SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

FOCUS: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Fig — Brazil

Goode — May Day

Webster — IMF Co-ordinating Council

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

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Editorial Note

The Editorial Board of the SALB wishes to thank Doug Hindson for all his work as managing editor. Doug supervised the move to Johannesburg, organised the office there and implemented a completely new process for preparation of material. He still found time to write for the SALB and his coverage of the unity talks has been particularly sensitive and informed. Best wishes for the future.

Johann Maree (chairperson)

Our thanks to the Technical Advice Group and especially to Eric for all the help with computerising subscriptions.

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INTERNATIONAL METALWORKERS FEDERATION: SOUTH AFRICAN CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL

On the 13th and 14th March 1984 South African trade unions, affiliated to the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), met to discuss policy and structures for the local IMF Co-ordinating Council, which was re-established in 1983.* The Council will represent some 200,000 South African metal-workers. Present at the inaugural conference were the following unions: Boilermakers Society of South Africa, Metal and Allied Workers Union, National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU), Steel Engineering and Allied Workers Union, Engineering Industrial Workers Union of South Africa, South African Tin Workers Union, Federated Mining Union, Radio Television Electronic and Allied Workers Union, Engineering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa and Motor Industry Combined Workers Union (This union is currently applying to become an IMF afffiliate). Mr Brian Fredericks of NAAWU will become the Council's full-time secretary from May 1st.

In his opening speech to the conference Herman Rebhan, General Secretary of the IMF, stressed the role of the Council in resolving inter-union dis-agreements. This was necessary to maintain unity in the face of opposition whether from employers, government or undemocratic so-called unions. Mr Rebhan cited the case of Japan to show that such unity was possible dispite conflicting ideological loyalties: "The IMF-Japan Council has unions in it that are left-wing and right-wing, unions that belong to different national Japanese

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*See E. Webster: "The International Metalworkers Federation in South Africa (1974-1980)" SALB 9.5. The IMF represents over 14 million metalworkers in 165 unions in 70 countries.

union centres, but they come together to present a united front on organisational and economic and international issues".

Mr Rebhan also stressed the importance of the IMF for channelling international solidarity action, a theme which he returned to in his closing statement to the press. IMF affiliates include the most powerful unions in the world and he would be appealing to them to give material support to South African unions and "to maximise pressure on the many hundreds of companies that have subsidiaries operating in South Africa".

In its final declaration the conference pledged:

1. to continue to fight for the total liberation of workers and the development of majority trade unions as a vehicle for change.
2. to fight for a living wage as determined by workers themselves.
3. to campaign for a reduction in working hours and for full employment.
4. to fight discrimination.

In drawing up practical guidelines the conference resolved:

To work within the International Metalworkers Federation South African Co-ordinating Council to achieve maximum unity for metalworkers along the following lines:

- a commitment to a non-racial policy aimed at eliminating discrimination in all aspects of labour and in all social, economic and political matters that affect workers
- an extension of organisation of the metalworking industries and a rejection of actively seeking members from unions already affiliated to the IMF. To that end the Co-ordinating Council shall establish a committee to develop guidelines to assure peaceful co-existence between affiliates and to conciliate and arbitrate in cases of organisation and demarcation disagreements

- the development towards greater unity in the presentation of collective bargaining claims based on sound research and negotiating positions commonly agreed
- the creation of an international link between metal unions in S.A. and the rest of the world and to be the voice of the united metalworkers in South Africa.

The conference also agreed in principle to a dual structure consisting of a broad structure, "designed mainly to deal with co-ordinating, initiating and planning joint action on behalf of the affiliates", and a separate disputes structure. The broad structure envisages three levels. At the base each IMF union in a particular workplace would be represented on a Local Shop Committee. The Local Shop Committees would then elect members to Area Committees which would in turn elect representatives to the IMF National Committee, ensuring "a direct line of communication into the main, national co-ordinating body". The National Committee would also include members nominated by the head offices of the various affiliated unions. A parallel system of area and national disputes committees is envisaged in order to prevent the broad structure being dragged into inter-union disagreements.

The re-establishment of the South African Co-ordinating Council of the IMF raises certain questions. Firstly, what is to prevent the Council collapsing as it did in 1980? IMF officials point to a dramatic change in the balance of forces amongst local affiliates, with the growth of the emerging unions and the expulsion in 1982 of the white-dominated South African Electrical Workers' Association and the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Moreover they argue that the IMF can offer concrete benefits to the Council. These include financial assistance and a wealth of experience in health and safety, research and trade union education. The IMF

also provides an effective channel of communication overseas to spread information and gather support. Herman Rebhan cites the solidarity given by IMF affiliates in disputes between NAAWU and Alfa Romeo and between NAAWU and Volkswagen.

The local Council, it is argued, provides a forum for settling demarcation problems. It is also viewed as a basis for a national trade union centre for the metal industry to facilitate joint action, research and negotiations with employers' federations. If successful the Council would start to challenge the control of the conservative Confederation of Metal and Building Unions which has dominated the metal and engineering industry in the past. In fact according to the Council's chairman, Ike van der Watt of the Boilermakers Society, it is too late for the Council to play any role in this years' negotiations with the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa.*

Finally, IMF officials argue that the emerging unions need to come to terms with the more middle-of-the-road established unions in order to consolidate their present position in the industry and maximise bargaining power. This assumes that enough common interest exists to unite unions with different traditions and forms of organisation, and which represent particular sectional interests (e.g. artisans). Already the emerging unions have had to debate the issue of multi-class alliances as part of a wider political struggle. Progressive unions in the metal industry now face the possibility of co-operation with organisations representing other sections of the working class. The objective basis for such co-operation is the need to present a common front against the employers. The limits to co-operation are yet to be defined.

(Jon Lewis, Johannesburg, March 1984).

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*Financial Mail 16.3.84.

THE IUF IN SOUTH AFRICA

There is not one trade union leader around who advocates dividing and splitting the workers movement. Every trade union leader speaks of trade union unity; of unity in action; of a united workers movement. But when it comes to actually forging trade union unity, workers witness the terrible sight of their leaders dividing "democratic" unions from one another when the whole situation cries out for a united trade union movement. Already it has taken the leaders of only some of the emerging unions over three years to arrive at an agreement to form a new federation. And even as this great step forward is being taken, new splits and divisions are emerging amongst some of these same unions.

Clearly, in a situation like this, any step - however small - toward building trade union unity needs to be encouraged. And it is here that the role of some of the international trade union federations have been particularly useful. For while some of the emerging unions were taking part in much publicised " unity summits" over the past three years, there were other "mini-summits" along industrial lines involving a much wider political spread of unions. A good example of this is the South African Co-ordinating Council (SACC) of the International Union of Food Workers (IUF).

The IUF is an international federation of food and allied workers uniting together nearly 2 million workers world-wide. Its headquarters are in Geneva in Switzerland and it has affiliated unions in western Europe, Canada, the USA, South America, Africa and Asia. The guiding principle of the IUF is "international labour solidarity" and its purpose is to strengthen members through "mutual support". It is committed to providing and defending "trade union rights" "human rights" and "the right of

workers to control the decisions affecting their lives". Any union organising workers in the preparation and manufacturing of food and beverages; in any stage of tobacco processing; and in hotels, restaurants and catering services, can apply to affiliate to the IUF. In addition; talks are being held at the moment between the IUF and the International Chemical Workers Federation(ICF) with a view to merging the two international bodies. This could pave the way for the organised unity of food and chemical workers in many parts of the world - including possibly South Africa.

The SACC of the IUF was set up about four years ago to try and co-ordinate the activities and build the solidarity of unions affiliated to the IUF in South Africa. A representative, based in Zimbabwe, is responsible for trying to co-ordinate the activities of affiliated unions in Africa. Local IUF affiliates are the: Bakery Employees Industrial Union; National Union of Cigarette and Tobacco Workers (TUCSA); African Tobacco Workers Union (TUCSA); Hotelica (CUSA); CCAWUSA; Food & Beverage Workers Union (FOSATU); Witwatersrand Tearoom Restaurant and Catering Trade Union; Liquor and Catering Employees Union; Domestic Workers Association; Brewery Employees Union, and the Natal Sugar Union (FOSATU). The only major food union not affiliated to the IUF is the African Food and Canning Workers Union/Food and Canning Workers Union.

Most of the current IUF affiliates - it is possible that more especially "emerging" unions will affiliate - have been meeting together under the auspices of the SACC for several years. In these meetings unions have shared experiences and information; have established rules for the SACC and a working programme; have tried to overcome problems of inter-union rivalry and have agreed to establish a joint-SACC newspaper directed at food and allied workers.

So far the SACC has managed to hold together extremely diverse unions in a "spirit" of mutual co-operation. This has not been easy as SACC meetings have been dominated by efforts to overcome intense inter-union rivalry amongst affiliates. Interestingly, this has, and continues to be, most acute amongst the "emerging" unions - particularly amongst those who are formally committed to the new federation. The difficulties in overcoming these problems within the ambit of the SACC are aggravated by the fact that it is virtually only trade union officials who attend the meetings.

Nevertheless, these meetings (which occur at least four times a year) often offer the only opportunity for trade union leaders organising in the same industries to actually get together and talk to one another. And occasionally positive developments emerge from these talks. A decision taken at a recent meeting of the SACC might be instructive for the wider trade union movement. The executive of the SACC was expanded to include Skakes Sikhakhane (Food and Beverage Workers Union) and Oscar Malgas (CCAWUSA) for the express purpose of functioning as a "mediator" between rival SACC affiliates*. The idea is that the expanded executive should be able to intervene immediately in a dispute between any affiliates to try and settle it in the interests of unity. The joint-SACC newspaper (which will be called the **SA Worker** and will appear at least four times a year) and talk of joint-union education programmes are other examples of greater co-operation and co-ordination. This is in keeping with the stated goal of the SACC - to strive for one united industrially-based union.

(Johannesburg correspondent, April 1984)

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*The other members are: Chair, Ted Frazer (Liquor & Catering Employees Union); vice-Chair, Chris Dlamini (Sweet Food & Allied Workers Union) and Secretary, Arthur Joseph (Bakery Employees Industrial Union).

PINETOWN BUS STRIKE

Due to South Africa's apartheid system, bus drivers have often found themselves caught between their management (and indirectly the State) and the community. The unacceptability of placing workers' homes many kilometres away from their workplaces has turned transport into a political issue and, therefore, part of the struggle against the apartheid State. Understandably rises in the bus fares are resented by workers who have not chosen to live so far from the factories.

Fare increases have often led to a boycott of the buses by the workers. This places bus drivers in an extremely difficult position - a position which is almost always exploited by their management. During a boycott bus drivers are still expected to drive their buses into the townships and because of this find themselves the focus of community anger. Labour legislation which defines transport as an "essential service" bars any possible legal sympathy action by the drivers. Any refusal to drive the buses would be regarded as a strike and would open bus drivers to prosecution under both the Labour Relations Act and the Internal Security Act. The anomolies of the apartheid system have, therefore, driven a wedge between drivers and the communities they live in.

The recent Pinetown bus strike, seen in this light, marks an important breakthrough, in that it established links between the community and the bus drivers. The cementing of this link was made possible by the high level of worker organisation in the Pinetown area. Since 1973 unions which later affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) have been active in Pinetown's industrial area, but in the last two years there has been a substantial increase in worker organisation.

Both the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the National Union of Textile Workers, which have been active in the area since 1973/4 have experienced a sharp rise in membership. Recently they have also been joined by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union and the Transport and General Workers Union - all FOSATU affiliates. Most of the major factories in the industries covered by these unions have been organised, and 1984 has already seen a number of strikes occurring. The 10-year struggle of NUTW for a recognition at the massive Frame cotton complex remains a central issue in the area. The FOSATU Local Shop Stewards Council enables shop stewards from different industries to meet and discuss their problems. This Local played an important role in the bus strike.

The bus strike has its origins in the strong tradition of internal Works Committee structures which existed at the Durban Transport Management Board (DTMB) - the Durban Corporation's Bus Company. The highly regimented and scheduled regime required in passenger transport has meant that major bus companies have paid particular attention to building such committees as a means of diffusing worker discontent.

Since 1981, when Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) was first recognised, tight internal control over the shop stewards has undermined the unions independence. Early in 1982 the union and its shop stewards attempted to assert the independence of union structures. Perceiving these moves as a threat to the individualised powers he held under the old system, the shop steward chairman turned against the union. His actions divided workers and led to a decline in union membership. Management was able to use the friction to obstruct the union's attempt to establish full independent recognition. Once membership dropped below 50% they cancelled the union's shop order facilities and withdrew

recognition. They established a Works Committee instead. This clear alignment of management against the union was met by a renewed surge in membership early in 1984.

Having regained majority support the union opened negotiations to re-establish stop order rights (which were granted) and for the return of the Shop Steward Committee as the representative body for drivers. It was DTMB's refusal to scrap its Works Committee and recognise the union's shop steward structure which resulted in the confrontation.

When an evening meeting at DTMB's Clermont Depot (DTMB's largest depot serving the Pinetown/New Germany industrial area) learnt that management had remained intransigent on this issue, drivers demanded that DTMB's General Manager, Marshall Cuthbert came and explain this refusal. When the General Manager refused to talk to them, drivers said "the management is on strike". They decided to wait until management did come to talk. No buses left the depot. Later the stoppage spread to the Klaarwater Depot and Ntuzuma (North of Durban). For the next four days drivers occupied the Clermont Depot.

Over the next five days management refused to negotiate with drivers and instead embarked on a strategy to crush their solidarity. In the press, and in notices to commuters, DTMB portrayed the disruption of services as a dispute between non-union and union members in an attempt to vindicate themselves from blame. Notices were immediately issued threatening drivers with prosecution under the Labour Relations Act and Riotous Assemblies Act (which has been superseded by the Internal Security Act). On each succeeding day there was an increasing presence of the municipality's new para-military security corps. On Friday March 9 notices were issued stating that the drivers were dismissed on 48 hours notice effective from midnight

on Sunday March 11.

On Sunday drivers' hopes of a settlement were raised when telephone discussions with management appeared to have resulted in an acceptance of their demands. These hopes were dashed when a delegation sent to sign an agreed draft found that DTMB had suddenly had second thoughts. Disappointment only consolidated the drivers resolve and the midnight deadline passed without any break in solidarity. On Monday from 3.00 am onward 12 inspectors started moving buses out of the depot to create the impression that the strike was breaking. Throughout the day loud speakers blared at drivers urging them to take up their duties. The security presence became overwhelming. Finally at 4 pm the riot police took control and informed the drivers that they were trespassing and must leave the depot or be forcefully removed. Singing, the drivers marched down lanes of security personnel with batons. A convoy of their cars conveyed them to the union's offices.

That afternoon the FOSATU Local Shop Steward Council became involved in the plight of their fellow workers. They decided to send a delegation to the Mayor of Durban and to approach their managements and ask them to pressurize DTMB to negotiate a settlement.

At midday on Tuesday 13 a delegation composed of senior shop stewards from a number of FOSATU factories and representatives of the drivers went to the Durban City Hall to see the Mayor, Sybil Hotz.

Security personnel refused to let the delegation into the City Hall and kept them waiting on the steps with threats of "riotous assemblies". After the Mayor intervened they were allowed in and a smaller five-man delegation went to her Chambers to convey their concern at the manner in which DTMB had dealt with the dispute. That afternoon's public

briefing

sitting of the Council went into closed session to debate the issue.

The Pinetown's shop stewards met again that night for a report back and to decide on further action the next day. Meanwhile TGWU had drafted a settlement agreement and submitted this to DTMB for their comment. Drivers met on Tuesday morning and agreed to meet again on Wednesday. At 1.ØØ pm on Wednesday 14 March DTMB suddenly requested negotiations.

While the TGWU moved to the talks, workers in organised FOSATU factories decided that they would refuse to ride the few "scab" buses which were coming to their factories. An action which spread to the rest of Clermont community. By the end of the 4.3Ø pm shift the majority of the people in the township were walking to and from work. The main road to Clermont was lined with workers some shouting "Amandla" and other groups singing FOSATU songs. The striking bus drivers joined the walkers and explained to them the reason for the strike. At the end of the 6 pm shift, thousands and thousands of workers were walking back to Clermont. Predictably, at this stage the riot police moved into the township and sporadically fired tear gas into the crowds of walkers.

Back at the negotiating table progress was being made. Finally a draft settlement document was agreed to after 6 hours of negotiation. On Thursday 15 drivers accepted this settlement.

In terms of the settlement DTMB agreed to:

* negotiate and conclude a full recognition agreement as soon as is reasonably possible;
* suspend all internal committees at DTMB;
* give the union the right to elect shop stewards with rights and facilities to represent members in grievance and disciplinary procedures;
* to meet with the union through a negotiating

committee composed of 4 shop stewards and 2 union officials to discuss matters of a collective nature;

* grant officials access to DTMB premises;
* on a return to work, to take back all drivers without selectivity or any loss of service benefits.

As they returned to work on March 15, the drivers drove in a convoy through Clermont announcing their victory and later in the day a pamphlet was issued thanking the workers and people of Clermont for their support. On the buses, union songs were sung and drivers hooted their jubilation to passing colleagues. The strike has certainly heightened the community's awareness of FOSATU and for some time afterwards groups of workers would come in to the Pinetown local office demanding to be organised. But, more important, the strike has broken down the division between bus drivers and the community. A six day strike without dismissals is a remarkable event in South Africa. It remains to be seen whether drivers will be charged. Whatever happens, it is clear that the strength of the organised factories in the area totally transformed the normal driver - community relationship. The effect of this in the future will be of crucial significance.

(Durban correspondent. April 1984).

UNIONS IN NAMIBIA

The Administration in Namibia has taken a tough line against unregistered unions. Dr Willie van Niekerk, the new Aministrator-General, addressing the South West African Confederation of Labour in 1983 stated: "No enforceable agreement can emerge between an unregistered trade union and any employers group." He added that "the agreement between a registered union and its employer can find expression in legislation which must be objectively applied by a government department".

When one considers that there are only five unions registered with the Department of Civic Affairs and Manpower, and, according to the department, three of them (the Typographical Union, the Building Workers Union and the Fisherman Workers Union) don't function, Dr van Niekerk was hardly taking an enlightened stand. The two functioning unions, the SWA Mineworkers Union, based in Tsumeb, and the Municipal Staff Association are both members of the Confederation, as are nine railways staff associations. It says it represents 19 500 employees. This includes the Association for Government Officials for SWA, based in the Administration for Whites, which registered in 1965 under the old system.

The Confederation had hoped that the other civil service body, the SWA Government Service Association would join but at its annual meeting at the end of September the Association decided not to do so. The Association says it is not a trade union and therefore does not need to register. Mr Hans Schoeman, the Confederation Secretary, described this as a "blow" and said the Association's refusal to join meant that "we can no longer say the Confederation represents all properly organised labour in the country". It would also jeopardise the chances of SWA's moderate labour voice abroad.

The Confederation clearly has international ambitions. It is to apply for affiliation to the International Metal Workers' Federation; although it will "wait for the right moment" before applying to join the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Brussels.

Clearly, the South West African Peoples' Organisation (Swapo) has other ideas. It has accused the Confederation of being "a totally fictitious union". Swapo has also condemned the French Christian Labour Confederation for its "fraternisation with the enemy of our people" by having links with the SWA Confeder-ation of Labour.

