

South African

LABOUR BULLETIN

March 1990 Volume 14 Number 7

Trade Unions and co-ops:
NUM and PAWCO



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The South African Labour Bulletin

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South African
LABOUR
BULLETIN

Volume 14 Number 7 March 1990

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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articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.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* or *Broadly Speaking*

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.

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Editorial Notes

Mandela release

We celebrate with most South Africans the release of Nelson Mandela. For 27 wasted years our nation has been denied his integrity and political wisdom. In a few weeks his release, together with the unbanning of organisations and the general political openness, has unleashed enormous enthusiasm and confidence among the oppressed. It has galvanised mass action, sparked off a national debate on the question of nationalisation and economic development, and provoked the white right-wing to organise mass demonstrations and threaten stayaways.

Thousands of workers engaged in stoppages and demonstrations to celebrate the release. Work stopped for an hour, a day, or - especially in the Eastern Cape - for up to a week! There are signs that the political climate is contributing to shop-floor militancy and confidence (see *Labour Action* and the articles by Desai & Auf de Heyde, Mondl and Parfit).

Militancy is by no means confined to the shopfloor. From the centre of Johannesburg to the tiniest *dorpie* and far-flung rural areas, the rebuilding of organisations, marches, demonstrations, mass meetings, boycotts, stayaways and militant demands are the order of the day. A matter of weeks after Mandela's release Ciskei's Sebe - notorious for his brutal anti-unionism - was ignominiously toppled. Other bantustan regimes are reeling under popular pressure (see *Labour Action*).

The new situation also poses important questions about the relation between alliances,

negotiations and mass action. These questions will have a complex impact on the shopfloor (see Desai & Auf de Heyde).

On the one hand a tentative climate of reconciliation and negotiation exists at the public level. On the other hand there is a climate of mass action, violent clashes and repression in the bantustans and townships and on the factory floors (almost 100 people died in 'unrest' in the first 12 days of March, according to police figures). In certain areas struggles have taken on the more radical form last seen in the 84-6 period. In Natal the appalling violence continues, despite Mandela's peace call. In other areas too there has been a tendency for uncontrolled and destructive violence - as in Ciskei and Katlehong - to the concern and dismay of MDM leaders.

The current situation is volatile and uncertain. Mass action may help to strengthen the role of the people in negotiations, and reinforce the demand of the liberation movement for a constituent assembly. At the same time it may also provide an excuse for right-wing forces in the state, such as the police and army, to sabotage de Klerk's reforms and launch a wave of repression.

SACTU and Ray Alexander

Labour Bulletin extends a warm welcome to SACTU exile Comrade Ray Alexander. It is wonderful to have her back with us after so long in exile. We are confident that her contribution to the labour movement in particular, but also the women's

movement and the struggle generally will be even more valuable now that she is back inside the country (see *Profile*). There is great excitement at the prospect of the other exiles returning, and the release of the remaining political prisoners.

For the labour movement, the return of SACTU exiles - during its 35th anniversary - poses questions about the future role of SACTU, which is at present under consideration within the ANC, SACP, SACTU and COSATU.

Living Wage Campaign and co-operatives

Despite the rapid political developments, the daily struggle for a decent life grinds on. In this issue we focus on COSATU's Living Wage Campaign. As the article shows, the campaign has not yet lived up to its promise. However, militant wage strikes are on the increase around the country. Individual unions (NUMSA in particular) and COSATU are currently reviving the campaign and campaign structures.

Our other major feature, on a NUM-linked co-operative in Phalaborwa, raises important questions about the strengths and limitations of production co-operatives. This discussion has an important bearing on the debate about a post-apartheid economy, and what role should be assigned to the co-operative sector.

The questions of a living wage and co-operative forms of production highlight the need for economic restructuring. The economy of a democratic South Africa will have to meet the needs of *all* South Africans, while ensuring economic growth.

The new-look Bulletin

So far the response to the new look of the *Labour Bulletin* has been overwhelmingly positive. This year will see fine-tuning of the new design, as we continue to try and maintain a balance between being accessible to a wide range of people in the trade union movement, while at the same time maintaining analytical depth. We welcome feedback, both positive and critical, from our readers.

Shortened index of recent editions

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1987 Mineworkers Strike // New labour legislation // Union survey // SACWU: SASOL dispute // Textile & Clothing merger // CCAWUSA parental rights

Volume 13 Number 4/5 June - July 1988

COSATU Special Congress // May Day // Health and safety // International worker struggles

Volume 13 Number 6 September 1988

Mechanisation of the mines // ESOPs // Labour Bill stayaway // Inflation and wage freezes

Volume 13 Number 7 November 1988

Municipal elections // NACTU Congress // LRA // SACCOLA talks // UWUSA on the mines // Venda strike // Korean trade unions

Volume 13 Number 8 February 1989

Debating broad alliances // NUM fights repression // Trade unions in the USSR // Hotelworkers organise // LRA // Medical aid

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Volume 14 Number 6 February 1990

'Has socialism failed': a draft position paper by Joe Slovo // History of the SACP // Post-apartheid economy // Mocambique // Developments in the Transkei

Letters to the Bulletin

Can one really say that the Communist Party was 'workerist' in the 30s?

Dear Editor, I have read your latest issue (volume 14.6) with considerable interest. One can only applaud the attempt to provide a forum for open critical discussion and debate. Lets hope that this is not a passing fad!!

There is, though, one little point I am unhappy about. The article by Devan Pillay on the SACP describes its Wolton/Bach period during the early 1930s thirties as 'workerist'. I question the way the label is used. It seems to suggest that Stalinism is 'workerist' and that 'workerists' (in contemporary South Africa) are or have been Stalinist. Whether or not this has been the case is not the point. What *is* the point is the usage of the term in a way that blurs what would seem at least to this writer to be important differences between Stalinism and 'workerism'. Is the writer trying to associate unions and unionists, labelled as 'workerist' in the 1980s, with the disastrous Stalinist policies of the party during the 1930s.?

Yours in struggle
Marlin Chisnic

Devan Pillay replies: By 'workerist', I was not referring to the Stalinist *purges*. I was referring to a particular political position which seeks a 'pure' working class struggle. This implies that workers (i.e. those eligible for trade union membership), or the wider working class (including all those dependent on wage-labour), should as far as possible avoid alliances with other classes in the struggle for national liberation and socialism. There are three variants of this perspective.

Firstly, there is *economism*, which is a tendency to confine worker struggles to the factory floor (which means avoiding 'state-power political' struggles).

Secondly, there is *syndicalism*, which recognises the need for workers to be involved in the struggle for state power, but only through the trade union movement, and not any party.

Thirdly, there is what can be called *worker-partyism*, which sees the need for a political party that would organise the wider working class, but one which avoids, or under-values, alliances with other classes.

The opposite tendency, 'populism', seeks to mobilise 'the people' on a non-class basis.

Individuals, or organisations, do not necessarily hold these positions for all time, which is why it is preferable to speak of 'workerist' or 'populist' *ideas* or tendencies, and not to label individuals 'workerist' or 'populist'. It is the *incorrect* usage of these labels which blocks fruitful debate, and not the usage of these terms in themselves.

New Bulletin reader writes in

Dear editor, I found the *SA Labour Bulletin* more interesting and educating than History lessons which I am given in class. Well, thanks to the organisers of the workers' rally held here this past Saturday, to address the LRA problem, where I was able to buy *SALB*.

Economic History is my favourite subject and *Labour Bulletin* can help me a lot. Thanks.

William Segola,
Mamelodi East



Post Office worker supports the Bulletin and the SACP

Dear comrade editor, I am a post office worker who reads your newsletter. I am a member of POTWA. I would like to mention that I have cherished the ideal of socialism and since the S A Communist Party is unbanned, now membership. If some communist T-shirts are available please inform me.

Yours sincerely,

Nqawe Mokoto

Northern Transvaal

Co-operatives: what is the difference between co-ops in South Africa and co-ops in the Soviet Union?

Dear Editor, I want to question something that I did not understand in your October edition. I read on page 117 about the miners in the Soviet Union demanding that co-operatives should be banned. I cannot understand. Progressive unions in South Africa, for example NUM and NUMSA, are striving to establish co-ops for their members if they are dismissed. We believe that co-ops are an important part of the

struggle, because we can learn about workers' control of production. Can you please explain why the Russian workers are adopting an opposition to co-ops? According to some comrades they are reactionary and striking for capitalism.

Lionel Ntleko,

Welkom

The *Labour Bulletin* replies: The co-operative movement in Soviet Union is very different from the co-ops you have described. They are basically what we call small businesses.

The co-operatives in the Soviet Union are part of the economic reforms of perestroika. They are small enterprises set up by individuals, or a group of individuals, and owned by them. The profits of the enterprises belong to the owners who are taxed by the state. They are being encouraged as part of the effort to stimulate economic growth.

The main reason for anger amongst miners and other workers' discontent with them is the fact that their prices are far higher than state prices. The co-ops are producing goods and services that were not available before, mainly in the retail trade, public catering and everyday services.

While people want these services, they resent paying higher prices than they are used to. In a co-operative restaurant for example, a meal for two can easily cost 80 roubles while a worker earns 250 roubles and can get an adequate meal for less

than a rouble in a state restaurant.

People also dislike co-ops because the owners can become wealthy. Some co-ops have also been known to hoard goods in order to force prices up, or to buy goods from state-owned shop and re-sell these at higher prices.

Some argue that the co-ops are a way of introducing capitalism. This is why the miners want co-operatives banned. The Soviet government believes that co-ops are basically a good thing and they are looking at ways that they can prevent the problems that people are complaining about.

Botshabelo activist writes about bus strike

Dear editor, Interstate Bus Line (IBL), formerly Jacaranda Buses, is the largest transport company in the Free State, transporting people of different colours from Botshabelo and Thabanchu to Bloemfontein. This company employs about 620 workers (drivers, cleaners, inspector, security and mechanics). In October 1989, after the demonstration of the people of Botshabelo against the bantustan Qwaqwa, the members and workers of TGWU at Jacaranda embarked on a strike against alleged corruption and unfair dismissals at the company. This resulted in the dismissal of 510 workers.

The cause of the strike The company opened pension funds for the workers in 1986

after a heavy strike by the workers. At that time, the workers were not belonging to any union. They handed their demands to the bosses.

- The company must give the workers the statements for their salaries.
- The company must open pension funds for the workers.

The company refused and the police were called to keep 'law and order'. But the workers were strong and chased the police out of the premises. From that day the workers were strong as never before.

In June 1987 the workers under the leadership of Cde. Mfazwe, a unionist and former Jacaranda driver, formed and launched the union (TGWU). Comrade Mfazwe was dismissed in 1987 for organising workers.

On that day the workers staged a sit-in, solidarity for his dismissal. In 1988 Comrade Mfazwe was detained for the third time under section 29 of the security act for 9 months. The following year he was arrested and released with restrictions.

In 1987, the problem of living wage and overtime ban was solved. But workers alleged that there was corruption of pension funds which led to a strike. Workers suspect there is corruption somewhere in the pension fund. They allege that there are discrepancies in what management says and what the insurance company says about the pension money.

Again in October 1989, a traffic controller resigned from the company after working for 10 years. Comrade Joseph Lela-

la was supposed to get his pension funds of 10 years, but he only got the money of seven years, and got R2 600. The shop stewards questioned the company, but it refused to talk. The workers responded with a sit-in. In the end the pension fund sent R3 612 instead of R2 600.

The other reason for the strike is the deduction of money from workers' pay. Workers believe that money has been deducted which cannot be accounted for.

Interference of the police

On 6th October 1989 the shop stewards held a meeting with the management at Bloemfontein. At the end of the meeting the bosses told them that they gave them only 30 minutes to vacate the premises.

Before the shop stewards could arrive at Botshabelo, 48km away from Bloemfontein, they were already late. The police had stopped the workers from singing. The workers were dismissed and told not to enter the premises or they would be detained.

Comrade Letsie, the chairperson of TGWU in Freestate, was arrested in July 1989 and accused of:

- Recruiting the workers to join the union and other progressive organisations.
- Recruiting workers to be ANC supporters.

There has also been violence and tension between strikers and scabs.

A plea to scabs

As one of the members of the Trio for Truth and Justice,

under the banner of exposing the evil of apartheid and injustice we plea to the "scabs" all over the country not to take the job which is not yours. He/she is not aware that by destroying the pension fund, his/her future is doomed. He is not aware that the bosses are making them to be slaves and make profit from them.

How much are you earning monthly, R250, and how much are the bosses getting daily? More than R250 per day and you are working for 50 to 60 hours per week! The workers of the progressive unions are fighting for a living wage to set their children free from hunger and exploitation, and even to rescue the workers of tomorrow from exploitation.

It is your right as a worker to have a pension fund for your family, and for the last days of your life and to eat what you have worked for in your time. It is surprising that you are destroying your future and dooming your life.

You accept a job without pension funds, and claim you are looking for jobs not hunger. To the families of the scabs and friends, advise your brother and sisters that all of us need wages but a living wage not a killing wage. We don't need the situation in our township to be like Pietermaritzburg, where there is violence in the township, brother killing his father and mother because of "job not hunger". We all need food, no one is looking for hunger.

Jacob Masego, Trio for Truth and Justice, Botshabelo, OFS.

Labour Action

Homelands rumble

Transkei

Labour Bulletin 14.6 looked at worker action in the Transkei over the last two years. Worker action is pressurising the military council to introduce protective labour legislation and recognise COSATU affiliates. The military council's response has been contradictory: it has placated workers through promises and a number of tentative steps toward recognising their demands; on the other hand it has allowed police action against strikes and never seriously intervened to force companies to recognise unions or bargain with workers.

Recent events have again shown that workers cannot rely on the military council's good faith or on the special charms of General Holomisa. On Friday 2 March Mongameli Dyantyi, the chairperson of the interim COSATU structure in Butterworth, was detained by the Butterworth security police. Dyantyi is a shop steward from SAB and the person who accompanied our writer for much of her stay in the Transkei.

On Monday 6 March Butterworth

came to a standstill as workers from all factories, banks, the post office and telephone exchange stayed away from work. Approximately 10 000 workers marched to the office of the security police and demanded the release of their leader. They also restated their demands for recognition of COSATU, re-instatement of workers dismissed after the October general strike, and an end to harassment by employers.

On Monday soldiers were sent to Butterworth. According to the military council they were there to "protect the workers". Brigadier Keswa of the military council also came to collect workers' grievances. However, when a delegation went to meet Holomisa later in the week, he claimed to not have had anything to do with events in Butterworth.

On Tuesday the stay-away continued and Dyantyi was released, although the police were still hunting down other members of the committee. Workers met on Tuesday evening to assess their action. Although their leader was released, they decided to teach the military a lesson, and "show them that we are not scared of them". So instead of returning to work the



Mongameli Dyantyi (left) - detained by the security police.

Photo: Renée Roux/Labour Bulletin

next day, they forfeited another day's pay and only returned to work on Thursday.

Workers strike against homeland system

The unbanning of the ANC and the SACP, and the release of Nelson Mandela has sparked off action in Ciskei, Venda, Gazankulu and Bophuthatswana against homeland institutions. The demands of strikes, marches and petitions have ranged from a living wage and union recognition, to re-incorporation into South Africa, an end to the use of witchcraft by government officials and the removal of homeland leaders.

In Venda and Bophuthatswana the strikes have included a large number of civil servants striking against selective salary increases for senior bureaucrats. Venda civil servants spearheaded a strike that spilled over into the industrial areas and the state tea plantation. It was only the police, nurses and soldiers who did not join "because we are run by white generals."

The current strike of all non-academic staff at Unibop is significant because it includes 100% black and white manual and clerical strike. The action was sparked by the announcement of a 12% increase only for academic staff. About 450 workers were dismissed on Monday 12 March, but won't be paid because the wage clerks also joined the strike. Workers are being assisted by UDUSA (Union of Democratic University Staff Associations) which has membership at the university, and two active academics have been detained. ☆

Public sector organisations step up opposition to authorities

Outside the homelands, public sector workers are also gearing up to confront the state on issues ranging from privatisation to racial discrimination and the announced 10% increase for civil servants, while ministers and MP's have been awarded an increase of 26%.

COSATU-affiliated public sector unions, NEHAWU, POTWA and SARWHU are proposing national action in the form of stoppages, go-slows and overtime bans as well as marches and demonstrations. A number of other unions such as NACTU's NUPSW and black staff associations are showing interest in joining protest action. The Police and Prison Civil Rights Union (Popcru), started by Lieut. Gregory Rockman, has announced that it is launching a living wage campaign for a 100% increase.

Four hundred Black prison warders at Diepkloof started a sit-in on 13 March for an end to discriminatory practices with respect to promotion, benefits and working conditions. The warders' "interim committee" is also demanding an increase of R850 across-the-board. ☆

Hospital workers strike in the Western Cape

Even the enraged members of the conservative white staff associations look set to start putting words into action. When parliament opened on members of the

South African Nursing Association (SANA) marched to protest the increases. Their new militance has won them formal recognition by the Commission for Administration and the right to negotiate directly on behalf of nurses for the first time, a move that is obviously designed to prevent more nurses turning to the progressive trade union movement.

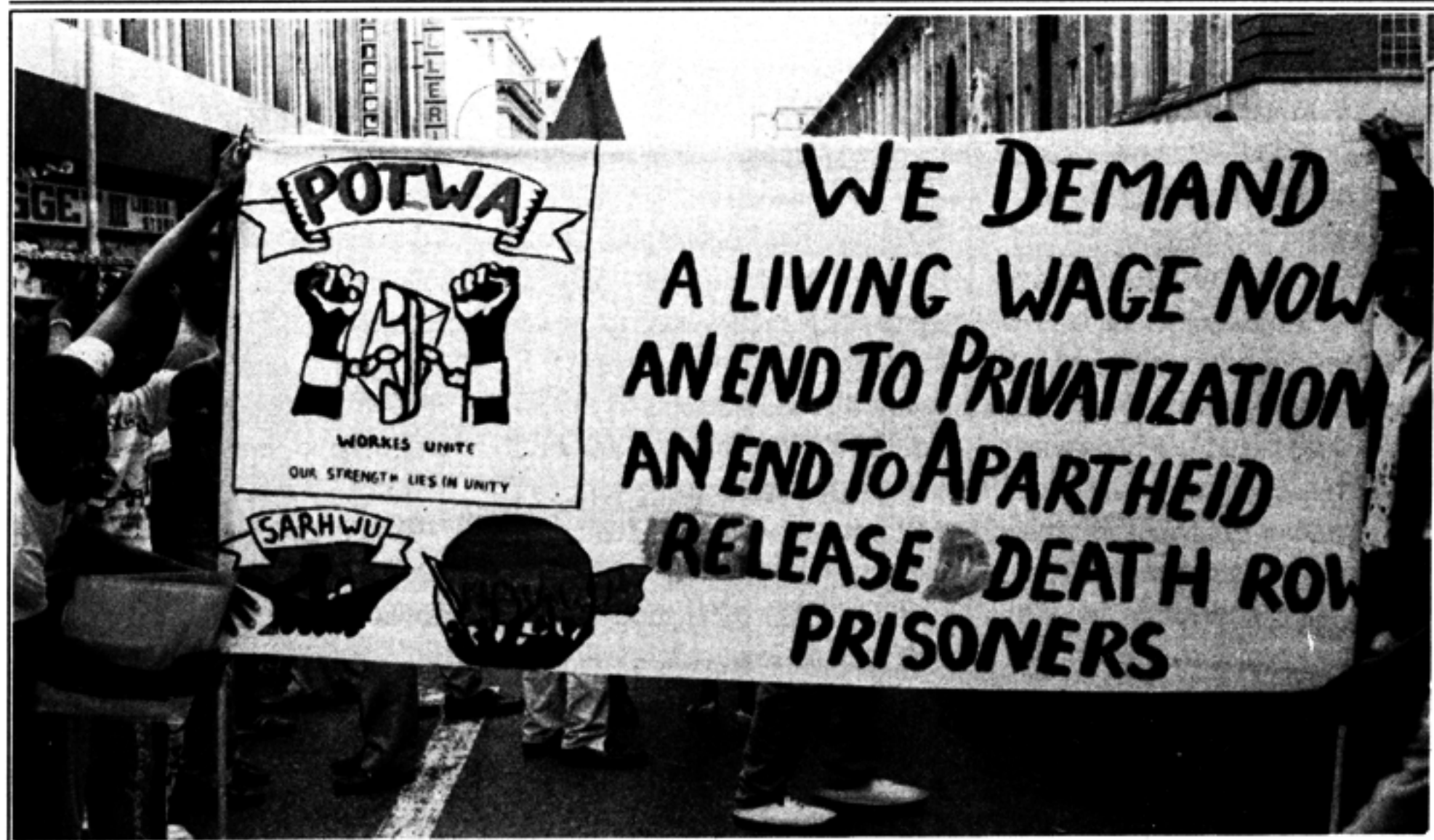
It is in this context that 1 500 general assistants in 3 Cape Town hospitals decided to down tools on 5 March. These workers are members of the unaffiliated HWU, and their frustrations with not being able to negotiate with the authorities had been growing for a long time.

These workers were demanding almost exactly what every public sector union has been demanding for years:

- ⇒ An increase in the minimum from R260 to R1 500 per month
- ⇒ Permanent worker status
- ⇒ Six months paid maternity leave
- ⇒ A 40-hour week
- ⇒ Recognition of HWU
- ⇒ End to privatisation

The demands grabbed the attention of workers throughout the state health sector and by Wednesday 14 March workers in 17 state hospitals and 7 day clinics had joined the strike. This is the biggest public sector strike to take place in the Western Cape.

Most of these workers were unorganised at the time of joining the strike. A HWU organiser told *Labour Bulletin* that strikers were in the process of joining HWU. The strikers are also getting active co-operation from COSATU and NEHAWU,



Workers show off their banner during a public sector march in Johannesburg

Photo: Morice Smithers/Labour Bulletin

which is organised in one of the hospitals, and from community structures. HWU was formed in 1985 to organise health workers in state and private institutions in the Western Cape. It is unaffiliated to COSATU or NACTU. Unity talks with NEHAWU have been unsuccessful.

The state sector does not recognise unions, and appointed a retired magistrate to hear workers' grievances. The union decided to reject this out of hand and is demanding to meet directly with the Ministers concerned and with the Commission for Administration. The union is also refusing to negotiate with local hospital authorities, except recently over the handling of emergency services. Management has started to use students and the SADF to relieve exhausted nursing staff who have been doing cleaning and emergency tasks. Nurses were hopelessly overworked even be-

fore the strike.

It is not clear where the strike will end, but it is significant for a number of features:

- ⇒ the length of the strike: in previous health sector strikes workers were soon dismissed
- ⇒ the level of discipline amongst workers, who are being allowed to remain on the hospital premises
- ⇒ the lack of police presence and intervention, and the lack of violence in the strike
- ⇒ the sympathy amongst other hospital staff for the strike: nurses have shown strong support and interest in the union, and the superintendent of Groote Schuur, the biggest hospital, publicly stated that the workers' demands are justified

In spite of the massive support for the strike, the state has not responded, the main reason being that the hospitals are still functioning. It does not seem to

care that in the words of a nursing sister: "Casualty patients live because we just manage to plug up holes, stitch them up and send them home. Patients are cleaning up and making tea." Only two factors could precipitate a real crisis in the short term: if the nursing staff joined the strike, or if there is a sudden flood of patients into all the hospitals.

But because of the extreme hierarchy, nursing ethics and their conditions of service, it is most unlikely that the nursing staff will join. Till now the union has not used a form of industrial action or protest that nurses can join without striking.

The strike again raises the thorny question of organising in the health sector, and organising nursing staff in particular. They keep hospitals functioning and the patients alive. Numerous hospital strikes have ended in a stalemate or mass dismissals in the past because they do not go

beyond mobilising the general assistants.

In this case, the inability to mobilise nurses is even sadder, as most of the nursing staff are coloured workers and clearly in sympathy with the strike. ☆

AECI bows to racism

When a white fitter (Nogueria) assaulted his assistant (Matlala), AECI Modderfontein management ignored the disciplinary code and simply reprimanded him. At the end of January 130 SACWU members downed tools in one department. Workers are particularly sensitive since the 'Wit Wolve' killing of a Modderfontein worker, Standford Mazikwana, last year.

SACWU met the white worker's union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union. The unions agreed that both workers should be given temporary transfers and this was done. White workers were not happy or not told, and downed tools for one hour demanding Nogueria's return. More negotiations followed with offers and counter-offers being rejected, and management always protecting Nogueria.

Management suggested a public shake of hands between the two people, but refused the union suggestion that this should happen in a *mass meeting*. On 21 February the company decided to transfer both workers back to the plant. This time all the black workers downed tools.

The AEU interdicted AECI from dismissing Nogueria, and the company used this not to act. Instead it turned on the 5000 striking workers, who were later joined by AECI Zommerveld.

After interdicts and threats to dismiss workers, settlement was finally reached. The company and the union agreed that in return for letting Nogueria keep his job, AECI would re-instate all SACWU members who were dismissed for assault in the past two years. ☆

Defiance grows

A number of recent strikes indicate that the mood of defiance has reached a high pitch: workers are feeling generally sick and tired of managerial practices in general, and racist practices in particular. Two recent TGWU strikes illustrate this clearly.

At the DTMB plant in Durban, workers laid a grievance against a manager, and expected to follow the normal procedure. When the manager announced that he "was not prepared to be tried in a kangaroo-court", workers took the intended insult quite literally. The manager was frog-marched off the premises, because, in the words of a shop steward "he called us kangaroos". The manager has not been seen on the premises since.

Women workers at Fidelity Guards have had a long-standing grievance, alleging continual sexual harassment by a supervisor. As is often the case, they were unable to produce substantial evidence of the harassment and could not get rid of him.

At the end of their patience, 15 workers attacked the company offices and stabbed the supervisor. It was quite an event with secretaries fainting all over the place. The 15 workers have been dismissed and some of them charged. ☆

Justice, democracy and peace

NUM has given a new focus to its defiance campaign on the mines. While stepping up their defiance of racism and discriminatory practices on the mines, mineworkers are now also making a call for justice, peace and democracy, and calling on white miners to join the NUM.

Since the second week in March, approximately 100 000 workers Witbank, OFS, Klerksdorp and Rustenburg regions have engaged in strike and protest action against repression in the mines. Their demands have centred around discriminatory practices in the allocation of facilities and working conditions.

Workers are demanding the abolition of segregated toilets, canteens, hostels and sports. They are also demanding the right to form hostel committees, without the mine security and indunas, and the right to bring their wives into the hostels.

Miners are also demanding the rights to go underground without waiting in queues. This time of waiting is deducted from their wages. White miners do not have to queue. This particular demand is causing a lot of friction between white and black workers. A number of actions have been broken up by teargas and rubber bullets. In the OFS, workers at one mine started an underground sit-in on 15 March. One shift was brought out at gunpoint. The next shift continued the action.

It remains to be seen whether this action spreads to the other OFS mines. ☆

Broadly speaking

LRA agreement soon?

A meeting between SACCOLA, the employer federation, and CO-SATU/NACTU recently ended with an agreement over certain amendments to the Labour Relations Act. This agreement was reached after two years of negotiations. They also agreed to hold talks with the Minister of Manpower, to discuss the LRA. It will be the first meeting between the independent unions and a government minister.

A legal committee is to draft legislation based on the agreement, which will have to be ratified by both parties. It will then be presented to the Minister. At the time of going to press, no details of the agreement were released.

However, the union demand for domestic, farm and public sector workers to be included in the Act are likely to be on the agenda. Unions also insist that state employers be included in further talks on the LRA.

So where are the women?

Way back in 1981 ANC president Oliver Tambo criticised the "male-dominated structures" within the liberation movement, and the tendency of women to "surrender" to these. Although militant women's organisation stretches back to the 1950s and beyond, it is only now that issues of sexism within the movement are being raised forcefully.

A paper presented by the ANC Women's League to the recent Malibongwe Women's Conference in Amsterdam makes pointed reference to the all-male nature of the ANC's Constitutional Committee, which

drafted the constitutional guidelines. It expresses concern that no-one from that committee protested against the absence of women.

What is even of greater concern is that, according to the paper, apart from "a very few individual voices", no protest was heard from the ANC's Women's Secretariat or the National Women's Executive Committee!

Also worthy of note is the presence of one woman, Ruth Mompati, in the ANC negotiating team which is due to meet the government soon. Ray Alexander, a long-standing campaigner for women's rights (see Profile), told the *Bulletin* that she hopes that women from within the country will also form part of the team.

As the paper says, in the same way that black people would object if an all-white group claimed to represent their interests, so should women object if an all-male group claimed to represent *their* interests.

Little to please workers in the Budget

Du Plessis has called for wage restraint as a way of addressing the unemployment problem.

NUMSA's Bernie Fanaroff says that such calls will not be tolerated by an "undemocratically elected government", and unions will continue to "bargain with the best of their ability".

NUM's Martin Nicol said that there was little to please workers in the Budget. The NUM was not excited about the tax concessions to the mining industry. While it might help the industry, the NUM could not give its support as long as workers did not benefit by receiving decent wages. ☆

Government concern about unemployment?

The budget allocation to the Department of Manpower for 1990/91 has increased by 50,3%, from R218,3m to R328,1m. This is the highest percentage increase for any department. Much of it is for the government's job creation and training programme. Finance Minister Bar-end Du Plessis expressed grave concern about the increasing unemployment problem. While the number of jobs in the state sector has increased, private sector em-

ployment, including the mining industry, has decreased.

