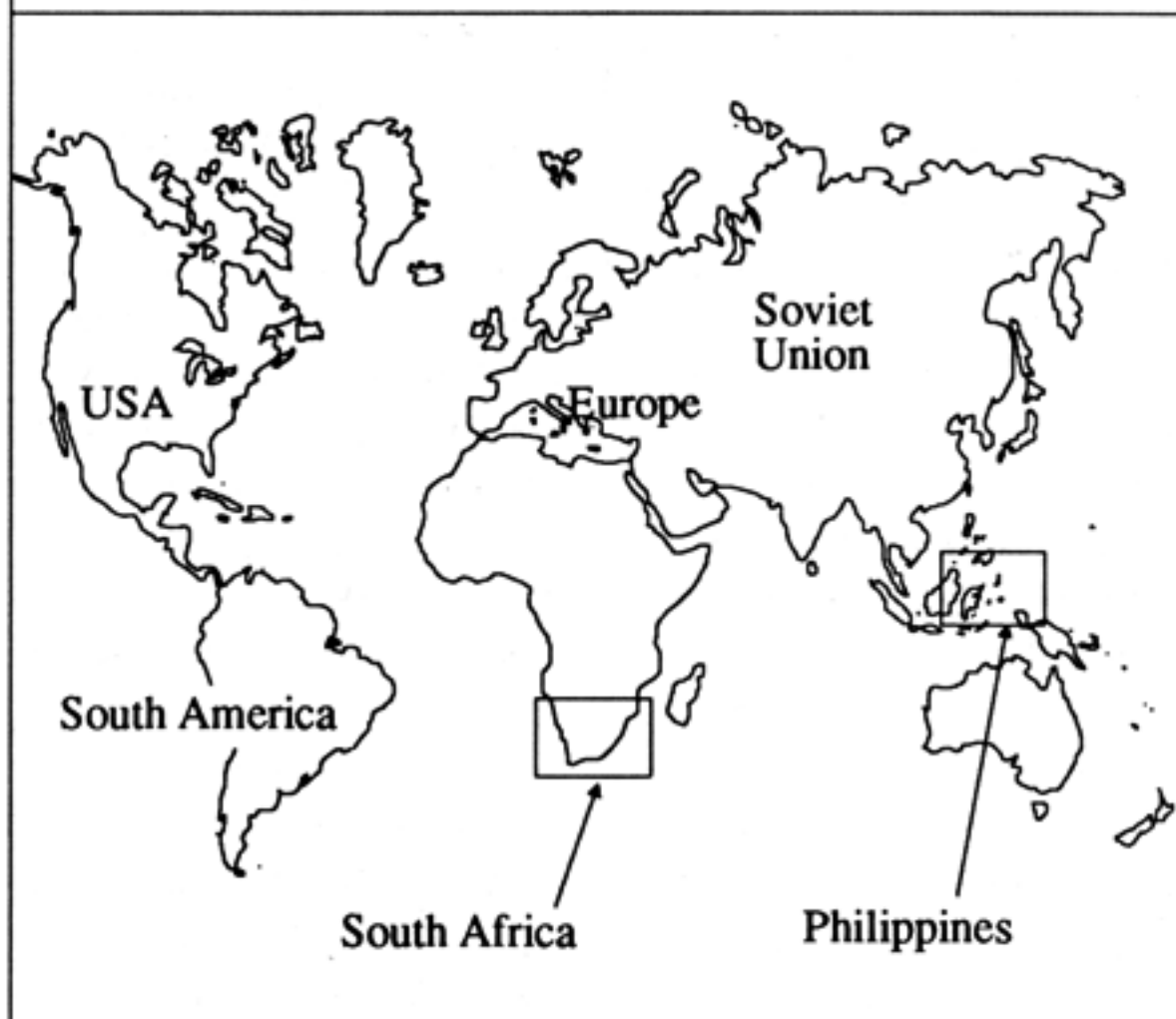
- to eliminate sexual inequality and discrimination against women
- to eradicate all forms of sexual degradation and to promote a non-sexist culture and education
- to guarantee childcare and childbirth rights and benefits
- freedom for women from the double burden through access to social and workplace facilities
- the protection of marital and reproductive rights
- to guarantee full participation of women in decision-making and political actions

KMK is a national women workers' movement, being strongest in Manila, a major city in the Philippines, where there are 20 000 members. It has a national structure which includes a General Assembly composed of all KMK members, a National Council with representatives from each region, an Executive Committee and four committees, namely, Education, Finance, Organising and Campaigns. There are also regional councils and municipal co-ordinating com-

Country profile: the Philippines

The Philippines is a group of islands in south east Asia. It is a country of deep poverty for the majority of the people. It is also a country of struggle, known world-wide for the 'People's Power' revolution in 1986, in which the people of the Philippines won the military over to their side and ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his regime.

The new government under Cory Aquino has not brought about significant improvement in the standard of living for the majority of Filipinos. Most people in the Philippines live below the poverty line. TB and other poverty-related diseases are common. There is one doctor to every 100 000 people. There is a housing shortage, particularly in working class areas. Rents are high. Multinational corporations dominate the economy. ❖



mittees. Through the Campaigns committee, KMK organises rallies and protests around issues concerning women workers, as well as events for International Women's Day and May 1.

The militant trade union federation, Kilusang Mayo

Uno (KMU), known also as the May First Movement, has a membership of 750 000. Like COSATU, KMU takes up political as well as economic issues. Most members of KMK are also members of KMU. ❖



Karen Hurt interviews CLOEFE ZAPANTA, general secretary of KMK

Hurt: *Why do you organise women workers in a separate women workers' movement?*

Cloefe: Workers are one of the leading forces in changing society and the situation in the country generally. But although there are many women members, the trade union leadership is mostly male dominated. KMK sees to it that women workers study issues, through education. We help women to understand the importance of separate women workers' organisations in factories and in communities.

We help women develop different skills through educators training, leadership training, organisers training, public speaking and writing, so that women workers can write their own newsletter. Articles come from women workers. And most are written in Tagalog.

Our priority is women workers' issues, but we do not limit ourselves. For example, we have specific education about US military bases* and their effects, and about economic issues, for example responding to government policies.