The Confederation president, Mr Hennie Barnard, of the SWA Mineworkers Union, rejected Swapo's militancy in the labour field in his presidential address this year and attacked party political agitation within the labour movement. While rejecting calls for South Africa's new labour dispensation to be applicable in Namibia, he called for the drafting of a sound labour code.

The call for South African labour policies to be adopted in Namibia came from Mr Solomon Mafima, Chairman of the Namibia Trade Union Council (NTUC). He also said the Basic Conditions of Employment Act should be adopted. In a statement, he said Namibian workers were unprotected by this law. It was imperative that "the labour force acts as a united front against the restrictions at present imposed upon their members". Black workers had no rights regarding period of notice, pensions, sick leave, maternity leave, holiday pay and other statutory benefits. His Council "demands the immediate implementation of the rights which are so fundamental to man's basic needs".

Mr Mifima has had a somewhat varied career. He was once Swapo's Labour Secretary in exile and then after his return to Namibia joined Andreas

Shipanga's Swapo-Democrats. It was during this period (1978-1982) that he founded the NUTC. He is now active in the Christian Democratic Action Party which is headed by the Chief Minister of Ovambo, Peter Kalangula. The NUTC, whose actual membership is not believed to be large, runs a complaints office in Windhoek. In an interview with the **Financial Mail** in 1983, Mr Mfima said the two biggest stumbling blocks to the emergence of a strong union movement are the distances between sites of organisation and, paradoxically, the high degree of politicisation of the labour force. "People feel they have work problems or are exploited because there is no independence. After independence, they say, we'll sort it out". There was also a problem of people not knowing what a union was and how it worked.

The National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), which has also been referred to as the Namibian Allied Workers Union (NAWU), was founded by Swapo. Once headed by a pastor, this union is apparently hardly functioning. Besides the logistical problems facing any union, the fears of harassment and the emphasis on the political struggle has hampered its operations.

The **Financial Mail** quoted a mining industry spokesman as saying: "You'll find worker solidarity on individual mines and a high degree of politicisation. Though compounds are ready-made for organisation, the constraint is one of a countrywide industrial union. The massive distances make for a problem of communication between mines. Logistically, unionisation will probably come about as a combination of in-house unions linked to a national union."

In the circumstances, worker organisation faces a long struggle in Namibia.

(Barry Streek, Cape Town, November 1983)

AFCWU IN QUEENSTOWN REVISITED

In May 1982 the African Food and Canning Workers Union (AFCWU) established itself in Queenstown. In something less than two years its strength has gradually developed. But events in Queenstown have revealed parallels with the development of unionism in other small towns. There has been a fairly consistent militancy on the part of unions on the one hand and a level of intransigence on the part of employers on the other that has not been as common a feature of industrial relations in the metropolitan areas since the end of the '70s. Management in many small towns has relied on police assistance in the resolution of industrial conflict in ways that suggest an inability to deal with workers' claims through the process of negotiation on the shop floor and this despite the existence of recognition agreements.

AFCWU has become an important organisational focus within the town and has been the subject of continuous police harassment. Despite this, it has consolidated its 1982 recognition agreement at KSM Milling by recruiting in other plants. The union is at present in the process of negotiating a recognition agreement at Imperial Bakery and at Tongaat Milling (formerly Bluebird Milling). However, these gains must be contrasted with the events surrounding a recent serious dispute at KSM which has resulted in substantial problems for AFCWU.

In January of this year, AFCWU members determined to oust Mr Mncedisi Ngoma from has position as chairperson of the local AFCWU branch and simultaneously to cancel his membership of the union. Although it was recognised that this decision would probably have far-reaching implications it was taken only after clear evidence had come to light that Mr Ngoma had attempted to

undermine the position of the union by establishing a rival AZAPO-aligned union, and by persuading AFCWU members to transfer their allegiance to the AZAPO union. Clearly it was not sufficient to resolve the organisational problems merely by expulsion of Mr Ngoma from the union. Ngoma's perceived strategy would not be halted if he were to remain in a position to engineer a weakening of the union from within the only plant with which it had secured recognition. Ngoma was an employee at KSM and thus in a powerful position vis a vis the union and KSM. Accordingly union members approached management at KSM requesting that he be transferred. According to an AFCWU press statement, this request was made "because they could not work with him after he had shown that his intentions were to `sabotage' the union". Management was adamant that it would consider no such step; and accordingly, in the first week of February workers embarked on a "go slow". It was at this point that negotiations were entered into but nothing could persuade management to alter its previous position on a possible transfer of Ngoma. In the wake of management's lack of insight into the serious problems faced by a union with which it had signed a recognition agreement, union officials decided to take direct action to protect its own interests and forcibly ejected Ngoma from the factory. On two subsequent occasions when Ngoma attempted to return to work he was again met with union members who barred his entry to KSM premises.

On Monday 13 February, eleven workers were dismissed by management for the treatment meted out to Ngoma and a certain Mr Minkley of KSM indicated to the union committee at KSM that a further twenty five workers were likely to be dismissed. Workers' response to this action was to insist that they ought all to be dismissed. They claimed that there had been collective responsibility for the treatment of Ngoma. In protest at the dismissal of the 13 February, and management's refusal to consider the union as a whole, workers downed tools

and on the morning of 15 February the entire workforce was locked out. However, workers did not leave the area and stayed all day outside the plant. At about five o'clock members of the SA Police arrived on the scene and informed workers that they should collect their wages and go home. Workers refused and told the police that they were still in employment, that they did not want their money but wanted to return to work. Shortly after this event, the AFCWU committee confronted management on the police involvement in what was a domestic industrial dispute. Management has denied having called in the police.

For the next few days the situation at KSM remained in a state of deadlock: from the 16th onwards workers returned each day to KSM. They congregated outside the plant in the continuous watchful presence of the SAP. A great deal of tension was generated by the daily gathering outside the plant and on 22 February the deadlock broke. That morning shortly after about 100 workers had gathered outside the plant, they were suddenly confronted by the arrival of an estimated 25 police vans. At once, the 100 or so workers were surrounded. As teargas cannisters were lobbed into the crowd, workers began to flee; police with their guard dogs set off after them; once the police had established total control over the situation numbers of workers were hospitalised and then, after receiving medical attention, were removed to the cells. In the end, 30 people were arrested and are now awaiting trial on charges under the Intimidation Act. Bail was initially set at the extraordinarily high figure of R1,000. Management testified against a reduction of bail on the ground that they had had a "lot of trouble with these people before". Bail was reduced to R450 and then again to R250 and by 12th March all those arrested had been released on bail. Their case has been set down for hearing on 18th April.

Meanwhile, KSM had started recruiting scab labour

from eZibeleni township. Most of those who have been recently recruited have been employed in unskilled loading work, as they lack the training necessary to perform the more skilled functions of operators or drivers. At a meeting held between management and the union on 8th March, it was agreed that the drivers could return to work and that management would guarantee re-employment of a further 80-85 workers out of a total workforce of approximately 176. More recently, management has confirmed that 100 workers would be re-employed and of those 92 have already been taken back. At the time of writing 50 workers remain dismissed.

One significant feature surrounds the re-employment of those locked out in mid-February. Management has determined that those work relations which had existed prior to the Ngoma dispute ought to be broken. One way management perceives that this could be achieved is to place workers in different jobs form those they formerly occupied. Furthermore, management recognises that breaks during the day are often used as informal meeting times and has attempted to remove this possibility by insisting that workers no longer take lunch and tea breaks en masse. There appears to be a rule that tea breaks are to be taken on an individual basis. Quite how a workforce of this size is able to take tea breaks on an individual basis is not clear.

There have been allegations that foremen perceive the events as having resulted in a victory for KSM management and have displayed a far more aggressive attitude towards union members since their return to work.

Those workers who remain out of work have been faced with enormous financial hardship. One interesting phenomenon is that in the few weeks since their dismissal and inability to return to work a number of AFCWU members have had household goods

repossessed because they had fallen into arrears with their payments. There may be no substance to it but some workers perceive that there is a connection between these repayments and attempts on the part of managment to break the solidarity of the militants.

Although the crisis at KSM is by no means over and it remains to be seen how workers will fare through the judicial process, questions must again be asked about the nature and significance of recognition agreements. In spite of the agreement which was entered into between KSM and AFCWU as long ago as 1982, the continued harassment of union members would seem to indicate that management does not consider itself bound by that agreement or at least by the spirit of it. Entered into at a time when unionism was capable of displaying enormous confidence, the agreement and the structures for negotiating set up by it are hardpressed to counter the obvious collaboration between an intransigent management and the SAP. Again one is left with the question - what is recognised in a recognition agreement?

(Ian Macun and Sarah Christie, Port Elizabeth, April 1984)

SAAWU CONFERENCE BRIEFING

In April the South African Allied Workers Union held its fifth annual conference in Soweto. Amidst allegations that the conference was unconstitutional and of a split in the union it is worth examining the growth of SAAWU over the last few years and the build up to the conference.

SAAWU has had to endure many difficulties in the past few years from continual harassment from the South African Security Police, the reign of terror from Sebe's regime to their eventual banning in the Ciskei. SAAWU offices have been raided repeatedly and the president and vice president of the union have been subjected to constant harrassment and detention. This extended further into the general membership with Mdantsane residents harrassed by Sebe and ordinary meetings of the union in East London banned or disrupted by the South African Security Police. The Pretoria and Kempton Park offices have also both had to move recently.

Nevertheless the organisation has made strides on the shop floor with 2Ø recognition agreements having been signed with companies such as Chloride, Johnson and Johnson, KSM Milling and EC Smith in East London; Defy, Union Flour Mills, Airfreight Services, and Coates Brothers in Durban; British Industrial Plastic in Pinetown and Standard Bakery, Park Bakery, Ozalid and Grinaker Construction on the Reef. Despite the turmoil in the Eastern Cape these agreements were either concluded or extended in the past year.

There is also a large percentage of companies where SAAWU operates with de facto recognition. Moreover agreements around health and safety, maternity rights, pensions - with a representative admitted onto the Chloride Oddham Pension Fund, which SAAWU

believes to be the first of its kind - and planning around the revival of the union's newspaper **THE WORKER** have all taken place in the past year.

The survival of the union against such incessant onslaught as well as the growth of the organisation has been due to the establishment and consolidation of factory floor structures. At the moment SAAWU reports a membership of about 100000 in 18 branches compared with approximately 50000 in 2 branches (East London and Durban) in 1980. These branches are spread across the Eastern Cape (4), Natal (10) and Transvaal (4) provinces with East London as the most active branch.

The build-up to the Conference

After the conference in September 1983 in Durban was declared null and void an interim management committee was elected to plan a further conference to be held the following year. Delegates to the September conference felt that branches had not been properly notified of the agenda nor of the details of the conference.

Planning between the interim management committee and the 5 NEC members began in earnest at the December IMC meeting in Durban. Every established workers' committee was to send at least two delegates and branches were to prepare reports on finance, progress in organisational work including legal actions taken by the union for example on health and safety, worker education, and the unemployed workers' project.

Circulars were sent to all the branches of the union in February to notify them of the conference and to inform them of the agenda from which resolutions would be adopted so that they would be discussed fully at the conference. Guidelines on the composition of the delegations, how to prepare reports and how unions could assist in financing the

conference were included.

Notwithstanding the difficulties the union has had to face in the preparation for the conference, such as inadequate transport, lack of finance and communication problems, (some of the union's offices do not have telephones), the conference was well organised with 146 out of an expected 200 worker delegates participating in the conference. A major stumbling block was that worker delegates had difficulty in securing leave of absence in some factories so that the deliberations at the conference went through the night so that workers could return to work by Monday morning.

Talk of "splits" and of "dramatic changes" have filled the reports on the conference's deliberations. But the newly elected executive have denied both the reports of a split and of major changes in the union's policy and direction. The reports of a split follow the expulsion of three former members of the Executive: Sam Kikine, former General Secretary and based in Durban; Herbert Barnabas, former National Organiser from Kempton Park and Isaac Ngobo, former National Treasurer also from Durban. Their expulsion was decided on by the conference after the delegates upheld their suspension taken by the interim management committee in February of this year. The three officials were given the opportunity to present their case to the conference, the union's highest authority, but they chose not to. The three officials were expelled for unconstitutional behavior.

The three former members of the executive are now arguing that the conference itself was unconstitutional because some of the branches were not notified of the conference and that their expulsion therefore does not hold. The new national executive have however made it clear that all constituted branches were notified by circular letters and visited by officials of the union in the

period leading up to the conference. This is evidenced by the presence of a delegation from the Durban branches. Kikine and Barnabas are further alleging that both Njikelana and Gqweta's leadership is not recognised by their branches. These branches are being visited by the new executive.

At the conference SAAWU reafirmed its commitment to the formation of industrial unions. SAAWU's stated aim is to organise and unite all workers employed in various job categories (or industries) and group them according to the nature of the work they are engaged in and thereby establish industrial unions, under the auspices of SAAWU as their national federation. These principles as well as those emphasising SAAWU's role in the broader struggle towards the attainment of social and economic justice and an end of all forms of oppression and exploitation were the subject of the papers and addresses in the open sessions and were crystallised in resolutions adopted at the conference.

Billy Nair, active in SACTU as its national secretary and recently released from Robben Island addressed the conference. He emphasised that although workers produce all the wealth of the country they do not enjoy any access to it but are forced to live in shanties in the homelands and left to die. In detailing the history of the labour movement Nair showed that the political and economic struggles cannot be separated. Steve Tshwete (President of the Border region of the UDF), in his opening address hailed SAAWU as an organisation that strives "to educate the workers that the evils of the capitalist society cannot be mended as long as that society remains unscathed, an organisation that has amply demonstrated that the workers' struggle is best given its historical perspective in an alliance with all other struggling and democratic peoples organisation throughout the length and breadth of this country that is at war with itself".

Auret van Heerden in a talk on democracy in the second open session argued that in virtually all aspects of workers lives' they do not have control because they do not have any power. In order to achieve power the working class would have to push back the frontiers of control by challenging the bosses and the government and their allies wherever they exercised their power, be it in the factories, townships or schools.

The papers were followed by a high standard of discussion which was reflected in the seriousness of the resolutions adopted. One such dealt with SAAWU's position on the unity talks. A full and detailed report was given of SAAWU's involvement in the unity talks up to the date of their withdrawal. SAAWU had been given the opportunity to remain as observers at the talks or withdraw. Concern was expressed by the delegates as to the motives for this choice: "The extent of propaganda levelled against the organisation before and after the withdrawal has clearly indicated a definite attitude towards SAAWU - terms like 'smaller community-based unions' and 'emerging unions' compared to 'bigger older mainstream unions' which have frequently appeared in the commercial press were interpreted as a confirmation of a concerted effort to discredit the commitment of unions like SAAWU to the establisment of one national federation of independent trade unions."

The feeling amongst delegates was that the attitudes expressed both within the talks and by commentators were so rigid and intolerant that what was suggested to the union was actually an ultimatum which soon assumed the proportions of an expulsion.

SAAWU consequently committed itself to embark on a nationwide development campaign and to take the initiative in approaching democratic trade unions to develop a working relationship. Unions were categorised into three groups: bureaucratic,

democratic and those that were both bureaucratic and democratic and hence dangerous because of the confusion they engendered amongst the membership. The conference also decided that all branches of SAAWU should affiliate to the United Democratic Front's regional structures. Sisa Njikelana explained at the press conference held after the conference that the onus was on the union to develop the quality of leadership and to develop the links between the problems on the factory floor and those in the community.

Because of lack of time the conference mandated the national executive to arrange a special conference to deal with the constitutional amendments, further discussions on the establishment of industrial unions and an evaluation of SAAWU's policy.

The new national executive comprises Thozamile Gqweta - President, Welcome Ntshangase and Zolile Mtshelwane as first and second vice-presidents, Sisa Njikelana - General Secretary, Robertson Mathe - Assistant General Secretary and Stanley Peter - National Treasurer.

(Avril Joffe - Community Resource & Information Centre, Johannesburg).

BRAZIL: LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE CRISIS

David Fig*

Why look at Brazil?

South Africa's workers face unique everyday struggles under apartheid. It is often easy to forget that in certain parts of the world there are other groups of workers subject to similar, although not identical, political and economic situations. Located across the South Atlantic Ocean, Brazil is the largest country in Latin America and the only one where Portuguese is the official language. It is seven times larger than south Africa (8.5 million square km) with a population four times the size (120 million in 1980). Its most important industrial city is Sao Paulo with 8 million people and another 5 million in surrounding areas. By the end of the century greater Sao Paulo is likely to be the biggest metropolitan area in the world, with 31 million people. The great size of the Sao Paulo working class and its experience of struggle are important features of interest to workers elsewhere.

But there are other reasons why we should not ignore the labour movement in Brazil. There are important similarities with the South African situation. Both countries have emerged as important bases of secondary industry since 1945. Capitalism has developed not simply as a result of self-generated local accumulation, but has relied to a considerable extent on the inflow of capital from beyond the borders. In effect this has meant a large presence in the economy of transnational corporations whose primary concern is their own profit rather than allegiance to any one country. Many of the same

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transnationals operate in South Africa.

Workers of both countries face common problems: inadequate incomes, housing, health care, schooling, pensions and other social services, and a combination of recession and high inflation, which eats away at wages and jobs. During 1982 for example, the recession resulted in 1/4 million redundancies in the state of Sao Paulo. The motor industry was affected particularly badly. The swelling of the reserve aremy of labour keeps wage levels low.

Labour migration between countryside and city is another common feature with South Africa. In South Africa such migration was for the most part officially induced in order to create an industrial workforce. In Brazil the motives for moving to the cities were less linked to the demands of industrial capital, but are to be found in the facts of rural class conflict, the loss of lands to the more powerful, the serious droughts in the densely populated north-east of the country, the attraction of slightly higher wage rates in the cities, especially those in the industrial south-east. Rural people swelled the cities during a period of industrial expansion. Now that that is over, many are migrating once again, back to the countryside, often to the newer areas of settlement in the Amazon or Mato Grosso where they face other forms of hardship and exploitation.

The economic crisis in Brazil has reached enormous proportions. Brazil's debt to foreign bankers is close to US$100 million, its annual inflation rate is around 240% and its currency has plummeted in value making imported goods extremely expensive. Like South Africa, the burden of the economic crisis falls on the poor. Government subsidies on basic foods have been ended. And government loans from the International Monetary Fund are conditional on further cuts including wage cuts. Droughts and floods added to the problems in 1983. Many

starving, unemployed people made desperate raids on supermarkets to obtain the basic foods of rice and beans which they could no longer afford.

Both countries have repressive, authoritarian governments, which exercise a great deal of control over the labour movement and the working class. In Brazil the forces of the state have traditionally been used to repress the demands of the workers. In 1929 the Brazilian president declared that "the social question (i.e. working class struggle) is a matter for the police". Broadly this attitude continues to be held by government and many major employers, reminiscent of some of their South African counterparts.

Until the 197Øs saw the emergence of independent non-racial unions in South Africa, there were all sorts of attempts to prevent their formation and to keep workers divided along racial lines. Sweetheart unions, parallel unions, works committees, and liaison committees were all attempts to delay or prevent the independent self-organisation of black workers. In a similar way, Brazilian workers faced the problem of developing an independent trade union system. A system of state interference has existed for over 4Ø years. With many unions controlled by officials who have been appointed by or collaborated deeply with the state.