But just how serious is the ruling class about unemployment, especially black unemployment? There are disturbing reports of thousands of Hungarians queuing outside the South African embassy in Vienna, seeking to emigrate here. In six days the embassy received more than 13 000 applications. The government has also expressed interest in recruiting skilled East Germans, and is reported to be competing with Canada and Australia for Hong Kong's skilled workers. ☆

certain sectors of the economy, the capitalist class in this country has been in a state of high agitation. A 'debate' has raged in the commercial press, but at a level which, to quote the distinguished liberal economist, J K Galbraith, has "been aberrant to the point of insanity". The arguments of those opposed to nationalisation have, in the main, been couched in an approach Galbraith calls Simplistic Ideology - a 'pure' capitalism versus a 'pure' communism. Yet the ANC is committed to a mixed economy and *limited* nationalisation.

But Ken Owen, the editor of *Business Day*, is in a class of his own. In a column on 19 February he says that Mandela's release was celebrated, "appropriately", by the looting which took place in Cape Town. "Appropriately", because "nationalisation is at heart the policy of a hooligan". He states that, by calling for nationalisation, Mandela gave his support to the looting, which was an "early example of the policy of appropriating other people's property". By repeating "the drive" of the Freedom Charter, says Owen, Mandela was displaying his "incompetence to run a modern economy". Judging by the letters written in response to Owen's reasoning, most of his (business) readers loved it!

Now it was reported a few months ago that, after meeting Albie Sachs, a prominent and influential member of the ANC, at the December Paris conference, Owen was emotionally overwhelmed. It seems that Sachs did not turn out to be a nasty Stalinist after all. This, however, does not stop Owen from comparing ANC secretary-general Alfred

RED EYE

MP's earn over R1 800 per week

Minister Stoffel van der Merwe claimed on TV2 the other day that, partly because of sanctions, the state did not have enough money to move fast enough to improve the desperate conditions of black education. Yet those in power have voted themselves a R12 000 a year across-the-board salary increase PLUS another 10% increase PLUS a further 10% non-pensionable allowance which was granted to all public servants.

Cabinet ministers will now receive a total of R185 800 a year, and ordinary MPs will receive R94 500 a year (R1 800 per week)! But this is not all. They are also entitled to a free car, 18 free return flights a year, and

cheap housing while Parliament is in session

And in the same breath the government tells workers in the public sector, most of whom earn below the poverty line, that all the government can afford for them is a 10% increase!!

We hear a deafening silence from the Democratic Party, whose MPs will no doubt reluctantly pocket their share of the booty! (We don't of course expect Hendrickse and Reddy to object - material gain is the main reason why they are in parliament).

The nationalisation 'debate'

Ever since Nelson Mandela restated a long-standing commitment of the ANC to nationalise

BROADLY SPEAKING
FREE MARKETS, FREE PEOPLE
TO HELL WITH
NATIONALISATION!



Banner seen at the DP march in Johannesburg - what did the MDM members who took part in the march think about it?

Photo: Steve Hilton-Barber/Afrapix

Nzo to Ceaucescu, Pol Pot and Stalin, simply because he supports limited nationalisation! In reply to MP Dave Dalling's objection to his remarks, Owen said he did not know he was expected to "fawn" over ANC leaders.

If it is not 'pure' capitalism, it is 'pure' communism. If it is not tendentious ridicule, it is fawning. Such, it seems, is the reasoning of a leading voice in the business world. ☆

"Terrorists can't visit other terrorists"

The pace of reform seems to be too rapid for some public officials. A few weeks ago, a prison warden on Robben Island refused to allow Zolandile Ntlokwana to visit a political prisoner because he was wearing an ANC T-shirt. The warden was unmoved when it was explained to him that the ANC was now unbanned. He said the ANC was still banned on the island! Determined to visit his friend, Mr Ntlokwana bor-

A white worker stayaway?

The Conservative Party and their right-wing trade union allies are in a bit of a frenzy after De Klerk's recent reforms. Their first act of desperation was to bring charges of 'high treason' against Mandela, Sisulu and Mothopeng. Then they threatened to bring the economy to a "standstill" by calling on all white workers to stay away from work for three days.

But white workers have shown little militancy since the 1922 mineworkers strike. They still enjoy enormous privileges compared with their fellow black workers, and, as Confederation of Metal and Building Workers' Unions' Ben Nicholson says, only a "lunatic fringe" will be willing to sacrifice their wages. In addition, many white workers are in superfluous supervisory positions. It is no wonder, then, that shortly after making the threat, the CP backed off, saying that "it was not being seriously considered".

Were they afraid that, even if a large number of white workers did go on strike, *no-one would notice?*



"Just answer me this hey — how you going to do the job when I go on strike?"

Cartoon courtesy of The Star, Johannesburg

rowed a jacket and covered his T-shirt. But the warden would still not allow him in, because he was a "terrorist and terrorists can't visit other terrorists"!

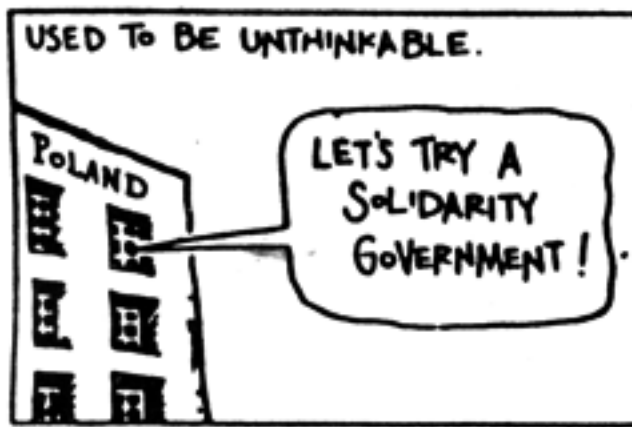
The SA Prison Services regretted the incident, saying it was an "unfortunate error of judgement on the part of the warden".

Mandela and Zionism

When you are an influential public figure respected by a wide range of people, you invite controversy. Such has been the fate

of Mandela since his release. A more recent issue has been Mandela's embrace of the PLO's Yasser Arafat, and his remark that there is a similarity between South Africa's special type of colonialism, and Israel's.

Organisations such as the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the SA Zionist Federation, and Harry Schwarz MP, have expressed surprise and concern that Mandela might be "anti-Semitic", especially since he had been "very conciliatory" up to then.



It is easy for Zionists to dismiss concerns about the rights of Palestinians as "anti-Semitic", if it comes from non-Jewish people. But what do they do about those of 'Jewish extraction', like the ANC's Denis Goldberg, who recently called for a boycott of Israeli goods until the government agrees to talk to the PLO? Apparently such people are 'self-haters'!

Red Mercedes for Mandela

RED EYE thinks it is entirely appropriate for workers to have a greater say over what they produce. It was particularly heart-warming to hear that Mercedes Benz workers in East London have decided to build a special bullet-proof red 500 SE model for Mandela. The company has agreed to the suggestion and Mandela has welcomed the idea.

NUMSA general-secretary Moses Mayekiso commented that the gift shows that workers 'look to Comrade Mandela to initiate a process of political settlement which will incorporate the needs and aspirations of

workers'. All Business Day's editor Ken Owen could say was that a Mercedes Benz 'costs more than Mrs Ceausescu's shoes'. No doubt Owen's own car does too.

Maponya and his workers

Businessman and millionaire Richard Maponya has been receiving a good press lately. He has been seen embracing Mandela, and both the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Star* have painted him as a jovial, generous soul who has the interests of the nation at heart.

Maponya apparently gives trays of fatcakes and crates of cold drinks to "radical youths at street meetings". But this is with his one hand. With his other hand, according to a SACCAWU official, Maponya makes his millions by paying his workers "poverty wages". So what he gives is a drop in the ocean compared to what he takes - and the commercial press seem to admire him for it!

A few years ago workers at one of Maponya's supermarkets

in Dube, went on strike over low wages and, according to SACCAWU, "atrocious working conditions". The workers were subsequently dismissed. Since then, say SACCAWU, Maponya has successfully "destabilised" the union at his businesses, such that it no longer has a presence there.

So when we hear of Maponya, the millionaire friend of the struggle, who "gives ceaselessly to his community", we must also remember the poor workers who made it all possible.

Not a blemish on JOT

Another "arch-capitalist", the new head of Anglo-American Julian Ogilvie Thompson (JOT), has also had a good press lately. In fact, the commercial press couldn't find one blemish worth mentioning. We wonder why?

May Day victory for workers

After a long battle by workers to have May 1 declared a holiday for workers, the government has finally given in. May Day is now official. The right-wing SA Confederation of Labour protested in February that May Day was part of the 'communist onslaught'. However, the Minister of Manpower said in parliament recently that only one white union, the Mineworkers Union, opposed Workers Day.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher also opposes May 1 as a workers' holiday. She proposes replacing it with a national holiday to celebrate the birthday of the queen mother instead. ☆



Reviving the living wage campaign: but what about the minimum wage?

RENÉE ROUX examines problems in the Living Wage Campaign over the last 3 years. The article focuses on the central elements of the campaign:

- the affiliate and federation structures which drive the campaign
- the negotiating forums through which unions pursue the LWC
- the demands and direction of the LWC

The COSATU Living Wage Campaign (LWC) slipped to the back of most union agendas after its formal launch in 1987. COSATU's third National Congress made no mention of living wage demands or the need to rebuild campaign structures. Yet real wages are dropping and most of the campaign demands are far

from being won. Report after report over the past three years has complained about the weakness of affiliate participation and the lack of momentum in the campaign.

There are many reasons for this - repression, political tensions within COSATU, the LRA amendments, political pressures.

But most unionists agree that the LWC was never given enough attention by COSATU or affiliate structures. Affiliates did not have a clear conception of where the campaign was going. The essence of a national LWC is to mobilise and unify workers across affiliates and sectors around common demands and a

common programme of action.

Such a campaign would have to:

- *develop demands and action that could unify workers in different sectors with very different conditions*
- *develop a viable structure to link the different affiliates and co-ordinate the campaign.*

While COSATU failed to develop a co-ordinated campaign, the demand for a living wage has lived on in workers' minds. Through collective bargaining and action, affiliates continued to raise the demands and expand them. Sometimes demands resembled a ten-page Workers' Charter! The campaign demands also played an important role in helping to organise the unorganised, especially in areas where COSATU is effectively outlawed, for example the farms, the bantustans and the public sector.

The economy scatters the working class

Any campaign that attempts to unify workers across the different sectors of the economy faces enormous problems. Wages and working conditions are vastly different between and within sectors. Graph 1 (on the right) shows the wage gap between and within various sectors organised by COSATU unions:

This graph does not highlight the widening gap that has developed between city and country. Farm and forestry workers and workers in bantustan factories are particularly badly paid.

As far as other living wage demands are concerned the picture is similar. Within some affiliates progress has been made

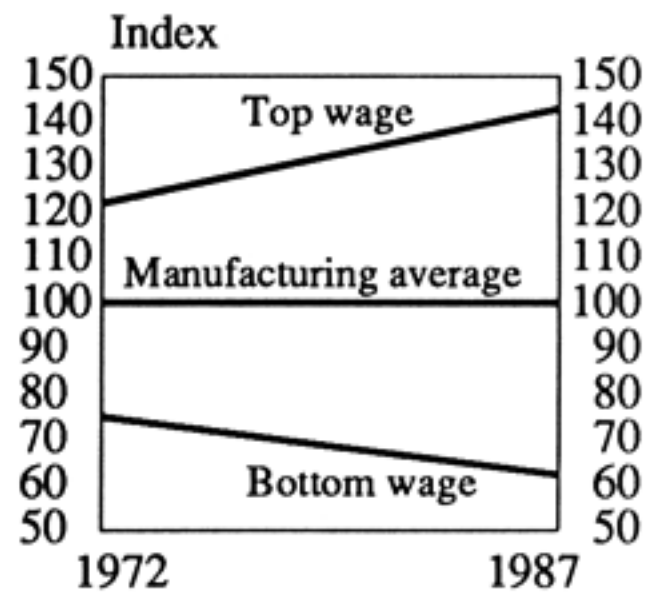
in winning housing assistance, provident funds and medical aid, while others will find this a very long and hard struggle. Siphon Kubheka, general secretary of PPWAWU, highlights the different realities workers face: "Many of our members still live in employers' premises with food and accommodation being considered as part of their payment, while other members have been able to sustain rent boycotts for up to two years in the townships."

This problem has increased over the years. (see diagram on the right) The wage gap between and within sectors has widened for a number of reasons. In some sectors there has been a strong tradition of collective bargaining, coupled with mechanisation which increases productivity. In these sectors a high-wage economy has developed, particularly in the auto, pharmaceutical and sections of the food and beverage industries. Wages and conditions in these sectors have moved further from the average or low-paying sectors than in early

years.

These growing differences could create further organisational problems if they are not addressed. They also have serious implications for any attempt to restructure the economy in a democratic South Africa.

Wage spread in manufacturing industry (Black average wage = 100)

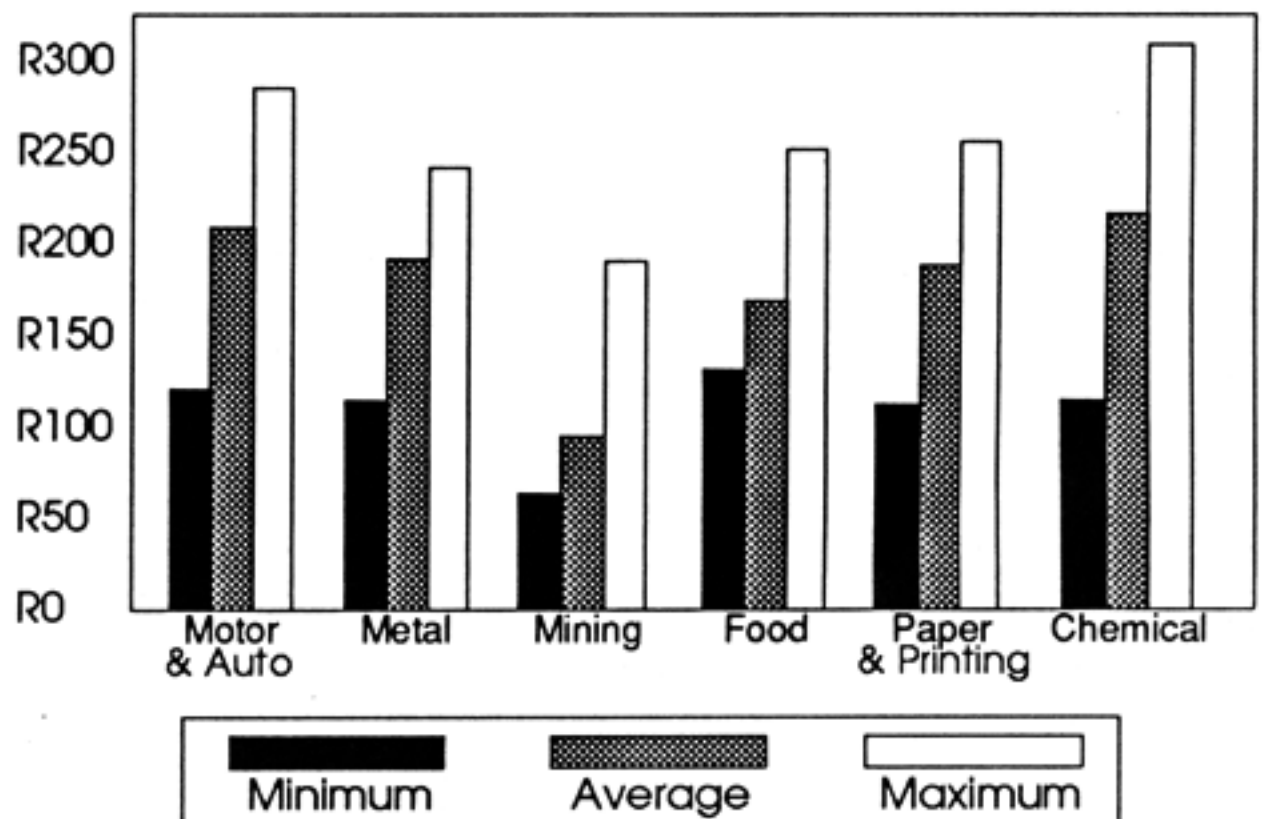


One of the reasons for increasing differences in wages and conditions is that employers have the last say over where and how they negotiate. There is no law which enables workers to determine bargaining forums

Industry wage spread

Rands per week

Graph 1



Labour Research Service and Chemical Workers Industrial Union

and to insist, for example, on industry bargaining even if they have majority membership in that industry. As a result, there

are a myriad different forums at plant, company, group, sector and industry level. Employers benefit from fragmenting bar-

gaining forums and exploiting regional and sectoral variations in wages.

NUM, POTWA and SAR-

The process of consolidating bargaining forums over the past 8 years has aimed at challenging the power of monopolies and closing the gap between workers within the same sectors. This process usually followed these steps:

1. Movement away from plant bargaining towards company, group, or industry bargaining.

2. Corresponding development of sectoral organisation within affiliates, though not as formal constitutional or decision-making structures.

3. Development of national wage policies, structures and campaigns, particularly by NUM and NUMSA. NUM was the first COSATU affiliate to develop a national wage policy at its 1989 Congress (see M. Nicol, *Labour Bulletin* 14.4, and below)

Like NUMSA, other unions have also experienced problems with sectoral organisation. Where employers refuse centralised bargaining, a number of unions have developed sectoral structures parallel to their constitutional structures eg. FAWU's milling and poultry sectors, or PPWAWU's paper and pulp sector. Often these also exist side by side with company or group councils on local, regional or national level. Examples are the Dorbyl and Barlows councils within NUMSA's Iron and Steel sector, a Premier council within FAWU's milling sector, or an Amalgamated Beverage Industries(SAB) council alongside a council of shop stewards from all coke bottlers, within the beverage sector as a whole.

These union structures have been successful in promoting unity within companies and sectors, but have also experienced a number of problems:

1. They are very costly and time-consuming and often receive more attention than the constitutional structures of the union, or the structures that plan campaigns for the whole union, eg a union LWC Committee.

2. On the other hand, union sectoral structures have a *co-ordinating* rather than a *decision-making* role, and there is nothing preventing workers in a particular company settling with their employers without agreement from other workers. NUMSA has experienced this in a number of their sector

Centralised bargaining and the limits of sectoral organisation

negotiations.

This is even more true when a structure does not coincide with one bargaining forum or at least similar implementation dates. PPWAWU has experienced this time and again when trying to co-ordinate settlements in the paper and pulp sectors, where only Mondi agrees to group bargaining, while all the SAPPI and

Nampak plants negotiate at plant level and at different times in the year.

3. Many workers do not benefit from centralised bargaining of any kind; increasingly it is only the more liberal companies that are agreeing to these forums. This can increase stratification within and between sectors. While sectoral organisation breaks down factory consciousness, it can result in sectoral consciousness: the union is expected to put most of its resources into these advanced sectors, and little thought given to other workers. PPWAWU is trying to overcome these problems by integrating cross-sectoral LWC committees with the constitutional structures of the union. For example, the paper and pulp shopstewards will now report in the joint local shopsteward council on progress in their sector.

4. Union sectoral organisation without industry bargaining cannot prevent the wage gap growing even in an homogeneous industry. Although shop stewards from all Coke bottlers have been meeting for almost three years, the gap between conditions in ABI(SAB) plants and those of Suncrush Bottling Co. and SA Bottling Company, have widened, not closed.

5. While many of these national structures became strong they did not correspond to strong regional, local and factory structures. Co-ordinating report-backs from various sectors to all levels places a burden on local organisation which needs also to run the union and do day-to-day servicing and building.

Unions have learned that structures within the union are no substitute for centralised bargaining forums, and that there needs to be a concerted push for centralised bargaining in all sectors. ☆

WHU, for example, have highly centralised national bargaining. NUMSA and SACTWU to a lesser degree, engage in centralised national bargaining through industrial councils in, for example, the engineering, clothing and cotton sectors. It is relatively easy for these unions to develop uniform demands and a co-ordinated LWC. The TGWU negotiates with goods transport companies at industrial council level in the Transvaal. None of the other COSATU affiliates are involved in industry-level bargaining. PPWAWU and FAWU, for example, negotiate over a range of sectors from farms and forestry to highly mechanised and centralised companies. Most employers vigorously oppose centralised bargaining, knowing well that it strengthens the union's hand.

Union campaigns, let alone federation campaigns, are a nightmare to co-ordinate because of diverse conditions, forums, implementation dates, etc. The structural problems make it very difficult, for example, to co-ordinate a national overtime ban in the struggle for a 40-hour week.

However, in spite of these obstacles, renewed efforts are being made by all COSATU affiliates to put their own campaigns back on the road and to strengthen the federation campaign. NUMSA is the most advanced in developing its LWC structures and demands. The progress in this sector has inspired a restructuring of COSATU campaign structures.

NUMSA leads in building national bargaining and LWC structures

NUMSA organises and negotiates in four major sectors:

- the auto sector
- the tyre and rubber sectors
- the engineering sector
- the motor sector, composed of component assembly plants, petrol stations and workshops.

The union has for some time tried to co-ordinate collective bargaining but has experienced serious problems because of negotiating in different sectors. At the end of 1989 the main problems were identified as:

- Lack of co-operation between sectors
- Each sector had its own strategy. For example the auto sector planned for strike action, while the engineering sector settled without striking
- Regions were faced with different strategies in different sectors and could not discuss united action
- Local and factory organisation had become weak, so that regional shop steward councils, where reports and planning were to take place, did not work.

New campaign structure

In 1988 NUMSA had established a single structure to co-ordinate all union campaigns. At that stage the union was involved in the Living Wage, anti-LRA and Release Comrade Moss campaigns. In October 1989 the union decided to develop and extend the campaign structure to centralise its collective bargaining strategy.

The new campaign co-ordi-

nating structure heads the work of the union's Organising and Collective Bargaining Department. The main components of the new structure are shown in the diagram on the next page.

The campaign structure is very closely tied to the constitutional structures of the union. The NOCC implements decisions of, and reports to, the union's national executive committee (NEC) as well as the national bargaining conferences. NUMSA national organisers are now directly supervised by the NOCC between NEC meetings.

At the NOCC delegates must assess each campaign and the progress made toward specific targets. Organisers say that the new structure will definitely make a difference to the union's ability to consolidate organisation, strengthen campaigns and co-ordinate united action. Its priority at the moment is to build local and regional structures and to increase training and education of organisers and worker leadership.

NUMSA does not claim that the structure is perfect. In the words of one of the national organisers: "Democracy is not simply a set of rules. It is the experience of trying to constantly deal with problems of representivity, democracy and decision-making on an ongoing and conscious basis."

The union has identified three major campaigns which will all be co-ordinated through the new structure:

- the LWC and annual wage negotiations
- the anti-LRA campaign
- the campaign against the Barlow Rand group's attempts to

break up national bargaining structures.

Programme of action

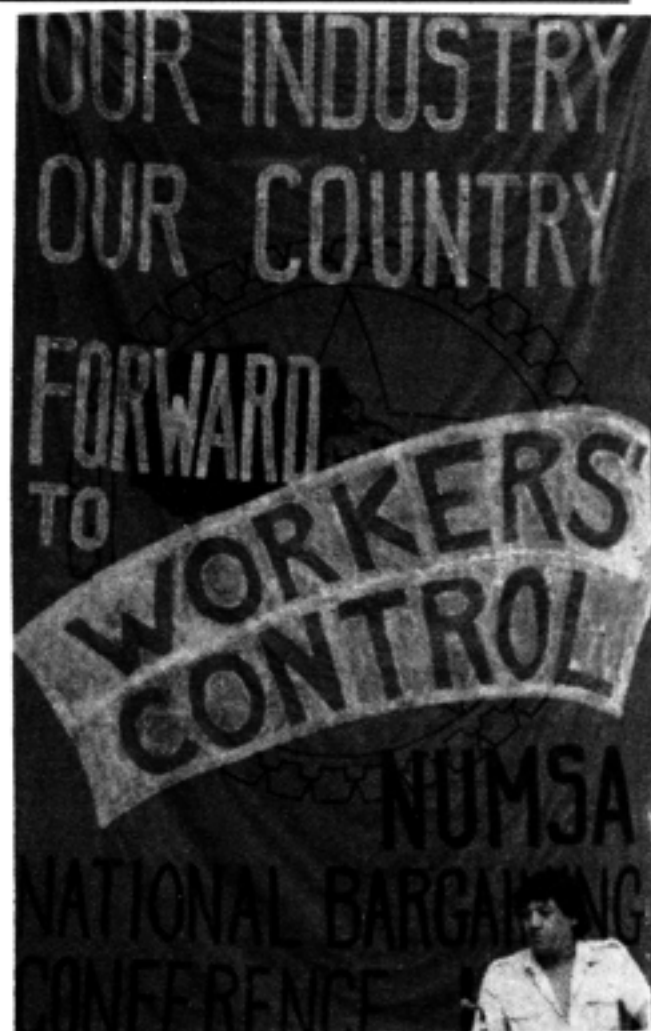
The first bargaining conference was held in February this year. At the conference NUMSA adopted a programme of action to build a national union capable of effective national bargaining, even though it has four distinct sectors and bargaining forums. Wages range from R1.76 per hour in the motor sector to over R5 per hour in the auto and tyre and rubber sectors. Working conditions are equally diverse.

The new structure has already been put to work for this year's wage negotiations. After demands had been discussed throughout the union structures and on the shop-floor, the Fe-

bruary bargaining conference agreed on a uniform set of demands that workers will put forward in all sectors for this year's wage negotiations. The demands cover a range of issues, the most important of which are: R2 per hour increase across the board for all sectors, job security, job creation, national industry bargaining, the Labour Relations Amendment Act and training.

This is the first time a national union with such diverse membership has come up with a uniform set of demands with which to mobilise and unify the whole union.

Discussions with shop stewards in a number of factories revealed that the impact of a national wage demand is already great. Workers at Autoflug, a



NUMSA's bargaining conference

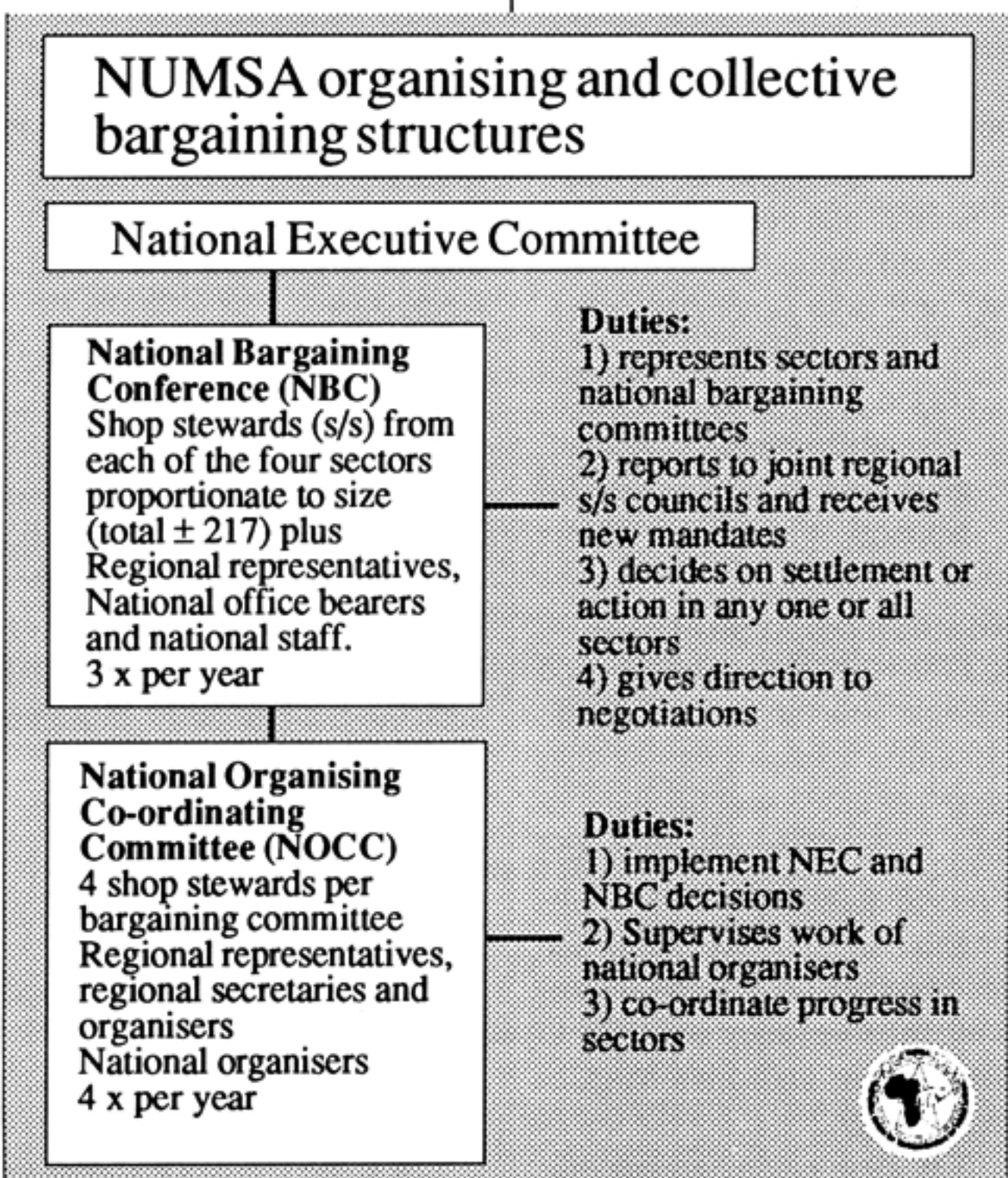
Photo: NUMSA

German multinational in Roodepoort, are currently in dispute with their management. Workers want to settle 1989 wage demands now and not to incorporate these with 1990 demands, "because our 1990 demand is R2 per hour, nothing more and nothing less".