Hurt: *What is the relationship between KMK and KMU?*

Cloefe: KMK is an affiliate of KMU. I am National Commissioner on Women's Affairs in KMU. KMK believes their role is to pressurise the unions to take up women's issues more seriously. KMU unions consult with KMK on how to take up women workers' issues with management. KMU now has a Women's Commission which works with us. But it wasn't always like this. The problem was their attitude towards women's issues. Men in unions would joke about women's issues. But then women from KMK made a formal criticism by letter about their attitude, and that made a difference. Now we get men joining our rallies.

We try to involve men workers as well as women, so that they understand women's issues are workers' issues. We talk to union officials and explain the demands. During our first years they didn't feel that it was a priority for trade unions. Now we have made them understand that it is very necessary to take up the

issues of women workers.

We still need time and effort for men to understand that maternity issues are as important as wage issues. Slowly the situation is improving because of our work.

KMK is also a member of Gabriela, which is a broad coalition of women's organisations in the Philippines.

Hurt: *How do you organise women workers?*

Cloefe: Individual women in factories are recruited. We set up a chapter in the factory. You need 10 members to have a chapter. We organise at a regional and national level.

All staff at KMK were at one time workers. Initially we did voluntary work. Then we set up the KMK as a women workers' movement in 1984, during the time of the repressive Marcos regime. Members pay monthly dues. KMK battles financially and we try to get support both locally and internationally. Some of the financial support comes from KMU unions.

Hurt: *Could you talk about some of the experiences of women workers?*

Cloefe: I was a saleslady at a big department store. Workers were not equally treated. There was unequal pay for counter workers and floor workers. We started to

* There are still many US bases in the Philippines, and their removal is a major demand of mass organisations

organise the trade union. We were transferred to different departments to discourage us from organising. We were watched by security guards all the time. We were harassed. But we won our union and bargained for our demands.

Women workers had to wear expensive make-up. We did not earn enough money for this. And if you used less expensive make-up you would get skin problems. We would say to them natural beauty is better. But they said that lipstick is a must. I don't normally wear make-up, so it is humiliating to be told to do so. We felt like we were part of the commodity being sold over the counter.

In Shoe Mart, which is a big chain store, when a woman worker applies for a job she can't wear pants. She must wear a skirt. Some women workers say that when management interviewed them they were asked to raise their skirts. You are not allowed to wear a half-slip because they say maybe the sales clerk is hiding something. After organising the union, we were able to change things.

Women workers get urinary tract infections because they are not allowed to go to the toilet when they need to. The bosses say you are stealing management's time. When you are pregnant you need to go to the toilet more often. The security guards record the time taken at the toilet. The bosses tell you when you can go. The

unions are trying to take up this issue.

It is very hot in the Philippines. Factories are not well-ventilated. In the garment and textile factories, there are ceiling fans, but this is not enough, because it is very hot working there.

The bosses encourage women workers to use contraceptives because they don't want them to fall pregnant. But they don't offer education for women about the different forms of contra-

feeding.

Management doesn't provide safe working conditions for women. We want equal access with men to different types of work. We want maternity leave, parental leave and paternity leave. We want abolition of forced overtime and we want a modification of night shift work. We want management to provide day care centres for workers' children. We also want an end to sexual harassment.



ception. There is discrimination against married women. Bosses specify in the application form that women must be single. They don't want married women because they have children.

The law in social security is that pregnant women should not be fired. But if you get pregnant the bosses 'encourage' you to resign. They do this in a 'nice' way. Some women do give in to pressure, especially women who are not active in the trade union or not educated in their rights as workers and as women. This is part of our education programme, for example, the rights of women during pregnancy and the promotion of breast-

Hurt: *What is the future that you are fighting for in the Philippines?*

Cloefe: For our country, my wish is to have freedom from foreign control, and freedom for the people. Freedom means I want the Philippine people to enjoy the wealth equally distributed so that there is no rich and no poor. A society where our children get a good education and bright future. Housing, education and basic foods for all.

For the women, we want to be equally treated by society. We want equal opportunities to participate in all parts of life, including political decision-making. ☆

Participation on the National Manpower Commission (NMC) and similar organisations

The CENTRE FOR APPLIED LEGAL STUDIES (CALs) looks at some questions around the NMC

Most statutes governing labour relations create an advisory body to advise the Minister of Manpower on policy and other matters. The best known of these organisations is the National Manpower Commission (NMC) which was created by the Labour Relations Act. The National Manpower Commission can make recommendations to the Minister on all labour matters including the labour policy that the State should adopt. The Commission can also conduct investigations on all matters related to labour relations and also do research.

There are three other bodies which advise the Minister of Manpower:

- The National Training Board (NTB) advises the Minister on the training of workers and the unemployed;
- The Advisory Council on Occupational Safety (ACOS) advises the Minister on all matters falling under the Ma-

chinery and Occupational Safety Act;

- The Unemployment Insurance Board (UIB) advises the Minister on unemployment insurance benefits.

These four bodies have three important features in common:

- All have representatives of the trade unions, employers and the government serving on them. They are often called "tri-partite" organisations.
- Their powers are limited to giving advice and making recommendations to the Minister. He must consider their advice but he does not have to follow it.
- They have the power to conduct investigations and do research on the issues in which they are involved.

All organisations have equal numbers of employer and employee representatives. On the NMC and the UIB there are many more employer and employee rep-

representatives than State representatives. The NTB and ACOS on the other hand have a majority of representatives of government.

Other advisory bodies

Some of the other advisory bodies have wide-ranging powers. For instance, no regulations may be made in terms of the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act unless they have been considered by the Advisory Council on Occupational Safety. The Unemployment Insurance Board hears appeals by workers who are refused benefits. It has the power to decide that workers may receive certain unemployment benefits in addition to those they are entitled to in terms of the Act.

There is no advisory body created by the Workmen's Compensation Act. This, according to the government, is because only employers make contributions to the Accident Fund from which compensation is paid. A body similar to ACOS, the Mine Safety Committee, exists to advise on safety in the mining industry.

Recent developments

Until recently, the trade union representatives on these organisations came from the established, predominantly white, trade unions. Since 1990 this has changed and COSATU now sits on both the NMC and the NTB.

COSATU's participation on the NMC followed the

Pretoria Minute signed by the Department of Manpower, SACCOLA, COSATU and NACTU in September last year in which it was agreed that all labour legislation should enjoy the confidence of the major actors in the labour arena (in other words, the major trade unions and employers' organisations). It was this Minute that also led to the enactment of the amendments to the LRA in May 1991 which had their origins in the COSATU/NACTU/SACCOLA accord.