Brazilian workers have developed certain strategies of resistance. These include the development of new organs of worker control, the freeing of the unions from corrupt or conciliatory leadership, the development of representative factory committees, and of a national trade union centre.

Finally, there is another reason why workers in South Africa should be concerned about workers in Brazil. Increasing numbers of South African companies have established a presence in Brazil. Anglo American, De Beers, AECI, Gencor, Goldfields,

Barlow Rand, Rembrandt and some smaller companies now have subsidiaries in Brazil. Facing the same employers, the scope for solidarity actions is increased.

The making of the Brazilian working class

The Brazilian working class has had a history of great militancy and organisation, but until the 195Øs was small in numbers and largely disenfranchised. Before 1888, the Portuguese rulers brought many Africans from Angola and other parts of the continent to work as slaves on the large sugar, coffee and cocoa plantations and in the mines. Slavery was only abolished in 1888, more than fifty years afer slaves were set free in South Africa. By this time, the plantation owners were willing to give up their slaves, since, in many cases, their need for skilled workers had grown. They did not retrain the ex-slaves to do the more skilled work. Instead the Brazilian government set up recruiting stations in southern Europe to stimulate immigration.

Many of these immigrants had been forced off the land in their own countries and had to seek work in the cities. they had come into contact with working class politics which at that time was dominated by anarcho-syndicalism. Anarcho-syndicalists believed that workers would only be free from exploitation once they organised themselves in big general unions controlled by the grassroots. Through using the tactic of the general strike, the state could be overthrown and workers' control established.

Workers' congresses were established in 19Ø6 and their strength tested in the great strikes of 1917 and 192Ø, when the city of Sao Paulo was brought to a halt. The state intervened to repress workers, but they defended themselves adequately, creating no-go areas for state troopers and militia. The 1917 strike, in which workers had demanded an

end to povery wages, excessive working hours and the exploitation of child labour, resulted in a stalemate, solved largely to the satisfaction of the workers after the journalists' union had persuaded employers to give in.

Anarcho-syndicalist ideas dominated the early years of the Brazilian working class movement until the 192Øs, when they were eclipsed by the new vision of workers' power offered by the Bolshevik revolution. Numerous socialist circles came into being and a number of these amalgamated in 1922 to form the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) which soon afterwards was admitted to the Third International.

The upsurge in strikes and other forms of militant action dating from 1917 was met with repression on the part of the state. Between 1922 and 1926, the president declared a state of emergency during which all civil rights were abolished. Many trade unionists and political activists born outside Brazil were deported. This affected the strength of the old anarchist leadership and of the trade unions in general.

Between 1889 and 193Ø, the years of the so-called Old Republic, a coalition of large landowners dominated Brazil. This class was weakened during the First World War and the Great Depression following the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Both of these events had adversely affected Brazil's agro-exports. Coffee, sugar, rubber and cattle production went into decline as exports fell during wartime and recession. Simultaneously an emerging class of industrial capitalists began to prosper. Shipping blockades during the war had stopped many imports from reaching Latin America. Manufacturers began to extend their position in the domestic market. They were eager to develop the national industrial base, and, unlike the export-oriented landowning class, were keen on such nationalist measures as protectionism, and looked to the state to realise their

interests.

In 1930, Getulio Vargas came to power in a coup which put an end to the elitist Old Republic. One of his first tasks was the creation of a Ministry of Labour to take control of trade union affairs. Within six months it began to have an impact on the vulnerable independent union movement.

Workers under the law

Vargas adopted the strategy of "corporatism" used by Italian fascists. In an attempt to "abolish" class struggle, bosses and workers in the same industrial sector were obliged to form common organisations (known as "corporations") which were given parliamentary representation. Through the Labour Ministry the state could intervene and mediate between bosses and workers. It also had the power to force workers to abandon the independent unions and to join the unions which the state recognised. Most socialists, communists and active trade unionists in Italy were jailed and persecuted under fascism, so that open opposition to the fascist-style unions was silenced.

Vargas sought to reproduce this vision of industrial peace. Under new decree-laws, only those trade unions recognised by the state could continue to exist. General unions were abolished and each occupational category of workers had to have their own union. Furthermore these new industrial unions could not operate on a national level, but could only represent workers in one industry in one municipality. Federations of workers in different industries were illegal. Every worker had to belong to the prescribed union and pay a day's wages each year to finance the unions. Thus the whole system was financed by workers. Moreover, workers could not picket or engage in sympathy strikes.

Although there were elections for union office holders, the candidates had to be approved by the

Ministry of Labour. Usually socialist candidates were vetoed. Two-thirds of office holders had to be born in Brazil. This curbed foreign-born activists. The unions were led by yes-men, prepared to work closely with the state and the employers. Many leaders remained in power for long periods since they were able to rig the next set of union elections while in office. Unions were organised by the state as buffers against workers' demands. Workers could no longer negotiate wages directly with their bosses. Each year wages would be fixed by a system of labour tribunals, where the bosses' organisations, the pliant unions and the Ministry of Labour would jointly fix the workers' income levels for the next twelve months. It was not surprising that in 1933 Vargas received a letter from the founder of the Employers' organisation, the Federation of Industries of the State of Sao Paulo, endorsing the new legislation. Industrialisation could now go ahead without the unrest experienced in the earlier period of free trade unions.

Vargas' early period in office was marked by two crises, an attempted middle class uprising in Sao Paulo (1932) and an abortive communist uprising, largely centred in the north-east of the country (1935). These factors, along with the possibility of his own successor losing the 1937 presidential elections, led him to assume supreme dictatorial powers between 1937 and 1945. All political parties were outlawed and parliament was closed. During this period Vargas consolidated the labour laws into a corporatist-type labour code - the CLT.

When Brazil entered the Second World War on the side of the Allies in 1942, certain gestures were made to workers to guarantee smooth production for the war effort. Some social security was introduced, as well as a minimum wage, but this masked the fact that real wages had fallen drastically by 56 per cent between 1914 and 1945. At the end of the war Vargas lost power but his immediate successor was

the person he had nominated to be the next president. Vargas was voted back into power in 1950 and remained president until he committed suicide in 1954. Apart from a brief period in 1961, Vargas supporters held the presidency for the following ten years until the military coup of 1964. His labour laws - the CLT - remain on the statute book.

The military are still in power today. Even though they have said that they wish to hand over power to civilians, this is being done in such a way as not to threaten the interests of the present regime. For example, there will be no direct elections for the presidency until 1991. The next president will be chosen in 1985 from an electoral college in which the present government has an automatic majority. It is likely that the repressive CLT will remain in force and continue to control the workings of the trade union movement.

The problem of trade union leadership

From the time of the consolidation of the labour laws there were purges of the more militant trade unionists. This did not only apply to adherents of the Communist Party but also to members of the Young Christian Workers movement and ex-socialists. All those who advocated a free trade union system or a class position were removed from trade union office. Purges were especially severe after the military takeover in 1964.

The coup occurred after an upsurge of activity by the popular classes. It put an end to the three-year-long administration of President Joao "Jango" Goulart, which was beginning to move towards the implementation of a radical nationalist reform programme. Goulart was the political heir of Vargas, having been Minister of Labour in his last government. His political base was in the working class and amongst the rural landless. But only in his third year of office was he able to abandon

caution and submit to popular demands for reform. With backing from the United States, the armed forces took over Brazil to prevent this. The military takeover became the model for similar right-wing coups over the next few years. It was accompanied by jailings and assaults, torture, exile and murder for the many trade union activists who emerged during the preceding period of popular upsurge. In their place came officials who enjoyed the confidence of the Ministry of Labour. The workers called such officials **pelegos**, the name for the sheepskin saddle used by cowboys. The job of the **pelegos** was to smooth the contact between the rider and the horse, that is, between the bosses and the workers. In the postwar period, many of the **pelegos** trained on courses set up by the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD) in the United States.

The government was able to place the **pelegos** in leadership positions through judicious use of key articles of the CLT. Under Article 555 unions can be dissolved for "creating obstacles to the carrying out of the government's economic policies". This provision is so wide as to embrace any of the actions of those unions with elected leaders who represent grassroots workers' interests rather than those of the employers or the state. Article 525 prevents any outsiders, except those designated by the Ministry of Labour, from interfering in the running of the unions. Article 528 allows the "intervention" by the Minister of Labour in cases of unrest or breaches of national security. Thus in the great metalworkers' strikes of 1978 to 1980, the officials were removed after attempting to carry out policies endorsed by mass meetings of up to 80000 workers. Again when thousands of workers went on strike in July 1983, the government intervened in the oil refinery workers' union of Campinas, the bank and metro and chemical unions in Sao Paulo and the metalworkers' union of Sao Bernardo. The pelego leadership of the metalworkers' union of Sao Paulo,

which had given only token support to the strike, remained untouched.

Under the CLT no provision was made for shopfloor representation in the unions. Members could only choose their leaders every four years. The elections were not for shop stewards, since no such position existed. Workers only had the choice of voting a particular "slate" or list of candidates. Often only one list was presented, but even when the contest was real, the incumbents had the advantage. Existing officers received, through the Ministry of Labour, a substantial share of the one-day's-wages-per-year tax which workers were obliged to pay. They used these monies to run the union, but during election years could divert some of this income to publicise their own "slate". They also had access to union printing facilities, vehicles and often sympathetic coverage in the largely pro-government press. When all else failed they simply rigged the ballots in their own favour.

The Ministry of Labour, set up federations and confederations of unions. These were totally unlike the concept of federations being discussed in South Africa. They were formed in each industry at regional level. For example, chemical workers within each municipality could come together in a state-wide federation. These federations were elected and run by the union officials who had already achieved power in individual unions. They were not elected by or responsible to workers in the industry. These regional federations were joined together in six national confederations (for industry, agriculture, commerce, banking and two for the transport sector). These confederations were also unaccountable to the workers, and apart from the agriculture confederation, Contag, have remained in the hands of the **pelegos.** An example of this is the career of Ari Campinas, one of the most prominent **pelegos.** He was voted onto the board of the Confederation of Industrial Workers as long ago

as 1943, and became its president in 1972. He stayed in this position, being re-elected by fellow **pelegos**, until 1983, when he was forced to resign after being exposed for corruption on a grand scale. He had, amongst other things, passed confederation money through his own private bank accounts.

Under Article 565 of the CLT, the unions cannot affiliate to or have any contact with international bodies without the express advance permission of the President of Brazil. Such permission is usually only granted to the federations and confederations which enabled them over most of the past forty years to act as a substitute for a national trade union centre in relations with the international trade union movement. This vertical system of representation and control has now been challenged by the workers themselves.

Resistance and repression

Despite the terrible repression, particularly under military rule, workers have not been totally passive. This is evident from the vicious ways in which the Brazilian state has had to apply the CLT and national security legislation (LSN) against unions. It is also evident in the numerous struggles which workers have undertaken to combat this rigid system. For example, during the populist government of Jango Goulart (1961-64), workers made use of the more favourable political climate to articulate their demands for a freer trade unionism. Although illegal, a national trade union organisation, the General Workers Command (**Comando Geral Dos Trabalhadores**, or CGT), came into being, and pressed the government for recognition. The state also moved towards giving trade union rights to soldiers and sailors. In the countryside farm workers and tenants on large estates began to organise themselves in the Peasants' League and other great rural unions.

Many of these initiatives were crushed when the military came to power in April 1964. The union of gold miners in Nova Lima, which had enjoyed a proud history since its formation, expressed its rejection of military rule by staging a strike. But the miners were amongst the few groups which dared to react. The severe repression which followed the coup ended open opposition and this period is still referred to by workers as "the dark years". It was the heyday of the political police, the DOPS, whose death squads kidnapped, tortured and murdered opponents of the regime. Although urban and rural guerilla movements were formed to react to state terror these were generally not representative of workers.

Strikes were abolished and wages held low by state control over wage bargaining. This made Brazil more attractive to foreign investors during the second half of the 1960s, when there was an expansion of the world economy. The policy of the military government was to encourage foreign investment. Most of the large multinational corporations entered Brazil during this time. Investment was concentrated geographically in the industrial state of Sao Paulo, both in the city of Sao Paulo and in the neighbouring municipalities such as Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo and Sao Caetano (known as the ABC region). The aim was to take advantage of the relatively experienced workforce, developed infrastructure and easy access to the main population centres.

The development of a trade union opposition

The multinationals set up huge plants (e.g. 40000 workers at Volkswagen) and many situated their factories in a line along the major highways and railways in the ABC region. This made for an unprecedented concentration of workers, most of whom fell under the Sao Bernardo metalworkers' union. In Sao Bernardo the most important municipality in the

Brazil

ABC region, by 1980, there were 142000 workers in 670 firms, 230 of which employed over fifty workers, or 95% of the local workforce. A total of 99000 worked in the motor and component industry, amounting to just under 70% of the workforce. Such a concentration had important implications for the development of worker consciousness and organisation.

Under military rule all strikes were declared illegal and regarded as potentially subversive. Yet workers could see that the owners of capital were prospering under military rule whilst their own living standards were consistently falling. Rates of return on new captial investment were extremely high between 1968 and 1974, and this epoch was nicknamed "the Brazilian miracle" to indicate the rapid rate at which industrialisation was proceeding, unusual for a country in the developing world.

Hand in hand with the "miracle" went the repression and emiseration of the popular classes. Open opposition within the unions was impossible. But in the absence of political organisations, workers received considerable support from certain sections of the church, especially after the meeting of the Conference of Latin American Bishops, (CELAM). The conference met at Medillin in Colombia in 1968 and argued for the church to devote its attention to the plight of the poor majority in Latin America. Previously the church had been associated with the interests of the rich.

Numerous trade unionists had been members of the Young Christian Workers (JOC), and were able to argue for representative unions and workers' control in discussions on the shop floor. Workers considered their problems together, informally, for the first time since the coup. In some cases they developed sufficient organisation to unseat the incumbent **pelegos**. Where this happened the new leadership of the unions felt strong enough to take more militant action. Strikes for higher wages

occurred in 1968 amongst the metalworkers of Contagem and Osasco, industrial suburbs of Belo Horizonte and Sao Paulo respectively. Although these were easily repressed, they were symbolic of the potential of opposition candidates to win union elections so as to take on the employers and the state. After 1968, the strike tactic was replaced by partial stoppages, overtime bans and go-slows (called "operation tortoise" in Brazil). The strikes had provided a great filip for the activities of the oppositionists. Organising quietly, they set up nuclei in major factories, particularly in the ABC region.

The employment policy within heavy secondary industry was to dismiss many workers before they reached their first twelve months in the job. In this way employers avoided paying workers higher wage scales and prevented them qualifying for other benefits such as employment security and redundancy money from the firm on dismissal. However, workers found relatively little difficulty in securing new jobs in other factories in similar sectors during the boom years. Hence the trade union oppositionists, who tended to lose their jobs when their political views became known to employers, were able to move from plant to plant setting up new nuclei. These nuclei operated to raise workers' consciousness about the CLT, the pelegos, and the potential benefits of a free trade unionism. Often they had an organisational impact at the level of factory meetings and in the community.

A key figure in the opposition movement at this time was Waldemar Rossi, whose background was in the JOC. In an interview with the author (7.12.1981) he described the difficulties:

> It was somewhat difficult for the government and the repressive forces to harrass us specifically in terms of our work as the trade union opposition, or indeed on the other hand in terms of our work with the church. So what

> the government tried to do, working together with the trade union stooges, the pelegos, was to have us denounced within the companies where we worked. The result of that was that during 18 years as a trade unionist in the engineering sector, I lost my job 19 times. On top of this the government, in 1974, planned a pretext for charging us under the National Security Law on the grounds that we were involved in a fictitious political movement...we suffered various tortures and assaults, yet in 1978 the government was forced to admit that we were not involved in any illegal political movement. And the repression continues to this day. Every step we take is closely watched, and in fact, I have just lost my job again.

Undaunted, the trade union oppositionists went on to play a key role in the events of the late seventies.

The ABC strikes, 1978-80

By 1974 the economic "miracle" ended. A massive economic crisis followed the rise in oil prices. Huge debts were incurred by the state, as a result of prestige projects of doubtful benefit to the development process such as the Itaipu hydroelectric scheme, the Grande Carajas mineral project, and a programme to construct nuclear reactors. The crisis has intensified over the past decade.

By 1977 inflation had seriously eroded industrial wages. Although the government obliged employers to increase wages periodically to compensate, it was discovered that the official calculation of the inflation rate deliberately underestimated cost of living rises by as much as 34,1%. Workers could see for themselves that the wage increases did not compensate them adequately for the escalating prices.

Workers in the car and engineering plants of the ABC

region were especially keen to redress the shortfall. The law allowed for a single wage determination for the entire sector in the state of Sao Paulo. The body charged with the negotiations was the state metalworkers' federation, firmly in the hands of the pelegos. When the federation failed to negotiate for the missing 34,1% the Sao Bernardo metalworkers sought exemption from the statewide determination in order to negotiate with their own employers separately. A younger leadership had recently been elected under the wing of a retiring pelego, but whose concept of the union as an arena for furthering workers' demands differed remarkably from that of their predecessor. This new leadership was headed by a fitter and turner from the Villares factory, Luis Inacio da Silva, widely known to his comrades as Lula.

The opposition saw the new leadership as being much more amenable to their demands for a unionism free of the shackles of the CLT's corporatist structures. Lula was prepared to mobilise workers behind the demand for the 34,1%, in clear contrast to those trade union officials who remained unresponsive to workers' demands. The workers rapidly developed a critique of the whole structure which permitted this sort of leadership to exist. The campaign to restore the 34,1% failed, yet workers had gained valuable experience of struggle and a clear perception of their most urgent organisational problems.

The campaign for higher wages was resumed in 1978. In the Swedish-owned Scania heavy vehicle factory in Sao Bernardo workers were angry about the dismissal of some apprentices. Although their readmission was gained, this was on condition that they forego their union activities. Toolshop workers had to stage a go-slow to secure their annual wage readjustment. On pay day in May the entire workforce was shocked to receive wages for only 230 hours in the month instead of for the usual 240 hours. Although the

notion of a strike was taboo, Gilson Menezes who worked for Scania and was also on the directorate of the union, approached Lula for possible support. Lula offered full union backing. Menezes then set about organising the opposition within the plant.

On 12 May 1978 the day shift took up their places at the factory machines as usual. But when the siren sounded to commence work at 7 a.m., the machines were not switched on. The workers simply folded their arms. The word spread form section to section, from shift to shift, from factory to factory. Because of the intense concentration of industry in the ABC region, thousands of workers could respond to the stoppage. The tactic of a factory occupation was chosen because the workers would remain united in their usual localities, safe from the repression which would have been unleashed had they decided to picket factory gates. It also prevented the employers from hiring scabs.

On 18 May the government declared the strike illegal and demanded that the workers resume work. The workers simply ignored this, and the government, surprisingly, refrained from employing repressive tactics. They left this task to the employers. Scania, for example, tried to prevent workers inside the plant from communicating with each other, even within sections. They placed obstacles between sections, putting guards on the doors, corridors, toilets, and inside the sections on the shop floor. Foremen attempted to pressurise workers into accepting the agreement proposed by the employers and to resume work. Scania also announced, in newspapers, flysheets and on the radio, that workers would be dismissed if they did not return to work. These pressures succeeded, and production resumed. In Mercedes workers returned after a 15% rise was offered. At Ford a similar deal was struck after hard bargaining with a recalcitrant management. But in Volkswagen there was considerable repression. Security guards were placed at 3 metre intervals

around the plant preventing new shifts from reoccupying the factory. The workers were insufficiently organised to resist and the strike collapsed with 28 dismissals uncontested.