The negotiating process

After each round of negotiations, negotiating teams will report to regional shop steward councils of shop stewards from all sectors, who in turn will report to their factories. The regional shop steward councils will meet on the same day in all regions, so that negotiating committees at the four industrial councils will be able to efficiently gather the feelings of workers and get new mandates between negotiations.

NUMSA expects negotiations to be exhausted in all sectors by the time the next bargaining conference is convened in June. The June conference





Workers at Numsa's bargaining conference

Photo: NUMSA

will decide whether there should be a national strike in all sectors or settlement in the union as a whole. There is strong feeling that sectors should not "do their own thing", and that settlement or action should take place only after national consultation.

Linking the LWC to other campaigns

NUMSA feels that the LWC has also been weak because it has been viewed too narrowly by workers as a struggle for more wages. The union wants to tie the anti-LRA campaign more closely with the LWC.

NUMSA will simultaneously co-ordinate a plan of action against Barlows companies if they continue to pursue a strategy of undermining centralised bargaining. Many of these companies are party to the engineering and the motor industry agreements. At this stage the union has put forward a series of demands in all Barlows subsidiaries:

- all wage agreements must expire in June to coincide with the SEIFSA implementation date of 1 July. This will enable workers to be part of the

national campaign.

- Those companies that are not covered by Industrial Council agreements must apply to be covered.
- Those companies that are covered should agree not to undermine centralised bargaining, eg. by interdicting striking workers at one company that are part of a national action.

1990 - new COSATU campaign structures

The LWC is not the only COSATU campaign which has suffered.

A number of campaigns have experienced problems of:

- lack of affiliate participation in planning structures
- lack of a clear programme of action
- uneven participation of affiliates in actions

In an attempt to ensure better co-ordination of its various cam-

paigns COSATU has evaluated and revamped its campaign structures.

The COSATU Central Executive Committee decided to develop a single structure to co-ordinate the various federation campaigns. This new structure is based on the structure that NUMSA developed in 1988. The newly formed National Campaign Committee (NCC) met for the first time on 26 February this year.

Instead of having a number of loosely co-ordinated sub-committees for each COSATU campaign, with unions usually sending whoever is available, the NCC will be made up of 2-4 representatives per union. They will be permanent delegates. People will be selected from amongst NCC members to form working committees of the LWC, anti-LRA and the Workers Charter campaign, as well as other political campaigns. Campaigns to organise and defend the unemployed, farmworkers and workers in the bantustans will also be co-ordinated through the NCC. Regional Campaign Committees (RCCs) will be formed to implement national decisions on a regional level.

A number of other campaigns and projects will now be directed to the LWC working committee. Amongst these are:

- the Barlow Rand campaign
- the anti-privatisation campaign
- the Economic Trends project
- research and forums on issues such as housing, medical aid and provident funds: the LWC will facilitate these so that it can recommend policy to the COSATU CEC.

In this way COSATU aims not only to strengthen each individual campaign, but also to link the campaigns. To this end COSATU is also convening a Living Wage/LRA national conference in May.

Living Wage Campaign and economic restructuring

Today demands on the LWC are far greater than when it was launched. On the one hand, repression has subsided and organisations have space to consolidate. On the other hand the employers and the state have an aggressive new economic policy aimed at weakening the working class and the democratic movement as a whole. This is extremely important at a time when the balance of forces will determine the role of the working class in a post-apartheid society.

The new economic policy has many aspects, but for organised workers the main features are:

- The Labour Relations Amendment Act which weakens workers' bargaining power.
- Attempts by companies to undermine centralised bargaining, which is essential if organised workers are going to improve conditions and begin to plan and influence a future economy in their interests.
- Privatisation, which will increase unemployment, raise the cost of living and remove economic resources from the post-apartheid state.
- Deregulation, which removes minimum conditions and hence weakens the

collective bargaining hand of progressive forces.

- Restructuring of the labour process, including the growing use of casual, contract and 'flexible' labour, especially in the retail and service sectors.
- More recently, government calls for wage restraint to curb inflation, which are likely to be used by employers in all negotiations.

The union movement is taking the new challenges very seriously. In his address to NUMSA's first national bargaining conference, national organiser Bernie Fanaroff said this means that union structures and campaigns need to "build organised power, understanding and consciousness amongst workers" and "win demands that begin to restructure the economy."

NUMSA has clearly devoted more thought to the issue of economic restructuring than other COSATU affiliates. Through its unified collective bargaining strategy the union wants to build enough power to start restructuring the industry, especially in areas such as training, job security and job creation programmes.

The direction of the Living Wage Campaign

The current conditions call for a more serious approach to the role of the trade union movement

in the present and future economy. In the NCC of 26 February, affiliates defined the core LWC demands under new conditions:

- the right to a living wage**, including an end to the racial wage gap, the right to education and training, housing and social security.
- job security**: unemployment and insecurity grows daily and employers and the state are ruthlessly oblivious of the long-term consequences. The LWC demands negotiations before retrenchments, an overtime ban and an end to casual work.
- end to privatisation**: the social and economic consequences can only be avoided if the state is forced to stop in its tracks and focus on restructuring the economy
- centralised bargaining**: employers are resisting centralised bargaining at a time when workers need these forums to challenge the monopolies, and begin to influence future economic policy. The LWC demands centralised bargaining at forums which are democratic.

All of these issues are important and central to a campaign that has to address the need to *restructure the economy*. However some affiliates, particularly in the low-wage sectors, stress that the struggle for centralised bargaining and the fight against privatisation should not dominate the living wage campaign. They argue that not all workers are affected by these demands in the short term. They argue that the central demand is the demand for a living wage because it gives content to what all workers ex-

pect from the economy.

In particular, there is a growing feeling in a number of unions in the low-wage sector, particularly NUM, that COSATU needs to revive the demand for a *legislated minimum wage*. All workers can unite around such a demand irrespective of their own particular conditions.

A legislated national minimum wage

At the 1985 launch of COSATU a resolution was passed that COSATU, in alliance with other progressive organisations, should initiate a national campaign for a *legally enforced minimum wage* automatically linked to inflation. This demand was not new: SACTU mobilised around the demand for a minimum pound-a-day in the fifties, and called for a minimum wage of R80 a week in 1980. During the early 1980's FOSATU affiliates made enormous gains with the campaign for R2 per hour minimum (R90 per week) on a national basis.

When the LWC was officially launched in May 1987, the situation was different. The federation was more confident. The campaign's focus shifted from the concept of a legal minimum, to a *living wage* with all its components (education, housing, job security, etc.). The July 1987 congress endorsed the view that COSATU had to expressly confront the bosses and the state on items which were normally regarded as political. These demands have educated rank-and-file membership and mobilised workers to look beyond wages in negotiations.

The federation had also

changed in composition: the sectors were less homogeneous than in FOSATU, especially with the inclusion of mineworkers and public sector workers. Early industrial unions had also won gains that set their members quite far ahead. The 1987 congress endorsed a CEC proposal that it was the concept of a living wage, and the concrete struggles and campaign that could be forged, that was important.

It was never clear why the idea of a legal minimum was dropped altogether, when the emphasis shifted from the *legal minimum* to the *living wage*. The debate in 1987 centred around whether or not to set a figure for the ideal *living wage*.

Those against setting figures for *either* a national minimum *or* a living wage have said:

1. that such demands lead to *economism* amongst workers, which means the one-sided focus on their economic interests;

2. that a minimum or living wage would be difficult to determine because of the vast wage gaps, and that trying to define figures would *cause division*;

3. that a *minimum* figure would be used against workers in sectors that are paying in the region of a living wage;

4. that the economy cannot afford a *minimum wage* and that many workers would be thrown into unemployment; here the example of retrenched domestic workers in Zimbabwe after minimum wage legislation is cited.

Arguments for demanding a national minimum wage

Against these arguments the following points can be raised:

1. A campaign without clear

minimum or short-term demands attainable for the majority can run out of steam.

2. A vague notion of what a living wage is has been used against workers in the low-wage sectors.

3. While wage gaps make uniform demands difficult, the absence of uniform demands and a clear wage policy also threatens to widen differences within the working class.

4. There are many ways of fixing a minimum wage in practice: this could be a process starting with fixed *industrial minima*, and planning toward a *national minimum wage*. Certain *unproductive* sectors, such as domestic work could be exempted. At the moment, however, there are no standards to measure wages on a national scale.

Both NUMSA and NUM have developed wage policies which begin to:

- raise the minimum wage in the lowest sectors, and develop a strategy of reaching a living wage in the union as a whole

- close the gap between the highest and lowest wage, both within sectors and between sectors.

In terms of its three year wage policy, NUM demanded a minimum wage of R600 throughout the mines in 1989, irrespective of the fact that the 1988 minimum at Anglo was R80 higher than at Gold Fields. The union also fought to close the gap between the grades. The union's wage policy is based on the belief in a national wage scale, where wealthy mines must subsidise marginal (less wealthy) mines and not hide behind them.

NUMSA has also put a national minimum wage on the agenda by demanding R2 per hour across the board in all sectors. In addition NUMSA decided the minimum rate in the auto sector (already over R5 per hour) should be frozen at R5.50 to allow the motor and engineering sectors to catch up, from R1.76 and R3.56 respectively.

Fight for a minimum wage now!

It is obviously more difficult to develop policy for COSATU as a whole, but there is an urgent need. A living wage of R1 140 (Labour Research Service *Bargaining Monitor*, Feb. 1990) may be a useful future target and within the reach of some workers, but it is too distant to be a realistic short-term goal for most workers.

On the other hand, fighting for a minimum, or a floor, to wages gives the majority of workers a realistic and popular target, while also protecting workers in advanced sectors. It is by no means incompatible with the fight for a living wage. According to the LRS a figure in the region of R700 would be quite affordable to all companies, including large-scale farming operations. It is quite possible for all COSATU unions to standardise demands within a range between R700 and R1 140 per month.

Minimum wage legislation developed in other countries only after governments became democratic, and after years of industry bargaining which closed the gaps. But it was also the result of conscious union strategy, so-called 'solidarity wage

policies'. National minimum wage legislation has been introduced in the USA (1937), Canada, Japan, Luxembourg (1945), France (1950), Netherlands (1969), Spain (1963), Portugal (1974), Belgium (1975) and Zimbabwe (1981).

There is no other economic demand which has the same potential to build a powerful campaign, across sectors and uniting low and high-paid workers. The campaign also has the potential to integrate other demands, for example for centralised bargaining within and across affiliates. It would concretise the campaign against decentralised companies such as Barlow Rand, Anglovaal, National Co-operative Dairies, and many others.

The demand for a legislated minimum wage has been raised in the Freedom Charter and the SACP and SACTU draft Workers Charters. While the COSATU worker charter questionnaire asks its membership whether it should demand a living wage, it says nothing about a legislated minimum (see questionnaire p. 30).

The Living Wage Working Committee has put the issue of a minimum wage demand on its agenda. This will need a lot of discussion within affiliate and COSATU structures. If the demand is adopted as part of the LWC and the Workers' Charter Campaign, it has to be treated in the same way as the other demands contained in the Charter. It is a demand that should be fought for now, not after liberation day. ☆

Wage settlements above inflation for 3rd year in a row

Wage review by Labour Research Service (LRS)

Labourers' wages in the second half of 1989 increased by 19.7% on average. This was lower than previous periods reviewed by Labour Research Service, but still well above inflation.

Because of the expected slowdown in the economy, unions will find it more difficult to secure increases well above inflation in 1990.

Labour Research Service's actual wage rates database - AWARD - also reveals that for the period July to December 1989, the average labourer's wage reached R154 per week. The average of R154 per week is based on two hundred and sixty eight wage settlements in this period.

An increasing number of companies - thirty eight in the settlement period July to December - are paying over R200 per week to labourers.

But the Labour Research Service's living wage estimate of R263 per week has been achieved by only a handful of companies.

Motor and auto at the top

The second half of 1989 saw the motor and auto industry record both the highest average

wage of R203 per week as well as the highest average increase of 24.1% for labourers.

This reflects the capital intensive nature of the auto industry and the success of the union's campaign to centralise bargaining in the auto sector.

A capital intensive industry is one where a large amount of machinery is used and a relatively smaller number of workers are employed.

The wood sector recorded the second highest average increase of 23.1%, followed by the clothing industry with an average increase of 22.6%. The lowest average labourers' increase of 15.8% was recorded in the transport sector.

Other sectors above the AWARD average

Besides motor and auto, there are three other sectors whose average weekly labourers' wages are also above the AWARD average of R154 per week.

They are the metal sector with R185.62 per week, paper and printing with R180.12 and food with an average of R158.77 per week.

The auto industry features prominently in the top ten wages, paying five out of the top ten wages. The highest wage of R277.65 is paid to labourers at Toyota.

Auto industry labourers have enjoyed number one spot in the past two years reviewed by the Labour Research Service. The top ten wages are listed below.

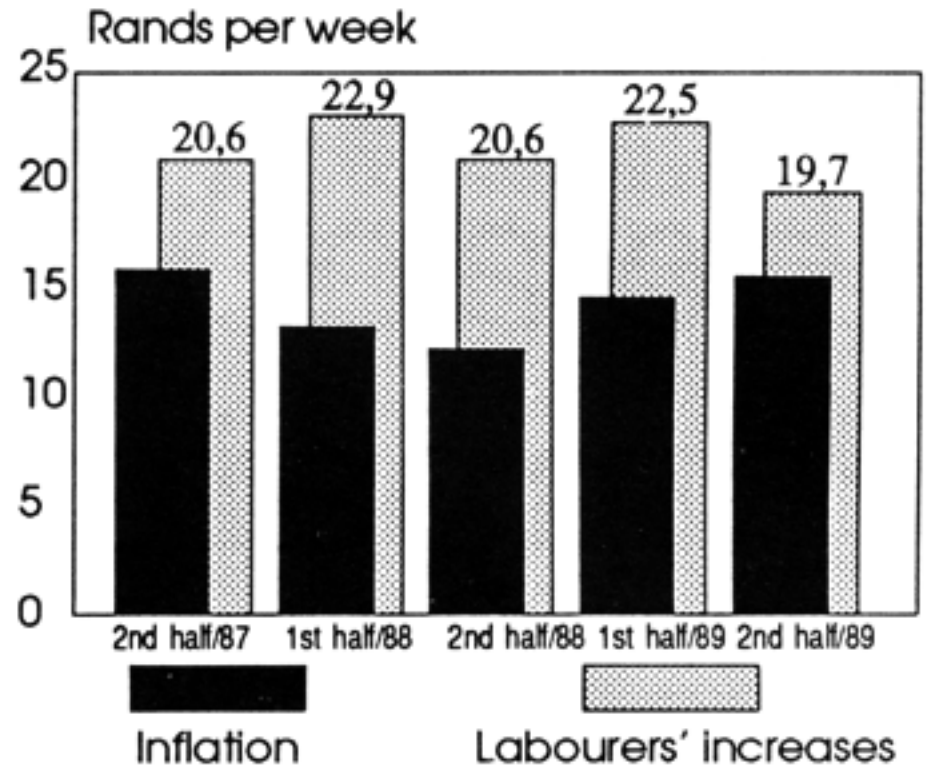
Labourers at Interwil (Bedfordview) - a PPWA-WU organized bargaining unit - won the highest increase of 61.4% in the second half of 1989, bringing their current wage to R149.96 per week. PPWAWU secured two of the top five increases, with NUM securing the other three.

Wage spread still very large

In most sectors, the wage spread between the top and bottom-paying company is very large. The food sector has the widest wage spread, however. The highest paying company pays R168 per week more than the lowest.

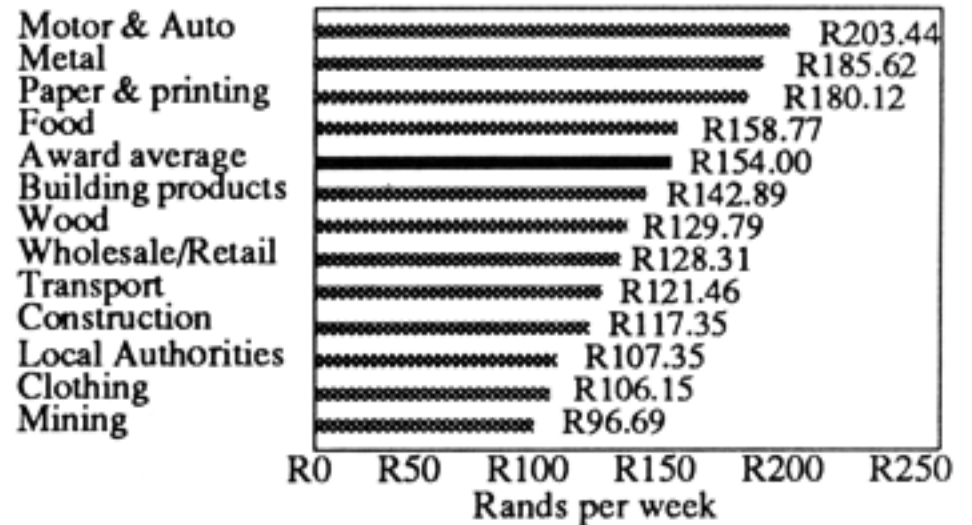
Clear policies aimed at narrowing the wage spread between top and bottom paying companies are needed in all industries. ☆

Wage increases:



Industry Averages

Labourer's Wages, weekly



Top ten labourers' wages

Company	Weekly Wage	Union
Toyota	R277.65	NUMSA
Nissan	R270.00	NUMSA
Mercedes	R259.20	NUMSA
Volkswagen	R254.00	NUMSA
Auto Manuf. Ind PE	R252.00	NUMSA
Carlton Paper Wade.	R252.00	PPWAWU
Nampak Paper Belville	R246.15	PPWAWU
SAB	R245.25	FAWU
Crown Cork	R236.25	NUMSA
Cadbury	R235.52	FAWU

Top five wage increases

Company	Increase	New wage	Union
Interwil	61.4%	R149.96	PPWAWU
Woodmet	49.7%	R222.64	PPWAWU
Silicon			
Smelters	47.2%	R159.28	NUM
Impala			
Platinum Reef	42.0%	R115.38	NUM
Samancor			
Manganese	37.9%	R92.31	NUM

On strengthening the anti-LRA campaign:

a response to Jansen

In the November edition of *Labour Bulletin* Martin Jansen criticised the LRA campaign and suggested a new direction. Here GEOFF SCHREINER* disagrees with Jansen. He argues that the strategic direction of the campaign is effective, but that there have been serious organisational weaknesses.

Martin Jansen's assessment of the LRA campaign is constructive and merits serious response. **

In essence, Jansen suggests that the LRA campaign was and is flawed because "it was not directed against the state" (p 56). He goes on to argue that therefore "a new plan on how to fight the state is needed". He proposes that state "liberalism" should be tested by sending a delegation "representing the union movement, armed with a memorandum of our demands...." (p 59).

Jansen identifies some organisational weaknesses in the LRA campaign, but his

view that the "SACCOLA talks" are the central problem is badly mistaken. These talks are a matter of tactic, not of principle. So far they have served a number of useful purposes in the campaign.

Two phases of the campaign

As background it is important to outline that there have been two phases in the LRA campaign. The first phase took place before the September 1988 amendments were promulgated, from about March of that year. The second phase came as a response to the new LRA. It really began after June 1989 when the 'labour

front', to use Jansen's expression, submitted a set of demands to the SA Co-ordinating Committee on Labour Affairs (SACCOLA), SA Transport Services (SATS), the SA Agricultural Union (SAAU), and the Commission of Administration (COA).

Right at the beginning of the second phase the unions planned that the campaign would be directed both at private capital and at the state as an employer in the form of the COA etc. In fact, SATS and SAAU (closely aligned to the state at least) attended the second and third negotiating meetings, though only as ob-

* Schreiner is NUMSA's delegate on the national co-ordinating committee of the campaign

** Jansen's article is inaccurate on a number of points, for example his summary of SACCOLA's position (p 52), or his assertion that the "Western Cape was the only region which displayed widespread support for the call" for action on 1 September (p 53). But these inaccuracies are not central to his argument.

servers.

The problem at that time was that the unions organising in the public sector were *themselves* not properly represented in these meetings. As a result when both SATS and SAAU stated that they were pulling out and joining the COA on a 'no-negotiation ticket' no pressure was placed on either SAAU, SATS or the COA to force a change in their positions.

The National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC) did discuss whether the unions should withdraw from talks with SACCOLA and agree to rejoin only if SACCOLA pulled in the other employer bodies. This position was however eventually rejected because it was felt that the forum (a) provided a centralised focus for mass mobilisation, and (b) provided possibilities for holding the initiative without giving up moral high ground to SACCOLA.

The NCC therefore decided that talks with SACCOLA should go on but that it should be made absolutely clear that there would be no final 'agreement' unless it included the state employers as well. This was conveyed to SACCOLA a number of times. The NCC also agreed that special efforts should be made to encourage public sector members and their leaders to participate fully in the campaign.

Fruits of negotiation

Jansen's next criticism of the SACCOLA talks is that "we



must stop toying around with this politically dangerous notion of reaching an agreement with bosses on fundamental trade union rights..."

Here his argument is at its weakest. Making demands relating to fundamental trade union rights is not "politically dangerous". It is a political necessity. Whether employers or the state will accept such demands however, obviously depends on the balance of forces. It is clearly wrong to suggest that fundamental rights can never be negotiated. It is precisely through negotiating that unions have won a range of agreements giving workers

the right to strike without dismissal, and other fundamental rights. Negotiations only become a problem when they are seen as a *substitute* for action and organisation (see box on p 26).

Jansen also asserts that "we have focused on legalistic struggles on paper, far removed from the day to day realities of the working class". This is also completely incorrect.

In fact the second half of 1989 saw the most sustained campaign on the ground that COSATU or NACTU (either singly or jointly) have ever embarked on. Never before has one issue achieved such a focus of planning and action: a workers summit, a day of action, the two-day stayaway, a consumer boycott, an overtime ban and country-wide marches - all in the space of a few months! It may well be argued that these activities were not properly supported or were 'problematic' in their



'...the most sustained campaign on the ground that COSATU or NACTU (singly or jointly) have ever embarked upon.'

Photo: Anna Zieminski/Afrapix

nature (and I would agree with a lot of the points Jansen makes here) - but this is an entirely different issue.

Targeting the state

Jansen concludes that the new way forward in the campaign is to make demands on Manpower Minister Eli Louw with the threat that "we will give him until the next parliamentary session to change the LRA". It is not clear why Jansen sees this as a change of direction. The second phase of the campaign was from the beginning, as pointed out above, directed against state employers as well as the private sector.

One has to assume that Jansen believes we should bypass the COA etc, and go 'right to the top', to the Minister himself. Here he seems to believe that the unions would make an impact because "our anti-

LRA campaign is definitely having an impact on the state" (p 57) - an assertion which contradicts his main argument that the campaign has been ineffective.

Are we however then to conclude that, since the state is prepared in Jansen's words to make "verligte announcements on the LRA", we should only negotiate with Eli Louw? What would become of the main protagonists, ie. capitalists who were directly responsible for the LRA amendments?

It would be foolish to allow them to hide behind the apartheid state and to claim that responsibility for the amendments lies at the state's door rather than their own. As socialists, our objective should surely be to expose capital's ongoing restructuring in the face of the current economic crisis. The LRA amendments

are but one aspect of this process.

This is not to suggest that a meeting with the Minister would have no purpose, but it should not be seen as a substitute for negotiations with the employer bodies.

COSATU has in fact agreed in principle to meet with the Minister to demand, first, that he brings the COA, SATS and SAAU into the talks and, second, that he guarantees not to process legislation which does not have support from the major forces in the arena of industrial relations.

National employer forum

We had the following aims in establishing a national forum where the labour movement and the employer organisations could negotiate the LRA:

> COSATU and NACTU agreed that unions would

Negotiations and mass action

Negotiations must never be allowed to *substitute* for action on the ground. Union members and the community more generally should not be lulled into a belief that negotiations without organisational strength will produce results.

There is no doubt that this was a mistake made in the first phase of the LRA campaign. After the highly successful stayaway in May 1988, discussions proceeded with SACCOLA in a way *which weakened* activity on the ground. As a result - as Jansen points out - SACCOLA was able to outmanoeuvre the labour front and the LRA Amendments went ahead as planned.

After assessing this experience the labour front decided that future discussions with any employer and/or state body should not be allowed to disrupt the programme of action which had been decided. This position has been spelt out clearly to SACCOLA. We have told them that we will only consider changing our programme of action when SACCOLA and the other employer bodies inform us that they will not use any of the 1988 amendments.

In short, for as long as the amendments remain on the statute book and are utilised by employers, the campaign of action on the ground will continue. It was precisely this stance which led to SACCOLA temporarily withdrawing from the talks in September.

not 'contract out' through negotiations at plant or industry level, and that there would be one central forum at national level where all negotiations would take place. This would unify the labour movement in its campaign and negotiations. This strategy has been reasonably successful. Some unions have contracted out in certain areas, but the vast majority have participated in the national campaign.

- > A single national forum would create a central focus for the campaign, so that our members could mobilise jointly and build unity.
- > It would highlight the role of employers in the LRA amendments and avoid their shunting responsibility for the LRA onto the state.
- > It would be clear that it was the responsibility of employers to get all their parties to the negotiations if there was to be any final agreement.
- > It would allow the unions to explore and exploit the *tactical* differences that exist between different groupings of employers on how to respond to the labour front.

Jansen hints that focusing on employers in this way means the unions might form an alliance with elements of capital against the state. This is not a serious argument. It reveals a lack of analysis of who was responsible for the LRA Amendments, why this was so, what they intended to achieve, and what role the state had to play. Negotiations with SACCOLA are part of

the struggle *against* employers, not an alliance *with* them.

Furthermore, the negotiations with the employers were not only aimed at making joint

'A single national forum would create a central focus for the campaign, so that our members could mobilise jointly and build unity'

recommendations to the state, as Jansen suggests. In fact it has always been our demand that the employers should implement within their own ranks whatever is agreed with the labour front, no matter whether the state legislates such agreements or not. SACCOLA for its part remains decidedly ambiguous on this issue.

Risks of national negotiations

I have argued above that it was strategically correct to es-

tablish a central national forum. However there are risks in this strategy, and we need to guard against them.

Firstly, there is a real risk that negotiations at the centre can become too distant from the rank and file. This has happened in a number of areas and unions. But the solution is not to stop the negotiations. The challenge is to find ways of bridging the gaps in our communication between national and shop-floor structures. The LRA NCC has already identified this problem, and it has taken a number of decisions to deal with it.

Secondly, negotiations should be linked to ongoing mass action and should not be a substitute for action. As explained above, the central principle of phase two of the campaign was that mass action would not stop until the LRA amendments were scrapped or no longer implemented.

This principle has been applied absolutely consistently. Where there have been shortcomings however is that the *link* between mass action and national negotiations has been weak. We clearly need to tighten up in this area.

Thirdly, negotiations should never involve compromises unacceptable to the masses and should involve properly representative negotiating teams. If all unions sent representatives to the negotiations (as they are entitled to do) and those representatives reported back then there would not have been any problem of our



NCC proposes holding marches in industrial areas on weekdays

Photo: Anna Ziemiński/Afrapix

members being properly informed at the base.

However, this did not happen, and the NCC decided to open up the negotiations to COSATU regional representatives as well. The NCC also decided that any 'agreement' reached in negotiations would have to be endorsed by all levels of the organisation before it was finally ratified.

The way forward

Charting a successful way forward in the LRA campaign depends on whether we correctly assess its current weaknesses and strengths. Jansen does not really succeed in doing this.

The LRA campaign has failed to reach its full potential because:

- > most regions have failed to set up active regional campaign co-ordinating structures (RCCS)
- > virtually all unaffiliated unions, most NACTU affiliates, and even some CO-

SATU unions, have failed to put sufficient effort into the LRA campaign.

- > community organisations have not given proper support to this campaign and tend to regard it as a 'trade union matter'.

Until there are active regional and local structures the LRA campaign will be hampered. There will be inadequate report-backs, and we will be unable to develop and sustain action, as the overtime ban and consumer boycotts have shown.

The appropriate negotiating forum must be decided by tactical considerations. At present there are good reasons to pursue discussion in one central national forum. It may also be wise at some stage to have a meeting with other state representatives.

If this will assist in mobilisation and in building organisation, then it should be pursued. However, we should never allow employers to hide

behind the state, nor should we run away from the fact that real changes will only come about if we are able to build up sufficient pressure on the ground.

It is with this latter point in mind that the NCC submitted to the Conference for a Democratic Future a range of possible actions which would be considered by the unions and their allies as part of a programme of action for 1990.

These possible mass actions include:

- > industrial area marches during the week;
- > factory, mine and shop occupations;
- > blacklisting of companies;
- > stay-away actions;
- > solidarity action against identified employers who use the LRA amendments;
- > defying the interdicts of the industrial court;
- > workers' conferences;
- > mass rallies. ☆

Workers' Charter campaign

RENÉE ROUX reports on the workers' charter campaign. We also reprint COSATU's Workers' Charter questionnaire and SACTU's draft Workers' Charter.

During 1985 there was much heated debate within COSATU about whether or not to draw up a workers' charter. The debate was initiated by MAWU in the context of COSATU's process of developing a political policy on issues such as alliances, the relationship between COSATU and political organisations such as the UDF, and ANC and the SACP.

The debate was highly polarised: many proponents of a workers' charter argued that the Freedom Charter was inadequate because it was not a socialist document. They saw the workers' charter as an alternative to the Freedom Charter. On the other hand, supporters of the Freedom Charter saw the workers' charter as a challenge to the Freedom Charter. Underlying the Charter debate were opposing views on whether 'Congress' organisations like the ANC, the UDF and the SACP represented the interests of the working class.