Future role of NMC

COSATU's participation on the NMC, in particular, has raised questions about the future role of these organisations.

Firstly, COSATU has demanded that the NMC be restructured so that it becomes more representative of the major organisations such as COSATU, on the union side, and SACCOLA, on the employer side.

Secondly, once the NMC is restructured, should it remain a debating shop that can only give advice to the Minister, or should its powers be extended? COSATU's view is that

- once the NMC represents the major trade unions and employer groupings, the Department of Manpower cannot merely choose to ignore its advice. (For instance, it believes that the NMC should be able to block legislation if its members

agree that the law should not be passed.)

- functions of the Department of Manpower, such as considering objections to proposed new laws, should be taken over by the NMC.

These changes would transform the NMC from an advisory body to a negotiation forum. This is necessary if the spirit of the Pretoria Minute (that the major employer and trade union parties must be satisfied with legislation) is to be put into practice. The lesson of the 1988 amendments to the LRA is that the government cannot afford to ignore the views of a major trade union grouping such as COSATU.

This raises the issue of what the relationship between the NMC and a democratic government should be if and when one is elected in South Africa. Should the major employers' organisations and trade unions be able jointly to block the policy of a popularly elected government on labour relations because they both disagree with it?

At the moment attention is focused on restructuring the NMC. Once this is done COSATU will presumably call for similar changes to the other advisory bodies.

A final question is whether the separate bodies should continue to exist, or whether the new NMC should deal with all labour matters including issues such as training, safety and unemployment benefits, creating

LEGAL NOTES

specialist committees where necessary.

Labour Assessors

Another new issue is the nomination of assessors by unions. For instance, in the Labour Appeal Court the judge is assisted by two assessors. These have mainly been practising lawyers, many of whom have represented management in cases in the Industrial Court. This has caused a lot of dissatisfaction and contributed to the lack of credibility of the Labour Appeal Court.

A question now being debated is whether the law should be changed so that assessors nominated by employers and the unions

should be appointed, and a management and labour assessor would assist the judge in each case. Labour Appeal Court assessors are neutral and their role is to assist the judge particularly by exposing him to the realities of labour relations.

The Workmen's Compensation Act also provides for assessors. A worker and a management assessor sit in hearings, such as objections to decisions made about compensation or applications for increased compensation. They sit with a representative of the Commissioner. These assessors are not required to be neutral and can advance the case of their side. Again, the union assessors have

been predominantly representative of the white trade unions. For instance, Arrie Paulus, general secretary of the whites-only Mineworkers Union was for many years the assessor for compensation claims in the mining industry. Should COSATU now be insisting that assessors for these hearings should also be drawn from its ranks?

Conclusion

This note has raised more issues than it has answered. Participation on the NMC is leading the unions into new territory. It is important that these issues are debated and policies formulated as soon as possible. ☆



South Africa's



Economic



Crisis



EDITED BY

STEPHEN GELB



Available from good bookshops or, in case of difficulty, David Philip Publishers, P O Box 23408, Claremont, 7735

DAVID PHILIP
BOOKS THAT MATTER



PUBLISHERS
FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

South Africa's Economic Crisis, commissioned by COSATU, is a powerful argument for a fundamentally different economic structure. R34,99

— And newly published . . . —

REDISTRIBUTION
*How Can It Work
In South Africa?*

Edited by Peter Moll,
Nicoli Nattrass & Lieb
Loots

A hopeful and constructive
work by some of South
Africa's leading economists
R19,99

Economic Notes

Economic Notes is supplied by Labour Research Service (LRS), Cape Town

VAT will hit the poor

Unions must demand 5 per cent

The replacement of GST with VAT on 30 September is going to hit the poor the hardest. But the bosses will reap huge benefits from the tax change - in hard cash.

Calculations by the Labour Research Service show that VAT at 12 per cent will *more than double the sales tax paid by low-income households*. Low-income households will pay, on average, between R26 and R38 more sales tax per month under VAT than under GST. This will reduce the money that each household can spare for essential goods and services by 5%.

For workers' living standards to be maintained, unions will have to demand an extra 5% increase at wage negotiations. This is a once-off demand, directly a result of the introduction of VAT. So unions should be demanding 14% for inflation *plus* another 5% for the effect of VAT - a total of 19% just to maintain the buying power of workers' wages!

Sales tax payments under VAT will be higher than under GST because VAT (unlike GST) will have very few exemptions. In fact workers can expect exemptions only on:

- Graded mealie-meal
- Brown bread
- Passenger transport by bus or rail
- Rental accommodation

Certain municipal services Consumers will have to pay VAT on

all other goods and services they buy. This wider coverage of VAT is the reason why workers will be 5% worse off, despite the fact that VAT (12%) is 1% less than GST (13%). In fact the Labour Research Service estimates that low-income households will have to pay an extra R546 million in sales tax in the 1991/92 tax year.

Poverty relief up, job creation down

The government says it knows that VAT will be a heavy burden on the poor. In return the government says it has set aside R220 million for poverty relief. At the same time it announced that it was to reduce by R45 million its spending on job creation and training for the unemployed!

Manufacturers will get a massive R3,75 billion tax break from VAT in the 1991/92 tax year. From 30 September sales tax will not have to be paid on machinery. The government says this will reduce manufacturing costs and the cost of investment. It hopes that consumers will benefit from lower prices. It says that more jobs will be created as a result of the reduced cost of investment. This is wishful thinking.

At what rate should VAT be set? A VAT rate of 6% would mean consumers would pay the same as GST at 13%. This would make VAT fair for workers while still reducing the cost of investment. The revenue lost through this lower rate could be raised through:

- Reintroducing tax on dividends
- A capital gains tax
- A minimum tax on company profits
- Special taxes on luxury goods
- Higher estate and gift taxes. ❖

New strike record in 1990

Strike actions rose to record levels in 1990. The number of "man-days" lost to strikes rose by 33% in 1990, to just over 4 million "man-days".