The strike, despite its uneven results, was an important lesson to the workers. It was neither utterly spontaneous, nor was it thoroughly organised. It demonstrated the weakness of strikes which, despite union support, were not mobilised by the union. What became clear was the need to co-ordinate actions through the union and to raise the political consciousness of many more workers. Workers learnt much through the process of struggle, and for many of them it was to be their first experience of standing up to management.

The 1978 strike was a forerunner for the events of 1979. This time workers were demanding a 78% rise of which 46% was accounted for by inflation. In contrast to 1978, the metalworkers' unions in Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo and Sao Caetano took the organisational lead. Strikers did not occupy the factories this time. Instead they staged mass meetings. At first these were held in the union headquarters, but as the strikes grew, the venue was moved to an outdoor football stadium. Up to 90000 workers met to reject the employers' demand that workers return to work as a precondition for negotiations.

The employers too were more organised than the previous year, and this time had mobilised the state to act to repress the union. On the day following the mass meeting, troops appeared at the Sao Bernardo union headquarters to eject Lula and other union officials from their elected posts. The union was henceforth under the direct control of the Ministry of Labour.

At this point the church stepped in to assist the strikers. Its premises were made over to the union

as a new strike headquarters. Grassroots church groups assisted in the collection of money, food and clothing for the strike fund. This helped the strike to continue, and gave legitimacy to Lula and his colleagues which the state had attempted to remove.

Anticipating arrest, Lula had gone into hiding, but his re-emergence at a mass meeting a few days later restored worker confidence in the ability of the union to ride out the repression. It was clear, though, that an impasse had been reached. Lula had the painful task of having to persuade the workers to resume work on condition that employers would meet their demands within a 45-day period. Work would be resumed for that truce period, but the strike would be renewed thereafter if demands had not been met. Workers agreed to this, but demonstrated their strength on May Day two weeks before the end of the truce period. A rally of 150000 filled the stadium in Sao Bernardo. Lula pointed to the fact that numerous white-collar workers and civil servants had joined the struggle for higher wages and protection against inflation. He claimed that their work had been "proletarianised" because of the government's wages policy.

On the eve of the last day of the truce, the employers signed an agreement offering a 63% increase and paid compensation for the time lost during the strike. The agreement was registered with the regional delegation of the Ministry of Labour. The strikes had proved the value of the union and of united action.

Throughout 1979, other groups of workers engaged in strike action, having seen the relative success of the tactic in ABC. The public sector workers came out in their hundreds of thousands, despite the illegality of such moves. Several unions suffered intervention. In October the metalworkers of Sao

Paulo, who, numbering half a million and formed the largest union in Latin America, also joined the strike wave. Their action was met with violent repression and a respected member of the metalworkers' opposition, Santo Dias, was shot dead while attempting to calm tempers on a picket line.

By the end of 1979, the government agreed to new wage guidelines drawn up by the Sao Paulo Federation of Employers. This allowed for automatic adjustments every six months with higher increases for the lower paid workers. These new guidelines marked an improvement for most workers, and the strike wave began to peter out. Yet in the wage campaigns of 1980, workers rejected these arrangements as inadequate. Once again, the ABC metalworkers took the lead. They demanded an adjustment of 15% above the raging 120% inflation rate. But this time they went further: they made demands for the setting up of factory floor representation in the unions, the recognition of shop stewards, and job security so as to avoid the habitual layoffs of workers whose first twelve month period was due. On 1 April 1980 the third wave of strikes was unleashed.

Preparation for these strikes was more intensive than ever. Workers had elected a committee of 400 with representatives from most of the big factories, who had worked together with union officials to create a democratic infrastructure for decision making.

In attempting to declare the strikes illegal, the government placed the case before the labour court, but the judges refused to outlaw them. Instead they ruled that strikers would have to settle for around 6% above inflation, and forego their other demands. The government ordered the employers not to negotiate. After two weeks of stalemate, the labour court reversed its decision, under pressure from the government, which in turn was under

pressure by employers to suppress the strike. Despite new interventions in the unions concerned, a mass meeting of 60000 workers in the Sao Bernardo stadium repudiated the move. On the following day the army moved into ABC, arresting Lula and other prominent union officials under national security legislation.

These arrests drew international attention to the strikes and created an immense support network throughout Brazil. The strike fund swelled and half a million tons of food was delivered to strikers, who remained steadfast for a total of 41 days. During this time the May Day march through Sao Bernardo attracted 120000 participants, forcing police to retire from the city centre.

The strikes ended once the strike fund had been depleted and many workers had been forced to return to work. None of their collective demands were met, but fierce resistance to constant police and army harrassment had renewed workers' self-confidence had removed the sting of the defeat. There was substantial national and international outrage at the jail sentences imposed on Lula and his colleagues by military tribunals. In the end charges were withdrawn.

Selective democratisation

On the political level the military began to accept that it could not govern crisis-ridden Brazil indefinitely. President Geisel (1974-79) and his successor Figueiredo (1979-85) began to implement a policy of gradual democratisation, known as the **abertura** ("opening up"). This was largely a response to widespread disaffection not simply amongst the popular classes but also amongst the owners of capital, Brazilian as well as foreign.

The arguments for **arbertura** resembled those raised by reformist businessmen and politicians in South

Africa. They recognised that in a modern industrial economy, requiring a more stable, skilled labour force, naked repression was not necessarily the best way of maintaining the system. Pressures of the international recession and competition added to their dilemmas. The economic crisis had also alienated the urban middle classes from any support for the military regime. To recuperate some support the more reformist sections of the armed forces sought to move towards selective democratisation of Brazil. Yet the implementation of the abertura was effected in such a manner as to allow the military to retain full control over the process. The retention of the CLT, of the national security laws and of the repressive political police, meant that abertura was dismissed by many workers as having little real meaning for them. Lula assessed the situation as follows:

> The authorities continue to talk about abertura. They say they are building a democracy. Only they do not fool us any more: abertura is the new name they have given to the repression of the workers.

Although the strikes of the 1978-80 period had largely raised economic demands, the context in which they were staged was one in which political issues became increasingly apparent. Workers, many without previous involvement in strike action, realised that government policy was responsible for their predicament as much as the practices of their employers. The case put by the trade union oppositions began to receive wide support, no longer being confined to small nuclei in the factories. This was reflected in the 1980 demands for the creation of democratic shopfloor representation. The presence of the army in the ABC region and the arrests of Lula and others raised demands for an end to state repression and intervention.

In a number of unions, rural as well as urban, candidates who upheld the opposition's demands for

free, representative unionism were soundly elected to office. The strikes had also revitalised grassroots community and church organisation sharing similar ideas about popular struggle.

Entering the political arena

One of the key proposals to emerge form the experience of this period was for the creaticn of a political party of the working class. Motivated by Lula, other trade unionists, and opposition politicians, the proposal reflected the realisation that workers needed to harness their political power to back up workplace demands and to transform Brazilian society in a fundamental way so as to put an end to exploitation.

Part of the **abertura** policy envisaged an end to the official two-party system (government and tame opposition) and the staging of the next round of general elections on a multi-party basis. Thus a legal opening was created for the existence of a working class party. The workers' party, or **Partido dos Trabalhadores** (PT) emerged during 1979/8Ø under the presidency of Lula.

Despite the personalist tradition in Brazilian political party leadership, and despite the enormous prestige enjoyed by Lula, the PT has never been a one-man-show. It rapidly developed amongst workers, the unemployed, grassroots sections of the church, progressive youth and left intellectuals. It is the only mass party in Brazil to have a system of regular branch meetings. Its program espouses socialism, minority rights, democratic freedoms, genuine land reform, and a government led by workers. It aims to put an end to repression, military rule, the domination of foreign capital, as well as restrictions on political and trade union organisation.

The creation of the PT has drawn much hostility from

the supporters of the illegal Brazilian Communist party (PCB) which claims that , historically, they form the party of the workers. The PCB's strategy has been to throw support behind the big liberal opposition party which it sees as being the only one with any chance of defeating the government. In the sphere of trade unions, the PCB has allied itself with the **pelegos.** Here it has used the rationale of not wanting to engage in confrontational politics, for fear that this will strengthen the right wing within the military, and jeopardise the **arbertura.**

The first electoral test for the PT came in November 1982, when there were elections for state governors, federal and state MPs, city councils and a third of the senate. Despite many changes in the electoral legislation to restrict the possibilities for opposition victories, the PT was able to put up candidates in the required number of offices. Although the elections were contested quite seriously, the PT saw them more in terms of an opportunity to spread its ideas than to gain political office. Even so, the PT performed relatively badly, winning only 4% of the votes. Even in areas where it expected wide support, it was largely a victim of the overriding desire to defeat the government party by switching support to the major opposition party in each state. Yet the PT returned a number of state and six federal deputies, and a scattering of city councillors.

The PT now faces the problem of how to widen its base without diluting its programme or damaging precarious party unity. It has to present itself to the masses as having credible alternatives to the major parties as well as strategic possibilities for winning power in key working class areas. Its strength lies in its origins in the struggles of the late 1970s, and the discrediting of its major rival in the ABC region, the PTB.

Developments on the shopfloor

Under the CLT, there is no legal provision for shop stewards or elected workers representing their own colleagues in relation to their own management. This counts out in-plant bargaining over wages and conditions. Workers can be represented only by their unions in formal negotiations with employers' groups. Sometimes, especially if the union is in the hands of the pelegos, workers may not trust it to represent them.

Workers do no elect individual candidates to union office. They choose between two or more "slates" of candidates. The successfully elected "slate" takes office. Its members are guaranteed job security by their original employers according to law. Usually the "slate" is made up of individuals from each of the major factories, to ensure a spread of representation and contact with the union. But chances are in most of the smaller plants there would be no elected union official. Workers' sole contact with the unions would be through its newspaper or a quick word with an organiser at the factory gates. In recent years the inadequacy of this form of representation has become very patent. What have emerged are coherent demands for directly elected representatives from each section of the factory to form a factory committee.

The first victory in this struggle was in February 1982 when Ford recognised the factory committee set up in its Sao Bernardo plant. The trade union opposition movement had made a decisive breakthrough in the struggle for democratic worker representation. Although the factory committees operate independently from the unions, in the case of Ford Sao Bernardo, two union office-bearers were included in the committee. However at Volkswagen, where the committee was forbidden by the company to have any links with the union, workers refused to elect representatives, and will only do so on their own terms.

Much of the experience of this form of organisation and representation was realised during the 1979 and 1980 strikes when workers created their own strike committees. Shopfloor representation, in the absence of a shop steward system, is likely to become a key transmission belt for worker demands.

Building a national centre

We have seen how the CLT provided for six national confederations, elected largely amongst the **pelegos**. A further challenge to the CLT, one also raised by the trade union opposition movement, is the need to form a national trade union centre representative of workers. The strike waves of the late 1970s highlighted this need. In the wake of the strikes a number of local unions were captured by the opposition slates in elections. These unions numbered amongst the most important in Brazil, and their leaders militated for the creation of a national centre by staging a number of preliminary congresses at state level.

In 1981 the first national workers congress was held with a view to the future formation of a national centre. Five thousand workers met at Praia Grande near Santos. The congress was split into two wings: the **pelegos** and their allies, who held a small majority, and the oppositionists on the other hand. A mixed commission consisting of both factions was formed and an uneasy unity maintained.

The commission was charged with mobilising support for the idea throughout Brazil and with staging a representative recall congress in 1982. the two wings had very different conceptions for the realisation of the national centre. The opposition threw up the slogan "for a grassroots national centre", implying the need for a developed democratic base. The **pelegos** and their allies sought a formula which was far more bureaucratic, with less accountability and less frequent national

congresses. Despite the mandate to recall the congress in 1982, the majority faction refused to sanction this, claiming that workers would be preoccupied with the November 1982 general elections. So the recall congress was postponed and dates set for August 1983.

In the run up to the recall congress, due to consider the proposals of both sides, a one-day general strike occurred on 21 July 1983. Although, unusually, there was collaboration by both wings of the movement, the role of the **pelego**-led wing was clearly to dampen down the workers' militancy. Once again the state intervened to throw out the leaders of the oppositional unions, replacing them with Labour Ministry officials. The government allowed the **pelegos** who had taken part in the strike to remain in office. When the recall congress met in Sao Bernardo in August, hosted by the metalworkers union, the **pelego** wing of the movement declined to participate. Whether this was a result of fears that the programme of the oppositional unions would win majority support, or an attempt to remove legitimacy from any attempt to set up a national centre based on mass democracy, the net result was a split in the trade union movement.

The oppositional unions went ahead to create their long-sought dream, the workers' national centre, **Central Unica dos Trabalhadores** (CUT). The congress adopted the organisational structure which favoured maximum grassroots participation. Representatives of numerous other national centres attended the congress as fraternal delegates. The establishment of the CUT has long-term strategic importance for the workers' movement, despite the illegality of workers from different sectors of the economy organising together.

The response of the **pelego**-led wing of the movement was to call a rival conference in Praia Grande at the beginning of November 1983. They created a

consultative body, the National Working Class Co-ordination, CONCLAT, and to confuse workers, adopted a programme similar to that of the CUT. It remains to be seen whether CONCLAT will prove as adamant in extending demands for trade union democracy and in challenging government economic policy. Ironically, the split may have favoured the oppositional unions, since the pelego- led wing is no longer in a position to neutralise their rivals under the smoke-screen of a dubious unity.

Brazil in crisis

As Brazil approaches 20 years of military rule, it is faced with one of the worst economic crises it has ever known. With its massive foreign debt, an annual inflation rate of 240%, falling production, falling exports, huge oil bills, and the destruction of major food crops by floods and drought, Brazil faces huge problems.

In the context of this crisis, workers' demands have found increasingly political expression. Workers know that, given democratic trade unionism and fair electoral laws, they would be able to overturn the CLT, the national security legislation, and government economic policy.

Redundancies have escalated over the past two years as production drops. But even those with jobs face steady emiseration. Sixty-six percent of all wage earners earned less than three times the officially registered minimum salary - i.e. less than R264 per month in 1982. According to UNICEF, more than half of Brazil's children do not receive enough to eat.

A series of austerity measures has been imposed on Brazil by the International Monetary Fund. The CUT has advocated a moratorium on debt repayments and an end to the austerity programme. Without an absolute majority in Congress, the government has experienced difficulties in implementing austerity

measures. Meanwhile it has resorted to indirect methods: running down the already precarious health service, tightening exchange controls, removing food subsidies on staple products (resulting in 400% inflation for foodstuffs in 1983). Throughout 1983 there were food raids on supermarkets by groups of hungry, unemployed people. In Sao Paulo a demonstration of the unemployed marched on the governor's palace. Governor Montoro, freshly elected from the liberal opposition party and a strong upholder of the abertura, summoned the riot police which dispersed the crowd - which included some PTA state deputies who were attempting to calm the situation - with considerable violence. Montoro excused these actions as "democratic repression". Today the obscene spectacle of armed security guards patrolling food shops in areas of high unemployment is not unusual.

Calls for a general strike to oppose government economic policies have mounted steadily over the past year. Reacting to the IMF measures, workers in key petrol refineries came out on strike in early July 1983. Within days the government, fearing supplies of petrol would be jeopardised, intervened, threw the leadership out of the union and dismissed the strikers. This triggered off a lightening sympathy strike in Sao Bernardo and a full-scale general stoppage in Sao Paulo on 21 July, backed by demonstrations in major centres of hundreds of thousands of workers. Government interventions in major oppositional unions followed.

A threatened general strike in October was averted when the government failed to pass the IMf-imposed austerity measures through Congress. But the CUT has renewed its call for a general strike in April 1984 to mark its opposition to the twentieth anniversary of the military coup.

If there are solutions to the present crisis, they can no longer be implemented over the heads of the

working class. The workers of Brazil, in putting forward their basic demands for living wages, democratic rights and land for those of them in rural areas, have taken on the state, the pelegos, the multinationals and the international bankers. Their struggles deserve close attention.

Further information

Latin American Bureau, **Brazil: state and struggle**, (London 1982), available from LAB, 1 Amwell street, London EC1R 1UL, UK.

Brazil Labour Report, bimonthly, available from BLR, Rua Sete de Abril 230/72F, 01044 Sao Paulo-SP, Brazil.

Brazil Information, bimonthly, available from IBASE, Rua Vicente de Souza 29, 22251 Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil.

ILRIG, the International Labour Research and Information group, is preparing booklets and slide shows on Brazil in easy English and Xhosa for workers. These will be available later in 1984. Advance orders or enquiries can be directed to Box 213, Salt River 7925. ILRIG can also provide a contact service with worker organisations in Brazil.

Note: Since most of the sources for this article appear only in Portuguese, footnotes have been ommitted. The author is willing to provide interested readers with the relevant references.

MAY DAY - INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

Richard Goode

May lst is a day of international solidarity of workers throughout the world; a day on which workers express their solidarity with brothers and sisters everywhere. It is a day which reminds us of the history and traditions of the working peoples' movement in their struggle for freedom and an end to exploitation. In South Africa it has been 8Ø years since May Day was first celebrated. Now, after a break of twenty years, May Day is once again being celebrated and this year more workers and their allies will be celebrating May Day than ever before -a sure sign of the growing strength of the workers.

I. Origins of May Day*

One hundred years ago the American Federation of Organised Trade and Labour Unions met in Congress and passed this resolution:

> That from this date, May lst 1886, the legal labour day shall be fixed at 8 hours and that all workers organisations should prepare themselves for it. (1)

In those days American workers, like workers all around the world, worked under terrible conditions. Hours were long - 14, 16, even 18 hours per day - wages were very low and working conditions dangerous. Young children were forced to work and the lives of working people were short and hard. The power of the bosses was unrestrained in the

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*Rosa Luxemburg traces the origins back to 1856 from which time workers in Australia held an annual strike on April 21 in support of the eight-hour day: R. Luxemburg, "What are the Origins of May Day?", in D. Howard, ed.,**The Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,**(MRP 1971).

drive for more profit from the workers' sweat.

Leadership in the 8 hour agitation was given by Marxists, mainly German immigrants from the more experienced European working class movement. The demand for an eight hour day rapidly won support. At first they concentrated upon legislative reform, but at the 1884 congress P J McGuine, a founder of the carpenter's union said: "The only way to get the eight hour day is by organising. In 1868 the United States government passed an 8 hour law, and that law has been enforced just twice. If you want an eight hour day, make it yourself."