The 3rd Congress of COSATU has again put the idea of a workers' charter on the agenda, this time under different condi-

tions:

1. *COSATU has established strong alliances with other political formations in the struggle for democracy.*

2. *Over the past four years, there has been thorough consultation with these organisations, including the ANC, SACP and SACTU, so that today there is a clearer understanding of, and consensus on, the role of organised workers in the struggle for democracy and socialism.*

3. *The ANC constitutional guidelines have clearly stated that there should be provision for a workers' charter in the constitution of a democratic South Africa. As with the other clauses, the ANC has encouraged mass organisations to discuss the content of such a charter.*

COSATU's Third National Congress

When the question of a workers charter was again raised at the July 3rd National Congress, it was felt that discussion should not be based on the draft of one union or another. The danger with drafts is that they tend to

pre-empt grassroots discussion. Rather it was felt that the draft must come out of a process of discussion and education, and that the formulation itself would be an instrument of struggle. Direct involvement in the formulation would ensure that such a charter would "articulate the basic rights of workers and all the toiling masses guaranteed by the constitution of a people's government".

COSATU's July Congress resolved:

1. *To launch and spearhead a Workers' Charter Campaign involving the broadest section of the oppressed and exploited masses of our country.*

2. *COSATU and its allies must canvass the views and opinions of the toiling masses through democratic and participatory methods of consultation.*

3. *The campaign should culminate in the drafting of a Workers' Charter as a matter of urgency.*

The SACP Central Committee welcomed the initiative taken by the Third Congress and prepared a draft which it stressed reflected preliminary thinking on what such a charter should contain, and urged all structures to examine it critically. *Labour Bulletin* Vol.14.6 carried the SACP draft, and in this edition we carry the SACTU draft which was also circulated soon after the COSATU congress to contribute to the debate.

Role of the workers' charter

Subsequent meetings and discussions in COSATU have clarified that the role of the workers charter is to contain a set of demands around which workers

are struggling now. Any gains made by workers should be transformed into rights and defended. Therefore the charter must serve as a vehicle for attaining and defending workers' rights that will be enshrined in the new constitution.

Campaign objectives

The short- and long-term objectives of the campaign have also been clarified through discussion. These can be summarised as:

1. to develop a charter of demands that will become a fighting document for the rights of workers now and in a post-apartheid South Africa

2. to strengthen the unity of the working class:

- unite workers in different federations and non-affiliated unions
- unite black & white workers
- organise the unorganised
- unite rural & urban workers

3. to raise the political consciousness of workers

4. to create a platform for political discussion at all levels of organisation.

Process

COSATU plans to have an intensive campaign with a tight timetable over a short period, but aims to continue a programme of sustained action and discussion even after adoption of a charter.

There is a strong feeling that it must be conducted on a non-sectarian basis, and that while COSATU must spearhead the campaign, it should draw in other sectors of the democratic movement and non-affiliated unions at local level.

COSATU has established a

working committee under the newly constituted National Campaign Committee, consisting of one representative per affiliate.

The campaign will be divided into three phases:

- **Information, education, consultation and launch:** as part of this phase affiliates and COSATU structures are:

1. discussing the history of workers charters (the first one was drafted by white mineworkers in 1913) and the SACP and SACTU draft charters, in the context of the Freedom Charter which is the guiding document of the democratic movement as a whole;

2. drafting and completing the questionnaire (printed below);

3. conducting regional and local workshops and rallies to discuss and popularise the process of drafting the charter.

- **Assessment of the campaign:** This will take place in June.

- **Adoption of the charter:** This will take place in a special congress, scheduled for September or October.

COSATU questionnaire

The SACTU draft charter deals mainly with workers' workplace and social welfare rights. The SACP draft deals with both the economic and political aspirations of the working class, ownership and control of the economy, the relationship between mass organisation (including trade unions) and the state, their role in planning, etc.

The COSATU questionnaire tries to cover both areas. ☆

The SACTU draft charter preamble

We, the workers of South Africa, declare that the future of the people of South Africa lies in the hands of the workers. It is only the working class, in alliance with other progressive-minded sections of our community, who can build a happy life for all South Africans, a life free from unemployment, insecurity and poverty, free from racial hatred and oppression, a life of vast opportunity for all our people.

The working class can only succeed in this great and noble endeavour if it itself is united and strong, if it is conscious of its inspiring responsibility. The workers of South Africa need a united trade union federation in which all sections of the working class can play their part unhindered by prejudice or racial discrimination. Only such a truly united federation can serve effectively the interests of the workers, both our immediate interests of higher wages and better working conditions, and our ultimate objective of complete emancipation from national oppression and economic exploitation.

There can be no peace in our country or in the world until all forms of racial discrimination, oppression and exploitation are completely abolished. We, the workers of South Africa, resolve to protect the interests of all workers with our guiding motto:

**An injury to one
is an injury to all!**

The SACTU draft charter

All workers shall have the right to work.

The most fundamental right of every worker is the right to work.

In a free and united democratic non-racial South Africa, every worker shall be guaranteed the right to work.

All workers shall have the right to:

- Form and join trade union of their own choice.
- Organise trade unions on the basis of one industry, one union.
- Organise all unorganised workers.
- Work towards unification of all democratic trade unions into one national federation.
- Oppose victimisation, harassment, bannings, banishment and imprisonment of trade unionists and workers.
- Reject all forms of representation which are not in conformity with the principles of democracy.

All workers shall have the right to freedom of movement, assembly and speech.

Passes shall be abolished and all pass laws shall be repealed. All workers shall receive equal treatment at the workplace and before any court of law.

All workers shall have the right to live with their families in decent housing near their place of work.

The state shall provide workers with accommodation, recreational facilities, creches, nursery schools and play grounds for our children.

All racist legislation restricting the right of our people to live where they choose - like influx control and Group Areas - shall be abolished.

There shall be equal opportunities for all workers.

Workers shall not be discriminated against on the basis of race, class, colour, sex or religion. All forms of education and training shall be free and compulsory for all.

Workers shall have the unconditional right to strike in support of their demands.

There are irreconcilable contradictions between capital and labour, therefore workers shall have the right to withdraw their labour to win their demands.

Workers shall be paid a wage which enables him/her to satisfy the minimum needs of the family.

- Discrimination in wages on the basis of colour and sex, shall be abolished.
- All workers shall be paid a living wage.
- A national minimum wage (NMW) enforced by law shall be established, linked to the rate of inflation.
- The national minimum wage shall take into account the need to cover rent, electricity and water, upkeep of the home, food and clothing, transport and entertainment.

Worker shall have the right to:

- Free medical care.
- Three weeks sick leave per annum on full pay.
- Four weeks annual leave on full pay.
- Women workers shall be guaranteed the right to return to their jobs at the same rate of pay after maternity leave.

There shall be a maximum eight-hour working day.

- In order to ensure full employment, a maximum of eight hours per day shall be worked, i.e. a basic 40 hours per week.
- Overtime must be banned and the working day shortened.
- Shift work shall be shortened/abolished.
- Where workers are involved in strenuous work, a six-hour day shall be worked i.e. 30 hours a week. This shall ensure adequate time for rest and leisure, giving workers the opportunity to develop their talents and skills unrelated to their specific jobs. This will encourage all-round development of the worker.

Unemployed workers shall be the responsibility of the state.

- Unemployed workers shall be entitled to unemployment benefits, which will take into account all the basic needs of the worker and his/her family.
- Unemployed workers shall be the responsibility of the state and will be fully supported.

All workers shall be eligible for retirement with full pension.

Pensioners shall be the responsibility of the state.

Male workers shall be eligible for pension at the age of 60. Those doing strenuous work shall be eligible for pension at 55.

Female workers shall be eligible for pension at 55.

Health and safety shall be guaranteed.

- A 'health and safety at work' charter should be evolved to guarantee the wellbeing and safety of workers.
- Families of all those injured at work and the injured workers themselves shall be fully compensated.

Women workers shall have the right to participate in all sectors of the economy without discrimination.

- Women workers shall enjoy full rights as equal participants in the economy of our country.
- Women workers shall be guaranteed their jobs back after maternity leave at the same rate or higher rates of pay.
- Childcare shall be available for the children of working parents.
- Women shall have the right to train for any job they wish to.

All racist labour legislation shall be outlawed, including the racist Labour Relations Amendment Act.

All restrictive racist labour legislation shall be abolished - such as influx control and the Group Areas Act.

All workers shall have full political rights.

All workers shall have the right to vote without any qualification and to stand as candidates for all institutions which make laws that govern the people in a united people's state. Workers shall have greater control over and share in the wealth they produce.

All workers and people shall have a universal franchise in South Africa. The working class, the peasantry, the revolutionary intelligentsia, progressive youth and women shall fight side by side until South Africa is free from national oppression and economic exploitation. ☆

An injury to one is an injury to all!

COSATU's Workers Charter Questionnaire

1. Basic Worker Rights

What rights should workers have, from the state and employers, in relation to:

- 1.1. Right to join trade unions
 - 1.2. Living wage
 - 1.3. Social security
 - 1.4. Education, training and skills upgrading
 - 1.5. Job security
 - 1.6. Right to work/full employment/job creation
 - 1.7. Right to healthy and safe working conditions
 - 1.8. Other rights
-

2. Trade Union Rights

What rights should trade unions have, from the employers and the state in relation to:

- 2.1. right to bargain collectively
 - 2.2. right to determine bargaining levels and bargaining issues
 - 2.3. right to strike
 - right to sympathy strikes
 - right to picket
 - right to job security while on strike
 - right to protection against employers taking on scab labour during a strike
 - right to a strike fund
 - 2.4. the right to appoint judges to the Industrial Court
 - 2.5. the right to negotiate all laws affecting workers
 - 2.6. the right to represent workers to state administrative bodies on labour issues.
-

3. Women Workers Rights

3.1. What women workers' rights should the workers' charter have in relation to:

- wages and grading
 - education, training and skills upgrading
 - job security
 - social security
 - taxation
 - sexual harassment
 - contraception
 - other
- 3.2. How must trade unions, worker political parties, all other mass organisations, employers and state correct inequalities based on sex?
 - 3.3. How can we ensure all workers have equal rights and equal opportunities, regardless of race, sex and creed.
-

4. Parental Rights

What kind of provisions should we make for workers to enjoy family life and what social facilities should be provided?

5. Political Rights

- 5.1. What political rights should workers have?
 - 5.2. Should trade unions be independent of the state and political parties?
 - 5.3. Should the state have any say in the running and control of trade unions?
 - 5.4. Should trade unions have a right to differ with the state?
 - 5.5. Should the state have powers to reverse/suspend worker rights eg. during a state of emergency?
 - 5.6. What access/control should trade unions have to all forms of media?
-

Mandela release: workers celebrate

11 February was a great day in South Africa. Stoppages occurred in many factories as workers celebrated the release of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. LUMKILE MONDI reports.

The surprise press conference on 10 February by FW de Klerk caught everyone unarmed. He was announcing the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years in prison. There was jubilation at every corner of our country and around the globe as people started *toyi-toying*, awaiting his release. Celebrations continued over night and all roads on 11 February were leading to the Victor Verster Prison to catch a glimpse of Nelson Mandela.

It appears as though celebrations took place at many plants and factories around South Africa, but manifested themselves differently according to the strength of the unions. In a snap telephone survey, *Labour Bulletin* found that stoppages, demonstrations and marches occurred at factories in the East Rand, Johannesburg, Durban and some plants in Cape Town. The most sustained

action took place in the Eastern Cape, with stoppages ranging from one day to a week (see page 36).

Isando celebrations

The Tembisa - Germiston train on the East Rand is always full of action.

Preachers deliver long sermons, gamblers and card-players settle down to

their hobbies and comrades chant revolutionary songs. On the 12 February most people had banners of the ANC, SACP, COSATU, etc. As the train stopped at Isando, workers alighted, singing and *toyi-toying* to the amazement of the white staff at the station. They marched on their factories as more people joined the celebration. The group then split up according to their factories.

Simba and FND workers demonstrated. They noticed that some people were not aware about what was being celebrated. Cardboards

were organised and workers started picketing. Some workers *toyi-toyed* to the airport nearby expecting that Nelson Mandela would land. There was no disruption of production at Simba.

At FND where workers had arrived an hour before, work started an hour late. They had gathered and *toyi-toyed*, angering supervisors. At lunchtime there was a meeting to discuss the Mandela Rally at FNB Stadium. Shop stewards were mandated to consult with management that workers were not coming the following day. The whole workforce went to the rally the following day and there was no production. The same happened at a number of other factories, including Propane (CWIU) and Beechams (SACWU). In other factories workers sent a delegation to represent them at the rally.

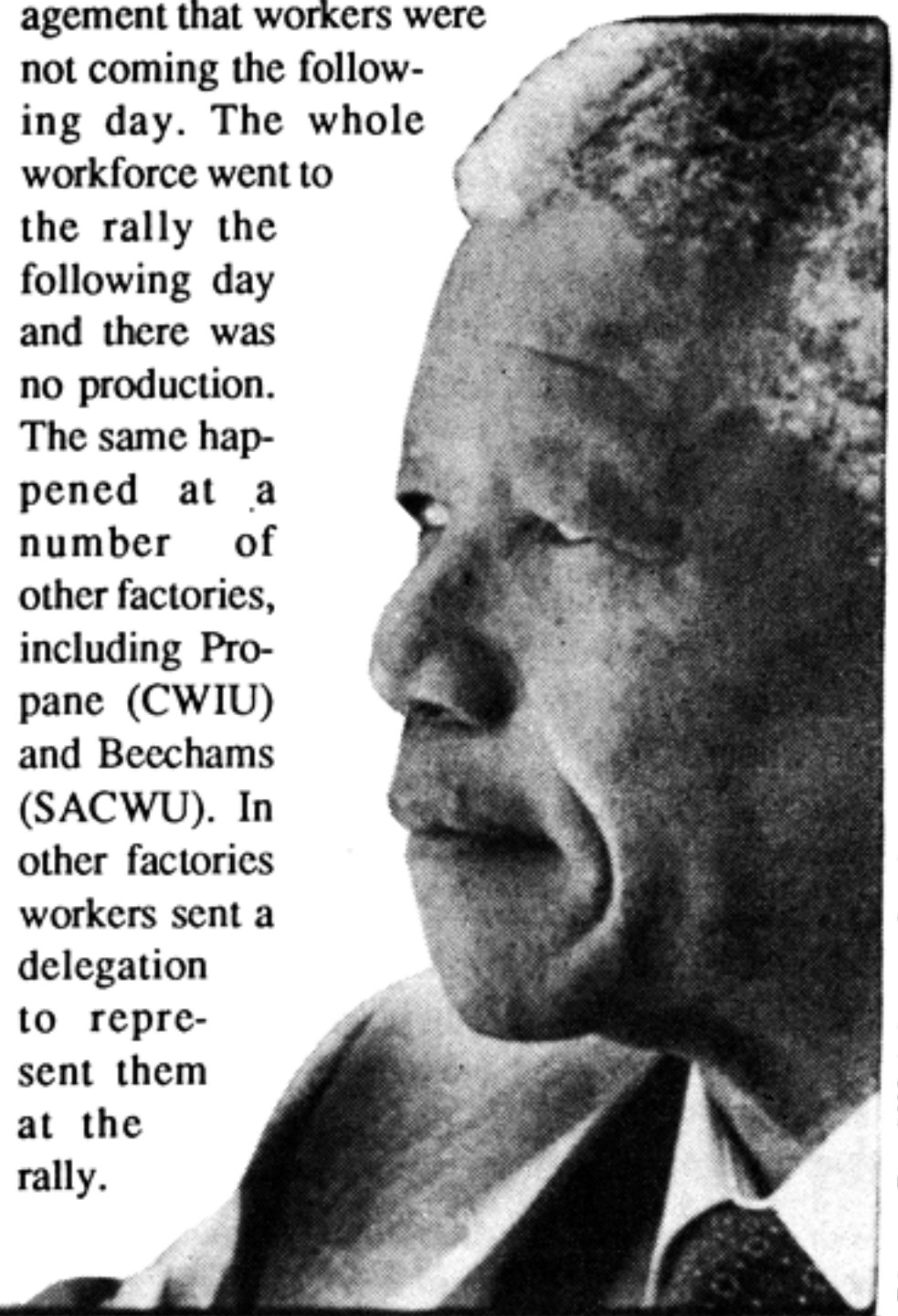
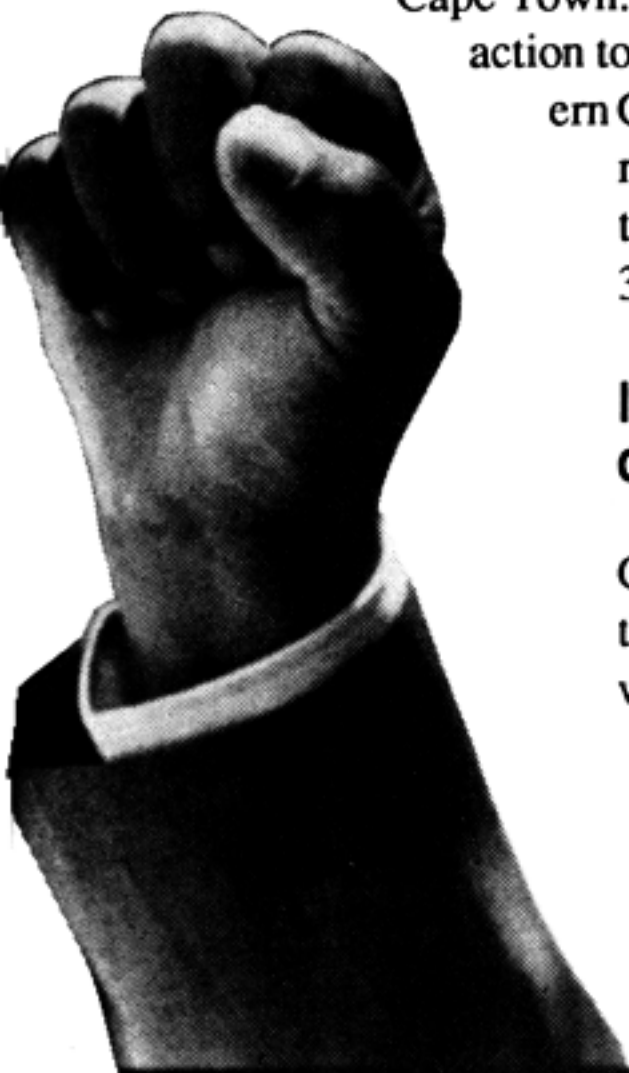


Photo: Paul Weinberg/Afrapix



At a SACWU (NACTU affiliate) organised factory workers celebrated, singing about Mandela, wearing stickers and carrying banners of the ANC. At lunch-time they marched to the canteen next to the administration office which is some distance from the workplace. The management was annoyed by the "noise". The workers replied that if they had been singing church songs, management would not have reacted, but it was reacting just because they were singing about Mandela.

The changed conditions within the country have raised expectations. Workers are celebrating not just the release of their leader, but also their coming liberation. Workers expect management to meet their demand. This has been a source of conflict at the workplace. Workers also claim that since Mandela's release the relationship with management and supervisors has worsened.

Workers have become strengthened and want their grievances redressed. They are defying and are testing the role and power of supervisors. There have been overtime bans. COSATU believes that this climate will have an impact on LRA negotiations with SACCOLA.

According to Geoff Schreiner, co-ordinator of the joint union committee, "Five years industrial relations were way ahead of developments in the political arena. But in a short space of time, political developments have outstripped developments in the labour field.

"There is clearly a lot of pressure on employers now to put their houses in order as far as labour relations in the factories go. There is no doubt political developments are going to fuel workers' political expectations. Big business, as well as the unions, are going to have to meet these."

The article in this edition by Desai and Auf den Heyde on disputes in the Eastern Cape (p 36) reflects on the tensions, challenges and questions posed by the new situation. ☆

Release of Nelson Mandela:

workers respond in the Eastern Cape

Thousands of workers in the Eastern Cape stopped work in celebration of Mandela's release. JUDY PARFIT reports.

Most Uitenhage factories were deserted during the week following Nelson Mandela's release from prison. On Monday 12 February, thousands of workers walked off their jobs to celebrate the event, and several factories stood idle for the remainder of the week as violence erupted in KwaNobuhle, claiming 19 lives according to press reports.

These were the findings of a telephonic survey of 12 Uitenhage companies (employing 11 750 workers) conducted by the Industrial Relations Unit at University of Port Elizabeth. Ten (83%) of the employers that were contacted reported that their companies had experienced disrupted production on 12 February, the day following Mandela's release.

At eight of these companies, workers went home during the course of the morning (management agreed to unpaid time off after representation from shop stewards at four plants). Another two employer spokesmen said afternoon shift attendance that day had been poor, and attributed this to transport problems. All the companies in the sample adopted a policy of 'no work - no pay - no

* Judy Parfit is a member of the Industrial Relations Unit of the University of Port Elizabeth

discipline'.

Ten companies recorded absenteeism levels ranging from 60% - 100% for the period Tuesday, 13 February to Friday, 16 February. (Eight of these companies experienced absenteeism rates of 99% - 100%). Most hourly-paid employees at these companies reported for work on Tuesday morning but had returned home by the afternoon, and stayed away for the rest of the week.

Only one of the factories in the sample enjoyed normal attendance. Management at another company said 10% of the workforce had not reported for work from Tuesday until Thursday, adding that employees had been granted unpaid leave on the Friday to enable them to attend a rally called to address the ongoing violence between Pan Africanists and African Nationalists in KwaNobuhle. Once again employers in the sample said a no work-no-pay-no discipline policy would apply.

Half of the employers telephoned said they had been approached by workers or union representatives demanding that employees who supported the Pan Africanist Movement (PAM) be dismissed. These demands had been rejected. Some of the employer comments are reported below:-

- We have been asked by the union to dismiss PAM supporters on the grounds that they are intimidating other employees. The company had said that evidence must be produced, in which case the disciplinary procedures will be followed.
- We can't dismiss PAC sympathisers: it would be an unfair labour practice.
- Our shop stewards are confident that we have no PAC sympathisers working for us. But demands at other companies for their dismissal are ludicrous considering that COSATU has fought for many years against unfair dismissals.
- We can't accede to demands for the dismissal of PAM supporters. We will have to try to educate these guys to political maturity, but is that an employer's role? The trouble is that

Uitenhage companies are bleeding to death simply because they are located in Uitenhage.

This last comment is symptomatic of mounting employer concern in Uitenhage, which experienced widespread and sometimes protracted industrial action last year, and which consistently records the highest stayaway figures in the country. One company is said to be exploring the option of relocating to the Ciskei.

Port Elizabeth

The unit telephoned 42 Port Elizabeth companies (employing a total of 25 000 workers) on 13 and 14 February to establish the extent to which workers downed tools to mark Mandela's release. Workers at three of the factories canvassed were on strike.

Of the remaining 39, eight had experienced some form of action: at two plants, lunch-time demonstrations were held without loss of production, while six companies were affected by stoppages ranging in duration from 10 minutes to 2 hours. At one of these plants, workers were sent home after failing to resume work at the end of a management-sanctioned lunch-time demonstration. Only one of the companies agreed to pay workers for time not worked - in this case, two hour stoppages on

each of three shifts. None of the employers intended taking disciplinary action.

Indications are that further worker protests occurred later in the week. An employer contacted on Wednesday, 14 February 1990 said he had been approached by the union to approve a two-hour paid stoppage the following Friday. Management endorsed the proposed action after the union hinted that workers would take the entire day off if a no pay policy applied.

One employer reported that workers had been briefed on company policy regarding absenteeism related to Mandela's release a week before the African National Congress leader was freed. Employees were told that the company was willing to grant leave applied for in advance. According to management, workers accepted this. ☆

Despite its high unemployment rate, Uitenhage consistently records the highest stayaway figures in the country.

Numsa disputes

The union most affected by the disputes is NUMSA, who were involved in more than 25 strikes involving more than 5 000 workers.

Abedare Cables: 850 workers at the company started striking on January 15 after deadlock between management and workers over wage negotiations. The company offered workers a 17c an hour increase in addition to the 56c an hour increase negotiated at a national level. Workers however demanded a 75c an hour increase across the board.

The striking workers were locked out. Mediation failed to resolve the issue and the company issued an ultimatum to workers to return on Monday, 5 March. Workers were dismissed after ignoring the ultimatum.

Welfit Oddy: The company dismissed about 500 workers in January after a two week strike. Workers were demanding that the company reimburse them the bonus deducted from workers after last year's two day stay-away (5 and 6 September).

According to a NUMSA spokesperson, the company at first agreed to pay the bonus, but later reversed their decision and dismissed workers who went on strike. The dismissed workers have been meeting regularly and police have taken action against them.

Mediation failed to produce any results. Both parties have since agreed to refer the dismissals to independent arbitration.

Fry's Metal: Two years ago the management of this company withdrew a policy whereby they had entered into in-house negotiations for a wage increase above that which was negotiated at the industrial council. Neither workers nor NUMSA were informed of their decision.

After getting nowhere in their attempts to have this decision reversed, workers embarked on a strike. Thirty seven workers were dismissed at the beginning of March and negotiations to have them reinstated are presently under way, but union officials say they have not made progress.

Autumn Ray: A two week strike by some 30 workers, who wanted to be paid weekly instead of fortnightly led to their dismissal on 5 March. Workers had started their strike after negotiations failed.

Dorbyl Busaf: Workers decided to return to work in March after a two week strike which was called to protest against a proposed retrenchment of 57 workers.

They had also claimed that six Portuguese artisans had been recruited to fill the posts of local artisans at high wages. The company maintained that local wor-

Eastern Cape Disputes

kers were not skilled enough to perform the duties of the six foreigners.

Workers returned to work while negotiations between NUMSA and management continued.

Dunlopillo: Two hundred and fifty workers at the factory went on strike after the dismissal of a shop steward at the end of February. His dismissal followed a demonstration celebrating the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela. Management claimed that some of the workers had intimidated others to join and as a result a disciplinary hearing against some of the workers was held. This led to the dismissal of the shop steward. The workers ended the strike after a settlement was reached.

Volkswagen: Volkswagen Uitenhage plant closed in September due to political unrest in the area. Workers returned to work after a week. At the beginning of March management closed the plant for an afternoon after a go-slow action in one section caused a bottleneck in parts and prevented production from continuing. Management told all 8 000 workers to go home.

Resolved strikes were:

Armstrong Hydraulics (400 workers)
Formex (250 workers)
Sentech Ind. (50 workers)
Gestro Wheels (unknown)
Firestone (1500 workers)
Repcor (300 workers)
Goodyear (unknown)
Burghead (47 workers)

PPWAWU strikes

The Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union has also been involved in a number of strikes.

Federated Timbers: Workers went on a short strike over their annual leave. Management agreed in the end to the extra 5 days they had demanded.

SAPPI Adams: There were work stoppages by about 380 workers over the dismissal of a worker who had been fired after being involved in conflict with a security guard. Negotiations are continuing between management and the union.

SAPPI Waste: Twenty one workers are involved in a strike over wage demands. Production is continuing after the company hired scab labour to do the work, most of which is unskilled.

The company was granted a court order locking out the striking workers.

SAPPI Novoboard: A total work stoppage by 450 workers started over wage issues in February. Not all workers continued with the strike and the company applied for an interdict restraining those on strike from interfering with normal company business. Workers went back after accepting a new wage offer on 7 March.

Timber Industries: A legal sleep-in strike by 150 workers which started in November last year ended early this year after they accepted an ultimatum to return to work. They won their wage increase. During the strike management called in the police and strikers were ordered to leave the plant. Two workers facing intimidation charges were not re-employed.

EH Walton: Industrial action was taken after two workers on maternity leave were dismissed. Workers slept in for three days after which they were locked out. The company's offer to pay-off workers was refused and the dispute was referred to the industrial court.

All PPWAWU workers out on strike have been dismissed.

CWIU strikes

Two industrial disputes have involved the Chemical Industrial Workers Union.

Chemserve Colloids: Forty workers at the company started striking on 23 January over unfair dismissals. Before the Christmas shut-down, workers had asked management to pay them early as they wanted to do their shopping, banking and other necessary things. Management refused and workers then decided not to continue working. Management told them that if they did not return to work, they would receive their pay and disciplinary action would be taken against them.

After the hearing three workers were given final written warnings while three were dismissed as they already had final warnings. Workers questioned the way in which the hearings had been conducted and went on strike after negotiations failed to resolve the matter. After a six week strike, management offered to withdraw the dismissals, and reverse the final written warnings.

Pilkington Shatterprufe: During the second week of February 1 800 workers went on a two day strike at the company over the issue of a new system of time keeping, which workers said monitored their every movement. Negotiations had failed to resolve the issue, but after workers embarked on the strike management abandoned the new system and workers returned to work. ☆

Unions, employers and the MDM

There has been an increase in industrial conflict in the Port Elizabeth - Uitenhage region. Management has responded harshly on the shopfloor, while cultivating warmer relationships with the MDM. This has raised difficult questions of alliances in this period of negotiations. ASHWIN DESAI and PETER AUF DER HEYDE report.

While the spirit of political negotiations prevails throughout the country, employers in the Eastern Cape seem unwilling to extend this spirit to the factory floor and into the negotiation room. The new political climate however has made workers in the region more militant, and many disputes and strikes have broken out.

A list of disputes appears on the facing page.