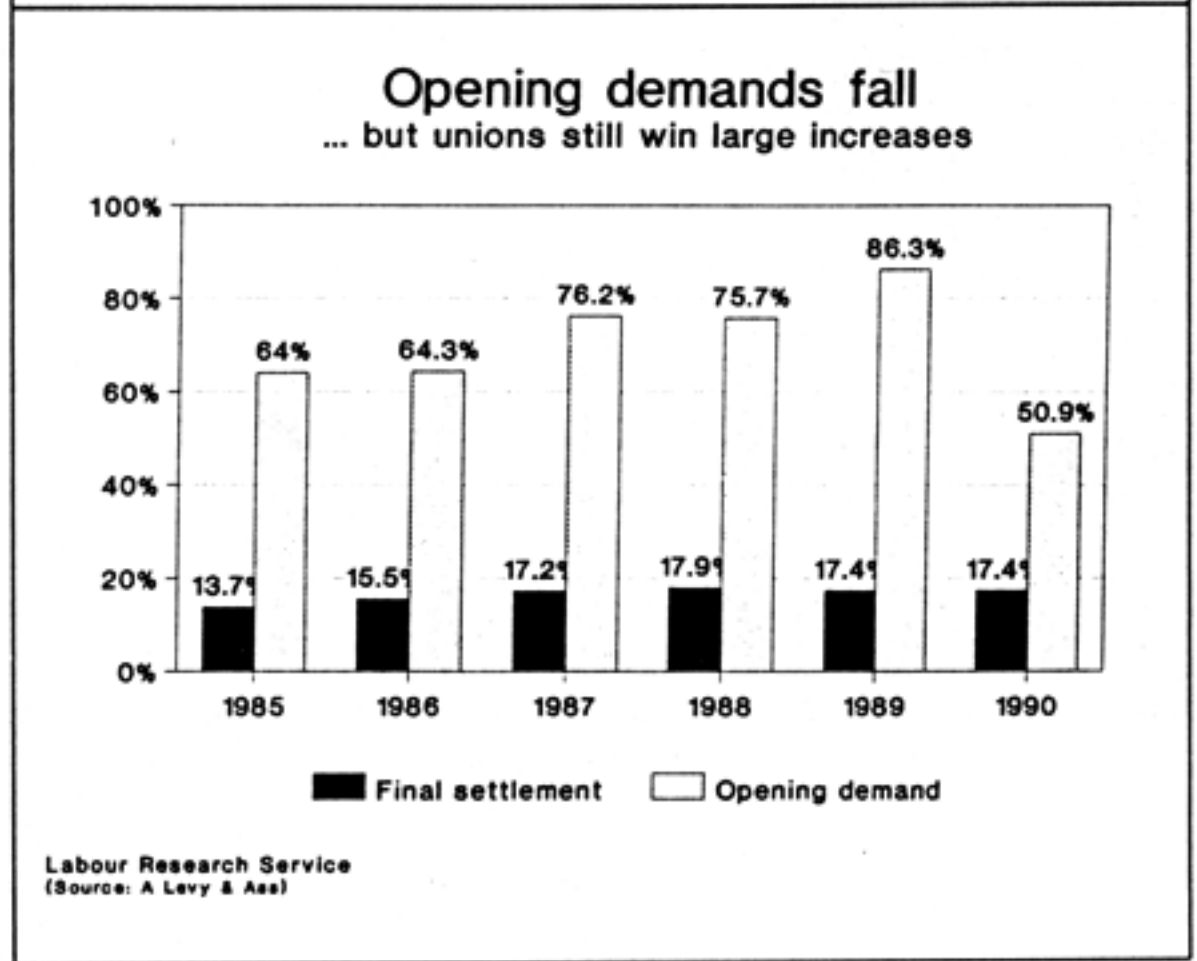
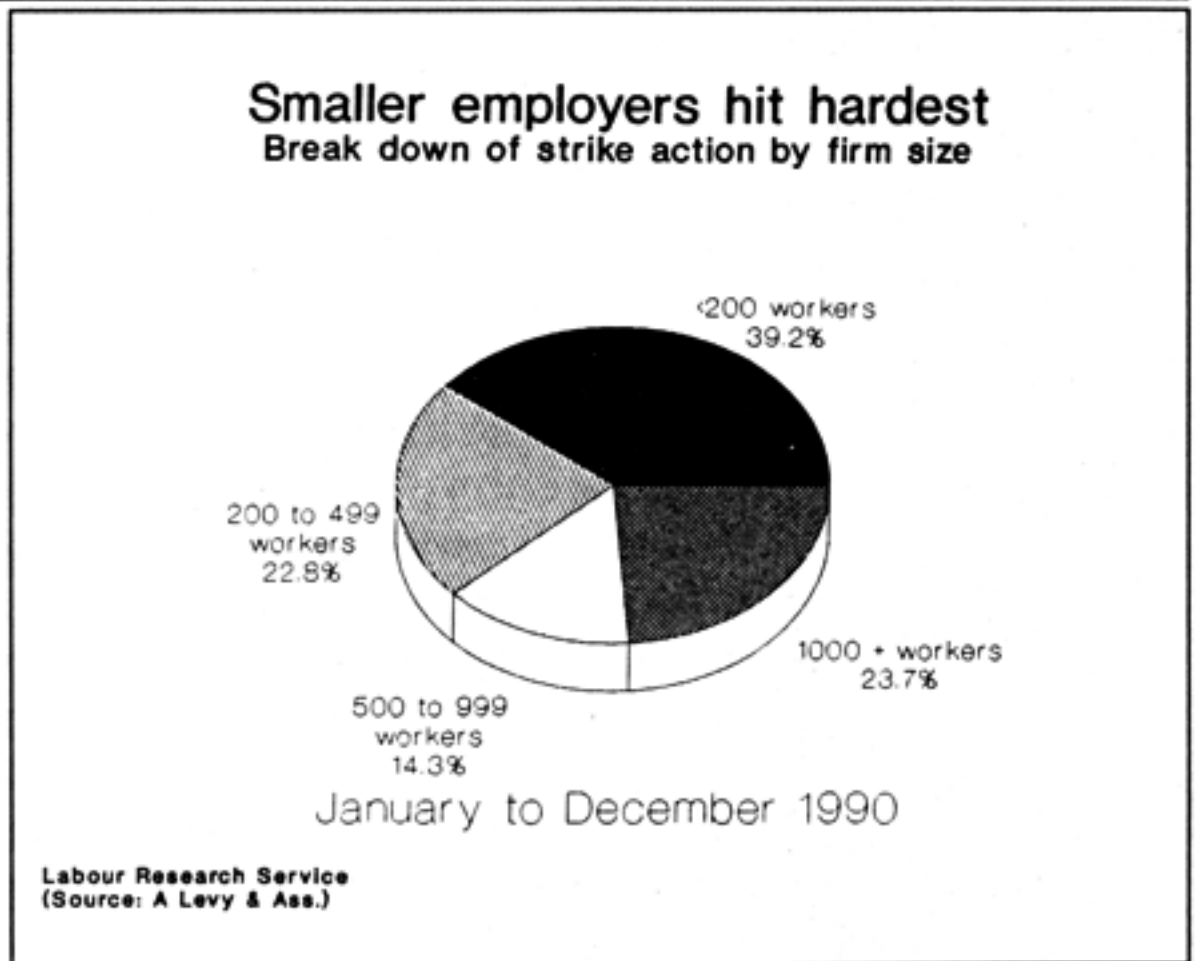
Strikes in the public sector grew dramatically, say industrial consultants Andrew Levy & Associates in their 1990 annual report. In 1990 24% of all strikes took place in the public sector, compared with only 1% in 1989.