But there was opposition to the 8 hour demand. The bosses and their newspapers noisily protested that it would encourage "loafing, gambling, rioting, debauchery and drunkenness" and mean lower wages and poverty. Some of the skilled workers protected by their craft unions agreed. On the other hand the far left felt it was a demand which meant accepting the wage system when the struggle was to end wage slavery and capitalism. They argued: "To grant the point that the capitalists have the right to eight hours of our labour is more than a compromise; it is a virtual admission that the wage system is right." (2) Despite all this, the call mobilised a quarter of a million American workers. Everywhere workers marched and sang - from New York to San Francisco. They smoked "8 hour tobacco" and wore "8 hour shoes", so labelled by workers who had already won the demand for an eight-hour day. On the buses, trains and in the streets, workers sang this eight-hour song:

We mean to make things over
we're tired of toil for naught
But bare enough to live on, never
an hour for thought.
We want to feel the sunshine
we want
to smell the flowers,
we're sure that God willed it

and we mean to have eight hours.
We're summoning our forces from
shipyard, shop and mill
eight hours for work, eight hours for rest
eight hours for what we will! (3)

Where the employers refused to give in to their demands, a strike was to be declared. On May 1st 1886, a Saturday, but normally a full working day, the factories were silent, shops closed and railways were still. Three-hundred-and-fifty-thousand downed tools in 11562 work places. In Detroit 11000 marched in the "8 hour" parade. In New York 25000 workers marched in a torchlight parade. In Chicago - the biggest industrial city - 40 000 people paraded peacefully through the streets on that hot Saturday afternoon, celebrating their unity and determination under the guns of the watching police. A further 45000 had already won their demand before the strike. It was a huge success. One-hundred-and-eighty-five-thousand of the 350000 who struck won their 8 hours on the same day or soon afterwards and a further 2000000 got their hours reduced to 9 or 10 per day. (4)

Victory it was, but not without cost. Throughout the strike the police and army had been mobilised ready to attack workers. On May 3 workers on strike at the McCormick factory in Chigaco were locked out and in the evening police fired on them, killing six. The next day at a peaceful protest meeting in Haymarket Square police rushed the crowd and a bomb was thrown. It was never discovered who by. The police used this as an excuse to attack working class organisations, smashing up their offices and arresting leaders and eight labour leaders were put on trial. It turned into a trial of the very ideas of the labour movement now seen as a threat to the established order. Four were hanged and the rest jailed for long periods. (5) The Haymarket affair, as it was called, stood out as an example to later socialists of capitalist injustice. Despite this repression, May 1st 1890 was fixed as the date for

another great demonstration.

The problems American workers faced were felt by workers in Europe too. They had also been agitating for shorter working hours. So when the Second International was founded in Paris in 1889 the following resolution was passed:

> This congress decides to organise a great International demonstration so that in all countries and in all cities on our appointed day, the toiling masses shall demand of the State authorities the legal reduction of the working day to eight hours.

The day chosen was May 1st and in 1890 May Day was celebrated internationally for the first time. Meetings were held in Austria, Hungary, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Poland and Britain.

Why was May Day so widely observed? It was because the demand for an eight hour day touched members directly and acted to unite the working class. It came at a time when there were big divisions between skilled craft workers and less skilled workers who were rapidly organising. The slogans of an eight hour day and minimum wages were able to rally millions. To win these demands required political action, agitation of a new sort against the state, and it brought the mass movements in separate countries into a powerful international movement.

In England the eight hour demand was taken up by the socialists. The Bloomsbury Gas Workers Union led by Eleanor Marx was one of the first to win the demand. Facing opposition from the craft dominated Trades Council who resisted the demands like the American craft workers had before them, the socialists triumphed and 100000 people gathered in the middle of London on May Day, visibly unifying the working classes, from unskilled workers to artisans. (6)

May Day meetings grew steadily after the launch in

189Ø and mirrored developments in the European labour movement. The day was to bring all workers together in international solidarity, but how they were to win their demands and what programmes they put forward were matters for debate. May Day slogans reflected this sharp division between revolutionary and reformist sections of the working class movement. The former always championing the cause of the mass of workers against narrow sectionalism and uniting workers against their oppressors.

It was not always easy. In some countries demonstrations were illegal. In Russia the strikes grew - by 19ØØ there were demonstrations against the Tzarist rulers. In 19Ø5 strikes took place acros the country and included soldiers and peasants i illegal demonstrations against the Tzar. In 1917 the Bolshevik revolution decisively changed May Day. It was freely celebrated for the first time as a very important holiday in 1917 and has since become a show of solidarity with the struggles of working people in capitalist countries and those fighting colonialism and imperialism.

In Europe the traditional celebration of the beginning of spring falls on May 1st and May Day has developed on top of this old festival. The day has become culturally important; with workers claiming the day for themselves, to express class solidarity with other workers. It is a truly internationaly celebration; from Mocambique to Canada, Portugal to China, solidarity is proclaimed but in each case tradition has developed out of the experience of the particular labour movement.

II. May Day traditions in South Africa

This year it will be 8Ø years since May Day was first celebrated in South Africa. In every country workers have had to fight for their day, to claim in for themselves. In South Africa workers have done this, building May Day into the history of the

labour movement and the struggle for national liberation. In South Africa, too, the message of May Day has not easily taken root. Unity of the working class, regardless of race, colour or creed, with the interests of the most exploited workers at the forefront, has never been easy in South Africa, where divisions have existed between white and black workers. This is why May Day has historically only touched a small section of the working class, and its traditions have been built by workers at the forefront of progressive organisations, only occassionally growing beyond them. Small though the tradition is, it shows a history which has been fought for and paid for in blood - a history which is now being reclaimed.

Origins: 1904-1920s

On Sunday afternoon May 1st 1904 in Market Square, Johannesburg, where people usually came to pass the time, a group of socialists held South Africa's first May Day meeting. They had come from Europe and had experience of the socialist and trade union movements there. They were a cosmopolitan bunch - in fact, two meetings were held, one in English and one where French, German and Russian were spoken. Using wagons decorated with red flags for platforms, the socialists made many fiery speeches above the noise of a Salvation Army Band. The crowd was told it had been decided that the time was ripe to introduce the movement of socialism to the people of Johannesburg. Mr Maclean, a trade unionist declared: "They were there to celebrate their first annual Labour Day, to testify, as their comrades in almost every town and country in the civilised world were doing, to the unity and oneness of sympathy and aims of the working classes throughout the world." (7) Speeches were made attacking capitalists for the misery and degradation of the working class.

Maclean contended the capitalists manipulated the political machinery "to confuse the working men, to

mislead and befog them, and make them believe that the interests of the capitalists and their own were the same. There was never a greater mistake. Their interests were irreconcilable, and therefore it was the bounden duty of the working men to organise themselves politically and destroy the disastrous social conditions to which not only themselves but their children were doomed". (8) The meeting ended by passing a resolution with the aim of establishing a "cooperative commonwealth" and demanding representative government in the Transvaal.

Once begun May Day took some time to become established as an annual event, really only taking off after World War 1. It was celebrated in Cape Town in 1906 and in Durban in 1909, where a strike of Natal government rail workers created a favourable climate. A crowd of over 5000 marched from Albert Park to Ocean Beach where speeches were made and the usual May Day resolution taken on high prices, child labour, lack of political representation and unemployment. All support for the strikers was urged. A Mr C H Knowles even encouraged the women to "form an organisation to help the workers union. He says they should refuse to talk to or dance or play tennis with the men until they (the men) swore allegiance to, and were in, the fighting line of the political army of workers."

May Day was celebrated in the following year when English trade union leader Tom Mann visited South Africa and led a march in Johannesburg of trade unionists. Next mention was made of socialists in Cape Town, who, under the banner of the Social Democratic Federation, organised a strike against the Riotous Assemblies Bill which coincided with May Day.

World War I found the labour movement split. Anti-war socialists around the world declared workers should not fight and die in a war started by capitalists fighting over how to divide up the

profits. In South Africa the Social Democratic Federation remained true to the principles of working class solidarity and so in 1915 "a little band of war on warites organised a picturesque but, as the press would say, attenuated procession through the streets of Johannesburg, ending with a meeting in the rain at Market Square, addressed by a number of stalwarts and enlivened with a small band." It was resolved to "fight for unity of all peoples and the abolition of capitalist exploitation, brutality and bloodshed." (10) The following year those social democrats who had opposed the war formed the International Socialist League(ISL) and held a quiet social function which passed a resolution celebrating "...our bond with the militant proletariat of all lands" and pledging" ...our energies to the New International for the building up in South Africa of such industrial labour solidarity as can alone destroy capitalism, militarism and war, and in the fullness of strength unfold itself into the socialist commonwealth." (11)

Up till this point the May Day celebrations had been exclusively white affairs and the unity proclaimed remained strictly inside the colour bar. In 1917 this changed. Greater "realisation of the meaning of international socialism began to dawn on the ISL and in that year the May Day meeting was to have as a speaker one Horatio Mbelle, an articled clerk active in the Transvaal ANC.(12) The meeting, however, was broken up by mobs of soldiers and civilians who, in the midst of war fever, were doubly enraged by the nonracialism and anti-war position of the ISL. These efforts continued and in 1918 the ISL held a meeting outside the Pilkington Hall in Ferreirastown where a crowd of 200, mainly coloured workers gathered. Speakers included Talbot Williams, an organiser for the African Peoples Organisation and William Thebedi of the ANC. While the ISL met, an exclusive meeting of white trade unions took place outside the town hall. Amalgamated Society of Engineers members on strike, who had got May

Day off, complained because they would lose pay. On the Rand, as elsewhere, there was a great deal of worker action after the war, and this affected May Day celebrations. Also for socialists the Bolshevik Revolution had altered May Day significantly, providing a great rallying point for workers around the world. Moreover the ISL began to identify racial discrimination as a weapon of exploitation and moved hesistantly away from white exclusiveness.

In 1919 a large procession marched through the streets of Johannesburg organised by the trade union body, the SA Industrial Federation. At the head were the building workers' and masons' band. Since miners and municipal workers had gone on strike to observe May Day, the whole of Johannesburg knew of the significance of the day. The ISL marched with their own band and a banner which bore the slogan "Follow the lead of Russia, Down with Capitalism, Long Live the Workers International Revolution. Workers of the World Unite". It was a remarkable day for Johannesburg for the procession marched through the streets singing songs, followed by crowds, many wearing red badges. In his speech Bill Andrews made special reference to the "regrettable absence of african and coloured workers from the procession" and urged for next year to be a huge black and white demonstration. (13) While white workers were demonstrating in peace in Johannesburg's squares and streets, somewhere else in the city a meeting of 4000 africans took place. Their meeting, however, was broken up by police, while an aeroplane circled overhead.

Due to the May Day strike the year before, employers on the Rand granted workers the day off in 1920. Again the day was an all-white affair, as coloured labour organisations refused to participate because of their treatment in a dock strike in Cape Town earlier in the year. Struggles over political lines came out in that May Day meeting. The ISL accused

the secretary of the Industrial Federation, Archie Crawford, of sabotaging May Day by not encouraging workers to attend and blamed him for the farcical spectacle of a brewery dray carrying a glorified beer bottle advertising beer at the head of the procession.

In Durban the ISL branch held a picnic in Albert Park accompanied by songs and speeches. During the day the people of Durban were treated to the sight of a trolley pulled by four oxen and decorated with flags on which were huge paintings of Karl Marx and the arms of the Soviet Republic of Russia. In Cape Town there was a large rally where an estimated 8000 gathered to listen to speakers of various shades of opinion.

In 1921 things were improving. On the Rand, although it was the responsibility of the Executive of the Industrial Federation to organise May Day, the ISL took the lead in organising social evenings, meetings and processions. In that year next to the decorated car conveying singing children, a small group of african workers marched under the ISL banner. In Durban a meeting was held at His Majesty's theatre, and in Cape Town a large demonstration with over 20 labour organisations took place. There the strength of the coloured and african workers' support, established without doubt their right to participate in May Day events. (14)

The Rand Revolt prevented May Day from being celebrated in 1922, and in the aftermath of its defeat, those white workers who had won May Day as a holiday, lost it again. Nonetheless the procession organised by the Communist Party was as colourful as ever with decorated cars, trolley buses and childrens choirs. The procession wound its way through Johannesburg and stopped to sing the "Red Flag" and "International" outside those symbols of the capitalist establishment: the Star and Rand Daily Mail newspapers and Corner House mining group

offices. (15) In Cape Town May Day became a day of protest against unemployment with a large CP led demonstration on the Parade demanding work or national maintenance. In the evening a social was held. (16)

The Depression: militants v. bureaucrats

From these meetings on the Rand, in Cape Town and in Durban a May Day tradition began to emerge. For all the backwardness of the early socialists, they were beginning to grapple with the problem of reaching the working masses. This was why they made efforts to make May Day meetings nonracial. However limited, these efforts were enough to distance them from the more conservative unions in the Industrial Federation. These attempts were from the top down however, and it took the growth of african trade unions on the Rand to really change things. In 1928 african workers marched in their thousands and among them a small number of whites who remained true to the principle of worker unity. Their celebrations dwarfed the Labour Party's exclusive little meeting. From that point onwards, with ups and downs, black and white workers held united demonstrations and social events until the 195Øs.

In South Africa divisions in the labour movement were so large that not even the unity of May Day could always bridge them. In the early 193Øs it was celebrated in markedly different ways. The registered unions and bureaucratic labour movement celebrated May Day, and even passed resolutions supporting international solidarity of labour, yet their meetings were exclusive and barred african workers. On the other hand, there were the un-official but larger meetings of the Communist Party. A press report of the time conveys the newspapers' view of this:

> Communists held meetings at the Johannesburg City Hall steps on Sunday and yesterday, in accordance with their May Day programme, while

yesterday afternoon the children of trade unionists and members of the labour party enjoyed their annual treat on the sports grounds near Zoo lake.
At the Saturday meeting, speeches got off to a slow start and they rattled off the "usual" matter that is heard at such gatherings. It was mainly on unemployment...
While this had been going on, natives, some of them bearing furled banners, began to congregate on the private roadways in front of the City Hall. Then they drifted one by one, to the steps between the main entrance and President street, and one by one the banners with such slogans as "we want work, food, land" were unfurled. All the time there had been a fire of interruptions from sections of the crowd, and most of them referred to the presence of natives in the Communist Party. Shortly after the natives arrived it was noticeable that there was a movement of police towards the South side of the main entrance to the City Hall, and how well thought out this move was was soon to be proved.
The leadership of the police and the tact of all ranks in dealing with the crowd was admirable. A native speaker was announced and at once there was a shout from an enraged section of the audience. Some of the Europeans pushed forward ominously towards the natives. Some people feared the natives would get a rough time. The police tactfully intervened and with their truncheons persuaded the natives to go away. They went in something of a hurry. There were no Europeans among the injured.
...Meanwhile the official May Day Committee held its usual quiet and happy function out beyond Zoo lake... A comprehensive resolution was passed protesting about the "exploitation of the toiling masses."... and the singing of the "Red Flag" followed the passing of the

resolutions. (17)

Massive unemployment in 1931 created the conditions for a united May Day demonstration of black and white workers. As the "United" May Day Committee refused to allow africans to participate in the official celebrations, the CP organised a counter-demonstration. Large processions, swelled by the numbers of unemployed, marched from different ends of town and converged on the City Hall. The marchers numbering 2000 africans and 1000 whites gathered at the City Hall, where the quiet meeting of the May Day Committee was drowned out by the booing and yelling of the unemployed. After a while the unemployed settled down to listen to speakers, among them Izzy Diamond, who drew cheers from the assembled africans by referring to them as "black comrades". As the speeches ended a mixed crowd of around 1000 formed into a procession and marched towards the Carlton Hotel singing the "Red Flag" and shouting "we want work, we want bread". The Carlton Hotel and the Rand Club, symbols of mining wealth were attacked and a number of demonstrators arrested. Izzy Diamond the communist leader was jailed for a year. (18)

A united May Day: 1936-1940s

The Depression and the weakness of the labour movement account for the absence of May Day celebrations in the early 1930s. As the situation improved so it became possible to hold May Day meetings once more. In 1936 for the first time a genuinely representative and nonracial May Day was planned:

> There will be unity on May Day in Johannesburg this year for the first time for many years. There will be one united platform. Black and white workers, communists, labourists and trade unionists will take part in a joint meeting.
>
> The so-called "United" May Day Committee has for many years been celebrating May Day in

colour bar fashion, refusing to co-operate with internationalist organisations, such as the Furniture Workers Union and the Communist Party, which have no colour bar. In reply the African May Day committee was formed by the more class conscious section. The result was that for some years there were rival meetings on May Day.

This year the United May Day Committee asked the Trades and Labour Council to co-operate with them. The TLC replied that it would only do so if the present split was ended. A joint meeting of the rival May Day committees was summoned under the auspices of the TLC. A new Joint May Day Committee has been set up.

The celebrations this year will therefore be in the true spirit of May Day, "Workers of all races, unite!" (19)

May Day committees from the Cape Federation of Labour Unions and the TLC worked together in 1937 to hold a meeting in Cape Town on the parade and a concert. The committees then formed a single body, the United May Day Committee to organise May Day events annually. The Communist Party also participated.

Significantly during the 1940's May Day was most consistently observed. A pattern began to emerge of the way May Day was celebrated during the period. Leadership figures from the trade union and international liberation movements addressed May Day meetings around the country. Exchanges of greetings were published in the progressive newspapers and meetings and socials were enriched with drama and music as workers made these celebrations more culturally attractive. A pattern was also established of the type of meetings held. In Johannesburg, typically, a procession through the streets to the City Hall steps would take place where speeches would be made. In the afternoon sports would be held at Wemmer Pan. In Cape Town

there would be a meeting on the parade and this was frequently supplemented by meetings in the City Hall enlivened with singing and drama. In Durban mass processions often started from Red Square and demonstrations were held in Albert Park.

This was the period when the Garment Workers Union used to hold a May Day picnic. A May Queen would be chosen and workers would march to Victoria Lake for a picnic and swimming and dancing. The union won May Day as a holiday and used it to the full, as a workers day to celebrate their own organisation and show solidarity with workers around the world. (2Ø) To this day clothing workers have May Day as a holiday.

During this period when meetings were held regularly, speeches focused on fascism, the war and international issues. This is understandable in the context and kept the traditions of May Day squarely on international issues. While the meetings were enriched with more dramatic content, they were slow to develop a more authentic tradition based in the wider South African working class. After the war, issues moved into the more immediate concerns of the trade unions: housing, minimum wages and african trade union recognition, in line with the demands of the unregistered labour movement.

Repression and resistance: 195Øs

Political developments rapidly overtook the celebration of May Day after 1948. Representatives of the white labour movement declined invitations to attend May Day affairs and the right wing of the labour movement ceased to observe it entirely.

On the political front, organisations previously distinct were now being drawn together, under attack from the Nationalist Government. May Day 195Ø was different to previous days. The CP, ANC, Natal Indian Congress and Transvaal Indian Congress all

undertook joint co-operation for the first time, declaring May Day as "Freedom Day" and calling for demonstrations and a general stay-away. The strike and demonstrations were to protest against the Suppression of Communism Bill. Hundreds of meetings were held throughout the country in the build up to the Freedom Day strike and extensive agitation took place in parts of the Transvaal. Feelings were high in support of the strike.

To counter this the State mobilised all its resources. Meetings were banned and police and army units patrolled the streets. Employers offered workers accommodation at the factory to cut them off from the strike; loudspeaker vans toured townships, ordering workers to go to work(21); and the army occupied townships in Pretoria. Despite attempts by police to force workers onto buses to be transported to the factories, and the heavy police intimidation, the strike was widely observed. In the evening police broke up a gathering in Benoni with fixed bayonets leaving four dead and seven injured. (22) In Alexandra township a crowd was fired on and a cinema burnt down. In Sophiatown crowds were also shot at. (23) The final death toll was eighteen killed and thirty seriously wounded. In Cape Town 6000 people listened to speeches on the parade and then marched up Adderley Street shouting "Down with Apartheid. We want Freedom." In Durban 10000 demonstrated against the Suppression of Communism Bill.