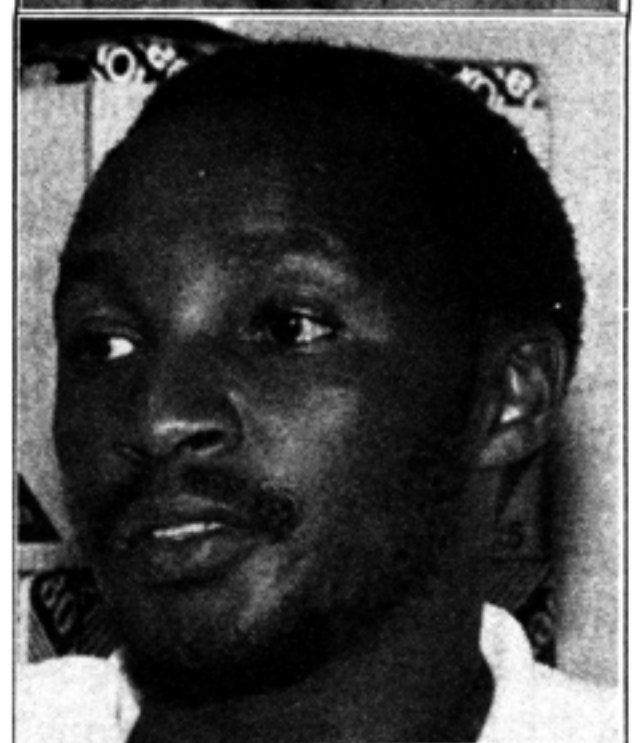
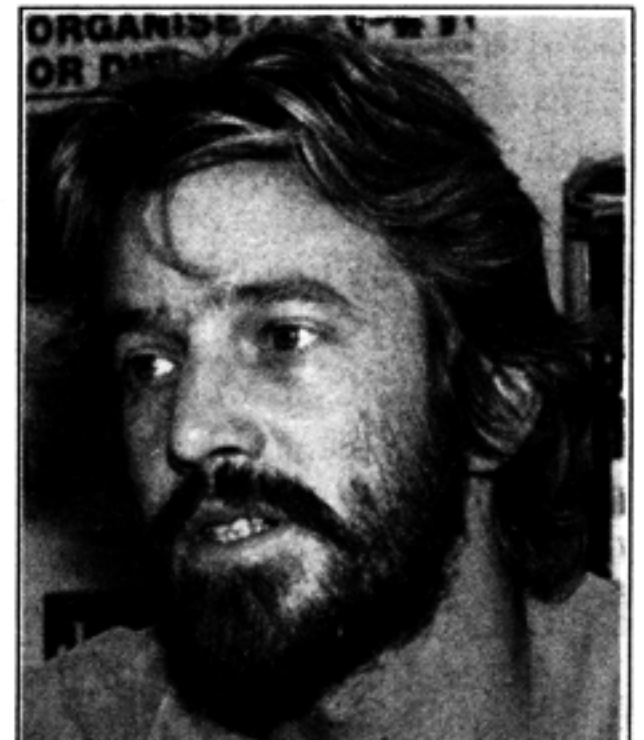
Management responses

Shop stewards and union officials interviewed were unanimous in their perception that employers were particularly hostile and uncompromising in their reactions to strikes. NUMSA's Gavin Hartford pointed to Fry's Metal as an example of this trend. Historically the company had always agreed to in-plant bargaining. However, this undeclared policy was reversed a short while ago,

without informing the workers or the union, thus "precipitating a strike". He felt that as the region's largest union, whose membership has a high political consciousness, NUMSA has become a particular target for employers.

CWIU shop steward, Phil Goduka, echoed Hartford's perception of employer intransigence. Goduka was involved in a six-week strike at Chemserve Colloids. He claimed that throughout the negotiations management was uncompromising. It was only after they realised that workers were determined to stay out that they agreed to meet worker demands.

Employers in the paper and printing sector have also been exceptionally harsh in their response to worker demands. PPWAWU has had to confront the closed shop established by SATU through the industrial council (see *Labour Bulletin* Vol 14 No. 5, for historical details). A



NUMSA's Gavin Hartford (top) and CWIU's Phil Goduka - employers are 'particularly hostile and uncompromising'

Photo: Peter auf der Heyde/Afrapix

PPWAWU organiser felt that the bosses were determined to utilise the full arsenal of repressive tactics including court interdicts, victimisation of union members and lock-outs to ensure that PPWAWU does not gain a majority in the factories.

Dismissals

Dismissals have been a popular option. At Aberdare Cables and Welfit Oddy, 600 and 550 workers respectively were dismissed. Many of the workers at Aberdare Cables had been employed by the company for over 20 years. Two other companies, Fry's Metal and Autumn Ray, dismissed 37 and 30 workers. At EH Walton, PPWAWU were in the process of organising the factory and had recruited 51 out of the 120 workforce. All 51 were dismissed.

Dividing the workforce

A particular feature of the strikes has been for employers to bypass the union and get the workers to sign individual agreements with workers. At Aberdare Cables for example, individual workers were enticed to sign an agreement entitled "Management's Final Wage Offer". By signing workers would in the words of the agreement have to "refrain from partaking in any industrial action pertaining to wages and basic conditions" until the next round of national bargaining.

At Volkswagen's Uitenhage plant, management closed the plant shortly before lunch on 8 March, after a go-

slow action in one section of the plant caused an end to supplies in other sections and normal production could no longer continue. This could result in friction between different sections as all workers were sent home even though only one small section had embarked on action.

Outside consultants

Management has turned increasingly to the services of industrial relations consultants. Particularly popular with employers in Port Elizabeth is Strategic Business Management (SBM), which incidentally also doubles as the Belgian Consulate in Port Elizabeth.

In a press release last year, NUMSA indicated that it was "alarmed at the growing number of self-styled industrial relations consultants plying their limited skills in the industrial relations market... these consultants are strongly anti-union" (see *Labour Bulletin* Vol 14 No.5). Unionists interviewed were unanimous that their experiences con-

firmed NUMSA's perceptions. They argued that it was not in the consultants' material interests to resolve a dispute quickly, as the longer it continued the more lucrative it would be for them.

The racial factory

Management on numerous occasions threatened striking workers that they would be replaced with coloured workers. At SAPPI Waste the company replaced dismissed workers with only coloured workers.

The police

Initially police seemed to keep a low profile. However where strikes seemed set to continue for a prolonged period and where workers were meeting regularly, police have intervened. This intervention has taken the form of arriving at meetings and arresting workers on charges ranging from allegations of intimidation to assault. Thirty four workers from Welfit Oddy and four workers from Aberdare have so far been ar-



Welfit Oddy workers who were all arrested after striking

Photo: Peter auf der Heyde/Atrapix

rested. A striking feature has been the high bail set - many workers have been forced to pay R1 500. In some cases police have also approached individual arrested workers and told them they would be released if they signed an agreement to return to work.

The law

Edwin Maepe, NUMSA's Eastern Cape Legal Officer, argued that employers responded to both legal and illegal strikes in similar ways. Legal strikes did not protect workers from being dismissed and employers, like Aberdare Cables, have been quick to use this option. Employers have also vigorously opposed sit-in strikes. Court interdicts have immediately been applied to institute lock-outs.

Union officials felt that the LRA, rather than creating the mechanisms for the peaceful and speedy resolution of disputes, made the situation more volatile and prolonged disputes.

Management, unions and the MDM

A number of employers who adopted the hard line approach to the strikers are ironically known for their liberal political stance.

The Managing Director of Welfit Oddy, Mr. Bill Oddy, is a past president of the Midland Chamber of Industry (MCI). This body has a policy of no work, no pay, no penalty. The strike at Welfit Oddy however started when man-

agement penalised workers by subtracting two days from their annual bonus because they participated in the national anti-LRA stayaway on 5 and 6 of September last year!

Management says COSATU out of step

Ian Miller, Human Resources Manager at Aberdare Cables, which dismissed some 650 workers after a strike, participates in the Consultative Business Movement (CBM). He has personal contacts with local MDM leadership and is at pains to express his anti-apartheid sentiments.

Millar did not see a contradiction between his public position and his hard line approach within the factory. The unbanning of political organisations and FW de Klerk's glasnost had created the conditions for free and open political activity. According to him the "political people" will sort out issues and workers and management can now get on with production and securing profits, without political struggles jeopardising this.

Millar also felt that COSATU was deliberately attempting to sabotage any rapport between business and the MDM and any moves towards a political settlement by embarking on "unnecessary strikes". The reason for this, according to Millar, is that SWAPO had ignored NUNW in the drawing up of the new constitution in Namibia. According to him

COSATU felt it would be "similarly betrayed".

In Uitenhage the bosses played an important role in the peace settlement between the UDF/COSATU and PAM. The constructive role played by employers was heralded in the local press. However, the employers felt that a just reward for their efforts was a conflict-free workplace. In a letter to NUMSA official Gloria Barry on 23 February, Goodyear expressed concern about frequent work stoppages.

Workers at the factory had walked off their jobs the day before. Earlier management had turned down a request by NUMSA shopstewards to hold a mass meeting between all shifts. The meeting was to give a report back on the MCI initiated talks between UDF/COSATU and PAM to end the violence in Kwanobuhle.

Peace in community, peace on shopfloor?

The letter reminded NUMSA "that while the Uitenhage industry and community is attempting to facilitate a lasting peace settlement and thereby to minimise losses in earning and the threat to the survival of industry in Uitenhage, your members under the leadership of the shopstewards, are deliberately using the NUMSA union to further their aims."

On the same day, the MCI wrote to John Gomomo, Regional Chairperson of NUMSA, reminding him that the "Uitenhage branch of the

Chamber has been deeply involved in the process to stop the feuding in Kwanobuhle and to bring about a peace settlement that will be in the best interests of the community and the industrialists of Uitenhage."

The letter criticised the work-stoppages at Goodyear because it was "undermining the credibility and good understanding that has been built up by the Uitenhage branch industrialists and COSATU/UDF .. the action at Tycon Goodyear is totally unacceptable and is contrary to the spirit in which all the negotiations were conducted."

MCI appealed to Gomomo to "discuss the situation with Tycon Goodyear shop stewards to see how this type of incident can be prevented from re-occurring."

The common theme running through both letters is that because employers brought peace to Uitenhage townships thus saving black lives, the unions were obliged to bring 'peace' to the shop-floor, thus saving profits. For the employers the peace settlement was not limited to the feud between COSATU/UDF and PAM, but also involved a truce between capital and labour. For the employers the "interests of the community and the industrialists of Uitenhage" are similar - peace and profits.

The strategy pursued by

employers in the Eastern Cape appears to be to use the media's extensive reporting of the growing rapport between progressive political organisations and business at national level, to demand that unions deliver stability and harmony on the shop-floor as a contribution to this development. For the employers, workers who continue to wage struggles on the shop floor are out of step with the politics of the MDM.

Unions and the UDF

Historically there have been tensions between the unions and political/community organisations in Port Elizabeth (see D. Pillay, 'Unions and Community in Conflict', *WIP* No. 35). The MDM has intervened in the recent wave of strikes. In some cases this has been initiated by management, who seem to have contacts within the MDM, at other times the call for MDM involvement has come from workers themselves.

In the case of the SAPPI Novoboard strike, the union approached the MDM and a joint delegation met the management. At Aberdare Cables some workers by-passed union structures and approached the UDF to intervene.*

What appears to be happening is that UDF intervention is ad-hoc and COSATU and UDF do not

have a co-ordinated strategy in approaching the strikes .

The danger of ad-hoc UDF interventions and of negotiating with management without union involvement is that it could create the space for management to undermine the base of unions. Management already feels that their relationship with the UDF is much warmer than with the unions, and they feel much more comfortable negotiating with UDF leaders. It is incumbent upon the UDF that in their effort to build a closer relationship with business, they do not fall prey to widening the division between union and political organisations. The priority is not relations with business, but to hammer out a democratic, honest and accountable relationship with COSATU that is grounded in unified mass action.

However, a new organisational form has emerged to facilitate a united and co-ordinated response to bosses. A joint strike committee has been formed to build solidarity with dismissed strikers. Importantly, the committee provides for UDF involvement in proposed negotiations with MCI, both COSATU and UDF regional office bearers will be included in the delegation.

Both unions and the UDF are acutely aware of the need for a united front approach. UDF Eastern Cape Publicity

* UDF and MDM has been used inter-changeably. Whilst the MDM was supposed to encompass COSATU, its leading figures were overwhelmingly from the UDF. The Eastern Cape UDF was 'resurrected' at the end of February.

Secretary, Mkhuseleli Jack, explains that when UDF and COSATU combine: "There is always, from the look of things, some sort of fear, or respect from the bosses because they fear the power of the two. If it is the UDF alone, or COSATU alone, the bosses have the tendency of applying delaying tactics or trying to use divisive methods."

Both NUMSA and CWIU officials expressed similar sentiments.

Plan of Action

The joint strike committee, consisting of workers from Aberdare Cables, Welfit Oddy, SAPPI Waste and EH Walton has drawn up a programme of action designed to build solidarity with dismissed strikers.

The committee planned a joint general meeting of stri-

kers to draw up demands which they were to hand to the MCI after a march. Workers demands are that negotiations be re-opened where they have broken down, that dismissed workers be reinstated, and that all disputes be settled by 20 March. They also decided to hold a formal meeting with the MCI at which employers will be asked to put pressure on affected companies to resolve the disputes.

A solidarity rally organised by COSATU and the UDF is to be held on March 21, at which a report back from the meeting with the MCI is to be given. At this rally workers will be able to plan further action if no settlement has been secured.

In accordance with the principle of unity in action, the joint strike committee agreed to recommend to a

general meeting of strikers that a procedure be set up whereby any settlements between companies and affiliates during the course of the campaign will need to be approved by a joint general meeting of all strikers.

The march

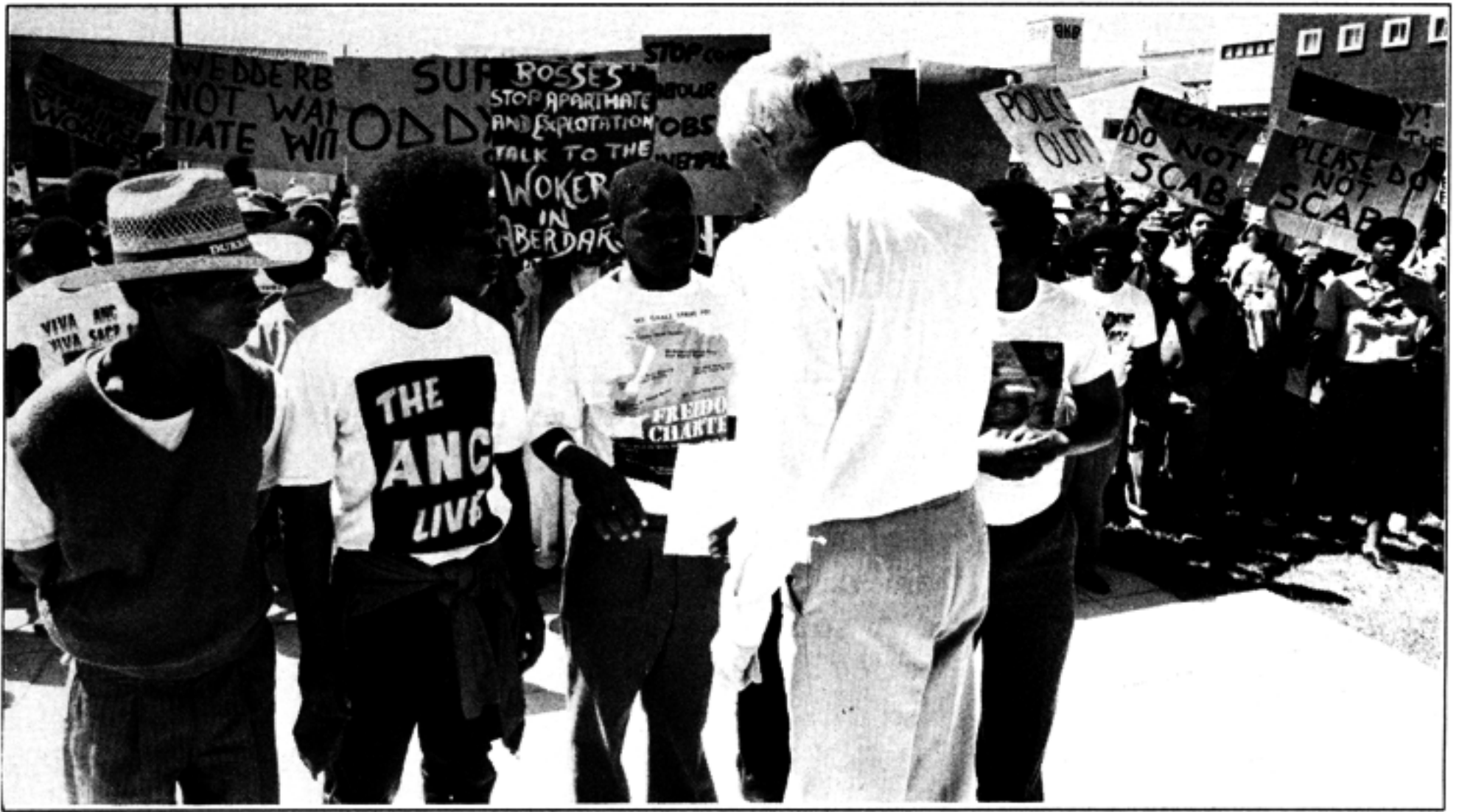
More than 10 000 dismissed workers participated in a march on 12 March, which was organised by the Joint Strike Committee.

Strikers met at the Co-operative Centre amidst a very strong police presence. The police were equipped with two van loads of barbed wire and four caspirs. Undaunted by the police presence, the strikers marched on to the headquarters of employers, the Midland Chamber of Industries. Shop stewards presented a memo-



Volkswagen workers gather after their plant was closed

Photo: Peter auf der Heyde/Afrapix



After a march through the city, worker representatives hand a list of demands to a member of the Midlands Chamber of Industries

Photo: Peter auf der Heyde/Afrapix

randum to MCI representatives. This is the first stage of a plan to build unity amongst strikers and also with community based organisations.

The march indicates a growing trend for police to assume a greater interventionist role in trying to intimidate striking workers. Unions fear that the present strategic offensive by the police may precipitate violent confrontation.

Earlier on the same day VW in Uitenhage re-opened its doors and workers assumed full production.

Conclusions

It would seem that the new political climate prevailing in this country has had an effect on the working class. On the one hand, employers have, to a large extent, joined the general trend towards an openness and

an accepting of previously unacceptable ideas and organisations. Recent industrial action taken by workers in the Eastern Cape, however, shows that this ends as soon as it leaves the overtly political sphere. Once profits are threatened, management reverts to the old way of thinking.

On the other hand, the current climate has meant that workers have become more militant in their dealing with employers. Whereas they would have previously accepted certain issues, they are now willing to go on strike to push their demands through. It is not surprising that the majority of strikes were over worker rights. As a result of the new climate, the space between the political activities of workers and their economic activities has become even more blurred than it was previously, and it is hardy

worthwhile to differentiate between the two. Management however has not moved along similar lines.

It has become imperative that a working alliance is built between community-based mass organisations and worker organisations, to defend the advantages gained on the political field and carry them through onto the factory floor. At times this might mean that community based organisations need to side with workers, even at the risk of upsetting broader alliances with management and capitalist organisations such as the Chamber of Industries and Chamber of Commerce.

Stop press: The joint strike committee has initiated a joint UDF - COSATU forum. This will meet every two weeks to co-ordinate strategy. The MDM is thus taking concrete form. ☆

The Phalaborwa printing co-op: born out of war

After bitter struggles against mining companies, police and Renamo, dismissed mineworkers decided to establish a co-operative. KATE PHILIP, co-ordinator of co-ops at NUM, describes the struggles that led to this decision.

The National Union of Mine-workers started organising at Foskor in Phalaborwa in early 1984. "During that time it wasn't so simple to organise workers," explains Charles Ramahlalerwa, former shop-steward chair from Foskor, and now chair of PAWCO. But by late 1984, the NUM had organised majority support at key mines in the region.

Workers strike to free Ramaphosa

In late 1985, Cyril Ramaphosa, NUM General Secretary, visited the region to meet with worker representatives. During the meeting Lebowa police detained him. "Those of us in the office scattered in all directions to find workers coming off their shifts - to all the bus routes and taxi ranks. Workers said they would never go to work until he is released,"

explains Stanley Matebula, a former Foskor shopsteward, who is now secretary of PAWCO.

Ramaphosa was released later that day - but shopstewards were unable to get the message to all workers in time for their next shift, because many had gone home. Three-hundred-and-eighty-nine workers who did not arrive for work were dismissed.

In a court settlement, Foskor management agreed to reinstate the workers when they had vacancies. But they failed to keep the agreement. NUM members at Foskor continued to struggle around the reinstatement issue. On 12 December they decided on a three-hour work stoppage, during which they stayed at the hostel. Foskor management gave workers a 12 noon deadline to be back at work or face dismissal. But only half the usual number of buses ar-

rived to fetch them from the hostels.

Workers refused to board, because they saw this as a tactic to divide them. By the time all eleven buses arrived, time was running out. And when they arrived at Foskor's entrance, management had set up a road-block of road-graders and caterpillars, and security was out in force. They told the workers the buses could only go in one at a time.

Angry workers walk home

Workers were convinced this was a trick. "We were quite sure and aware that only two or three buses can get in before the deadline. Workers were very angry. They alighted from the buses, and just started to march back to Namakgale on foot. The police were escorting us and trying to persuade us to board the buses to take us back to the

hostel. But even though Namakgale is far, and there were some old men, and it was raining, workers refused."

When they arrived at the entrance to the township, Lebowa police ambushed them. "We tried to say no, we are not fighting, but if you try to explain something you get a sjambok. Workers were beaten, many were injured, we were all forced to scatter and seek refuge in the community." Later that day, workers regrouped at the hostel, and decided to go on strike.

Community feeds strikers

"After the first three days management realised that now we are serious, and they stopped supplying us with meals, and started to charge workers R1,50 for a plate of food. It was then that we had to rely on support from the community. The community realised that we are not wrong, and in fact the mine has wronged many people in the community. So when people came to speak to their relatives at the fence we told them not just to bring a small plate of food, but to bring a huge pot of porridge for everyone to share. Even people without relatives were bringing food to us. And the businessmen donated bread and fruits so we didn't go hungry."

Every day, management threatened workers with dismissals if they did not return to work by certain deadlines. "Some workers started to be afraid, when they heard these



things on the loudspeaker - and not everyone can be brave. Some of them have been cowards since the day they were born. So we decided we have to sing at all times, so when management announces their threats on the loudspeaker, not even the cowards can hear what they are saying. So we sang the whole day and the whole night in shifts."

After seven days in which no amount of threatening seemed able to break the spirit of the workers, the police adopted a new strategy. "They started to attack the members of the community who were supporting us with food, sjambokking and preventing them from reaching us."

Strike settled, new strike

Finally after ten days, workers agreed to mediation with management. Their demands were for the reinstatement of all workers, and the recognition of the union. They lost both these demands, but they did win reinstatement for the workers who took part in the ten day strike.

However when they returned to work, five key NUM shop stewards were transferred to work chopping bushes in the mountains. They

were guarded by armed security guards, as if they were convicts. This continued for a number of weeks. One day, one of the workers was separated from the rest for being 'cheeky'. He was assaulted, and his hand was broken. When an attempt was made later to separate another of the workers, they refused. They were dismissed. The next day the Foskor workforce clocked in and then downed tools, demanding the reinstatement of the five.

That night, Foskor workers joined workers from Phalaborwa Mining Company (PMC) in a meeting. Police arrived to disperse the gathering, fired teargas into the crowd and then opened fire, killing a worker.

War in Namakgale

This incident sparked a war in the Namakgale community. Police recruited the assistance of Renamo soldiers from their secret training camp nearby. But for the people of Namakgale it is no secret that South Africa has been training Renamo to wage war on Mozambique. They are used to uniformed Renamo soldiers throwing their weight around in the township.

The police and soldiers ran amok in Namakgale. Two people were killed, some lost eyes, others were left with broken limbs. The community was outraged. Even the school-children said, "We can't go to school while we are being harassed."

Then on March 14, police

opened fire on people returning from a night vigil for those killed, and Renamo bandits killed a member of the Namakgale Youth Congress (NAYCO). A week later, the Lebowa police and Renamo bandits surrounded the Lutheran church where NAYCO was holding a meeting. A sixteen-year-old girl was shot dead, scores were wounded and 29 youths were arrested. That night, Renamo bandits attacked the hotel, where the owner, a UDF supporter, had allowed youths to take refuge. A youth congress member was killed by a Renamo hand-grenade in the incident.

That night the youth struck back in defence of their community. Two policemen's houses were burnt down, a Renamo bandit was killed and Mercedes Benz cars owned by Renamo soldiers were burnt and used as road-blocks to prevent police and Renamo vehicles moving freely in the township.

"Then the Renamos went to a village called Lulekane, because they had heard we were hiding there. They threw a hand-grenade, killing five people and injuring others." Two more died on their way to the hospital.

Stayaway leads to dismissals

Against the backdrop of this township siege, NUM workers supported the national stayaway call on May 1. The entire Foskor workforce of 1 800 workers was dismissed. After negotiations

with the NUM, management agreed to reinstate - but when workers arrived, 390 were turned away.

"It was clear in our region that the NUM was not wanted by management, and we did not think we will get our jobs back. So we started to look at the idea of a co-op, no matter that some didn't believe in it. But some of us did understand that if we can operate the promised co-op, it will help to strengthen the union in our region, and help us to support our families - no matter how the salary may be, even if it's not fixed or monthly." ☆

Workers in control at Phalaborwa

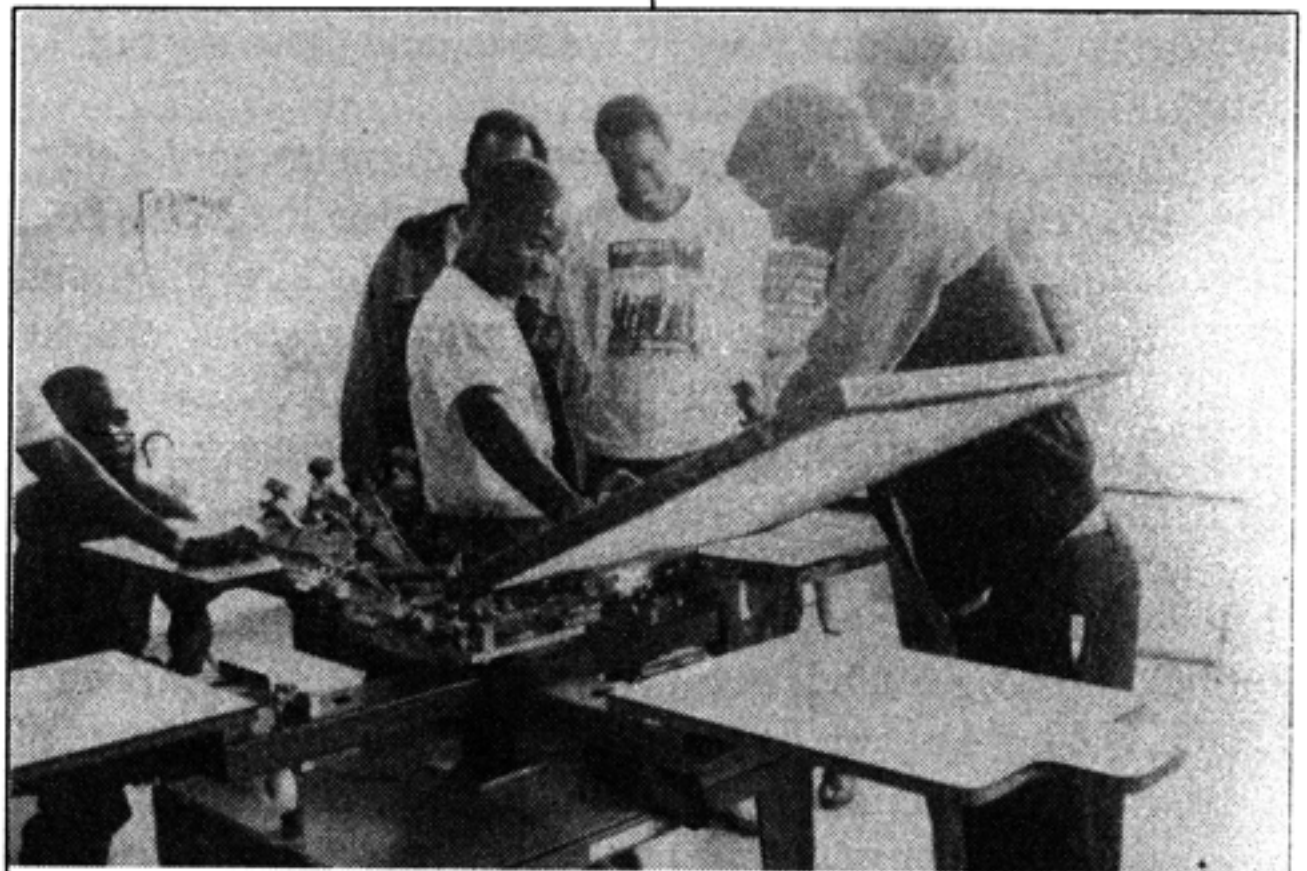
So the idea of starting a workers co-op was born out of the war in Phalaborwa. A group of former Foskor shopstewards were the motor force behind the establishment of the Phalaborwa Workers Co-op (PAWCO). The NUM

NEC backed the idea of setting up a co-op, and on the basis of T-shirt sales within the union, it seemed that there was a sufficient market for a T-shirt project. But setting up the project was not an easy task. Workers were scattered and many were trying to find work - although this was disheartening: "If you look for a job, you'll never find one if you were dismissed from Foskor. They just think you are a terrorist."