Significantly, the number of strikes involving companies with fewer than 200 workers grew the most. This, say Levy & Associates, is because unions are now focusing greater attention on smaller employers. Just under 40% of all strike activity in 1990 involved the smaller employer compared to 32% in 1989.

Levy & Associates also say that in most cases these smaller employers have "less expertise, less experience and less tolerance in the IR area". The potential for industrial action is therefore raised.

Wages continue to be the most important trigger for strike actions. In 1990 two-thirds of all strikes were in support of wage increases. Nearly three-quarters of all strikes lasted for fewer than 4 days while only 11% lasted for more than 10 days.

Levy & Associates report that the longest strike in



1990, at Zebediela Estates, lasted 87 days. Workers there are organised by the National Union of Farmworkers, a Nactu affiliate. Numsa recorded the largest number of strikes of any union, just under 70, in 1990. Saccawu accounted for the most 'man-days' lost through strike actions.

During 1990, nearly 64% of all wage negotiations involved some form of industrial action. In 1987 the

figure was only 32%. But the level of the opening wage demand in 1990 was well below previous years. This, say Levy & Associates, "indicates an increasing maturity in the bargaining process on the part of the labour movement".

Unions, however, continued to win large wage increases in 1990, even with negative economic growth for the economy. The Levy & Associates wage survey

shows that in 1990 the average increase on payroll was 17,4%. The key focal point of conflict for the 1990s will be centralised wage bargaining and centralised social security benefits, say Levy & Associates. Even the IR Consultants admit that employers which attack centralised bargaining forums like industrial councils will face fierce opposition from unions. ♦

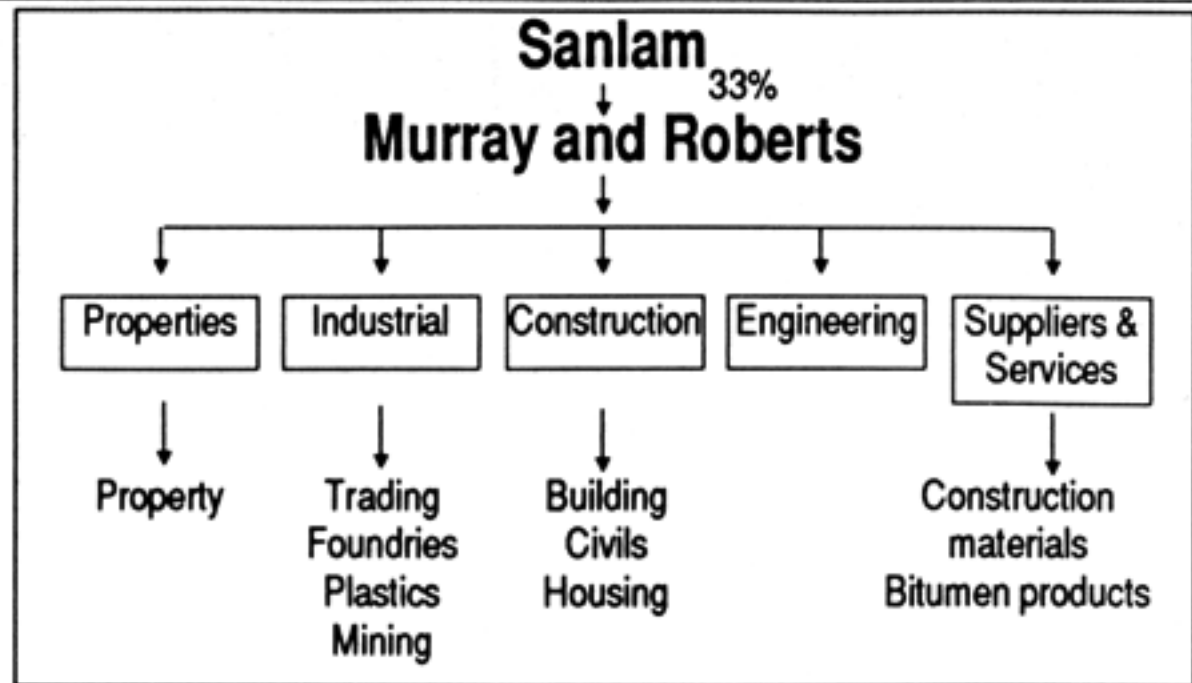
Company Profile: Murray & Roberts

Murray & Roberts is South Africa's largest construction company. Its operations go beyond just construction, however. They extend from housing and construction materials (such as Premix Asphalt) to the manufacturing of structural steelwork and ship repairs.

Murray & Roberts has five divisions. Each of these divisions own a number of operating companies. The largest division is construction. Its profits more than doubled in 1990 from R43 million to R95 million.

Murray & Roberts' total profits reached record levels in 1990. Profits increased by 36% to R301 million.