Thus May Day 1950 became South Africa's first mass stay-away. The day on which the international struggle for eight hours is celebrated became a day of mass political struggle against oppression. May Day then took on a new meaning for the african working class. It was a day on which blood had been spilt too, and a day of mourning was called for June 26th to recall those who had fallen. This is how June 26 came into our calender as Freedom Day.

After the Freedom Day strike of 1950, the celebra-

tion of May Day declined. In the early 1950's rallies and social evenings were held in Cape Town. These did not grow again into the large May Day parades of previous years. This was a result of the state's attacks on the trade union and national liberation movements. The SACTU unions were weakened by the removal of the leaders, who had previously been responsible for organising May Day events. Nor was there any interest in May Day from the registered unions, who chose to disregard their past May Day activities. SACTU kept alive a tradition of May Day through the progressive newspapers, the Guardian and New Age. These continued to bring out May Day editions with notices and greetings from trade unions. From its origins SACTU stressed the importance of May Day for the inspiration and strength it lent to workers' struggles inside South Africa. SACTU called few May Day meetings and instead the day was used to review the trade union movement and the struggles of oppressed workers. In this way it was linked to the "pound a day" Campaign and adapted so that the traditional international aspects were used as a background to the demands of South African workers.

Nonetheless South African trade unionists were intensely aware of the wider significance of May Day. Francis Baard, a former secretary of the Port Elizabeth branch of the Food and Canning Workers Union made this appeal:

> The non-european workers of SA must not let down the workers of other countries by failing to join them in this great annual demonstration of the people of the world for working class solidarity.
> Every worker must start now preparing for May Day. Celebrations must be held in homes, halls, factories and streets. Through meetings and personal contacts workers must be told of the significance of this day.
> Where public meetings are against the law small gatherings can be held. Freedom songs

> sung in homes and factories, on streets and in buses and trains. Families can gather around May Day dinners and tea parties where the meaning of this day can be discussed with children, relatives and friends. (24)

Re-emergence of May Day

As SACTU was weakened by repression and New Age was banned, May Day, a small but important part of the politics and practice of the labour movement disappeared. After twenty years it is now re-emerging as the workers movement grows in strength. In 1982 May Day meetings were held where small numbers of workers attended. In 1983 trade unions in several parts of the country held meetings on May Day. 1984 is set for further expansion with more workers than before taking part. Moreover, at least one union has raised the demand that May Day be a workers' holiday. A new and stronger May Day tradition is sure to grow out of the foundations being laid by South Africa's "emerging" labour movement.

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THE INTERNATIONAL METALWORKERS FEDERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA (1974 -1980)

Eddie Webster*

The role of international trade unionism in the development of black trade unionism in South Africa is a subject that has received little attention.(1) While this article does not attempt to evaluate all the activities of the International Metalworker's Federation (IMF) in South Africa, it does provide a starting point for such an analysis by examining the regional activities of the metal workers international - the IMF South African Co-ordinating Council (IMF SACC).

The Council was established in 1974 to co-ordinate the activities of all metal unions in South Africa. This article traces how the comfortable imperial relationship between the IMF and its local craft affiliates (the established unions) was challenged by the emerging unions in the 1970s. The Council was to provide a lever and a platform for the beleaguered emerging unions, enabling them to establish a common position on certain key issues. As a result the Council reflected the major struggles between the established and emerging unions between 1974 and 1980.

The IMF and South Africa

The International Trade Secretariats (ITS's) emerged in the late nineteenth century when craft workers in

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particular trades came together internationally. In contrast to the First International (1864 - 1876), the ITS's were purely trade union bodies.(2) Whereas the First International covered issues ranging from the political rights of workers to the representation of their workplace interests, workplace issues were to come to the fore in the ITS's. Political interest in socialism came to be represented largely through political parties affiliated to the Second International (1889 - 1914).

The IMF was founded in Zurich in 1893. By 1981 it claimed more than 14 million blue and white collar members in 140 unions in more than 70 countries. Employed in machine shops, foundries, ship yards, steel-mills, automative, electrical, electronic and aerospace plants, these metal workers belong to the largest of the 14 ITS's.(3) Membership of the IMF is distributed as follows:

Europe	-	6 million
North America	-	3,5 million
Asia	-	2,3 million
Latin America & West Indies	-	1,0 million
South Pacific	-	260,000
Near East	-	100,000
Africa	-	100,000*

Like all other ITS's, members are overwhelmingly from Europe, North America and Japan.

The rise of the multinational corporation in the post Second World War period, led the IMF to increasingly recognise the need "to oppose the united front of capital with the united strength of trade unions" everywhere these companies invested.(4) In 1966 World Company Councils (WCCs)

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*a more recent estimate for South Africa alone would be 200,000

were established linking together workers from all over the world in companies such as Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and Volkswagen.(5) In 1971 the 2nd Congress of the IMF concluded that multinational corporations "play a divide and rule game calculated to pit each national group of workers against the others in this policy of buying human labour and raw materials in the cheapest markets". Concern was expressed by some delegates from developed countries that jobs would be "exported" to "cheap labour" countries. South Africa was mentioned at this Congress as an example of the way in which multinational companies "make full use of discriminatory domestic racism to maximise profits".

This direct interest in black workers in South Africa by the IMF Congress was to place both the IMF Secretariat and its South African affiliates, the established unions, in a dilemma. The established unions, such as the South African Boilermakers Society (SABS), the South African Electrical Workers Association (SAEWA) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), formed a privileged labour aristocracy of largely skilled white workers who constitute a powerful caucus, the Confederation of Metal and Building Unions (CMBU). These unions have over the years acted largely in the interest of their predominantly white members often at the expense of less skilled non-unionised but numerically dominant black workers. In 1972 the IMF sent a delegation to South Africa to examine this situation more closely. In essence their report endorsed the CMBU perspective that the founding of independent black unions was not practical. The best possibility of building unions, they argued, was "step by step through the protective umbrella of a registered union" i.e. the parallel union approach.(6) In making this recommendation, the delegation was ignoring the claims of the only existing emerging metal union at that time, Jane Hlongwane's Engineering and Allied Workers Union (EAWU).

The outbreak of mass strikes among black workers in Durban in 1973 was to shift the IMF out of its uncritical acceptance of its CMBU affiliates view of black workers. In April 1973 a further independent black metal union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), was established in Natal. At the 23rd Congress of the IMF in 1974 it was recommended that "all IMF affiliates in South Africa should co-operate in organising the unorganised workers in the metal industry". The EAWU, and an emerging black motor union, the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA), were to attend this Congress. Arising out of their contact with the CMBU at the Congress, it was decided to launch a regional committee of the IMF in South Africa - a decision consistent with the general tendency inside the IMF to regionalize their structures. "The S.A. delegates", Hlongwane wrote later, "found they did not know each other and were not helping each other. After this event, with the assistance of the General Secretary of the IMF, the inaugural meeting of the IMF SACC was held in Port Elizabeth in September 1974". (7) In addition to the CMBU members its founder members included the four emerging unions, MAWU, EAWU, NUMARWOSA and its african associate, the UAW.

Thonnessen, Assistant General Secretary of the IMF, began the meeting by pointing out that few workers were organised in South Africa:

> As a start, I suggest that trade union pressure should be applied to multi-national companies operating in South Africa to grant model wages, working conditions, trade union rights, etc. IMF affiliates in countries with parent companies with subsidiaries in South Africa can and will put pressure on these companies to obtain full information about the treatment of black workers and to upgrade their conditions.

In order to put this pressure on foreign companies, he said, "the IMF requires regular information and

reports on the problems facing the black, coloured and white members in South Africa to be able to give positive assistance".(8) The quid pro quo in return for the IMF breaking the economic boycott of South Africa called for by anti-apartheid forces was that local multi-national corporations, with the co-operation of the CMBU, would encourage trade union recognition.(9) Difficulties in this strategy emerged from the very beginning. At their August 1975 meeting the Chairman reported a request from the Toyota World Company Council on Nissan-Toyota in South Africa. After noting the amendment to the General Law Amendment Act which prohibited the furnishing of information to overseas companies, "it was agreed that the consequences of contravening the Act is of such a serious nature that the IMF affiliates in South Africa should be advised of the provisions of this amendment and that the S.A. Co-ordinating Council should completely refrain from submitting any information such as that prohibited by the said Act".(10)

Struggles inside the Council

The Council was to reflect 4 major struggles between the emerging and established union between 1974 and 1980: the attempt by established unions to form parallel unions, the lack of support in the struggle for recognition by MAWU, the attempt to establish democratic representation on the Industrial Council and the role of the CMBU in the Everready strike.

The first issue to emerge in the Council was parallel unionism. On the basis of the support given to this strategy in the 1972 IMF report, Tom Murray, Secretary of the SABS, had informed the inaugural meeting of the Council that an important management "had invited the SABS to organise African workers into a multi-racial union. When it was pointed out by an established union that African unions often used `union membership' as a party political platform, Murray made it clear that `for

over seventy years or more the trade union movement as a whole has never ever tolerated party politics". Murray suggested instead that the emerging unions "approach the registered unions when they have any problems that require the attention of the Industrial Council, and thus use the offices of the registered union as a means of rectifying their problems". This was echoed by the other registered unions. The AEU felt "it would be in the interests of these unions to seek the advice of the secretariat of the various registered unions before lodging complaints or endeavouring to put forward demands for an agreement". The Ironmoulders Society (IMS), an established union, declared that although they were opposed to a parallel union they "were not against the establishment of black unions under the control of a registered union".(11)

At the second meeting of the IMF in March 1975 the SABS declared that it was going to set up a parallel union at Metal Box under the guidance of SABS. Murray stressed that the SABS had become involved "at the express invitation of Metal Box, because they wanted a union with national representivity to take control of their employees". He then said that management had suggested that a referendum be conducted in Metal Box "to ascertain whether the employees are desirous of becoming unionised". He appealed to all unions in Natal to encourage their members to vote in favour of SABS. Failure he said, on their part to co-operate in this respect would result in Metal Box being unorganised for ever.(12) Alpheus Mthwetha, Secretary of MAWU, objected to Murray's proposal, believing it to be unfair as an African union, MAWU, already existed in Natal. They should, he said, consult with the other African unions involved, including the South African Tinworkers' Union (SATWU), a founder member of SACTU. Murray dismissed the SATWU as a union "that in a matter of thirty years had only managed to organise 200 members".

The referendum held in June came as a shock to SABS when workers overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to join SABS by 31 votes to 1139. (13) Both MAWU and SATWU had called on members among Metal Box staff to vote against the proposal. MAWU rejected the proposal because it saw it as an attempt to pre-empt the more democratic non-racial approach of MAWU in favour of a management initiated company-style union in collaboration with an established union that had showed no interest in organising African workers before.(14) By challenging SATWU, SABS had revealed an ignorance of the history of the struggle for recognition at Metal Box by a union whose history is deeply rooted in the Indian working class in Durban. In a letter to Metal Box after the rejection of the SABS, the SATWU said "the union had catered for its members (500 Coloureds and Indians) for 38 years, and they see no reason to change now to something which they would have little say in".(15) Again, they wrote to Metal box, "we have every reason to believe that the new body your company is contemplating to enforce on workers is going to be segretated in character with its entire office bearers and executive members consisting only of whites".(16) Founded after the Durban Falkirk strike of 1937, the SATWU had been an active member of SACTU and through the state harrassment in the early 1960s and managerial resistance had ceased to have an active presence at Metal Box. Nevertheless its support among the workers was obvious from this referendum.

The first CMBU union to set up a parallel union was the SAEWA when it established the Electrical and Allied Workers Union (EAWU) in 1978 in anticipation of the Wiehahn Commission recommendations.(17) Archie Poole of the "coloured" Engineering Industrial Workers' Union (EIWU) followed when he established the National Union of Engineering Industrial and Allied Workers (NUEIAW) as a parallel union for African workers in early 1979.(18) Faced by what the emerging unions saw as "unfair competi-

tion" they turned to the Council to arbitrate. A disputes committee was set up the secretary recorded "because the existing unions have been denied facilities or recognition by management, whereas the parallel unions were formed at the request of management and enjoy facilities from management".(19) In November 1979 this committed met to discuss an attack by Poole at the TUCSA Conference on the emerging unions for being "ineffectual". In addition the committee was asked to arbitrate in a dispute between MAWU and EIWU over the organisation of African workers in Non-Ferrour Metals in Durban.(20)

While the Council had provided the emerging unions with a platform to attack the parallel unions, the real challenge to these unions was to take place outside the Council. After initial rapid recruitment through management assistance, these unions were to face a lack of credibility in the eyes of african workers as "white controlled unions". More specifically they were to be rapidly outpaced by the more militant emerging unions.(21)

The lack of concrete support on the Council for the emerging metal unions was revealed in March 1976 when MAWU appealed to the Council after Heinemann management had refused to recognise it, engineering a confrontation with the union. Instead of offering the union concrete support, they criticised the union for its "unethical approach to management", distancing themselves from it by setting up a sub-committee of the Council to visit Heinemann management that excluded MAWU from the delegation.(22) While the head office of the IMF in Geneva sent R1000 to support the striking workers, the limits of international support were demonstrated when the General Secretary of the IMF tried to win support for black workers in the Heinemann plants in North America. He said "none of the IMF affiliates has a collective bargaining agreement with any of the 13 plants of Heinemann in the United States or Canada".

(23) Rebhan, Secretary General of the IMF, drew the conclusion from the Heinemann incident that black metal workers should organise their recognition strategies around those companies that were well organised in Europe and America. He said "this is another important lesson which we have to keep in mind if we start to fight about the recognition of a black union by a multi-national corporation. The selection of a target should be made in the light of trade union strength in the mother country".(24)

Scepticism of the IMF in South Africa, and their reasons for establishing the local Council, existed inside MAWU from its formation.(25) But they would gain little, they believed, by staying out of the Council. "If they stayed out of the Co-ordinating Council the establised unions would gain financially and morally".(26) Thus during the first three years of the Council's existence (1974-1977) MAWU was content largely to test the limits of the Council's commitment to the shopfloor struggle of MAWU. Both Metal Box and Heinemann had demonstrated the limited commitment of the CMBU in the Council to their struggle. In October 1976 MAWU took the tactic one step further when they challenged the representivity of africans drawn from liaison committees sitting as observers on the Industrial Council. MAWU suggested instead that only african representatives endorsed by representative unions should be allowed to take advantage of this concession. At the October meeting of the Council they proposed that:

> at an industry level registered unions which are members of industrial councils will try to ensure that only representatives of african workers who have been endorsed by unregistered unions in the Co-ordinating Council would be admitted to, and given standing at, meetings of the Industrial Council.

MAWU's scepticism seemed confirmed when, after lengthy discussions, the established unions concluded that the proposal was "too wide and far-reaching for it to be acceptable in its present

form".(27)
However it was the State's offensive against MAWU, unleashed in November 1976 with the banning of all four of its full-time organisers, that revealed a sinister intention behind some of the members of the Council. After having refused to support MAWU's request that african observers on the Industrial Council have the support of the emerging metal unions, Nicholson promised at the January 1977 meeting that the EAWU would be present at the Industrial Council negotiations that year in the capacity of an observer. Curiously, no MAWU representatives were present at this meeting, having been told that the meeting was to be held the following day.(28) Nicholson made it clear that he believed MAWU was controlled by "white agitators" and had shown a clear preference for what he believed was the more moderate EAWU.(29) Jane Hlongwane, Secretary of EAWU, had continued to receive support from the IMF even after she was suspended by her executive in 1977 for alleged autocratic methods. In fact the four emerging metal unions (UAW,NUMARWOSA,EAWU and MAWU) were to accuse the IMF Secretary, Thonnessen, of "interfering in the internal affairs of the EAWU" and encouraging the establishment of a splinter union, the Steel, Engineering and Allied Workers Union (SEAWU).(3Ø)

The first indication of a challenge to the established unions' control over the Council emerged in January 1977 when Freddie Sauls, Secretary of NUMARWOSA raised the issue of the statement released by the Trade Union Council of South Africa(TUCSA) after the bannings of trade unionists in the previous year. NUMARWOSA had already become disillusioned with TUCSA, resigning in December 1976 when they were nearly removed from the Congress after they sponsored a motion that TUCSA affiliates should deregister and admit African workers. They had begun sounding out the idea of an alternative federation of like-minded registered and unregistered unions and a date had been set for March 1977 to

discuss the feasibility of this idea.(31) Sauls queried what the activities were that were allegedly "outside the ambit of trade unions", as TUCSA's General Secretary, Grobbelaar, had said in his statement. At the March 1977 meeting of the Council, MAWU successfully proposed that the Council reject the Minister's reasons for banning the trade unionists and condemn TUCSA.(32) This was the beginning of an alliance that was to present the first effective challenge to CMBU control over the Council.

The growing polarisation within the Council was to come to a head in November 1978 over the response of the CMBU members to the Everready strike in Port Elizabeth. A strike had taken place when 320 Coloured workers were dismissed after management had refused to negotiate with their union, NUMARWOSA. (33) At a special meeting of the Council called in November NUMARWOSA opposed the resolution that a delegation should meet the Minister of Labour to discuss the role played by the Department of Labour in the dispute. NUMARWOSA opposed this decision as it was satisfied with the role that the Department had played. When the delegation, consisting of the CMBU members, met the Minister and Departmental officials, they were informed about the proceedings of the Conciliation Board meeting and given other information. As a result of the meeting, the CMBU delegates decided to launch an investigation into the strike and circumstances leading to it. CMBU representatives in Port Elizabeth met the local Department of Labour officials and together with a representative of Yster-en-Staal, which had members in Everready, met the Company management and spoke to the workers. Matters came to a head when the CMBU representatives reported back on their findings at a Council meeting held on 29 November. There was an immediate clash with Mr Sauls and he walked out, accompanied by representatives of all the emerging unions in the Council.

According to various press reports, NUMARWOSA and

the other unions involved in the walk-out accused established unions of siding with the Government and management against NUMARWOSA. Delegates involved in the walkout said they had done so because a member union had been undermined by an independent investigation without being consulted. Mr Sauls said the delegation had acted outside its mandate, which was only to discuss the role of the Department of Labour. He said the walk-out was the culmination of the long-standing failure of some "white unions" on the Council to co-operate. "They don't treat us as equals. They don't consult us and seem to care more about talking to management and the Government than us". The walk-out was seen by both sides as tantamount to the break up of the Council. Mr Bower, General Secretary of SABS, wrote an urgent letter to the IMF headquarters in Geneva, pointing out that NUMARWOSA was acting irresponsibly and appealed to the body to send a mediator to South Africa to resolve the dispute. In mid-January 1979 Thonnessen, Assistant General Secretary of the IMF, came to South Africa and, after a week of negotiations, convened a Council meeting on 2Ø January where the rift was healed. A conciliatory statement was issued, saying that affiliates had agreed that a lack of co-operation may have led to misunderstandings. Attempts should be made, it said, to ensure closer co-operation and affiliates re-affirmed their determination to work in accordance with, and in the spirit of, the Council's constitution. A full-time Secretary would be appointed to improve the Council's services to its affiliates, it said.(34)

However, in spite of these statements of good intent, the Everready dispute was to reinforce the practice, begun a year earlier, of the black metal unions on the Council meeting as a regular caucus. In March 1979 they drew up a set of criteria for participation in the Council identifying "genuine shop-floor co-operation as the most important area of co-operation". We are concerned, they said, that existing divisions and prejudices be overcome in the

workplace if we are going to see "co-operation to the ultimate benefit of all". Solidarity action over recognition and opposition to the presence of liaison committee members on the Industrial Council were also mentioned. The document concluded by suggesting that it is no longer acceptable for craft unions to "use race as a means of protecting craft privilege".(35) These five black metal unions were to come together with other independent unions in April 1979 to form The non-racial Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). (36)

With Ike van der Watt as Chairman of the Council and Bernie Fanaroff, an organiser in MAWU, as Secretary, the CMBU members were no longer in complete control of the Co-ordinating Council. But it had become clear that two camps had emerged in the metal industry, representing two different styles of unionism. The one, the CMBU members, emerging from a history of craft and race privilege, attempting late in the day to open up to blacks either through parallel unions or through opening membership to blacks under separate branches; the other, the emerging black unions, struggling from a position of race-discrimination to win basic trade union rights. With the establishment of parallel unions from 1978 onwards to take advantage of the change in the Industrial Conciliation Act, the relationship between these unions was to become a competitive one. The unsuccessful attempt to get the Council to act as arbitrator was the last straw. In April 1980 the fragile unity among the unions in the Council finally crumbled and the FOSATU metal unions withdrew from the Council.