The dismissed workers continued to hold regular meetings to discuss and plan the establishment of the project. It was decided that the initial project membership would be open to those who regularly attended meetings.

Where to start?

In September 1987, the carousel T-shirt printer was bought, and workers went to Johannesburg for training by the supplier. The training lasted three hours. "When the machine arrived in Phalabor-



Co-op members set up the carousel before starting to print

Photo: NUM

wa, we had to ask ourselves who is going to connect it? We phoned the company to get the instructions. But where to start? We discussed how to do it, and looked at our notes, but it was tough - very tough. When we managed to connect it we tried to print, but it wouldn't come. But we kept trying. We were pulling hard. There was a lot to be done, and we didn't have our own transport - we just used our own few cents to get quotes for electricity, plumbing and carpentry.

"By this time we were 25, because the news had gone out that the machine had arrived. We needed a plumber but members resolved not to just rely on other people - we've got our own hands - let's take a spade and dig ourselves.

Lazy workers discharge themselves

"Then when we started digging, some workers were lazy, and refused to dig the hole. So when we'd finished, we met, and we decided those workers who were lazy had just discharged themselves from the co-op. Because we had resolved together that we all have to dig, that we have to do the work ourselves, and not wait for someone else to do it for us."

Members from PAWCO then visited the Sarmcol Workers Co-op to get advice. In March 1988, they started production, nearly three years after workers' dismissal from Foskor. PAWCO started with fifty members, working on a



PAWCO members sing to welcome SARMCOL Co-op workers who have come to discuss future relations between the two co-ops and to offer assistance.

Photo: NUM

half-time basis to share the available jobs.

In the first few months, PAWCO experienced many of the problems that so often limit the economic viability of co-op projects. "When we look at the difficulties in setting up a co-op, we can start with capital, and secondly we come to skills. These two are the major problems - know-how as to what to do, how to plan - those are the difficulties we face, and those are big."

Lack of management skills

Production was often held up through lack of planning; raw materials would run out before new stock was ordered, and the co-op had no system for invoicing customers and no strategy for debt collection. At first many of the members saw their responsibilities only in terms of producing, not in terms of these other aspects of the overall control of the enterprise.

"Payment was difficult to come. We found we keep on printing T-shirts and sending them to the regions but little money came back. And if some came back, it was not the whole amount."

These problems all come from the lack of management in the co-op. Members had experience of fighting management's authority in the mines, but not of building a democratic alternative; and the organisational skills learnt in trade union struggles did not equip workers with the skill needed to run a co-operative.

Wages cause tensions

As a result of these problems, PAWCO was unable to generate enough income to pay wages. The issue of wages caused many tensions in the project. Not all of the members were clear that wages had to come out of the income earned by the co-operative.

"Some members were saying the committee should go to Jo'burg to demand wages from NUM, as if NUM was our employer. And many were pointing fingers at the executive, saying 'We produced many T-shirts this month, now what did you do with the money?' And when it came to deciding what to share between us, some members just wanted to divide everything in the account, not thinking how much will we need to buy T-shirts and paints for the coming month?"

The decision to work in the co-operative had not been an active political choice for all the members. Some joined simply because they had no other options. Such members were not always committed enough to shoulder the extra responsibilities needed to make the co-op work.

In addition, the decision to work half-time to share the jobs available, made it even more difficult for members to survive off the income from the co-op, and members were suffering. At the same time, there was not enough work for everyone to do.

PAWCO starts to tackle problems

In October 1988, the co-op started to tackle all these problems. Firstly, PAWCO members identified education as one of their key priorities: "We are really in need of education. We need co-op education for the members, we need skills training for the committees, we need much education. Even now we can-

not say we can run this co-op."

A series of co-op education programmes and planning workshops were run with the project. One of the important aims was to make sure all the members understood the relationship between how many T-shirts were produced, the costs of production, the income the co-op could expect, and the wages that it would be able to pay. Members started to see

just doesn't come back to the co-op. So now, if a region has an order for T-shirts, they must arrange accommodation for one comrade from the co-op, to come with this order, and then he stays there, sells those T-shirts, and deposits the cash. We have eight members out in the regions doing sales on a full-time basis." This has dramatically improved PAWCO's sales returns.

PAWCO members also



Co-op members watch a demonstration of quality control.

Photo: NUM

the link between production targets, and different potential wage rates. And they also came to understand that it is no good producing without selling - and that nobody besides the co-op members themselves was going to chase customers who had not paid.

So PAWCO developed a marketing strategy which uses the over-supply of labour in PAWCO in a productive way: "We found that workers are buying many T-shirts in the regions, but the money

decided that their structure was an obstacle to efficient management. The co-op had nine committees, with five members on each; so forty-five out of fifty workers were committee members.

Instead, PAWCO now elects three people to each of the following committees: marketing, production, finance, welfare and education. The chairs of these committees make up a Co-ordinating Committee, which is the day-to-day management structure in the co-op.

Building unity and collective responsibility

Along with these practical strategies, PAWCO has emphasised building unity and collective responsibility in the co-op. These measures have paid off. Since the start of 1989, PAWCO has been financially self-sufficient; it has paid back the loans given by NUM, it has paid wages consistently, and the wage rates in the co-op have steadily increased. Workers earned an average of R400 a month over the last five months, and were able to pay themselves R1 000 Christmas bonus. All 50 members now work full time.

"We share our wages equally but we share them according to hours. At the end of the month, we go to the bank and see how much is there. Then we check the expenditure and the income and the outcome; we see we are owing so much to this company and so much to that one, this customer has not bothered to pay us, and of course we must leave something in the bank for reserve. Then we say okay we can afford to pay R2 an hour. Then we work out how much each person can share, according to the hours they have worked."

Members are earning more than the current minimum on the mines, and significantly more than on the farms, which is the other main employment option in the region. But earning a living wage remains an important target of the co-op. "We do believe we will get there some day," says PAWCO's Chair.

A member of the Welfare Committee explains:
"The co-op has taught me unionism; it has taught me to work with other people in co-operation. And it has tried to upgrade my knowledge through discussion, through the way in which we are working in the co-op. It means if I was still in Foskor, I am sure I would not speak in the right way that I am now speaking. Even the feelings I've got are not the same. Before maybe I would be afraid of practising something but now it has become less, less, less. I think the co-op is upgrading me - I'm going up and meanwhile my problems are just going down."

"Something beyond money"

"In checking with comrades whether they would go back to the old narrow work that is known as being employed, if they had the option, comrades are saying it would be a drawback for the struggle for them to go back. The co-op doesn't only offer money, it offers a sense of being involved in the struggle and pushing the struggle forward ... There is something beyond money that we get here."

Members rate the control they now have over their lives as a strong advantage of work in the co-op. A member of the Education Committee explains:

"I feel it is very, very nice to be a member of the co-operative. Because I'm working nicely, I'm controlling myself, I haven't got any boss - my boss is only the job that I'm doing. And then I've got a lot of time on my hands... There is freedom and you are responsible for your life. You can use your time the way you want to use it and you earn on the basis of that time. So the theme that is right to develop is the question of responsibility."

Disciplinary code - building spirit of co-operation

PAWCO's attempt to build a sense of collective responsibility and respect for each other is clear from the disciplinary code they have drawn up. This code gives standard penalties for things like drunkenness, absenteeism and theft, and these are strictly dealt with; but the



The 1989 Co-ordinating Committee of PAWCO

Photo: NUM

code also identifies offences that are seen to break down unity and the spirit of co-operation in the co-op. Co-op members see that certain attitudes can be just as destructive to the co-op as late-coming or loafing.

"When the co-op started, we had that problem of tribalism which the co-op sat down and decided to do something about. And when we spoke, we decided that we should all unite as one person. We shouldn't discriminate amongst ourselves on the basis of tribalism. And then we agreed that a person who is found insulting another on the basis of his tribe, that person will be disciplined."

There are also penalties for insulting another co-op member while on duty, for undermining decisions of the committees, for intimidation, and for fighting between members.

According to a member of

the Education Committee: "Frankly, relationships and the atmosphere that you see, which is more healthy here, goes a long way. We think that the basic point where it starts is with discipline, and the rules laid down by the members as the co-op has developed."

Personal and social well-being comes first

Disciplinary issues are handled by the Welfare Committee, and the co-op had developed ways of mediating conflict and dealing with social problems faced by members, within an overall framework of disciplinary guidelines. But concern for the emotional and social well-being of the members comes first. A member of the Education Committee explains:

"The Welfare Committee is committed to your personal life. If you have a problem at home, you go through the

Welfare Committee and explain why you want two days, or three weeks, or one month off. Then they will discuss with you and find out whether it is necessary for them to help you with a loan or in some way...And if a member is a latecomer, the Welfare Committee will not just discipline them, they will first discuss his personal problems at home, to understand that he has this and this reason for latecoming, which they will understand." * ☆

Production Co-ops - some strategic questions

KATE PHILIP

assesses the issues faced by trade unions involved in co-op development in SA. She argues that production co-ops should not become a welfare strategy - this undermines their economic and political potential.

NUM has learnt many valuable lessons from PAWCO. These have helped us to develop our co-op strategies in Lesotho, the Transkei (SA), and Swaziland. But these experiences also raise broader questions and challenges that need to be widely discussed.

A number of COSATU affiliates have become involved in co-op development, and a

* Thanks to Leila Patel, Department of Social Work, University of the Witwatersrand, for use of the transcripts of her interviews with PAWCO members.

sector of co-ops is therefore emerging with direct links to the trade union movement. This link makes the South African co-op movement different from that in other countries.

Co-op movements in other countries have developed alliances with the trade union movement, but they have seldom been structurally linked to the trade unions. In South Africa too there are many co-ops which are not linked to trade unions.

However, this link has the potential to become a political strength for both the co-ops and the trade unions. At the same time, it raises new issues that need to be discussed.

So far, the trade unions involved in co-op development have mainly focussed on the role of *production* co-ops, which have been seen as having the potential to create jobs for workers faced with dismissals or mass retrenchment. In this article, I look at some of the contradictions and challenges this strategy creates for the trade union movement.

Job creation , with a difference.

Production co-ops do have the potential to create jobs on workers' own terms. They can provide an alternative to the authoritarian control and exploitation of work in the factories and mines, because workers get the opportunity to build democratic forms of ownership and control of the means of production - even if it is only inside individual produc-

tion units, rather than at a social level.

In the process, the unions have expected to learn practical lessons about building democratic control in production. They hope these lessons can be used both to strengthen the potential of a co-op sector in a future mixed economy, as well as to provide insights into aspects of workers control of production under socialism.

However, for co-ops to do this, they need to be economically viable enterprises, able to survive in the competitive capitalist context of South Africa today.

For NUM, co-op development is also part of our strategy against the migrant labour system. NUM argues that workers will be forced to continue migrating to the urban areas until they can find jobs in the rural areas. Co-op development in these areas can make some contribution to creating such alternatives, in a way that empowers workers and their community.

Co-ops can play these economic and political roles; but we need to develop a clear analysis of their limitations - because the process of setting up co-ops can also divide workers, and create political contradictions for the unions involved. The role of co-ops in job creation raises some particularly difficult organisational questions.

Firstly, co-ops cannot create a large number of jobs. Most retrenchments or dismissals involve hundreds or thousands of workers. But production co-ops are not

mass organisations. There are very few in South African today with more than 50 members.

Secondly, co-ops need skills. It takes months of research, organisation, and training to set up a co-op, and several more before it can generate an income for its members. Special skills - and experience - are needed to develop management that is democratic and is also efficient. And it requires a lot of resources from the unions to assist each co-op.

At this stage, there is a shortage of the skills and infrastructure needed to support co-ops on a large scale. But the biggest obstacle limiting the potential of co-ops to create jobs on a mass scale is the shortage of capital. NUM's experience is a good example. In the 1987 mineworkers strike, 50 000 workers were dismissed. Of these, 20 000 workers were not selectively reinstated by management. Many of these workers looked to NUM to create jobs for them by setting up co-ops.

But to set up any enterprise, you need capital; and co-ops are no exception. The Small Business Development Corporation has estimated that it costs at least R2 500 to create one job - and this does not include the costs of training.

It often costs more to set up co-ops than capitalist companies, because workers have to learn management skills as well as production skills. But if we use the SBDC's figure, then to create jobs for the wor-



The problem of unemployment - but the creation of jobs should not be the main reason for starting a co-op

Photo: Steve Hilton-Barber/Afrapix

kers dismissed in the 1987 strike, NUM would need to raise at least R50 million!

In 1988, 50 000 more jobs were lost through retrenchments in the mining industry alone. From these figures, it is clear why the 1989 Cosatu Congress motion on co-ops says: "Co-ops cannot create jobs for all. To do this, we need the political power to restructure the economy, and to use the wealth of the nation to serve the needs of the people as a whole."

The trade unions therefore need to guard against raising unrealistic expectations among workers about how many jobs the unions can create by setting up co-ops. The unions cannot afford to shoulder responsibility for job creation, and raising such expectations can create serious

organisational problems for us.

So, establishing co-ops should never be seen as the main way to resist retrenchments or dismissals. These struggles and the struggle against unemployment must be rooted in a broader political and economic challenge aimed at capital and the state. It is *their* policies that have created the problem, and at present, they monopolise the power and the profits needed to solve it.

Co-op wage policies

The second key issue that needs discussion is the question of co-op wage policies. Sometimes, co-ops take on more people than they actually need for production, to create more jobs. This lowers the wage levels for all the

members.

Some people argue that this is necessary, because it is better for co-ops to provide a subsistence income for as many workers as possible, rather than a living wage for a few.

This is a serious issue for debate. Tens of thousands of trade union members are being shuttled off to the bantustans and neighbouring states, with little chance of future employment, no means of subsistence, and no welfare provisions provided by the state.

Under these conditions, there is pressure for as many people as possible to share the income created through co-op development. Where unemployment is the grim alternative, workers may decide to spread the benefits by

pushing co-op wages well below what they would have accepted in the mines or industry.

A co-op set up on these terms is really filling a gap created by the abysmal lack of welfare provisions for unemployed workers. While this gap clearly needs to be filled, it is questionable whether production co-ops are the best way to do this. And in fact, this strategy can undermine the co-ops potential to succeed both economically and politically.

Economic viability

Co-ops have to be economically viable enterprises, able to survive competition from capitalist companies. This means they have to be able to match the quality and prices of goods produced by capitalist companies - but usually with less sophisticated machinery, and without the skills and infrastructure that capitalist companies have on their side. In these conditions, production co-ops often face an uphill struggle to survive.

If the co-op employs more workers than are needed in relation to its production output, it will find it difficult to keep its prices at market levels, and still cover its costs. As a result, it will be difficult for the members to earn more than a low-level subsistence income, or even to be sure of a wage every week. This has a number of political and economic consequences for the co-op:

- Co-op members may resort to self-exploitation to secure a survival wage; they may end up working longer hours than unionised workers would accept, for the same starvation wages paid by the bantustan factories which the trade unions are fighting.
- Where co-op members are living hand to mouth, it is less likely that the members will see expenditure on safety in the workplace as important. It also becomes more difficult for members to accept the need for reserve funds or for expenditure on the maintenance of machinery. Debates over such issues also have the potential to cause tensions between leadership with a more long-term view, and members who may be facing immediate financial and family pressures.
- These and other pressures can also lead the more skilled members in the co-ops to look for other jobs. Subsistence-level survival is no long-term solution for workers; it can only be seen as a temporary and undesirable situation. The more skilled members of the co-op will more easily find other jobs, and as a result, the co-op will struggle to develop a layer of skilled membership.

Yet building a viable worker-controlled sector of the economy requires the development of many skills.

This is necessarily a long-term process, and can only take place if there is a continuity of membership and leadership.

So if co-ops draw in more members than are really needed, it becomes less likely that they will ever become truly self-sufficient; instead, they may become dependent on outside funding. This can in turn distort the relationship with the trade union, which may hold the purse strings for such funding - either directly or indirectly.

Political problems

In addition, such conditions can jeopardise the political potential of co-op development. Where co-op members are barely winning the struggle for survival, it is not uncommon for a kind of economism to develop in a co-op. Democratic control, skills development, member participation, broader political engagement and the development of the human potential of the members all take a back seat to narrower priorities of production and survival.

In addition, where co-ops are battling for survival, the trade unions may be faced with serious differences between the conditions of work that have been won by their members in the mines and factories, and the conditions of work of their members in the co-ops. In addition, the conditions of work in the co-ops may resemble conditions in the deregulated businesses that COSATU is fighting.

This has the potential to

create a political contradiction for the trade unions. Capital is encouraging deregulation and is fighting minimum wages on the basis that such measures stifle job creation.

They recognise the unemployment crisis is threatening political stability and therefore also profits. The short term solution is to provide greater welfare benefits - but capitalists refuse to contemplate this for the simple reason that it would mean substantial taxation of their profits.

Instead, they are pegging their hopes on strategies of job creation based on deregulated small business development, where workers are unprotected and earn well below union rates. They argue that any job is better than no job at all. But the creation of jobs on these terms also has a number of advantages for them.

Dangers of deregulation

Firstly, it lessens the pressure for capitalists to use their profits to pay for adequate welfare for the unemployed.

Secondly, these deregulated small businesses are harder for the trade unions to organise and they can undercut union wage rates and the existing safety standards. The creation of such a "second economy" would also mean big business could cut their costs and increase their profit by sub-contracting some of their production to these small businesses. The result would be more retrenchments, and a further weakening of the power of the unions on the

factory floor.

The job creation strategies developed by the trade unions must take this broader battle with capital into account. Co-satu is fighting deregulation; we must therefore ensure that our own strategies of job creation do not inadvertently strengthen capital's arguments.

The need for clear aims

This means that we need to be clear about our aims in building co-ops, and distinguish between different levels of our strategy. At one level, there is a need to create jobs.

But we face enormous limitations in doing so on a mass scale, and as a result, thousands of people are faced with the more immediate issue of survival. These are two aspects of the same problem; but this doesn't mean the same organisational strategies can be applied to both situations.

If our co-op development strategies are aimed at *job creation*, then the challenge we face is to build production co-ops that *challenge* capital's deregulated model. We must build viable and productive units that not only create jobs that equal minimum trade union standards, but that do so under workers' control, allowing workers to reach their full human potential in the ways that PAWCO is starting to do.

This is a long, slow process; and in the short term, this strategy holds out direct benefits for only a limited number

of workers, for the reasons already explained. However, it does have the potential to provide a sound economic and political base for the growth of a viable co-op sector in the long term.

On the other hand, if our priority is to contribute to the subsistence of the largest possible numbers of unemployed workers, then it is doubtful whether *production* co-ops are the best starting point for this process. In fact, as explained, the attempt to use production co-ops as a strategy for survival can undermine both their economic and political potential.

Instead, we need to discuss the potential of related but less ambitious forms of collective and co-operative organisation, that take account of the resources we *do* have at our disposal, but are realistic about our potential to mobilise capital, and to develop the skills base required. This requires creative thinking; and a closer look at pre-co-operative forms of organisation, as well as secondary and service co-ops.

NUM is grappling with these issues at present; while we are continuing with our job creation strategies, we are also exploring other forms of organisation, of the kind that can involve large numbers of people in collective activity, and assist in the struggle for survival. ☆

Sanctions against apartheid

EDDIE WEBSTER
reviews *Sanctions
against apartheid* *
while contributing to the
debate himself.**

The dramatic announcements by President de Klerk on 2 February, have decisively shifted the debate away from *pressure* on South Africa to *negotiations*. Jubilant businessmen now await the lifting of sanctions.***

Indeed these reforms have come very close to meeting conditions laid down by the US government for doing so. It is widely believed that events have overtaken the sanctions strategy. However, *Sanctions against apartheid* challenges this comfortable conclusion.

The idea of sanctions

The idea of economic sanctions emerged inside South Africa in the 1950's as one way of putting pressure on the apartheid state. Through sanctions the liberation movement hoped to increase the

cost of maintaining apartheid, thus persuading the government to negotiate an end to it.

The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 was to change the strategy of peaceful extra-parliamentary pressure. The brutal crushing of the popular movements in the early 1960s forced the ANC and PAC underground and into exile. The exile movements turned to external pressure and guerrilla warfare as their main weapons against apartheid.

Anti-apartheid movements

At the same time anti-apartheid movements were established in most Western countries. The struggle against apartheid became the moral equivalent of the Spanish civil war in the 1930's, with democrats, liberals, communists and concerned Christians united in common abhorrence of white domination.

These anti-apartheid activists became important allies to the exiled political movement. They challenged liberal views

that economic growth would break down apartheid, arguing that foreign investment was reinforcing white supremacy. The international anti-apartheid movement provided the 'foot soldiers' for the campaign against the presence of multinational companies such as Barclays Bank, Shell, Ford and Mobil in South Africa.

Over time internal resistance to apartheid has re-emerged, at first with the democratic unions of the 1970's, and later with the growth of the mass democratic movement in the 1980's. This has had contradictory implications for the sanctions strategy. On the one hand, it has given an enormous boost to the call to isolate the South African regime, especially when overseas audiences see South African police shooting unarmed demonstrators on TV. On the other hand, increased resistance has raised the difficult question of how to link sanctions to the internal resistance movement.

At first in the 1970's overseas anti-apartheid groups and the liberation movement were sceptical of, or even hostile to, the new trade unions. Either, they argued, these organisations would be crushed or they would be co-opted. But over time the unions won the support and respect of the exiled leadership, especially after the formation of COSATU. For a while a natural partnership seemed to exist, with those outside South Africa work-

* Collection of essays edited by Mark Orkin (Johannesburg, David Philip, 1989)

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*** These include embargoes on trade, curtailing of foreign loans and trade credits, disinvestment (in which foreign companies close down or sell their South African operations) and divestment (in which shareholders pressurize companies by publicising the selling of their shares)



Shell - target for overseas anti-apartheid campaigners

Photo: Paul Weinberg/Afrapix

ing for sanctions and those inside confronting apartheid directly through building mass democratic organisations.

Sanctions not so simple

More recently, however, it has become clear that sanctions is not that simple. A key event was the disinvestment of General Motors in 1986. This caught the sanctions movement by surprise, as few expected disinvestment. The fact that disinvestments could be deceptive added to the confusion and anger.

The anti-apartheid movement had not analysed exactly what disinvestment might mean in practice. In essence, as Duncan Innes shows in his contribution to Orkin's book (pp 233-238), foreign companies were not withdrawing from South Africa, but *changing the form* of their involvement. When IBM 'disinvested' in October 1986, for example, it made a secret agreement with the South African offspring, ISM, to pro-

vide IBM products and services. IBM also signed a secret contract with ISM covering spares and repairs. Instead of IBM Corporation in the US gaining profits as owners of IBM SA, they now made profits by means of royalties, licence fees, etc.

In fact, this shift by multinationals from *direct* to *indirect* investment has become commonplace in the Third World. Over the last few years IBM has sold off its subsidiaries in India, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, while retaining access to these markets through agency agreements. At least 57 of the 114 American companies that 'disinvested' between 1 January 1986 and 30 April 1988 still kept some link - licensing, management and technology agreements, loans, product sales, buy-back clauses, etc - with their former South African subsidiary.

Views in the anti-apartheid movement hardened in the face of these sham disinvestments. As NUMSA education officer Alec

Erwin put it in his contribution to Orkin's book, 'We were faced with a situation where local companies were benefiting and where unions were not being consulted about this transfer of ownership. Corporate withdrawals were becoming a more complex variant of the endless retrenchment battles which unions had to fight. The success of the sanctions campaign had led to the very real threat of job losses. It now became necessary to carefully evaluate sanctions and discuss it amongst union members' (p 54). It is against this background that COSATU encouraged a number of studies on sanctions. *Sanctions against apartheid*, essays edited by Mark Orkin, is one of these. It is the first detailed consideration of the case for sanctions written inside SA.

Effective, indispensable and efficient

This informative study concludes that sanctions against apartheid are *effective, indispensable* and *efficient* in their contribution to the struggle to end apartheid and achieve majority rule. The costs of sanctions, notably extra unemployment, are outweighed by their contribution to the struggle against apartheid. How does Orkin reach this challenging conclusion?

The study provides two direct examples of the *effectiveness* of economic pressure. Rob Davies argues that the 1988 battle of Cuito Cuanvale, was a military setback which revealed technological weaknesses in the South African Defence Force, particularly the Air Force. These weaknesses, he argues, were the direct result of sanctions (p 201). The arms em-

bargo imposed by the United Nations in 1977 meant the SADF had no electronic answer to the Angolan SAMs (surface-to-air missiles). The SA Air Force began to lose control of the air. The SADF was faced with the likelihood of losing many white soldiers, especially conscripts, and withdrew at the battle of Cuito Cuanvale. Ultimately, Davies argues, sanctions - particularly the arms embargo - made victory impossible for the SADF. This paved the way for the negotiations that led to the independence of Namibia.

The most striking direct example of the effectiveness of sanctions is the debt crisis. By 1985, foreign debt equalled half of GDP. Two thirds was short term debt. Then in August 1985 the American bankers abruptly (after P W Botha's 'Rubicon' speech) refused to renew their loans to South African borrowers. The sanctions campaign, Alan Hirsh argues, helped not only to precipitate the debt crisis; it led directly to political reform when the Urban Foundation-led campaign to lift influx control succeeded in 1986 (p 270).

Orkin also argues that sanctions are *indispensable*. Tom Lodge, in his contribution to the study, argues that none of the forces for progressive change - organisation on the shop floor, mobilisation in the communities, and struggle by the liberation movements - has the power on its own to displace the regime. But all of them jointly, complemented by sanctions, do. Orkin concludes that sanctions are indispensable because "the desperate attempts of the state to accommodate, divide or resist the various forces impose

huge burdens on an ailing economy. With appreciable sanctions in place as well, these burdens will soon be insupportable".

Orkin argues that sanctions are *efficient* as well. The study rejects the popular argument that sanctions will disrupt the economies of the frontline states. Joe Hanlon concludes his chapter by arguing that it is South Africa itself that is the destabilising factor in the region. He argues that, far from sanctions ruining the economies of the frontline states, sanctions against South Africa could even benefit them. In this sense, sanctions provide an efficient method of weakening the apartheid regime.

Sanctions & unemployment

The study also deals with the widely accepted argument that sanctions will create extra unemployment. Charles Meth suggests in his contribution that the effects of sanctions on unemployment are greatly exaggerated. It is apartheid capitalism that has produced three million unemployed and continues to produce 200 000 black unemployed each year.

Although sanctions threatens certain hardships, writes Erwin, shop-steward leadership perceives that unemployment and poverty will not be eliminated unless there is a restructuring of the economy. This can only be achieved by removing the regime. In this sense sanctions are seen as a *solution* to the unemployment problem rather than the cause of it.

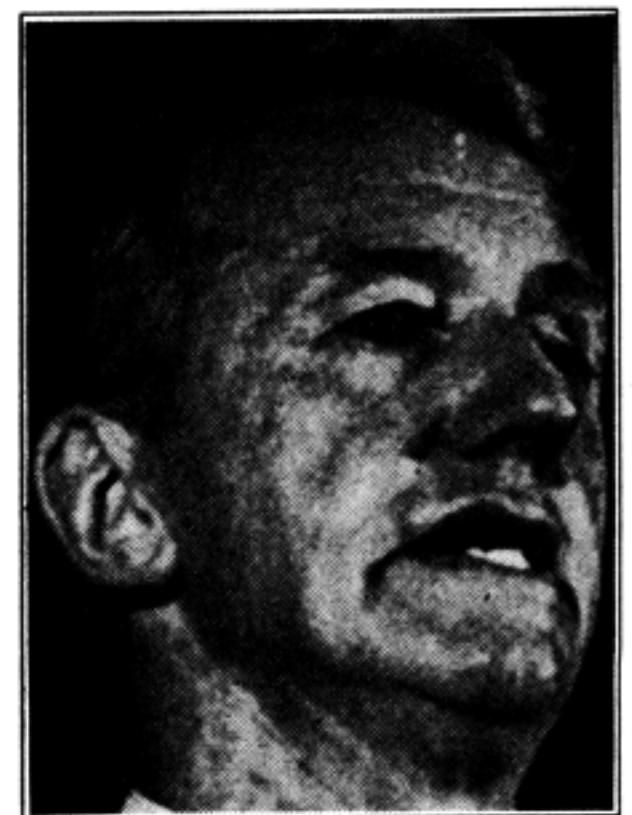
The lessons of Rhodesia

Orkin's book draws some important conclusions from the

experience of sanctions in Rhodesia. Three phases are identified by Joe Hanlon:

- the first few years when sanctions hurt slightly
- a second phase when the economy experienced rapid growth as Rhodesian factories made goods that were previously imported
- a third phase, after 1975, when sanctions became comprehensive. Two factors were important. Firstly, the US imposed a ban on ferrochrome, the country's chief mineral export. Secondly, South Africa reduced the flow of sanctions-busting oil and withheld loans, in the hope that Rhodesia's Ian Smith would install the 'moderate' Bishop Muzorewa as Prime Minister.

Hanlon concludes that if sanctions are *comprehensive and mandatory*, they cannot easily be evaded, and they will have quicker results. Besides, Orkin argues, sanctions will be more



SA, a target of sanctions', itself used them against Smith (above) in Rhodesia

Photo: Paul Weinberg/Atropix

effective in South Africa because

- the more highly industrialised South African economy is more dependent on imported high technology than Rhodesia was;
- local savings have been wasted buying up disinvesting foreign companies;
- South Africa does not have a supportive 'big brother';
- SA has the additional burden of the debt crisis.

What Orkin omits to mention is Richard Moorsom's contribution to the book. Moorsom argues that a ban on South Africa's gold, platinum and diamonds is unlikely in the foreseeable future. These are South Africa's major exports. If half of South Africa's export earnings are reasonably secure, is comprehensive sanctions a serious option? Is it useful to base an argument for sanctions on this option, as Orkin does?