Shareholders received a 22% increase in their profit pay-out (dividends). At the same time employment was cut by 4% from 47 000 in



1990 Financial Results: by division

Divisions	Sales	Profits
Construction	R1 379 million	R95 million
Industrial	R1 188 million	R97 million
Suppliers & services	R656 million	R66 million
Engineering	R607 million	R23 million
Properties	R18 million	R17 million
Group	R4 014 million	R310 million

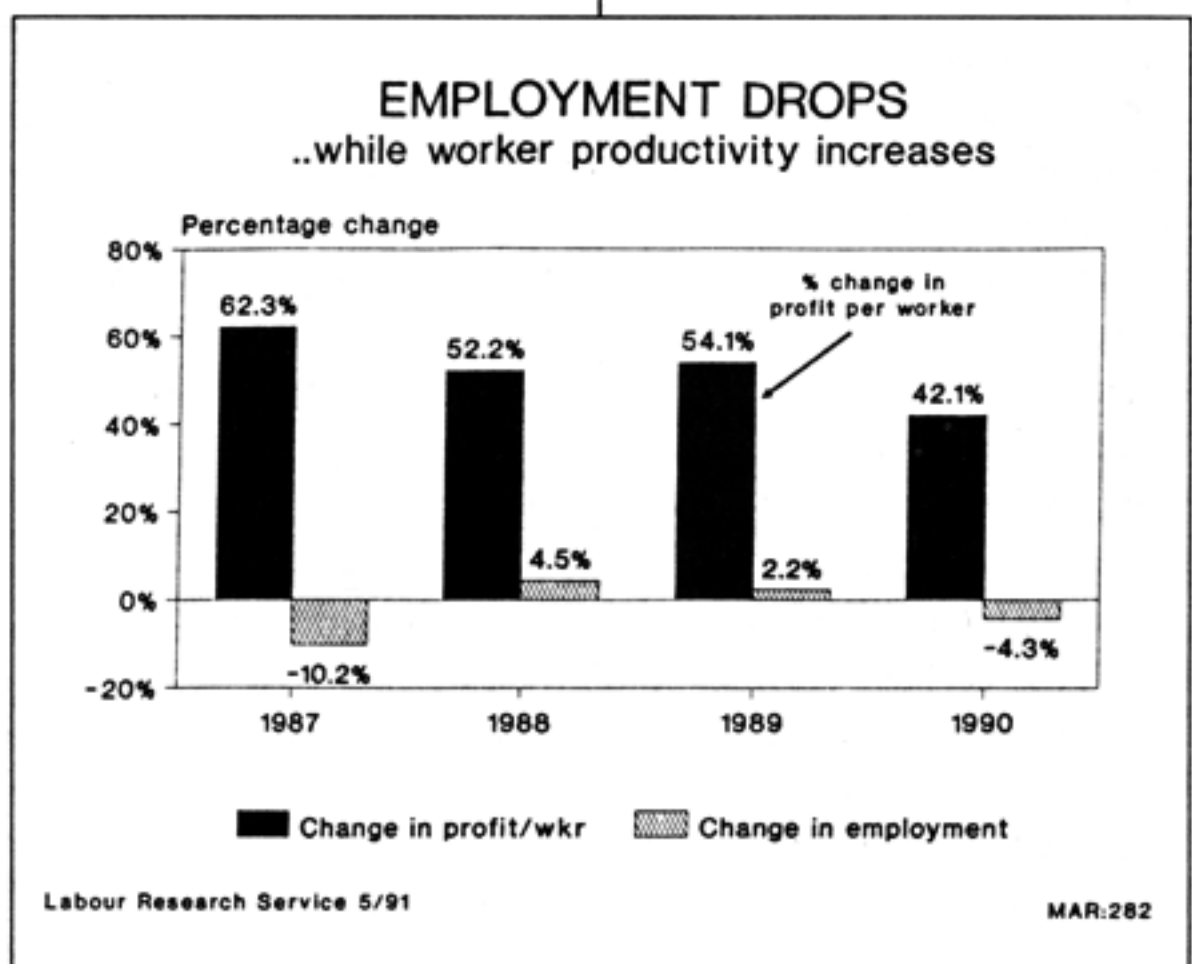
1989 to 45 000 in 1990.

Compared to the 1986 employment figure, 4 000 fewer workers are employed by Murray & Roberts. The bosses are more interested in making profits for shareholders than expanding

employment!

At the same time workers' productivity improved dramatically. Even Murray & Roberts' Chief Executive, Dave Brink, admits this.

In his 1990 annual report Brink stated that the com-



ECONOMIC NOTES

pany's productivity improvement was "the most important achievement over the last four years". Profit per worker, for example, increased by 42% in 1990.

Directors have also kept themselves happy. Each director earned R8 028 per week in 1990! This is 53 times more than the earnings of some of Murray & Roberts' workers. ♦

Another economic plan

"Blame it on the workers!"

That is the theme of a draft economic policy document issued by the State President's Economic Advisory Council. The causes of South Africa's economic problems, according to this body of top businessmen and civil servants, are laid at the door of the working class: sanctions, disinvestment, unrest, low productivity, etc. So naturally, the proposed policy recommends anti-union measures: the closed shop should be outlawed, and the "labour market" must be freed of restrictions (such as minimum wages and industrial councils?).

The tone of the document is perhaps not surprising: the chairman of the Economic Advisory Council, Warren Clewlow, is also chairman of Barlow Rand. The Council's proposed economic strategy is basically a "supply-side" strategy. This includes plans to:

Inflation

Consumer Price Index
(1985=100)

Annual rate of inflation
(% increase over 1 year)

Area

Mar 1991

Mar 90 - 91

Cape Town	221.8	13.8%
Port Elizabeth	227.1	14.2%
East London	219.0	14.2%
Durban	212.6	13.2%
Pietermaritzburg	218.2	13.5%
Witwatersrand	228.1	14.7%
Vaal Triangle	217.5	12.7%
Pretoria	234.3	14.6%
Klerksdorp	234.4	14.3%
Bloemfontein	234.4	10.1%
OFS Goldfields	223.2	14.0%
Kimberley	211.0	12.1%
South Africa	224.1	14.1%

Area

Apr 1991

Apr 90 - 91

Cape Town	225.4	14.6%
Port Elizabeth	231.1	15.3%
East London	221.1	14.0%
Durban	215.3	13.3%
Pietermaritzburg	220.7	13.9%
Witwatersrand	231.8	15.3%
Vaal Triangle	220.2	13.4%
Pretoria	235.8	14.2%
Klerksdorp	236.4	14.7%
Bloemfontein	197.7	10.1%
OFS Goldfields	226.6	14.6%
Kimberley	213.9	12.8%
South Africa	227.3	14.6%

Source: Central Statistical Service

- reduce inflation
- stabilise the rand
- reduce the government's stake in the economy
- reduce company taxes
- de-regulate
- privatise

Then - abracadabra - the economy will start performing. While waiting for the miracle to occur, the government will sit on its hands and do nothing about unemployment, poverty and much-needed productive in-

vestments. The document does acknowledge a government responsibility for the provision of housing stands "with minimum standards of service" at subsidised prices. Infrastructure, education, training and health services "on an affordable basis" are also recognised as government duties. But there are no concrete proposals. ☆
A summary of the report is available from LRS.