The conflict between these two groups culminated two years later when in June 1982 at the Central Committee meeting of the IMF in Rome, FOSATU metal unions made certain allegations concerning the activities of some IMF affiliates in South Africa. Written statements were filed about the activities of the Radio, Television, Electronic and Allied

Workers' Union, the EIWU, the SAEWA and the AEU. It was alleged that these unions practised racism, and showed an attitude of paternalism rather than of co-operation, and in some cases actively undermined fellow IMF delegates.(37) The statement noted:

1) That during disputes at Heinemann in 1976, Everready 1978 and Dorbyl 1981, the unions concerned undermined strikers and in some cases collaborated with management and the Department of Labour to force a settlement against the wishes of the unions involved in the disputes.

2) They have ignored requests to caucus about wage demands before wage negotiations in which they had been involved.

3) They objected to MAWU's registration application on racial grounds, which is out of keeping with internationally accepted principles and those of the IMF.

4) The four unions submitted a memorandum to the Wiehahn Commission asking that blacks should do military service on the border before they were given apprenticeship training.

5) They have also practised segregation by either working only among white workers, or by having parallel unions for workers of different races, normally dominated by the white unions.

After considerable debate the SAEWA and the AEU were expelled while the other two unions were given a year "to get rid of apartheid" in their organisations.

With the expulsion of these two leading CMBU members, the international factor had clearly had an impact on South African industrial relations. "It is the first time", **FOSATU Worker News** noted, "that a major international body has taken action against South African unions for practising apartheid". (38) Initially dominated by the CMBU members of the Council, the established unions' hold over the Council was to weaken with the growing challenge from the black unions. For the emerging unions the Council was to provide both a platform and an

opportunity to develop a common set of organisational principles. In the case of MAWU and the black motor unions - UAW, NUMARWOSA and Western Province Motor Assemblies Workers' Union (WPMAWU) - the council was to cement an alliance that was to lead to these unions playing an important part in the establishment of FOSATU.

This case-study illustrates sharply that what challenged the established unions' position inside the Council was not the IMF but the self-organisation of black metal workers in South Africa itself. Ultimately, the IMF had no power to direct events inside the IMF SACC. In a situation where they accepted that they had to work with the status quo, the established unions continued to dominate the Council. This confirms Neuhaus's conclusions that "the ITS's have very little power in their own right. Theirs is a proxy power: in implementing their decisions, especially in international actions, they depend on the voluntary backing of their affiliates, who jealously guard their autonomy". (39) However once the balance of power began to shift and the lines were redrawn then the IMF acted decisively. Once charges were filed alleging racist practices in certain established unions, these unions were investigated and the racists expelled from the IMF. The effect these expulsions will have on the CMBU and the IMF SACC, revived formally in 1983, remains to be seen.

Footnotes

1. For an analysis of international trade unionism see G.K. Busch, the Economist Intelligence Unit, Political Currents in the International Labour Movement, Vol. 1, Europe and North America. For an argument that these international activities constitute a form of trade union imperialism, see D. Thompson and R. Larson, Where were you, brother?, (War on Want 1978). For the Cold War nature of these

activities in South Africa, in particular the attempt to set up alternatives to SACTU, see K. Luckhardt and B. Wall, **Organise or Starve: The history of SACTU**,(London 1980), especially Chapter 11.

2. See W. Olle and W. Scholler, "World Market Competition and restrictions upon international trade union policies" **Capital and Class**, No 2, p56-75.
3. R. Neuhaus, **International Trade Secretariats**, (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 1981), p71.
4. IMF 2nd Congress, 26-30 October 1971. Personal Collection.
5. Olle and Scholler,**World Market Competition**,p65.
6. Report of the IMF delegation on their visit to South Africa, March 11-27 1972, p.35. Personal Collection.
7. J. Hlongwane, "The emergence of African unions in Johannesburg with reference to the engineering industry", in J.A. Grey Coetzee, **Industrial Relations in South Africa**, (Cape Town 1976), p207.
8. IMF SACC Minutes, 14 October, 1974.
9. A gathering of representatives internationally from labour called for a boycott of South Africa in 1973 in Geneva: "International Trade Union Conference Against Apartheid", in Luckhardt and Wall, **Organise or Starve**, p 101. Similar conferences have of course, been called since then but this was the most representative.
10. IMF SACC Minutes, 19 August 1975. In fact provisions of this Act have never been used.
11. Ibid., 14 October 1974.
12. Ibid., 20 March 1975.
13. Ibid., 19 August 1975.
14. Interview with Alpheus Mthwetha, 31 August 1981.
15. Letter from SATWU to Managing Director, Metal Box, 18.7.1975, FOSATU Archives, Central Court, Durban.
16. Ibid., 21.2.1975.
17. J.D. Farrell, "Focus on labour in South

Africa",South African Journal of Labour Relations, 2.4 , December 1978, p 46-47.

18. "Shop floor battle looms", Financial Mail, 27 July 1979.
19. Disputes Committee of the IMF SACC, 25 Oct. 1979.
20. Ibid, 20 November 1979.
21. For a discussion of the ineffectiveness of the metal parallel unions see E. Webster, "The Labour Process and forms of Workplace Organization", Phd., Univ. of the Witwatersrand, 1983, chapter 10.
22. IMF SACC Minutes, 12 March 1976.
23. IMF SACC, Rebhan to Bouwer, 4 May 1976.
24. Ibid.
25. See report on the discussion between MAWU (Natal) and the IMS in June 1975, IAS records
26. Interview with Alpheus Mthwetha.
27. IMF SACC, October 1976.
28. MAWU was clearly under the impression that this was a deliberate exclusion. A letter from their Secretary, June-Rose Nala, to the Secretary of the IMF SACC on 20 March 1977 makes this clear: "The Executive Committee of MAWU is extremely disappointed that it was not possible to attend the Council meeting in January 1977 due to the failure of the Secretary to inform the union of the sudden change of date. They are particularly concerned that this prevented MAWU from raising and participating in discussion on the TUCSA action on bannings. How could proper discussion take place without those most affected being present?", Correspondence, IMF SACC.
29. "MAWU is controlled by white agitators and the black secretary (Nala) is simply a figurehead who couldn't move without the whites", interview with Ben Nicholson, SAEWA August 1981.
30. "EAWU and the activities of the IMF in this matter", Updated Report, IMF SACC.

31. P. Bonner, "Focus on FOSATU", SALB, 5.1, May 1979, p11.
32. IMF SACC, March 1977.
33. This account of the strike is drawn from R. de Villiers, "Everready strike", SALB, 5.1., May 1979, p25-36.
34. Ibid., p34.
35. Joint Statement on the IMF SACC issued by the EAWU, MAWU, NUMARWOSA, UAW and the WPMAWU which joined the Council in 1978.
36. Bonner, "Focus on FOSATU".
37. "IMF expels two SA Trade Unions", FOSATU Worker News, July 1982.
38. Ibid.
39. Neuhaus,International Trade Secretariats, p149.

BOILERMAKERS UNION

The SALB interviewed Mr Ike van der Watt, General Secretary of the South African Boilermakers Society, at Vulcan House, Johannesburg, on 22nd March 1984.

SALB: How did you become involved in trade unionism?

v.d.WATT: I served my time as an artisan in the mining industry. I joined the Boilermakers Society in 1950 and became a shop steward in 1958. From there I progressed through the structures of the union.

SALB: Can you tell us about the union; its history and its members?

v.d.WATT The union was formed in 1895 as a branch of the British craft union. In 1916 we broke away and became independent. During the second world war with the employment of large numbers of dilutees the union started organising semi-skilled workers and ceased to be a craft union. But the legacy of the craft period remained. The Boilermakers Society is spread over 23 industries where we had originally represented artisans in the past. We had very little strength in some of these areas. For the last 10-20 years we have tried to concentrate on metal and engineering. Even so we still have 3-4000 members on the mines.

The total membership of the union is 54000, although we have lost some due to the recession. The majority of members are semi-skilled. We have 2000 women members who are entitled to maternity benefits from the union.

SALB: In the last fifteen years the Boilermakers

have experienced phenomenal growth. (See table at end of page.) How has this been achieved?

v.d.WATT: Although we have full-time organisers, most of our recruiting is done by shop stewards. We have concentrated on retaining the members we have and providing them with a good service. A hard-sell approach may gain members in the short-term. But if you can't meet expectations then you will sow disillusionment. We have now decided as a union to stop recruiting vigorously and to concentrate on building up an infrastructure to deal with the present membership.

SALB: The majority of the members of the Boilermakers Society are black: coloured, asian and african. What is the history of this and what are the relations between black and white members?

v.d.WATT: The Society has been organising coloured and asian workers since the 1920's. This was done through separate branches. In 1980 we started to organise african workers as well, again in separate branches.

Originally we tried to work with the emerging unions - Engineering and Allied Workers Union and Metal and Allied Workers Union - which were organising african workers. But by the late 1970s we were faced with a dilemma. When job reservation was removed african workers started to move into higher skill tasks. As a result where we had had 100% membership in certain grades, in some factories it fell to only 60%. At

S A BOILERMAKERS SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

	White	Coloured/ Asian	African	Total
1969	14253	1459	nil	15712
1982	22875	20364	10720	53959

this time the emerging unions were still concentrating on organising the unskilled.

Our executive decided that we would help the new unions to organise in these grades, if they would increase subs for the more skilled workers in line with our own, so there would be no undercutting. After 18 months of discussion the new unions decided they could not give precedence to the more skilled workers and they would not differentiate their subs. It was decided therefore that the Boilermakers could go ahead and organise these workers. The arrangement worked well. If we moved into a factory we signed up the operator and skilled grades, and directed the unskilled workers to the new unions. However, this understanding came to an end after there was a change of leadership in MAWU. Since then we have had to admit unskilled workers into the union as well.

SALB: You mentioned separate branches. How does this work in practice and why has there been no attempt to integrate branches?

v.d.WATT: On this we have our own philosophy, based on experience, which differs from CUSA and FOSATU. CUSA's position in favour of black leadership, I believe, tends to polarise workers. On the other hand FOSATU refuses to recognise race. We believe that race is an issue, but we are committed to working towards acceptance of a multi-racial society. We would argue for a policy of integration from the top downwards.

In practice this means maintaining separate branches for the different races and this is the basis of election to the union's governing bodies. This means that all groups are assured of representation on the executive and general council. (See table at the end of page 4.) This cannot be guaranteed by unions which follow a policy of integration. There are other advantages. In mixed branches those with

the most experience, skills and education would tend to dominate. Also separate branches spreads the base of the union and provides opportunities for more workers to gain experience and hold positions. We have greatly expanded the number of shop stewards to 2000, and last year over 900 went through our training scheme.

At shop floor level it is up to members how they conduct their meetings and elect shop stewards. In Kimberley meetings are integrated. But where there are separately elected stewards to represent the different races, there must also be a combined shop stewards committee to take up issues jointly either to management or to higher levels within the union. On certain issues - particularly wages and conditions - joint meetings of the three branches are usually held. It is not possible to make this the rule as there are problems with venues and because the different races have their own specific problems that they want discussed; e.g. transport in the case of black workers.

SALB: How do you assess the growth of the emerging unions?

v.d.WATT: There are some criticisms to be made, particulary over the tendency to organise and move on without consolidating. If MAWU had held all the factories where it has gained members it would have

The figures for January 1983 were as follows:

	G C Members	Exec Members
White	43	6
Coloured/Asian	21	3
African	15	2
Total	79	11(+ chairman)

a membership of 500000. Also, plant-by-plant organisation and plant-based bargaining are all very well for a union in the process of establishing itself. But to provide the basic protectionist functions of trade unionism for your own members you must move rapidly to protect all workers in the industry. Otherwise you create dual standards which can be undercut by non-union firms.

SALB: This brings us to the re-establishment of the South African Co-ordinating Council of the International Metalworkers Federation. What are its chances of success?

v.d.WATT: We mustn't be over-optimistic - there is a better climate due to the expulsions. But this had not overcome all problems. In meetings at leadership level the right attitude has prevailed. But we need a broader commitment. The recent conference was called in an attempt to ascertain the depth of commitment by involving the executives of all member unions. Similarly the suggestion of joint local shop committees would involve greater participation and commitment at the base.

SALB: What are the implications for the Council of Metal and Building Unions, and for other metal unions left outside the IMF?

v.d.WATT: The CMBU is very slipshod. If the SACC can start functioning properly the IMF unions will soon be dictating to the industry. Eventually the Boilermakers would like to see co-operation between all the unions in the industry to present a common policy on wages etc. The major problem with non-IMF unions is one of style and personality. We must just seek out the areas where co-operation is possible in the short-term.

SALB: Through the SACC the Boilermakers Society is now co-operating with unions which have explicitly political goals. What are your views on this?

interview

v.d.WATT: We accept that trade unions have a legitimate political interest in the areas that affect workers and the union. We would part company with some of the CMBU unions and TUCSA over this. The problem is what do we do about it? Even among the new unions there are divisions over tactics. We need a sound structure that will accommodate these differences. The IMF SACC will take up political positions.

SALB: The question of wider trade union unity arises. Where does the Boilermakers Society stand in relation to trade union federations, established and yet to be established?

v.d.WATT: We would like to see a strong united labour movement. But to be realistic there are major differences. It is difficult enough building solidarity within one union. We can waste a lot of time on this. We should acknowledge differences and seek to identify areas of common interest where we can co-operate.

As far as the present unity talks are concerned the Boilermakers approached the participants - but we were rejected. Our executive was left wondering how serious these talks about unity are. Obviously we would give careful consideration to any future approach made to us.

As far as TUCSA is concerned it has stagnated and is now dying a natural death. Up to 1979 the question of recognition for african unions provided a focus. When the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended, TUCSA was caught unawares with no new objectives. It was unable to cope with all the new issues. The leadership lacked the energy to deal with the situation. As a result TUCSA seriously misread the aspirations of black workers. Over registration and the death of Neil Aggett, TUCSA tried to avoid what it saw as troublesome "political" issues.

The Boilermakers Society pulled out of TUCSA last year. One reason for this was the increase in subs, which were virtually doubled. The increase was sold as a necessary step in order to improve TUCSA's legal advice and training functions. We argued that that was fine but that the increased revenue should be put into a separate fund for these purposes. This was rejected and TUCSA's efforts in this area are still hopelessly inadequate. By the end of 1984 a lot of unions are going to be asking questions. I predict a lot more unions leaving TUCSA.

SALB: To what extent has the Boilermakers Society been able to carry its membership - especially its white members - with it in the positions it has adopted.

v.d.WATT: When we accepted african members in 1980 we anticipated a loss of white membership. This did not happen. We have since commissioned an independent enquiry into our members attitudes towards the union.* The results have been very encouraging. Commitment was uniformly high amongst black and white members. On specific issues - on the break with TUCSA, and working with unregistered unions - the majority backed the leadership.

SALB: One final question. New legislation in the bantustan of Bophuthatswana threatens to outlaw South African-based unions. Will this affect your union?

v.d.WATT: This affects us in the following way. I am also General Secretary of the Federated Mining

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*Fullager, C., "Union commitment survey for the South African Boilermakers Society", Psychology Department, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, November 1983.

Union (FMU) which has members in Bophuthatswana. Let me explain the history of this. The Boilermakers have organised De Beers diamond mines for 25 years. In 1972 management questioned our right to do this because of our limited scope of registration. For three years we tried to extend our scope on a multi-racial basis. Objections were lodged by the Mineworkers Union, S A Electrical Workers Association, and the Almalgamated Engineering Union. In the end we circumvented these objections by forming a separate union for coloured and asian workers covering mining, explosives and chemical industries. This was a paper union in the sense that the Boilermakers provided the personnel and performed administrative tasks. Ideally we would like to merge but there are no provisions for amalgamation under the Industrial Conciliation Act. The Federated Mining Union has grown apace since 1976 and represents 80% of the De Beers workforce on the mines. It is now in a position to be viable in its own right.
To return to the problems in Bophuthatswana, the FMU has 98% membership in Matte Smelters in Rustenburg. The workers live in Bophuthatswana, and that is where the union holds its meetings. There are no premises available this side of the border. We have been informed by the Bophuthatswana government that this will be illegal.

SALB: How does the union intend to respond?

v.d.WATT: We shall have to see. It may be necessary to test the position.

POSTSCRIPT: A meeting was allowed to take place without interference by the authorities.

H P ADEBOLA: THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MOVEMENT

On May 25, 1982, there died one of the giants of the Nigerian trade union movement, Alhaji H P ("Horse Power") Adebola. Born in 1920, Adebola had been a leading figure in the national trade union movement since the late 1940's, becoming a leader of the rightwing and Western-oriented national trade union centre, the United Labour Congress (1962-1976), as well as of the Western trade union international, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In the mid-1970s he became one of the driving forces for national trade union unity. He was a fervent supporter of the new Nigerian Labour Congress (1978) and defended it against its right-wing critics. At the time of his death, Adebola was the subject of numerous obituaries. Now that the dust has had time to settle, it is worthwhile reconsidering the most important of these comments - written by Nigeria's best-known labour correspondent - in order to attempt a more rounded assessment of Adebola.

It was in the Lagos **Sunday Times** of June 8, 1982, that Umoh James Umoh said his "Bye for now" to "Adebola, the Labour Hero". In writing this obituary Umoh refered to Adebola the democrat and anti-communist, Adebola the defeated leader of the United Labour Congress (ULC), Adebola the wreaker of vengeance on the old ULC leader, and Adebola the friend of the Marxists who, with his help, now dominated the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC).

There are at least two aspects of the account and interpretation that need challenging. The first is Umoh's terminology: Democrats versus Marxists. It is not only that this view of the trade union world prevents us from understanding contemporary Nigerian trade unionism. It also prevents us from understanding Adebola's transition except in terms

of personal disappointment, spite and revenge. The second aspect is its concentration on Adebola as a national trade union leader, at the expense of his activities as an industrial unionist. The fact is that in the 197Øs Adebola threw his formidable energies into Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) unionism and built a second career at this level. To forget this Adebola is not only to miss a vital phase in his career, but, again, to obscure the industrial roots of his shift from right to left in the Nigerian trade union spectrum.

It strikes me that there is also a third aspect missing in Umoh's account: Adebola the fallible human being. By transforming Adebola into a "Labour Hero" Umoh prevents us from learning lessons from his shortcomings. I would like, on the basis of my own research and interviews with Adebola during the 197Øs, to present Adebola in a somewhat different light.