However, Orkin makes an important point about negotiations and sanctions. Shrewdly drawing on a study of economic sanctions against Rhodesia by the current British Ambassador in Pretoria, Sir Robin Renwick, Orkin warns against seeing negotiations as a *substitute* for sanctions. Diplomatic initiatives, he says, *depend* upon sanctions. Negotiations will only be successful if enough real pressure is exerted. In Rhodesia, he says, lifting sanctions prematurely would have encouraged the government to avoid a settlement (p 33).

Difficult issues not addressed

It is tempting for sociologists to

take the comfortable career path of 'abstracted empiricism' or 'grand theory'. By choosing to intervene directly in one of the most hotly contested political debates in South Africa, Orkin has shown considerable courage.

The difficulties of producing such a book are increased by the speed of political developments in South Africa. However, in spite of the difficulties, *Sanctions against apartheid* is a persuasive book. The case for sanctions is presented in a convincing and coherent way. Nevertheless, there are a number of extremely important issues which Orkin does not deal with.

Unions and sanctions

Firstly, how are trade unions going to cope with the short-term effects of sanctions, including disinvestment? In *SA Review 5*, Glenn Adler addresses this question through examining the disinvestment of General Motors and Ford. He argues that problems arose because of the lack of effective links between internal and external groups. Ford successfully split the Samcor* workers and NUMSA from the US sanctions movement by threatening to cut ties and cripple, or even close, Samcor. Ford was pushing to reach agreement with NUMSA on a trust, and to gain US Congress approval of new investment by the company in South Africa. Adler shows that Ford successfully played off workers' fears of unemployment against the sanctions movement's call for a ban on links between Ford US and Samcor.

Future campaigns, he suggests, must be discussed and negotiated with worker representatives from inside South Africa. The sanctions movement must also find ways of improving the terms of disinvestment. There is also a need to look beyond disinvestment to the importance of continuing international solidarity work with South African unions (Adler 1989, pp 318-319).

The clearest attempt to make sure that disinvestment happens on terms favourable to workers, is the Chemical Workers Industrial Union campaign in 1988-9 (Rafel 1989, pp. 35-44). By using the threat of a national strike the CWIU succeeded in getting chemical companies to accept the need to negotiate the terms of disinvestment.

But as Debbie Budlender concludes in her critical checklist of disinvesting companies, "It is unlikely that any companies will act in a completely ideal manner. Companies exist to make profits, not to take part in the struggle for a new South Africa" (Budlender 1989, p.53).

Will sanctions undermine reconstruction?

The second issue that needs to be explored is the long-term effect of a successful sanctions campaign on a post-apartheid economy. Are we likely to regain the lost investment and trade after liberation, or are we going to 'inherit a wasteland' that cannot regain its economic strength? Sanctions may have contributed to the collapse of Rhodesia, but what effect has sanctions had on

* Samcor is the SA company, owned by Anglo American, which took over Ford's SA operation

the long-term prospects of the post-liberation Zimbabwean economy? Even if we get our politics right, the general shortage of long term capital for the developing world - especially since the opening up of investment opportunities in Eastern Europe - makes major investment in SA after liberation unlikely. Current research by the COSATU-commissioned Economic Trends project points to a long term decline in the South African economy, and a massive outflow of capital that started before the current disinvestment campaign.

Innes concludes his article by arguing that while disinvestment has failed in its short-term objectives, it may yet succeed over the longer term (p 238). The overall result of disinvestment, he argues, is that South Africa will become less competitive with its exports and will face more expensive imports. It will therefore be unable to acquire the foreign exchange that is crucial, both to buy capital equipment from overseas and to pay its massive debt. This does not mean, writes Innes, that the economy will collapse; but it will gradually and inevitably begin to grind down. Unemployment will rise, as will crime and violence.

The case for sanctions is that this 'grinding down' will lead eventually to whites 'coming to their senses'. There is some evidence that this is in fact beginning to happen. For the first time under Nationalist rule, economic issues played an important role in last year's parliamentary election. However, for every white who has come to realise the need for a negotiated settlement, two voted

to the right of the government. If sanctions is to be used to 'bring whites to their senses' then it will have to be used in a more targeted and conditional way.

Conditional and targeted sanctions

It is worth noting that 52% of the respondents in Orkin's 1987 survey of blacks in towns opted for *conditional* sanctions, ie imposing sanctions until the government meets certain conditions such as unbanning political movements. Only 29% took the more hardline view that sanctions should be applied unconditionally, ie sanctions must be applied until the government is forced to hand over power to representatives of the majority. Unfortunately Orkin conflates this crucial distinction between conditional and unconditional sanctions in his introduction to the book.

The recently completed Expert Study Group takes the sanctions debate one step forward by arguing for a *targeted* approach. They conclude their study for the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa with a plea for a targeted and practical package of measures, short of comprehensive sanctions. This would 'take advantage of the economic window of opportunity caused by the anticipated 1990-91 debt crisis. If widely and rapidly applied, this package should provide a catalyst for genuine negotiations' (Ramphal, 1989).

Sanctions and negotiations

During the 1980's the focus of the struggle against apartheid

moved from external pressure to internal resistance. What role sanctions will continue to play as we move into negotiations in 1990 is not yet clear. Indeed, sanctions is a difficult weapon to wield in a strategic way. This is because not all sanctioners have the same theories of how South African society works, and what counts as an acceptable alternative to it. These differences in aims are likely to come to the fore now that the negotiation process is beginning. Above all, international solidarity groups need to begin thinking beyond sanctions to the support that is necessary now that the reconstruction of South African society has begun.

However the lesson *Sanctions against apartheid* draws from Rhodesia is that sanctions were a vital part of the negotiation process. Indeed sanctions gave Smith the incentive to negotiate an acceptable settlement. If this assessment is correct then *Sanctions against apartheid* is an important political intervention that needs to be read carefully by all those concerned that the negotiation process does not stop short of a full political democracy. ☆

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Zimbabwe: the gulf widens

A shortened version of a report from Harare by MIKE HALL on the growing rift between President Robert Mugabe's ZANU Government and Zimbabwe's trade unions. The full article was published in *International Labour Reports*, Jan/Feb 1990

An "occupational hazard" was how Morgan Tsvangirai, Secretary - General of the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), described his five weeks detained by the Zimbabwean Government, accused of being a South African agent. He was freed on 14 November.

The detention of critics of President Robert Mugabe's Government seems to have become routine. Tsvangirai's case has highlighted the gulf between the avowedly socialist ruling ZANU Party and Zimbabwe's trade unions. Mugabe's popularity has waned, and the political climate is volatile. Against this backdrop, the ruling elite is unsure of how to handle the ZCTU - the umbrella body of 29 unions - which is increasingly independent and critical.

Observers are concerned that Tsvangirai's detention means the Government of

Zimbabwe is not prepared to allow the development of a genuine independent trade union movement which could oppose government policies more than by just issuing reports.

"Subversive"

Tsvangirai was arrested on 6 October for a press statement criticising the Government's handling of protests by Harare University students amid a general clampdown. He warned that attempts to suppress disenchantment over rising living costs, transport problems and unemployment would "certainly plunge the whole society into complete turmoil sooner rather than later". It had already brought about the naked use of brute state force and the suppression of individual rights, according to Tsvangirai.

Trade unions in Zimbabwe are weak. Unionisation is low (about 20% of workers in formal em-

ployment are union members). Most jobs are insecure because of unemployment, and most workers lack the political consciousness of their South African counterparts. Observers say Tsvangirai's call for action which the government deemed 'subversive' was rhetorical.

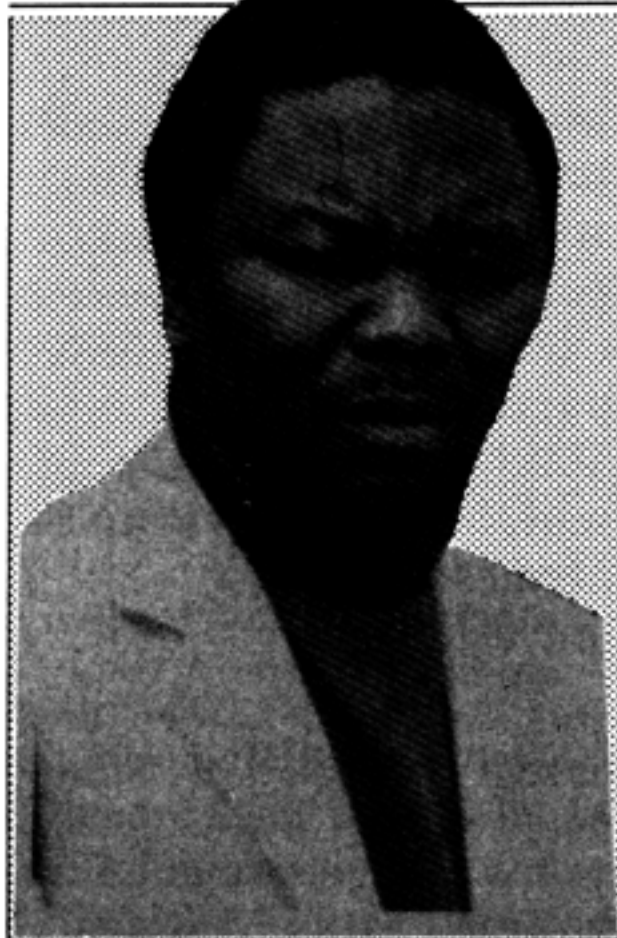
His detention was widely condemned within Zimbabwe as an affront to democracy. Numerous international labour organisations also strongly protested. The ZCTU campaigned for his release, although the organisation, close to the ruling party, probably tempered its response.

Dissatisfaction

Underlying the Government's intolerance of dissent is the volatile political climate in Zimbabwe. ZANU has been badly shaken by a corruption scandal last year involving the illegal sale of cars. Five cabinet ministers resigned, and one of them, a close associate of Mugabe and hero of the liberation struggle, committed suicide.

Still formally pledged to building a society based on Marxist - Leninist principles, Mugabe's ZANU has chosen a pragmatic capitalist path. Most of the structures of the old regime of Ian Smith remain intact and foreign multinationals are being encouraged to invest.

President Mugabe's aim is a one-party state, with a clear mandate to rewrite the Constitution after next April,



ZCTU Secretary-General
Morgan Tsvangirai

Photo: ZCTU

when the Lancaster House Agreement (which laid down certain conditions after independence such as protection for white farmers against having their land appropriated) expires.

His ZANU party (whose political base is the majority of Shona people) and its former arch-rival, Joshua Nkoma's ZAPU Party (centred on the minority Ndebele) are engaged in a delicate process of sealing a 1987 decision to merge.

However, former ZANU General - Secretary and close colleague of Mugabe, Edgar Tekere, has launched a new party, the ZUM. Tekere was expelled from ZANU in 1988 for his outspoken criticisms including a statement that "democracy in Zimbabwe is in the intensive care unit".

In four recent by-elections, several ZUM officials were beaten up allegedly by ZANU youth league members and others were detained by

ZANU's 1990 election manifesto - more promises

In anticipation of elections, ZANU(PF) has once again affirmed its "Marxist-Leninist" principles. ZANU(PF)'s election manifesto, according to the *Star* (7/3/90), promises to improve life for workers and peasants, and to "keep a tight rein on the activities of the petty-bourgeoisie". It speaks of the "second phase of the revolution", which will see the government using drastic measures to acquire land for peasant farmers. The manifesto also promises to reduce the presence of foreign multinationals in the economy, through "individuals, co-operatives, joint ventures and government (being) fully involved as partners and co-owners in public and private ventures."

Such things have been promised by ZANU(PF) before. How much of it is mere election rhetoric, and how much sincere intention, remains to be seen. What seems clear, though, is that Mugabe's style of government - which is often highly intolerant of criticism - seems set to continue. For example, the election manifesto denies students the right to challenge the government on "matters of policy concerning the university or on the general maintenance of law and order".

Devan Pillay

the security services.

Most agree that the ZUM is a rag-bag of political has-beens and opportunists, but Tekere has raised issues which have embarrassed the ruling party. The ZUM could well attract a protest vote in urban areas.

There is considerable public dissatisfaction with the Government. Transport is a major headache for working people. Wages have not kept pace with the high rate of inflation. Unemployment levels are alarming. Taxation is very high, and housing and education expensive. Mugabe has been seen as too soft on corruption and the abuse of power by politicians and senior officials.

Workers' gains since Independence, especially minimum wage laws and controls on dismissals, have to be

put beside wage freezes and price rises, thousands of job losses (100 000 jobs were lost in commercial agriculture 1980 - 1985), and laws banning virtually all strikes.

Land re-distribution remains a key political issue which many Zimbabweans believe the Government has not adequately addressed. Above all else, it was land for which the liberation war was fought. Yet a handful of white commercial farmers still control vast areas of fertile farmland, while hundreds and thousands of peasants are either landless or till barren land, even though the peasant sector has shown huge increases in productivity since Independence.

Rhetoric

Faced with these uncertainties, the Government has

clamped down on dissent, with the ZCTU as a prime target. For several years after its formation in 1981, the organisation has been hampered by corruption, bureaucracy and a leadership close to ruling interests and far removed from workers. Under Tsvangirai, a former mineworker, and his colleagues elected last year, the ZCTU had begun organising workers meetings and forcefully criticising government policy on matters of wider trade union importance.

"For the first time since Independence," says ZCTU lawyer Albert Musaruwa, "we began to question issues affecting workers, such as national economic policy and new legislation. Government control over the trade union has disappeared," he adds, "and the Government finds it difficult to enter into public debate on these issues."

A major area of difference widening the gulf between the Government and the unions is ideological. The ZCTU has drawn attention to government rhetoric, accusing ZANU of "ideological indecision and ineptitude". Orthodox Marxists at the University, also critical of ZANU's ideological direction, have been harassed and suspended.

"The Government says it is socialist," said one unionist, "but it is moving away from socialism. If it believes socialism has failed then it should say so openly."

Some observers believe that one reason why Tsvangirai was arrested is that the

Government may have feared the emergence of a new opposition workers' party. "The Government says our criticism amounts to opposition," says Mike Mushyabasa, head of the 5 000 strong chemical workers' union and ZCTU Deputy Secretary-General, "but we are not an opposition party. All we are saying is: let's debate the issues that affect workers."

ZCTU activists say their aim is to encourage workers to transform ZANU into a vanguard party. "It must have strong links with workers," says Mushyabasa.

Investment code

Ideological criticism is linked to two recent government initiatives in particular which have been strongly attacked by the ZCTU. One is an Investment Code launched last April to attract foreign business to help combat the unemployment crisis, and another the extension of the emergency powers legislation - inherited from the Smith regime - limiting the right to strike.

The Investment Code offers tax incentives and up to 100% profit remittance to investors in priority areas. It promises to de-control prices while the Government will set wage ranges. It also promises "greater flexibility" for employers wanting to dismiss workers.

The Code has been criticised from both sides. The private sector argues it does not go far enough. The ZCTU says it "symbolises an almost

total abandonment" of the aim of building a socialist society.

The ZCTU argues that foreign investment would create few jobs, since it is likely to be capital-intensive and may put local firms out of business. Zimbabwe, says the ZCTU, would become even more dependent on foreign capital (already 75% of the economy is foreign-owned) and it would mean the loss of regulations which protect workers.

Another major issue for the unions has been extension of the emergency powers (Maintenance of Law and Order) regulations to control strike action. This followed a minor dispute by railway workers and came at about the same time as the Investment Code.

Most industries have been declared 'essential' and managers have been given powers to sack striking workers. "There are now so many laws banning strikes," says Albert Musaruwa, "that some ban the same things several times over."

"If we don't have the right to strike," says Mike Mushyabasa, "we have no power." The ZCTU wants to see a strike provision enacted.

The labour movement in Zimbabwe feels under pressure from an increasingly hostile Government. Unionists are concerned that the hidden agenda is to make the ZCTU an arm of the ruling party and the Government. "If we don't review the situation quickly", says Mushyabasa, "we could find ourselves non-existent." ☆

Africa, my land

by *Manyaola Mothibeli**

Africa my land when will thou awake?
Thine tall trees, thine short trees,
Are dinner for capitalist machines producing paper.
Thine green carpets feed the conquerors' livestock.
My goats, my cattle, my land have all been taken by the gun.

The morning sun, the evening moon
have added deep sorrow in my heart
as I see the healthy waters of thine rivers
being diverted to feed the aggressors' needs.
Africa, my land, come back.

I stand hopeless, I stand hopeful,
under the shadow of a large gum tree looking at the
beautiful landscapes that have been expropriated from me.
I have prayed, I have dreamt of the day when I will be
master of my house.
Africa, my land, thou art a pillar of my strength.

Enemy tractors, repeatedly scold thine soil for produce
for capitalist markets.
Convict labour has fallen prey to mercenary farming.
I labour from morning to sunset,
but my wage is another hell.
Nkosi sikeleli IAFRIKA!

The coffee, the tea, the cocoa that I labour to produce
under healthy conditions,
is not for my consumption
but for the slave-master's 11 o'clock tea!
Africa have mercy on thine suffering children.

The cotton fields of America have been fertilised with
the blood of thine sons and daughters taken as slaves.
Nongqongqo, Robben Island, universities of our heroes
have been tamed.
Sharpeville, Soweto, Kinross, St Helena, present a
happier moment in our history.

** Mothibeli is a former mineworker and was Carletonville regional chair of NUM. He is currently employed at Sociology of Work Project at Wits University.*

Africa, my land, come back.

When I look back into the cold,
I see shadows of my chiefs who died in conquest.
Spears in hand, they command me to advance the struggle
from where they left.

Wild nights come, wild nights go.
Sensational American films have failed to water down my
quest for liberation, where all shall sing, "free at last!".
Africa, Africa, come back.

The poison that I am given in the classroom,
is planned to make me an uncompromising yes sir.
The religious instruction I am taught,
is tailored to make me accept the naked plunder of my land
as an act of God.
The truth about my history has been deliberately laid to rest.
Africa, Africa, mother of holy cities.

Africa, my land, look at the painful operation of
thine geological gardens.
Gold, coal, diamonds all going into Oppenheimer's pocket.
Workers we are, but the machines and produce are not Africa's.
The man-made mountains on thine soil
tell an "interesting" story about life underground.
My heart yearns for the day when all the peoples of Africa
shall together sing, "free at last"
after completely dwarfing the enemy.

Africa my land,
Look at the cruel plunder of thine fish and thine oil
which abound in thine oceans, by angels of exploitation.
Look at the naked legalised theft of thine alluvial diamonds,
discharged by thine oceans.
Thine holy oceans, which wardeth off foreign intervention
are playgrounds of capitalist weaponry.
Thine skies are springboards for the enemy's destabilising air
attacks.
Viva heroes' square! Aluta Continua!

Chimurenga in the thick forests of Africa,
where snake and lion abound,
hosted Cabral, Lumumba and Mondlane.
Smith and Salazar were toasted with AK47 and left for drunk,
Africa, theatre of revolutionary change, awake!

But alas! Thine real tiger that burnt thine forests in the night
hath been caged and paper-tigered in capitalist
"spaza* ivory towers",
iced into English speaking, Portuguese speaking, French speaking
and Arab speaking.
The enemy's thwart of Pan Africanism grounded Lumumba and Nkurumah.
Heroes come, heroes go.
Africa, Africa, mother of raw materials. ☆

* Spaza refers to something that is "not real".

Comrade Moss: valuable, but where's the politics?

Karl von Holdt reviews *Comrade Moss*, a book by Labour and Community Resources Project (LACOM) (Learn and Teach Publications, Johannesburg, 1989)

It is difficult to write a biography of someone who is still alive. It is even more difficult when the biography is part of a campaign for the release of the person whose story it tells. Does one read *Comrade Moss* as a powerful piece of campaign propaganda, or as a semi-official story of the life of a union leader and his organisation, or as a serious "attempt to explain broader developments in working class organisation"?

Comrade Moss tries to be all these things. It is a very readable and lively story of the life of Moses Mayekiso, one of South Africa's most widely-known and respected working class leaders. It tells how Mayekiso grew up in Transkei, how he worked on the mines, and then deserted and went to Jo'burg, looking for a job. It tells how he joined MAWU and became a shopsteward. After being dismissed in a strike in 1979, Mayekiso was employed as a union organiser.

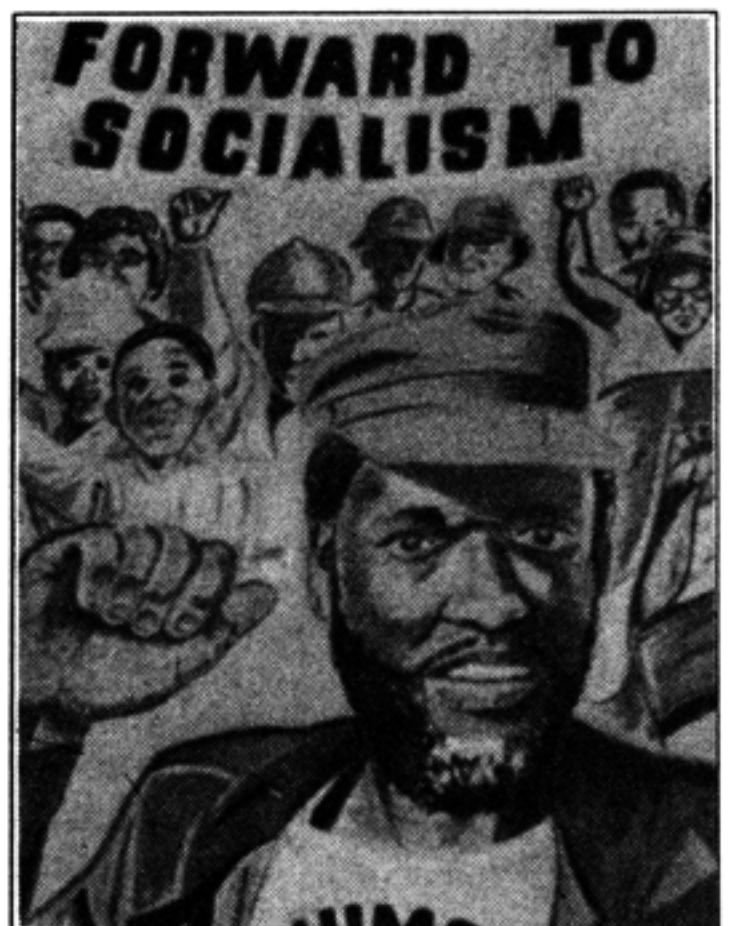
"His shoes were finished"

The book describes how Mayekiso worked day-and-night on the East Rand organising the metal factories. "Moss worked very hard - I don't think even a soldier could work hard like him... Moss was the only one the workers wanted. So he was walking everywhere, even his shoes, his heels, they were finished from all the walking."

Because of his leadership qualities, Mayekiso was elected branch secretary of MAWU, and later

while he was in prison, general secretary of the giant new metal union, NUMSA. The book therefore also tells the history of MAWU in the Transvaal. It does this quite deliberately, quoting the experiences of other workers and organisers besides Mayekiso. It describes the slow patient process of organising factories in the 70s, the East Rand strike waves in the early 80s, the birth of the Waddeville shopsteward council, the entry into the Industrial Council in 1983, and the split in the Transvaal branch of the union in 1984.

The book then goes on to tell the fascinating story of how Mayekiso, union members and youth activists together organised the system of yard, block and street committees in Alexandra in 1986. It was this work that got



Graphic from the cover of *Comrade Moss*

the 'Alex Five' detained and put on trial for treason. *Comrade Moss* was written as part of the campaign to free the 'Five'. Ironically, they were acquitted on all charges before the book was finished - their triumphant return home forms its conclusion!

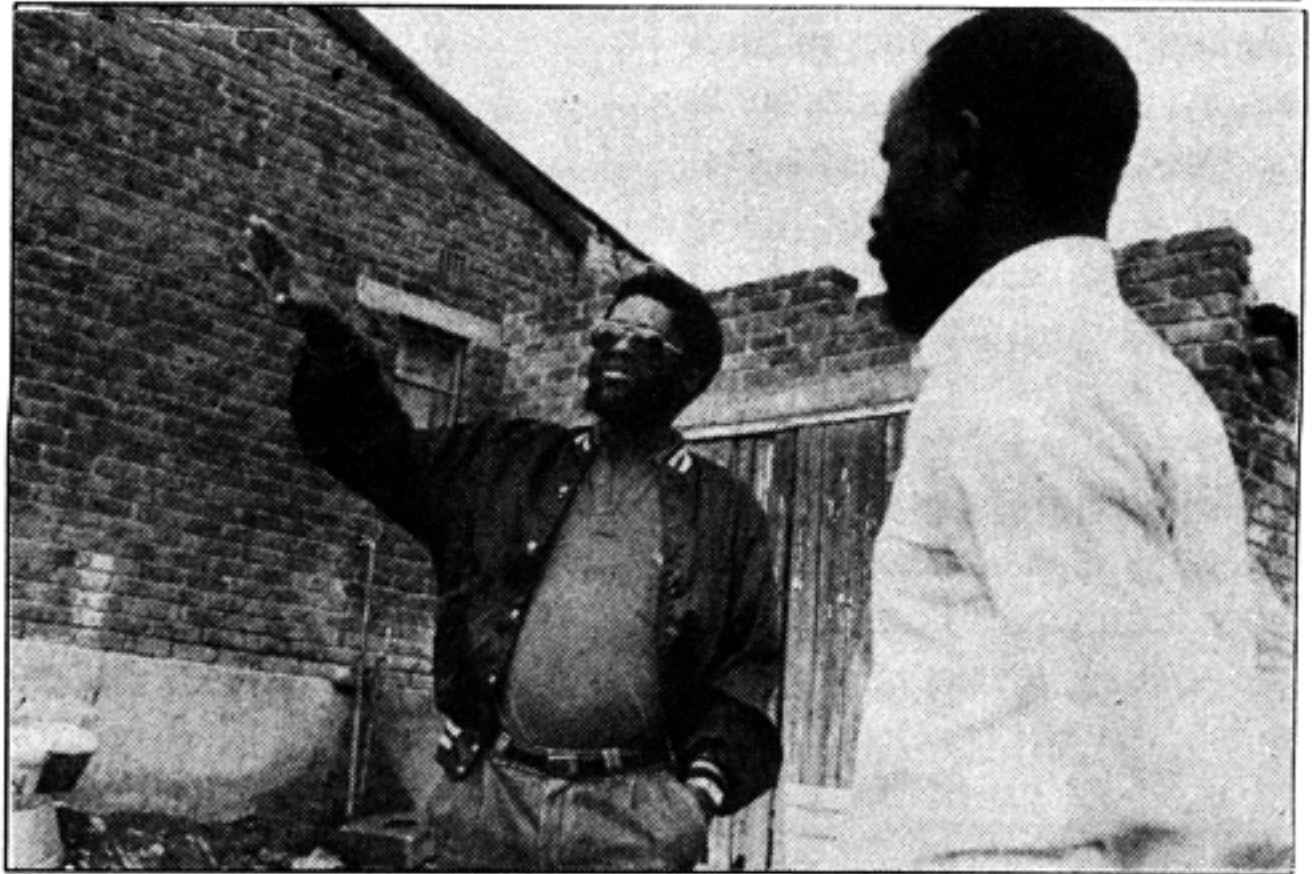
Powerful sense of history

The strength of *Comrade Moss* is its very powerful sense of recent working class history on the Witwatersrand. This is achieved by weaving together the voices and experiences of different workers and residents around the central story of Mayekiso. The book constantly points out that Mayekiso's life is not unique, that it is one with the experiences of hundreds of thousands of workers.

It gives a very strong impression of how powerless workers were before the unions of the mid-seventies started organising. Wages were low, treatment was bad, workers were dismissed at will. It tells of the new hope brought by the unions, and of the protracted battles to establish union organisation and win workers' rights. *Comrade Moss* will give worker readers access to this history, and pride in their struggles, their organisations, and their leaders.

Where are the political conflicts?

But *Comrade Moss* also has weaknesses as working class history. Partly this springs from the book's role in the Free Mayekiso campaign. It gives an idealised and uncontroversial picture of Mayekiso and his union,



Moss Mayekiso in Alex - a unionist rooted in the community

Photo: Cedric Nunn/Afrapix

MAWU. This is perhaps most noticeable in the reference to the bitter division in the Transvaal branch. The immediate cause of the split in 1984 was the dismissal of the general secretary for corruption. However, underlying this were sharp political differences, which reflected wider political tensions within FOSATU, and between FOSATU and the UDF. *Comrade Moss* refers to these political debates and tensions only in passing.

Likewise, while *Comrade Moss* describes how Mayekiso "began to argue quite forcefully for a change in policy towards greater involvement in community politics", it does not reflect the heated debates and struggles that preceded and followed the formation of COSATU. Everyone agreed on the need to take up "community issues" - but what did this mean in practice? Did it mean supporting UDF-affiliated civics, links with the ANC, or union locals taking up community issues on their own?

In fact, there is very little ref-

erence to national political organisations, such as the UDF, ANC, or SACP, either in the text or in the interview with Mayekiso at the end of the book. Attitudes to these organisations were, however, central to the debates in the union movement over political strategies and alliances.

Mayekiso was an influential participant in these debates, but the book does not help us to understand them. In fact, it *prevents* understanding: according to the writers, when Mayekiso spoke "it was the voice of the workers that spoke" (p 96). Does this mean that leaders with different views did not speak with the voice of workers? In reality, workers have different political views, and the book does not recognise that.