Profile

A love of working with people

Morice Smithers interviews Gwede Mantashe, national organiser of NUM

I was born at Cala in the Transkei 36 years ago. I grew up and had my schooling there. I had problems with my schooling because my family didn't take education seriously and also, as I came from a peasant family, there was no money as such. I had to work part-time to try and get money to continue with my schooling.

In 1972 when I was doing my matric, I got involved politically in the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and became the chairman of the west Transkeian branch. The SCM wasn't pro-ANC or pro-PAC. Both organisations were projected as sister liberation movements. I personally opted for the ANC because I learned from discussion that it had a longer history of involvement in the struggle.

I matriculated in 1973, but was unable to go beyond that, so I got a job with the Transkeian government. I couldn't get happiness there because I disagreed with many of the things that were happening.

In 1975, I joined the mines, starting at Western Deep Levels. I underwent training with the Anglo recreation department in Welkom. I did very well and so my career in the mining industry was mainly sport organisation. I myself played rugby and did athletics.

At that time in the mining industry there was no unionism. But we still tried to challenge our conditions. As a result, I only lasted at Western Deep for 7 months before being dismissed.

I then went to Prieska Copper in the Northern Cape. There was no recreation department, so I managed to get the task of starting a welfare department. I remained in that department on that mine for the next 7 years.

I enjoyed the work because I was dealing with the practical problems faced by workers. Things like compensation, remittance of money, personal problems, cash advances for those with financial problems. Through this I developed a love of working with people.

Discovering NUM

NUM was formed in 1982 while I was still at Prieska Copper. We started to read about this union, but it sounded very far away to us in the Northern Cape. In 1983 I resigned from Prieska and joined Maatla colliery in Witbank. When I got there, the union wasn't there. We wondered where we could find this union that we were hearing about. We came across NUM pamphlets and through them we managed to track the union down. So we hired a car and went to Lekton House in Johannesburg.

You must remember we were migrant workers and coming to Johannesburg was a difficult thing. We saw it as a very big city where you could get robbed. But we came and we met Cyril and discussed with him ways of organising. We took forms back and started recruiting clandestinely. NUM at that time didn't have enough organisers and so the union relied on the workers on each mine to do the organising. At Maatla Coal I don't remember ever seeing an organiser from 1983 to 1985 when we attained recognition.

It wasn't easy to organise. Some people were victimised and dismissed if it was known that they were recruiting for the union. I was in an advantageous position because I was a sport organiser. I had access to various teams and used the

team captains in soccer, rugby, tribal dancing and so on to organise. Because I was doing very well as a sports organiser, I think they were reluctant to take action against me.

Getting recognition was very difficult. You must remember it was a Gencor mine and these were very terrible. We would organise people, but they would get disillusioned because we never attained recognition. The surrounding mines were all Amcoal mines and there they could get recognition easily. Some of them started after we did and got recognition before us.

After the 1985 strike, we took a decision as workers that we were going to organise all Gencor mines. We organised a Gencor shopstewards council within the NUM unofficially, and it was out of that council that we managed to reach out to the other mines.

By April 1986, the number of recognised mines in Gencor increased from 4 to 13. We as workers in the collieries had to target other collieries and gold miners the gold mines. Our approach was that the power of the union was not with the officials or the organisers. It was with us the workers because we were feeling the exploitation and the oppression.

When we were recognised, I became the first chair of the branch. Then in 1985, I was elected a regional secretary of the NUM for the whole Witbank region. I remained in that position until 1988 when I came here. When we formed a COSATU region in the Highveld in 1986, I was the first chairperson. In 1988, I resigned as a worker and then resigned my two positions in NUM and COSATU to become an organiser. Now I am the national organiser of NUM.

We are stronger

One of the reasons that I joined the union full-time was that I thought my involvement was too limited in the collieries. I thought things were not as bad in the collieries as they were in the gold mines. I also wanted to work full-time so I could use my organisational experience to help build NUM. After the 1987 strike there was a dip organisationally, but not very seriously in terms of membership. Our membership dropped from close to 300,000 to 202,000, but I think we recovered quickly from that situation. Paid-up membership is around 264,000 now, with signed-up above 300,000.

But that membership is going to drop gradually because of retrenchments which are facing the industry, unless we in NUM work harder. We take the retrenchment issue very seriously.

Our view is that it is not just an economic decision. It is also a political decision by management who want to restructure and streamline the industry. We say that because, even before the price of gold fell, mines like Genmin had retrenched workers on the basis of rationalisation. There was also major retrenchment resulting from mechanisation in Western Areas before the price went down.

So we say that we see the problem of the price of gold, but we are not convinced that the best is done at Chamber level to address the question of retrenchment. Our view is also that retrenchment should not be an issue that is dealt with on the basis of individual mines. It should be seen as a national problem, involving not only NUM and the Chamber, but also the government. It should not be left to individual mine managers to take major decisions like cutting the workforce in the industry to the extent that they intend to do.

Other problems facing the union

This industry is very conservative. You must understand that even in terms of earnings, it is only better than domestic workers and agricultural workers. But miners are amongst the most hard-working workers and are exposed to very serious dangers. Our view, therefore, is that mineworkers should be the best paid workers in any given country.

There is also the problem of racial discrimination. Historically, many jobs were reserved for whites in terms of the Mines and Works Act. Despite the fact that this has been scrapped, not enough people are being trained for these jobs. For example, the number of miners who were trained in 1990 is half the number trained in 1989.

That means racial discrimination is alive and well. Our opinion is that apartheid originated in the Chamber of Mines. The Bernstein Commission said in 1911 that if there was a desire to see people working in the mining industry, land must be taken away from them, they should be taxed, and their customs should be diluted and made to seem backward. If you take those recommendations and link them with the passing of the Land Act in 1913, you see that they contributed practically in formulating apartheid policies. Even now in this time of change, the mining industry will hold back unless mineworkers themselves act to put pressure on management.