Let us begin with Adebola's ideology. We may consider in turn his views on trade unions, on Nigerian society, and on politics. Adebola adhered to a tripartite model of relations between unions, management and government:

> ...in any industry, you must have the Management representing the capital and the Trade Union representing the labour, and they are at par, but the moment any Management starts to look down on the Trade Union, it is from that side they make mistake...

From this belief sprang his strongly-held views on the right to strike, and his opposition to government legislation or police action benefitting management.

He believed in the necessity of trade union autonomy, opposing the Soviet union model because, "say what you will, the Government must approve of their functionaries". On the other hand, Adebola approved in principle any government in power: "Any

trade union must cooperate with the Government of each country". By this he meant that the unions should point out workers' problems to government and be ready to serve on any committees a government might set up. Despite his belief in trade union autonomy, Alhaji Adebola was quite prepared to accept government subsidies to the unions, referring to union headquarters donated by other African regimes to the unions.

Adebola was against party affiliation of trade unions, a position held since at least 1948. He justified this position 30 years later by citing an American trade union dictum: "punish your enemies and reward your friends". He took this to imply voting for or against parties according to their labour policies. He believed that politics was a luxury for unions where a country was not industrialised and workers had not yet even been able to win proper conditions of service. This did not mean that he was opposed to unionists being politically active as individuals (as he himself was in the NCNC, from which he was even appointed to the House of Chiefs). As for the future,

> Oh, it will still take a very long time and even then it is the labour party that will be formed and it will not be formed only by the workers because the labour party in England consists of lawyers and so many people - economists and so on...

Adebola had a special view of the nature of trade union leadership. He was anxious to stress his equality with those who were former peers. This was not simply a matter of his joking with Chief Justice Adebiyi about days when they were both employees of Nigerian Railways Corporation (NRC). Nor of his feeling that he, a senior union leader, was being slighted if the Labour Ministry sent a junior officer to deal with him. He believed that there should be a minimum educational level (Class IV of Middle School) for a union secretary, and that union

secretaries should be qualified and associated as are accountants and architects. He ridiculed workers who protested if they heard a union secretary was earning N4,ØØØ a year and declared in 1973 that

> there are those coming from the trade union ranks who earn three times as much as trade union leaders for half the effort. A lawyer gets N1Ø,ØØØ for representing management at a tribunal. I get nothing.

As for his views on what was or should be the nature of Nigerian society, Adebola had a particular amalgam of egalitarianism and individualism. On the one hand he believed that in Nigeria you could get to the top "by dint of hard work. You have to prove what you are worth, and once acceptable, people will reward you..." On the other hand he believed that there is too much money at the top. The rich get more than they deserve". He believed that the economy "should be in the hands of Nigerians, private as well as government", and that Nigerian businessmen could "live up to the expectations of business anywhere in the world".

This should not be taken to imply that Adebola himself engaged in or approved of those business activities - legitimate or illegitmate - beloved of many former trade union leaders in Nigeria. Considering unionism a "noble profession", "like a religion", he proudly declared his holdings (a mortgage on a middle-class house in Surulere, Lagos, and a piece of land at Ijebu-Ode) that he had never received money from any body other than his union, never used a union scholarship for his children. He was cleared by two tribunals in the late 196Øs and another in the 197Øs. His personal rejection of private profit-seeking, combined with his favourable attitude toward private enterprise, led him to this view of the kind of future society Nigerian unions should seek. They should

> pursue social democracy: live and let live.

> It should be a society in which everybody has ample opportunity to develop and display his talents. I don't believe in control of the economy by government, however, because it kills the spirit of enterprise.

What of politics more narrowly? Adebola began as a nationalist in the late 1940s, and then developed in the 1950s, as strongly pro-Western, exploiting anti-Communism to recruit into his own fold.He associated intimately with the Western trade unions during the 1950s and 1960s. But in 1969, becoming aware of CIA involvement in the international activities of the US unions (which were now the main financial prop of his own United Labour Congress), he became bitterly opposed to them as he had been to the Communists:

> I formed the impression that some of the officials of the foreign trade unions in Nigeria had something to do with the CIA of America... Since the advent of the African-American Labour Centre in Nigeria...treachery and betrayal has found a comfortable asylum in the Nigerian trade union movement.

The clash with the Americans meant that Adebola lost his leadership of the ULC to American-backed unionists. In later denouncing to the government a US trade-union representative, he declared himself to be acting as a "loyal", "reasonable" and "patriotic" Nigerian. He had apparently turned back not only to his own union base but also to his early identification with the Nigerian state.

What does all this amount to? That Adebola was a democrat, but not in the Umoh James Umoh sense. For what Adebola was (or what he developed into during the 1970s) was a radical democrat, a nationalist democrat, and an egalitarian democrat. This sort of phenomenon is well known in the mass politics of the third world as populism. and it is under such a rubric that both Adebola and the predominant trend in the present Nigerian Labour Congress can be most fruitfully discussed. What distinguishes this kind

of democrat from the liberal democrat that Umoh has in mind, is the clear recognition of an "us" and a "them", with the "us" being a majority that should replace the minority.

Let us now consider what Adebola did when he returned to industrial unionism. Remember that both the United Labour Congress and the Communist-inspired Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC) had become decreasingly relevant to Nigerian workers following the first military coup in 1966. In aban doning the ULC Adebola was abandoning an increasing-ly empty shell, kept in existence by and for its foreign financial sponsors. By turning to industry-level unionism Adebola was restoring links with the Nigerian working class, which was becoming increas-ingly restive under military dictatorship and legal-istic collective-bargaining unionism.

Adebola's activity was within the NPA, where his aggressive brand of unionism was increasingly attractive to the ordinary workers, and where he set the style for the more militant unionism of the new NPA Workers Union (NPAWU), which he helped to create in the late 197Øs. I have records of 13 strikes during the 1Ø-year period 1968-79. Eight of these were directly organised by Adebola's Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staffs Union (R&PT&CSU), and two of the other five were inspired by its success on one of these occasions. One of the two was organised by dissidents of the old NPAWU who later joined the R&PT&CSU. The R&PT&CSU president declared:

> We do not use the power to hold this country to ransom , but we go the whole hog in industrial relations matters.

"Going the whole hog" meant that the union had an aggressive manner at the bargaining table within NPA, immediately declared a formal dispute if it did not obtain satisfaction, pushed matters through to the Industrial Arbitration Tribunal (or the law courts), and then enforced formal agreements by

initiating or supporting strikes amongst its members.

What was the nature of strikes and what sort of worker action did they imply? The actions were mostly of a demonstration nature, with one-day stoppages being common, and five or six the maximum. They were usually brought to an end by merely verbal assurances from management or the re-opening of negotiations. In terms of form, also, they were limited, requiring a minimal commitment or change of routine by the strikers. Workers did not customarily quit the workplace, picket or gather in menacing crowds. The leisurely workpace typical of NPA was simply reduced to a halt, workers remaining in their departments, reading the papers or chatting.

This did not, however, mean that actions were limited to a mere ritual, nor that there was no challenge to the customary order. On one occasion, office workers in the Headquarters building locked the gates and forced management to stand in a courtyard in the sun. On another, a group of workers (on their own initiative but with tacit support of their local leaders) cut off the electricity supply to the Port. Moreover, union branches struck despite the opposition of leaders.

Finally, it should be remembered that strikes in the 197Øs took place against a background of escalating anti-strike legislation, of which workers were well aware. They struck in 1977 even after a new decree stated that workers must lose pay for days struck, and that strikes implied a breach of employment contract. The 13 strikes were rather successful in so far as they brought an authoritarian and arbitrary management to rapidly make considerable concessions in either word or deed. They were carried out without cost to either strike leaders or members since disciplinary measures were always abandoned and workers paid for days struck.

Such protest action, however, represented the highest point reached within NPA. On only one occasion in the 197Øs did the Nigerian Maritime Trade Union federation (NMTUF) itself call out all the workers, and that was following the footsteps of both the R&PT&CSU and a radical section of NPAWU - and it was for less than a day. Moreover, the militancy of the R&PT&CSU should not be exaggerated. Since neither its leadership nor its membership saw management as an enemy, strikes were rather seen as a weapon against bad managers. Strikes were considered a necessary evil, not a means for building up worker consciousness and capacity. Although carried out in defiance of the state, strikes were seen more as an appeal to it to take action against a recalcitrant management.

For R&PT&CSU leadership was as prone to use other means of stuggle which did not imply mass action at all. Thus, through the 197Øs it continally made use of secret letters and files to which it had been able to get access. Such documents were used in press releases, and in appeals to various state bodies for action against NPA managers. These exposures were extremely effective, finally resulting in the retirement at government order of a considerable number of top managers, as well as an officer of the NPA Board. The tactic was applauded by workers, seeing their erstwhile lords and masters tumbled by the audacious Adebola. Yet, the tactic was not one that required any collective worker action. The workers, with the exception of the one or two involved in obtaining or copying the confidential documents, were just an admiring audience. Furthermore, the tactic was just that: exposure or threat of exposure against a particular manager, or management as a whole, would be used to obtain some possibly unrelated concession by the union. The opportunity for the union to make a point about the nature of management as such was, of course, not taken because the union still believed there could be a good management. I do not know

whether it was this sort of behaviour to which the moderate critics of the R&PT&CSU were referring to when they called it "political", but it is, perhaps, a style of operation more appropriate to Nigerian parties than to that collective worker self-activity necessary to deal with the more experienced and tougher management and state that we find today in Nigeria.

What is to be made of all this? Adebola's militancy touched a chord amongst the workers. It also led increasing numbers of them to shift to his union. Unity of the class was thus being built from the bottom, at the same time as it was being manipulated from above (by the state) and sought for in the middle (by the more dynamic trade union leaders). I suggest that Adebola learned from the workers that militant trade unionism and united unionism were more important than imported ideologies and divisions. It was this that led him (and many other formerly liberal and Western-orientated trade unionist) to support the creation of the new NLC. It was also, presumably, the same thing that caused him to prefer working together with former Communists than with those unionists who still held to the discredited liberalism of the old ULC. However, we should not fail to note the limit to Adebola's radicalism: his tendency to play "politics" instead of educating and mobilising the workers. Recognition of this strategic shortcoming alerts us to the other non-heroic feature in Adebola's behaviour.

I am here referring to Adebola's leadership style. Everyone who ever met him knew him to have been arrogant, suspicious and temperamental. I myself felt the rough side of Adebola's tongue and it was an experience not to be forgotten. Used against management it could be an effective weapon. But Adebola also used it against fellow unionists and against his juniors. As a result he ran a one-man union, with neither his office staff nor his union

officers really permitted to develop and express themselves freely. He wished to be surrounded by praise-singers, not critics, or even equals.

This characteristic came out openly (if not publicly) at his retirement. Adebola had failed to train a successor and did not want to hand over the Secreraryship of the NPAWU to one of his rivals. What he apparently wanted was that the new NPAWU should pay him his gratuity and appoint him as a consultant. This was unacceptable to the NPAWU which insisted that he hand over, retire and leave the union to them before he received his emoluments. The old war horse must have realised he had over-played his hand. He did as the union demanded, and the union then honoured him generously and publicly, letting bygones remain bygones.

The Nigerian trade union movement seems to be out-growing the men who both made it and moulded it to their individual personalities. The new NPAWU has shown a maturity and a capacity to impose its collective will on its leaders. And the top leaders seem to have learned from the militant populist that Adebola became in the middle 197Øs. This is surely the finest possible tribute to "Horse Power" Adebola, the man not the myth.

(Peter Waterman*, Institute of Social Studies, Badhuisweg 251, 25Ø9 LS, The Hague, Holland.)

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*Peter Waterman has published a history of Lagos Port unionism - **Division and Unity amongst Nigerian Workers: Lagos Port and Dock Worker Unionism, 194Øs-6Øs..** Heinemann,1982. He has recently completed a follow-up study on the 197Øs for a Ph.D. - **Aristocrats and Plebeians in African Unions? Lagos Port and Dock Worker Organisation and Struggle.** He has also produced a tape-and-slide show, **Labour Divided or Workers United? The World of Lagos Port and Dock Workers.** Waterman also edits the Hague-based **Newsletter of International Labour Studies.**

COMPANIES MADE BIG PROFITS

The following is reprinted from UMBIKO we MAWU, 2.2, March/April 1984.

Management always tells workers:
- they are struggling to keep the factory open;
- they are not making any money;
- they are losing customers;
- the workers must be reasonable.

There are some companies (usually small companies) where this is true. But for the most of the companies in the metal industry - IT IS A LIE. Look at these results for 1983.

Company	Profit (after Tax)
Dorbyl	R60,4 million
Haggie	R50,4 million
Siemens	R12,7 million
Highveld	R23,3 million
Metkor	R64 million
Altech	R31,2 million
Barlow Rand (Engineering interest only) (approximately).	R80 million.

These few companies control most of the output in the engineering industry. Last year all the companies told MAWU that they would be lucky to make any profit at all. But that was not true. They still made HUGE PROFITS.

Some companies (but not all) made less profit than in 1981/1982 - but 1981/1982 profits were at record levels because of the boom.

And remember - there are many ways of hiding profits. Companies employ many accountants to hide profits so that they won't have to pay tax. Workers make these profits for management. So we have a right to see your books. Let us see how much profit you really made.

Companies say to workers: don't be irresponsible. Don't demand such bid increases. We say to

companies: It is you who are irresponsible. It is you who take super-profits. It is you who throw even more people out of work by putting in more machines. Companies say to workers: don't be irresponsible. Don't demand such bid increases. We say to companies: It is you who are irresponsible. It is you who take super-profits. It is you who throw even more people out of work by putting in more machines. If you want us to be responsible - SHOW US YOUR BOOKS!

MAWU claims an influential supporter - Floors Kotzee, managing director of ISCOR. He recently suggested that South African companies were uncompetitive because the share of distributed profits was too large:

> An analysis recently carried out by the American journal, Business Week, shows that South Africa was one of the most profitable countries in the world in which to conduct business in 1981. This analysis was based on a random sample of results of private sector companies and shows that the net yield on capital invested in South African companies amounted to a high 24,8%. This compared extremely well with similar groups in Britain whose yield was only 6,8%; Germany 4,1%, the Netherlands 4,7%, Switzerland 5,9%, Japan 4,1% and Taiwan 1Ø,6%.
>
> This was an outstanding achievement for South African companies. Yet the question may be asked whether this achievement was really A reflection of ultra-efficiency or whether it had not largely been achieved through exceptionally high prices under sheltered conditions. It is generally known that South Africa, in comparison with those countries has a very poor performance in respect of productivity, whilst our inflation rate is constantly much higher. These are but two important negative aspects. In my humble

> opinion, these factors are going to make South Africa less and less competitive with other countries. Indeed, this abnormal profit-taking requires, I believe, an investigation on a national level.*

*F. Kotzee "In defence of ISCOR and the state corporation principle", Leadership S A, 2.1 Autumn 1982, p. 28,30.

HARASSMENT OF TRADE UNIONISTS

The following resolution was passed at the March meeting of the South African Co-ordinating Council of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers:

> We the South African Co-ordinating Council of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (IUF) noting the arrests under the Intimidation Act, of Bro "Skakes" Sikhakhane of the Food Beverage Workers Union, and Bro Robert Mkize of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa and noting that these and other arrests under the same Act appear to be part of a rising trend of State interference and intimidation in trade Union activities in South Africa, noting further the banning of the South African Allied Workers Union in the Ciskei and all Unions in Bophuthatswana, hereby condemn these repressive measures against the Trade Union movement, and call on all South African Trade Unions and IUF affiliates to add their voice of protest against State interference in legitimate Trade Union activities.

moved: Bro Hartford, Wits Tearoom Union
seconded: Bro Malgas, Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REPORTS

International Labour Reports, Mayday Publications, 300 Oxford Street, Manchester M13 9NS or Third World Publications, 151 Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 1RD. Subscriptions #10 (Institutions #20). Enquiries:(021) 698531 ext 308(wk); 642551(h).

An important new publication has appeared. **International Labour Reports** provides news and information on labour struggles around the world. Appropriately it comes from Manchester, the industrial heart of nineteenth century Britain, where Engels helped to develop ideas for the formation of the first International Workingmen's Association. In the development of international solidarity between workers, it is vital that there are good sources of direct information available. The ILR goes further than newspapers and trade union bulletins in its worldwide coverage of working conditions, strikes, the behaviour of multinational corporations and new features of the world economy. Drawing on a global network of journalists, researchers, and trade union publications, it presents issues in a clear and interesting way. There is good use of illustrations, including the cartoon services of Tony Gibbard of the **Guardian**. The large magazine format and clear type are easy on the eye.

The pilot issue (Number 1, Jan/Feb 1984) has a wide range of articles. Coverage of South Africa includes a two-page spread on the **South African Labour Bulletin**, a report on NAAWU recognition at Alfa Romeo, an article on Dunlop workers and one on the banning of SAAWU in the Ciskei.

The core feature on Free Trade Zones deserves attention in view of the plans by Western Cape entrepreneurs to transform the region into a similar zone*. ILR explains how Free Trade Zones are low-

wage, low-tax, customs-free areas in which most workers are young unskilled women and where very little of the normal labour legislation applies. They are favoured by multinationals in the electronics and other sectors. ILR's comprehensive coverage of multinationals goes a long way towards providing South African workers with insights into the employment practices of these corporations in other countries. There is particularly thorough information on corporate practice and worker organisation in South East Asia and Japan, areas of which we in South Africa know little.

The intention of the editors is principally to inform the British labour movement. Hence they do not take into account that many of their potential audience may be second-language readers in other countries. Accessibility to their information may be raised by simplifying the existing language level without any prejudice to its content.

Although the first issue is thin on struggles in Africa, and on those in North America and Eastern Europe, perhaps this will be remedied in future editions. Attention needs to be devoted to improving the staid layout and in providing clearer demarcation between the different sections of the magazine. Yet, judging by the strength of the first issue's 75 articles and information boxes, International Labour Reports fills a longstanding gap in our understanding of global labour issues and is a welcome instrument in the development of international solidarity. It should find a compulsory place on the shelves of resource centres, trade unions and labour researchers.

(David Fig, Cape Town, April 1984).

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*see Cape Times 10 March 1984.

review

USEFUL REFERENCE BOOKS FOR UNIONS AND ADVICE CENTRES

This short list (5 pages) has been compiled by the Cape Town Trade Union Library:

> In recent years, many new unions have started, and community advice offices have opened, and they share one need: need for information. They need information to help the workers, pensioners and unemployed people who come to them. As all this information cannot be stored in people's heads, it must be kept in books. This list tells you what useful books there are that have some of the information you need.
> All these books (and many others) may be read at the Trade Union Library, which is open every Saturday from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm, and on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons by arrangement with the Secretary.

The list covers the following topics: employment law, wage regulating measures, shop stewards, pensions, UIF, Workmens' Compensation, industrial health, job evaluation, women workers, companies, trade unions, conditions of employment, community issues. It also gives addresses of organisation and journals.

The SALB would like to make one correction: although our standard subscription is R20 there are concessions for workers, students and unemployed (see details at the back of the Bulletin).

Useful reference books is available at 25c + postage from: Cape Town Trade Union Library, P O Box 376, Salt River 7925.

SALB Publication guidelines

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

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

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

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

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