It may be that these omissions were inevitable in a book written for a campaign, a book that would necessarily be a 'semi-official' history of the organisation of which Mayekiso is the leader. But it makes for a somewhat superficial and bland account, and one which is not likely to deepen

workers' understanding of their history. If popular histories are to be truly "democratic" and empower the working class, surely they have to deal openly with debates and struggles over strategy and ideology?

Political perspective

There is also a sense that the book hasn't quite kept pace with the political developments in the union movement. In its selections, in the questions it asks, in its silences, it reflects the old FOSATU perspective that placed almost exclusive emphasis on shopfloor organisation, distanced itself from the national liberation movement, and was overcautious about alliances.

Since then however there has been a rapid development of a political culture that combines the strengths of the FOSATU tradition with the strengths of the national liberation tradition. Mayekiso is one of the many union leaders who embodies this development and combination of qualities. *Comrade Moss*, however, continues to stress the perspective that was associated with FOSATU.

Problems of worker history

In her preface Coco Cachalia argues that oral history is important because it makes history more "democratic" by relying on "people's own understanding of their lives, rather than on 'expert' knowledge of how to write history." There is a danger in this view. By idealising experience it can simply confirm popular beliefs, rather than developing a critical, scientific analysis. Historical analysis



should go beyond common sense and memory, to reveal the hidden forces that shape our history.

Cachalia also writes that workers should have the opportunity "to control the writing of their own history." This raises a host of questions. Is worker participation the same as control? Does the political perspective that informs the book reflect the views of the writers, the workers, the union, or a complex combination of these? As pointed out above, workers have different political views. Which workers should control the writing of history? Furthermore, if a history is 'controlled' can it be a critical history, or will it inevitably be an official version?

These are important questions for all those engaged in social analysis which is linked to organisation.

'Simple democracy'

The book also delivers too simple an organisational message - a message of what one might call 'simple democracy'. It emphasises the importance of patient, solid grassroots organisation and democratic structures. This message is very important. But it does not capture the complex problems faced by massive industrial unions such as NUMSA has grown into. For example, participation in the industrial council has enormously strengthened the power of the union and increased its member-

ship and its ability to mobilise - but it has also contributed to weakening shopfloor structures because the union simply does not have the resources to service every plant. The model of 'simple democracy', which was so crucial to the birth of the new unions, does not help to solve this problem. Nor does *Comrade Moss* help us to understand it.

Leadership and democracy

Despite its weaknesses, this is an important book. Those who have met Mayekiso are immediately impressed by his modesty, his friendliness, and his lack of rhetoric. Through the words of workers in *Comrade Moss*, he emerges as "a fair man" with a deep respect for people, committed to solving workers' problems and involving workers in decisions.

These are valuable leadership qualities, and well worth emphasising. Especially now, when high-profile national politics is growing in importance, it is essential to stress the importance of modesty, accountability and consistent grassroots work.

For the same reason, *Comrade Moss*'s emphasis on tight, disciplined grassroots organisation, and on democratic structures and practices, is timely. Precisely because the scale and complexity of union organisation has increased so rapidly, there is a danger of neglecting grassroots structures. This tendency is also encouraged by the rapid political developments in the country. It needs to be balanced by powerful, democratic mass organisation.

Comrade Moss is a book that all activists should read. ☆

Who is really a comrade?

What do we mean by the word 'comrade'? How do we conduct ourselves as comrades with one another? Our first *Organiser's Notes* was written for *COSATU NEWS* in 1989 by COSATU's education officer, KHETSI LEHOKO.

Discipline

We need structural meetings to set goals, evaluate, and practice democracy. There are some who believe if they cannot control a structure, they should not attend meetings. We saw how this paralysed the Wits region in 1986/87. We see how this affected so many locals in 1988.

Democracy

In meetings we practise democracy. To do this well, we need to give mandates and get report-backs. People must feel free to discuss and debate. Everyone has the right to be heard. It is wrong not to listen to someone just because they come from a certain union. It is also wrong to support someone whether they are right or wrong.

Decision-making

There are different styles of decision making:

A clique: this is a small group which moves into an organisation with a position. All those who disagree with the position are isolated. The methods used to iso-

late people can be a smear campaign or destructive criticism. People have a right to hold discussion outside of structures, but whatever they decide does not automatically become a position of a structure. You have to win your position.

Majority decisions: this can also be a problem if the minority did not have a chance to express its position. If an item is raised and quickly passed over, there might be some people who aren't happy. They won't go out and build that decision. But if the procedure is right, if they have a chance to speak, they will feel better about abiding by the majority position.

Consensus: when there are sharp divisions, we must try to compromise. This does not mean that we compromise our principles. It means we are building unity in the organisation. Consensus comes when both sides compromise so that everyone is happy with the decision. Everybody must respect and implement majority decisions and consensus decisions. For example, we have adopted the

Freedom Charter - we must all work to implement it.

Punctuality

Our meetings don't start on time. Why? Organising under repressive conditions needs discipline. Many people find it hard to adapt to repression, because they did not build their discipline when repression was not so bad.

Labelling

People used to talk about 'workerist' and 'populist'. If you didn't feel like arguing against someone's point, you just called them one of these names. Comrades, if political work is trying to influence others, you don't do this by intimidation. We label because we are unable to win others over.

Criticism and self-criticism

Are we able to accept the con-



structive criticism by other comrades? Are we ready to admit mistakes and weaknesses. Constructive criticism means that you must also try to provide a solution. People who just criticise must watch out - you'll end up standing on the sidelines removed from struggle.

Self education

No-one has the monopoly of knowledge. No person has *The Line*. This is what we are challenging in the education struggle - that the teacher has full power over the pupil. Everyone learns - even facili-

tators in seminars. As activists we must not become stagnant, we must develop. If you think you know everything you become stagnant.

Qualities of leadership

Leadership must be honest to the organisation and to ourselves. Other comrades must have no difficulty in approaching you. There must be a collective spirit.

Full-time officials

Full-time workers must be able to discipline one another. We cannot just look at someone's political position when deciding who to employ. We must also look at ability to do the work.

In building an organisation, it does not depend on how many times you recite the Freedom Charter. It has more to do with whether we are servicing members on a day to day basis. ☆



Workers meeting - people must feel free to discuss and debate. Everyone has the right to be heard!

Photo: Jabu Matiko/Labour Bulletin

Draft changes to the LRA

Part eight of a worker's guide to the new Labour Relations Act. This series is written by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs), Wits University

In January 1990 a draft bill containing proposed changes to the Labour Relations Act was leaked to the press. It is the State's intention to make the bill a law in 1990. The Department of Manpower did not publish the bill for comment which is its normal procedure when considering making changes to the law. The most important parts of the bill deal with some of the most controversial aspects of the September 1988 changes to the LRA. These are the statutory procedures for the resolution of disputes and the new s79(2) that made it easier for employers to sue unions for damages arising out of an illegal strike.

Conciliation procedures

The dispute procedures in the LRA currently have two time requirements. If either party wishes to refer a dispute to an industrial council or a conciliation board, it must do so within 21 days of a letter of deadlock being served on the other parties; and within 90 days from the date upon which the dispute is first alleged to have arisen (s27A(1)(d)(i) and s35(3)(d)(i)). The bill will do away with the letter of deadlock. This is a welcome change as the letter of deadlock is unnecessary. It has been used by many employers

to prevent disputes being resolved.

The 90 day period will remain in a slightly changed form. The dispute will have to be referred to an industrial council or conciliation board within 90 days from the date on which the dispute was alleged to have arisen or when the unfair labour practice was alleged to have been introduced. If the application is made outside this 90 day period the application may still be accepted if there is a good reason.

Increased cool-off period

Currently industrial councils and conciliation boards have 30 days in which to try and settle a dispute (s27A and s36). During this period, no strike or lockout action can be taken. The bill proposes to change this period to 45 days. The trade unions have attacked this proposed change, saying that it will place an excessive delay on the right of employees to strike.

Why has the state decided to make this change? There appear to be two reasons. The first is that prior to the 1988 amendments there could be a 60 day delay in the case of conciliation boards before the start of legal strike action. In the case of industrial councils it was a 30 day

period which could be extended. The 1988 amendments made this period 30 days in both cases. This was apparently an oversight the state now wishes to correct.

The second factor is that the Department of Manpower is seldom able to establish and convene conciliation boards within the 30 days. The unions are not happy with the longer period because, before a dispute is referred to a conciliation board or industrial council, it will usually have been the subject of many meetings held in terms of in-house or other negotiated procedures. This is the major cause of delays. In addition, since 1988, balloting cannot take place until either the 45 day period is up, or the industrial council or conciliation board has made an earlier report that the parties have failed to reach settlement.

Both parties can refer disputes to the industrial court

Where an industrial council or conciliation board cannot resolve a dispute concerning an unfair labour practice, the dispute can be referred to the Industrial Court for a determination as an unfair labour practice. At present an official of the conciliation board or industrial council must refer the dispute to the court (s46(9)(b)).

Whether a party to the dispute can also refer the matter to court is left open by the LRA, but the Supreme Court has ruled that a party can do so. This lack of certainty will be cleared up by the new bill which gives either party to the

dispute 30 days to refer it to the Industrial Court.

But is it actually desirable that a party to a dispute other than the party that actually referred the dispute, should be able to refer the matter to court? A trade union, for example, may declare a dispute with an employer over an alleged unfair labour practice during collective bargaining. The conciliation board meeting is held, the parties discuss the matter and although they do not reach a settlement the union is satisfied with the progress made. It therefore decides not to refer the matter to Court.

The employer, however, is entitled by the new bill to do so and can proceed to court to obtain a ruling that its conduct was not an unfair labour practice. Thus every party who uses the statutory dispute procedures runs the risk of having to defend a court case, even if it decides itself not to take the case to court.

This is highly undesirable. Ironically, someone who starts Supreme Court litigation may withdraw the case, but in the Industrial Court the other side is entitled to insist on proceeding to the end.

Suing unions for illegal strikes

This is the most controversial 1988 amendment and the bill proposes further changes to the section. Before the 1988 amendments s79 of the LRA protected trade unions, their members, office bearers and officials from legal actions arising out of legal strikes. The only class of actions not pro-

tected were acts that amounted to criminal conduct.

Identical protections are extended to employers in the case of lockouts. This protection applied to both interdicts and claims for damages. It was for this reason that legal strikes could not be interdicted, although conduct such as intimidation could be interdicted because it was criminal.

The 1988 Act changed this section of the law in two ways. Firstly, defamation was added to criminal acts as an unprotected activity during lawful strikes. Secondly, and most importantly, the law changed the 'onus of proof' in cases arising out of illegal industrial action.

The effect of this change was that any act by any member, office bearer or official of the trade union is assumed to have been authorised by the union. The trade union has to show that it did not authorise the action.

If it fails to do this it will lose the case and, in the case of an illegal strike, be liable for all the damages suffered by the employer as a result of the strike. This provision was used by a number of union-bashing firms and IR consultants to institute damages actions against unions.

This assumption will be removed from the law. The normal position will prevail, which is that the employer (or whoever else institutes a case) will have to prove that any acts were authorised by the trade union.

Certificates of compliance
At the moment, in terms of s37,



Resistance to the Labour Relations Act remains a priority of workers

Photo: Paul Grendon/Afrapix

both registered and unregistered trade unions must furnish a certificate of compliance with the provisions of the LRA, issued by the Department of Manpower, before they can be represented at a conciliation board. This certificate indicates that the union's book of account, membership records, etc, are in good order.

A registered trade union has to meet these requirements anyway in order to remain registered, and therefore the provisions are to be dropped in regard to them. It will however,

remain a requirement for unregistered unions.

Conclusion

The proposed changes do address some of the faults of the 1988 amendments. However, it is the feeling of labour lawyers that the state has only acted in areas where the changes were a problem for *both* employers and trade unions. They do not address the major problems *for the trade unions*. Secondly, no proper consultation took place over the changes. While the change to the conciliation pro-

cedures and the indemnity for legal industrial action had been subject of some debate, the changing of the cooling-off period from 30 to 45 days came as a surprise.

Despite all the problems the LRA has caused, the state does not appear to have realised the necessity for entering into proper discussions with trade unions over the law. Thirdly, the changes are not as well drafted as they should be. They contain ambiguities which will be used by hostile employers to delay resolution of disputes. ☆

Economic Notes

Economic Notes is written by Labour Research Service (LRS), Cape Town.

Nationalisation: what it means

With nationalisation, existing companies are transferred from private ownership into national ownership.

Nationalised companies are state-owned companies which were previously privately owned. No new wealth is created - it is only redistributed.

Why nationalise?

Nationalisation of privately-owned companies, like Anglo American or Barlow Rand, and whole industries such as banking could help to:

- ensure that a democratic government's central economic plan is carried out.
- direct surplus funds to new factories and mines in South Africa.
- ensure profits are re-invested, not paid out to shareholders.
- reduce the political power of the rich families.
- re-distribute wealth from the rich few to the many poor.

In addition, new state-owned companies could be started to create new wealth which would not otherwise be created.

These companies would also be used to carry out the government's economic plan.

Worker directors

In capitalist countries, state-owned industries are usually state-controlled. Under socialism, however, workers must be entitled to elect at least part of the board of directors. The other directors would come from the national trade union movement and the government.

A democratic government will

have to reduce unemployment and increase living standards. It will not be able to rely solely on 'market forces' to do this.

So it must have a plan. Such a plan is not likely to be carried out by private companies which are motivated only by profit.

This is why state-owned companies are so important. There can be no solution to poverty without an economic plan; the plan cannot be carried out without nationalisation and state-owned industries. ☆

Company profile: Strebel

Strebel is South Africa's largest manufacturer of clothing accessories such as zips and fasteners. It is also a major producer and distributor of knitted cloth, non-woven cloth and embroidery.

Strebel is owned by the Strebel family, one of the wealthiest in South Africa. John Strebel, the company's founder, is still a director of the company, although his son is now the managing director.

In 1989 each of Strebel's directors earned R1 522 per week. On top of this the Strebel family paid themselves dividends of R1,4 million!

Large rise in profits

By all accounts, the next few years are likely to be good ones for the Strebel group. Not only has the group performed well in the last year, with profits and sales both rising by 39%, but management are also positive about the future.

Management reports that positive conditions in the textile industry and a substantial investment programme

have provided "a solid base for strong organic growth in the coming year".

Good prospects

Prospects for the textile industry are indeed good. People are moving to the urban areas and incomes are rising. These factors lead to an increase in demand for basic goods such as food and clothing.

There is also potential for growth by manufacturing goods that replace expensive imported goods and in manufacturing goods for the export market.

The minimum rate paid to Strebel workers currently differs from plant to plant, as shown in the graph below.

The minimum rate paid to workers at Embroitex is only 65.5% of the top wage of R142 per week paid to workers at General Dyers and Bleachers.

Minimum rates in Strebel's plants are also low compared to wages in other textile companies and to various all-industry averages.

The minimum rate at Em-

SLL falls again

The August 1989 Supplemented Living Level shows another decline in real terms.

This poverty datum line produced by the Bureau of Market Research for August 1989 was R159,50 per week. But to earn as much as the 1983 SLL today, you would need R196,80 per week, after taking into account inflation.

SLL for the major centres

Centre	Per month	Per week
Durban	R750.47	R173.19
Pretoria	R737.03	R170.08
Cape Peninsula	R724.42	R167.17
Johannesburg	R717.22	R165.51
Port Elizabeth	R665.68	R153.62
Bloemfontein	R599.80	R138.42
SOUTH AFRICA	R691.17	R159.50

broitex is only R93 per week. This is only 60% of the AWARD all-industry average of R154 per week.

A goal of the union is to set a single wage for each grade in the Strebel group. SACTWU's drive to centralise bargaining will help the union achieve this.

The union has decided its first step is to set one implementation date. After this it will work to close the gaps between wages at each Strebel plant. ☆

The economy moves downhill

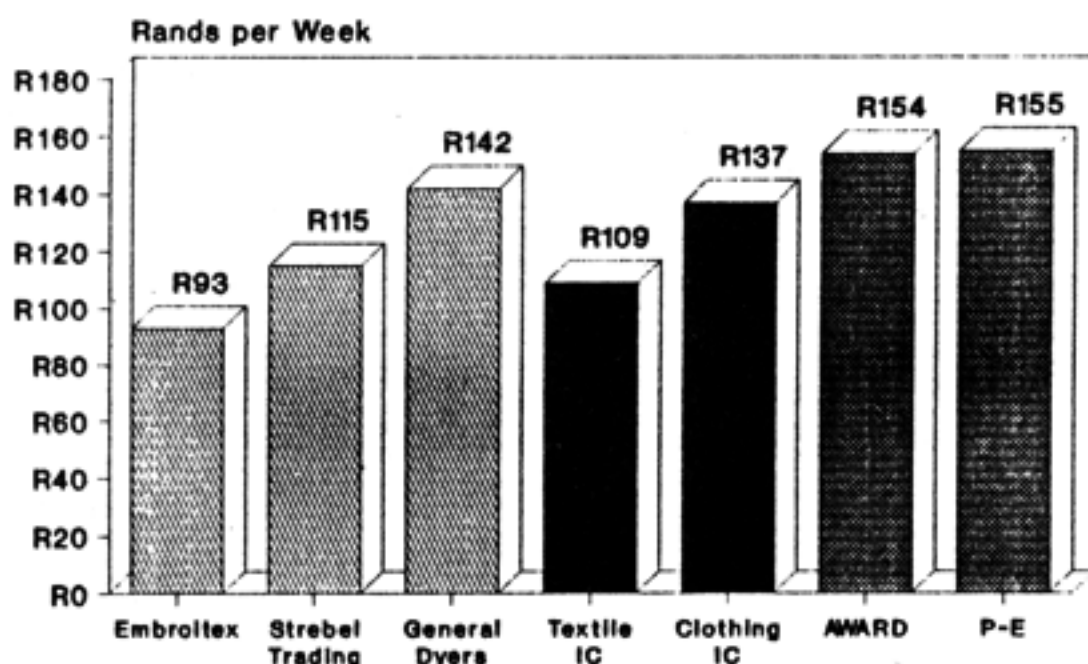
Workers should expect little from the 1990 economy. Most financial reporters and economists are predicting a slow-down in economic growth during the current year.

One of the biggest problems facing the economy is the repayment of large loans borrowed by the government from overseas banks. About R6 billion of the R50 billion owed to these banks must be repaid in 1990.

Repayment in American dollars

These loans have to be repaid in American dollars. To repay the loans in dollars the economy has to sell more goods overseas for dollars (exports). It has to use fewer dollars to buy goods from overseas (imports).

WAGE COMPARISONS



Labour Research Service 1990

The government believes that imports can be reduced by maintaining high interest rates and charging special taxes on imported goods. These measures have reduced imports in recent months - but lower economic growth is the result!

High interest rates

The prime interest rate has risen from a low of 12% in 1986 to its current high level of 21%. High interest rates will halt the large increases in profits made by most companies over the past two years. This is likely to mean tougher wage negotiations in 1990.

The problem of inflation

Another major problem is inflation. Unions succeeded in increasing wages at a faster rate than inflation in both 1988 and 1989. This is likely to be more difficult in 1990.

An annual survey by Unisa's Bureau of Market Research reports that company managers expect an inflation rate of 16,1% in 1990. Most economists are predicting an inflation rate of 14% to 15% in 1990.

There is unlikely to be much economic growth in the 1990 economy. Some economists even predict a decline in manufacturing sector growth.

The South African economy needs to grow by about 2,3% every year just to maintain the current unemployment level. As this growth is unlikely unions should expect increased unemployment in 1990. Company managers expect the economy to grow by only 1,8% in 1990. ☆

Industrial Councils respond to pressure

Twenty five industrial councils published new wage agreements in the second half of 1989. The average increase was 21%, and the average wage was R136.47 per week.

This is an impressive increase - it is slightly higher than the AWARD all-industry average of 19.7% for the same period.

Some of these industrial council agreements were, however, last changed more than twelve months ago. For example, the increase of 65.3% in the Natal liquor and catering trade was on a wage last changed in June 1987.

Wages and inflation

To get an accurate picture we need to examine the real wage increase for each agreement. Workers want to see whether the wage rates have risen by more or less than inflation.

In fact, wage increases for the 25 industrial councils, on average, exceeded inflation by more than 8.7%!

In 18 of the 25 agreements, the labourers' increase was higher than inflation. So living standards have risen for labourers falling under these 18 industrial councils. ☆

Top five Industrial Council increases

Industrial Council	Weekly Wage	Increase	
		Cash	Real
1. Liquor & Catering IC (Dbn)	R103.85	65,3%	19,2%
2. Furniture Mnf. W.Cape	124.00	56,3%	18,8%
3. Clothing EP	R93.44	30,8%	13,8%
4. Building (Cape Peninsula)	R124.53	27,4%	10,8%
5. Automobile Mnf. Ind. (EP)	R252.00	25,0%	9,7%

Bottom five Industrial Council increases

Industrial Council	Weekly Wage	Increase	
		Cash	Real
21. Building Mnf. Tvl.	R84.80	13,4%	-1,2%
22. Road Passenger Tpt. Cape	R121.15	12,0%	-3,1%
23. Biscuit industry	R175.00	13,6%	-3,2%
24. Motor other	R121.50	12,5%	-3,4%
25. Motor Auto Eng.	R121.50	12,5%	-3,4%

A dangerous development

The Building Industrial Council, Port Natal and North Natal, no longer covers general workers, plant operators and drivers. The new agreement now says that "the wage rate paid to a general worker, a plant operator or a driver shall be determined....by negotiation between the employer and the employee".

Trade unions need to take note of this development because it gives employers the opportunity to pay very low wages.

Profile: the food industry

Food companies have again performed very well. An LRS survey of food company profits shows an average increase of 34% in 1989!

This survey covered 31 of the largest companies in South Africa.

Productivity in the food industry remains high. The profit made for the bosses by each worker rose on average by 35%, from R7 023 to R9 468 per year between 1988 and 1989.

Increase expected

Food production, unlike other manufacturing sectors, is expected to increase in 1990. Most food companies expect their profits in 1990 to increase at their current rate.

This means that food companies will be able to afford wage increases well above the inflation rate in 1990.

Ownership of the food industry is highly concentrated. Almost all companies are subsidiaries of one of the following:

- Barlow Rand (CG Smith Foods),
- Anglovaal,
- Fedfood
- Anglo American (Premier, South African Breweries,

Inflation

Area	Consumer Price Index (1985=100)	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)
	Dec 1989	Dec 88 - Dec 89
Cape Town	187,0	14,0%
Port Elizabeth	193,1	16,1%
East London	184,8	15,1%
Durban	182,6	17,2%
Pietermaritzburg	187,3	16,7%
Witwatersrand	191,1	15,7%
Vaal Triangle	186,2	15,4%
Pretoria	197,6	14,5%
Klerksdorp	199,1	14,5%
Bloemfontein	174,4	14,0%
OFS Goldfields	189,7	14,6%
Kimberley	182,0	14,2%
South Africa	189,4	15,3%

Source: Central Statistical Service

Inflation

Area	Consumer Price Index (1985=100)	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)
	Jan 1990	Jan 89 - Jan 90
Cape Town	189,9	14,2%
Port Elizabeth	193,7	14,3%
East London	186,9	14,6%
Durban	185,3	17,2%
Pietermaritzburg	189,2	16,3%
Witwatersrand	193,9	15,4%
Vaal Triangle	188,8	15,1%
Pretoria	200,4	14,4%
Klerksdorp	201,1	14,3%
Bloemfontein	176,1	14,1%
OFS Goldfields	191,9	14,8%
Kimberley	184,5	14,2%
South Africa	192,0	15,1%

Source: Central Statistical Service

Tongaat-Hulett).
The concentration of ownership in the food industry means

that centralised bargaining is essential to co-ordinate the Living Wage Campaign. ☆

This information is extracted from the Labour Research Service's December 1989 *Food Bargaining Report*.



FAWU negotiators can obtain a copy of this report by writing to: Labour Research Service, P O Box 376, Salt River 7925.

Profile

Ray Alexander: socialist & trade unionist

Ray Alexander first came to South Africa on 6 November 1929. She had attended illegal study groups and been an active member of the 'International Organisation to Help Revolutionaries' in Latvia since she was fifteen. Her mother, fearing for her safety, sent her to South Africa, where they heard the Communist Party was legal. Ray was very disappointed the day after she arrived because there were no October Revolution celebrations on the 7 November. She couldn't understand why this was so, especially in a country where the Party was legal. After thirty years of pioneering work in trade union organisation, in particular the Food and Canning Workers Unions, the Communist Party and the Federation of South African Women, amongst others, Alexander and her husband, Jack Simons, left South Africa in 1965. She continued her close involvement with the liberation movement in exile, and now she has returned to her adopted country. Comrade Ray visited the *Bulletin* offices, and spoke to us about many issues.

COSATU: an impressive giant

It is very great to be back. The one thing that I'm very impressed with is the great formation of COSATU. As soon as COSATU was established I called it a great giant in an article in the *African Communist*. I'm particularly impressed with the large number of women trade union officials. Of course the women will say there are not enough, but... you know they say Rome wasn't built in one day.

I'll say it time and again, that without COSATU, that without this big organisation and the strikes that COSATU carried over the years, this break-through which Nelson Mandela is talking about would not have taken place. It is the working class

and what they are doing that affects the economy of our country.

New situation filled with hope

I'm very confident. When comrades were expressing fears about Jack and me I said, No - its a new situation. And the more I see it the more I believe it. Things can't go back, we can only push them forward. So I have great confidence.

Our movement is not what it was when we left 25 years ago. When we left comrades were afraid to say goodbye to us. Even if I saw people on the street and I wanted to say goodbye, they would turn their heads away. We are coming back to a new situation altogether, and I'm looking forward to the other comrades coming here.

Tremendous writers and poets

You know we South Africans are very lucky. Not only do we have tremendous leaders like Comrade Nelson, Comrade Walter Sisulu, Comrade Govan and all the others - but our people, the poets and writers! I'm a lover of poetry.

I have tried to best of my ability to learn what is happening and always refer to the *Labour Bulletin* and other South African publications. I've been a subscriber from the beginning.

SACTU's role in COSATU's formation

We made a big input in the formation of COSATU. Because you know there were problems with the formation of COSATU and the other unions, and we worked very hard on these. We met comrades in Lusaka, Gaborone, Harare, pleading with them to be an all-embracing COSATU. There were all kinds of leanings - ultra left, and a bit reactionary. Racism was entering in it. And we had to iron it out. So I'm not saying that COSATU is a SACTU formation, but SACTU made a big input.

And to my mind now the SACTU comrades must come and work in COSATU unions, and help to make them stronger... There are still plenty of workers to be organised. Not only the farmworkers but the large numbers of workers that are not in the unions yet. So we have a big job to do to organise the unorganised. To or-

ganise the unemployed and to fight for jobs.

Political and administrative training

I am going to make myself available to FAWU to give their members political and administrative training. Because over the years I've trained hundreds of people, literally, in South Africa. That is why the Food and Canning Workers Union and the African Food and Canning Workers Union were lasting - because I had built up trade union people.

To teach them how to look after the funds, minute taking, correspondence, how to negotiate. We used to have mock conciliation boards. On this side the bosses. On that side the workers. And at times I used to go on the bosses side and argue how bosses argue, and then on the other side. And that is the way I trained them so that the workers could negotiate on their own in the factories as well as on conciliation boards. And all sat on wage boards.

When in 1970 the Wages Commissions started, I corresponded with some of the people involved. I advised them to apply to the Wage Board because any kind of confrontation with the bosses educates the workers. In the process you prepare the wage demands and you discuss them. That's the way I started - I would like to go back and do similar work.

White workers

There was a time in South Africa when the white workers were working close to us. I mean there was Jannie Venter, the leader of the Bus Workers of South Africa in Johannesburg. There was Johanna Cornelius and Hester Cornelius. They had a following. We must examine who are the working class and where there are white workers, if there really are white workers and not only in the upper jobs. We must get to them.

Bluffed about socialism

When the new situation in Eastern Europe broke out it was a great shock to me personally. I have been in the movement for a long, long time, 60 years. And I defended the Soviet Union at all times, and Eastern Europe. And when I came out in exile I went to Czechoslovakia, the GDR, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Romania and to Bulgaria. I haven't been to Yugoslavia.

Therefore the news that broke, well it made me very unhappy. I felt in a way that I was bluffed. Many times I had arguments in our house. My own children would say: "Mummy, this is what we hear is happening in the socialist countries." And I would tell them what I have seen. But I had not seen what other people had seen. Because I was put in a posh hotel. I was going from one meeting to another meeting. I went to factories, but I've never really been in the homes of people, except in Hungary.



Workers still striking for cloak rooms

I read in the Moscow News one day that the bus workers in Moscow went on strike. They were striking for a cloak room or a rest room in their area where they knock off. When I read it I said to a Soviet comrade: "You mean to tell me that your workers must strike for it in 1989, when our workers in Cape Town struck and won it in 1932!"

So altogether it was a big shock to me. I have been told perestroika will bring about greater improvements in the economy. But I didn't know that their economy is in a bad way. Remember, the Soviet Union has been helping us a great deal. Food and clothing. They were and are great supporters of our movement.

Romania and the GDR: great disappointments

As far as Romania is concerned, that is a very great tragedy. I went to Romania and I saw things for myself. That was in 1974 or 75. I was not at all impressed, because I saw that the upper groups in the leadership of the trade unions, the women and in the party were living high. Now the GDR was a great disappointment to me. I thought that they were democrats. But to my mind they had not been democrats, they were not socialists.

A new crop of people have come up, the leaders who will be dedicated socialists, and that is where the hope lies. I am a great believer that socialism will triumph in the Soviet Union and in the other countries. I think that they will reorganise. ☆

*Welcome
home*



Ray Alexander