Today most white mineworkers support the CP because they see that as their hope of pres-

erving their jobs and privileges. But I personally don't see that lasting too long. I am involved in dealing with Escom. There we have the Mineworkers Union and Yster and Staal, both very reactionary unions, sharing platforms with us. I think we have more common ground with these right-wing unions than with the middle ground unions, like the Boilermakers Society and others. Those are more aligned to management.

If our interaction is used correctly and we gain access to them, I'm sure white workers can be shifted over to understand the actual concept and needs of the working class. They will start realising that they are part of that class and not of something called a 'white working class'.

We need to redress the inequalities in the mining industry and nationalisation is one way of doing it. In 1985, research showed that black mineworkers earned 13 times less than white mineworkers. If the mines are nationalised those inequalities will be redressed.

Of course, some people will respond badly to the idea of nationalisation. But my argument is that it is about nothing but government intervention, and my view as an ordinary mineworker is that the solution to the crisis that the mining industry is facing is through direct government intervention.

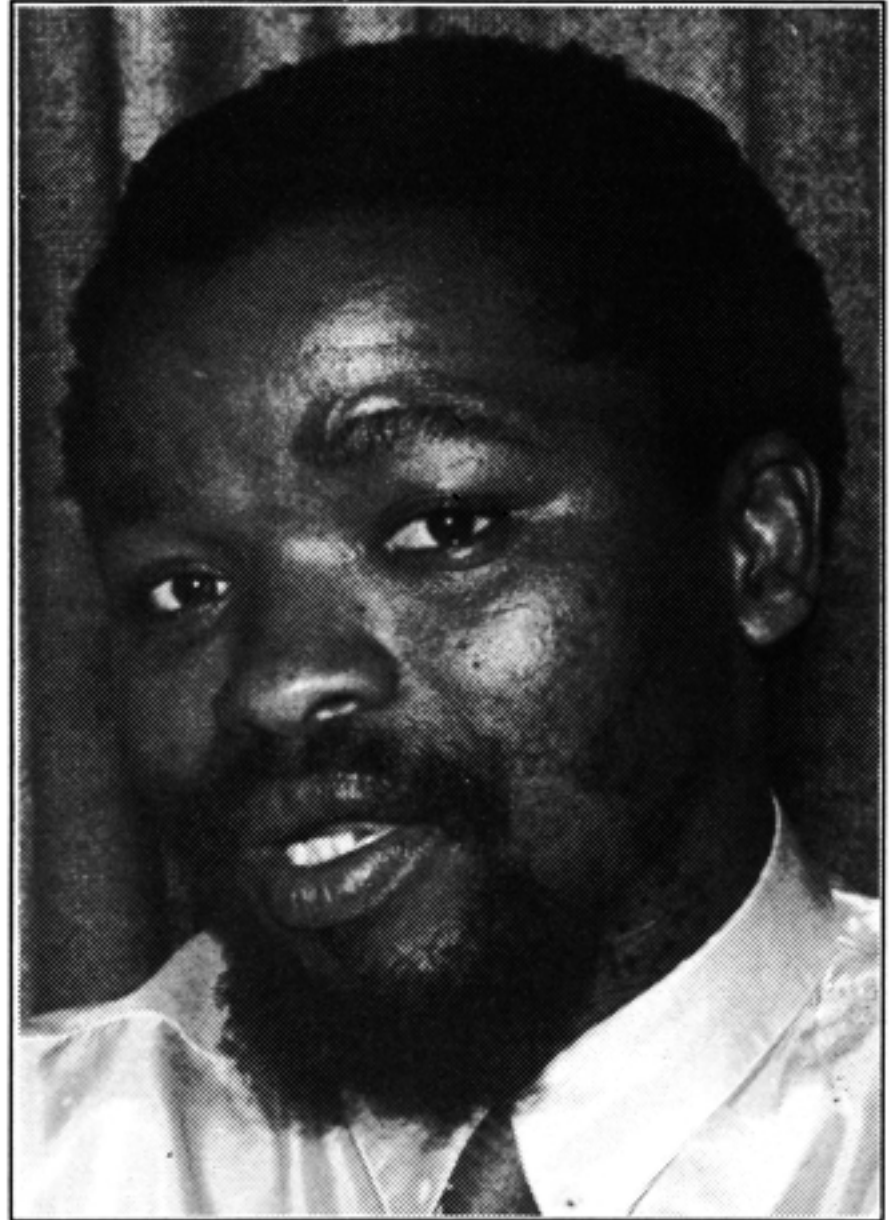
Independence and the Alliance

As the national organiser of NUM I don't think it would correct for me to talk about my own involvement in political organisations. So I want to restrict comments about myself just to my involvement in the NUM and the trade union movement.

But speaking broadly, I would say that trade unions must always remain independent - they should never be a conveyor belt of the ANC or the SACP. Unions have a role to play now and they will have a role to play in the future even should the ANC come into power. This is a watchdog role which will always be necessary. Unions will have to continue to fight for the interests of workers.

There is a lot of debate around, some saying we should just build the ANC, others saying we must concentrate on the SACP because they are the vanguard of the working class. Others think we must just concentrate on trade union work.

My view is that before we become workers, we are residents and so it is important to participate in the mass-based formations in the areas where we are staying. As workers we are also citizens, so we should become active members



of the ANC - and be prepared to provide leadership to the ANC. As members of the working class, it is important to join the SACP in our thousands. If we want the party to exist, we must join it and lead it.

There's nothing like a 'too many hats' debate as far as I am concerned. People are starting to think we are in a post-apartheid society. We are not, and so we still need to fight. Only in a post-apartheid South Africa, where ANC and SACP members may become members of parliament, will two hats be an issue. It will, of course, at that stage be incorrect for union leaders to take full-time positions in political organisations.

People do have genuine concerns about comrades having too many positions in different organisations and therefore not being effective in any of them. But the question is not of too many caps, it is the question of time and availability.

My job and my family

My job is a demanding one, but fortunately this does not threaten my home life. We have two kids and we live in Vosloosrus. The family is stable and my wife understands the situation. There were problems, in the past, especially around 1987, but now everything has settled down very well. ☆

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

