

**PLAYERS OR PAWNS?:
"PROFESSIONALISM" AND TEACHER DISUNITY
IN THE WESTERN CAPE, 1980-1990**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT

Teacher Organisations

(A) *African*

(C) *Coloured*

(I) *Indian*

(W) *White*

* *Officially recognised by the state*

Grouping of teacher organisations

+ *No longer in existence*

ACT	<i>Alliance of Concerned Teachers (Philippines)</i>
ATASA (A)*	<i>African Teachers' Association of South Africa</i>
CATA (A)+	<i>Cape African Teachers' Association</i>
CATU (A)*	<i>Cape African Teachers' Union</i>
CTCC +	<i>Concerned Teachers' Coordination Committee</i>
CTPA (C)*	<i>Cape Teachers' Professional Association</i>
DETU +	<i>Democratic Teachers' Union</i>
ECTU +	<i>Eastern Cape Teachers' Union</i>
EDASA +	<i>Education for an Award South Africa</i>
ELPTU +	<i>East London Progressive Teachers' Union</i>
JOCTASA #	<i>Joint Council of Teachers' Associations of South Africa</i>
NAPTOSA *#	<i>National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa</i>
NEUSA +	<i>National Education Union of South Africa</i>
NTS (W)*	<i>Natal Teachers' Society</i>
NTUF #+	<i>National Teacher Unity Forum</i>
PENATA (A)*	<i>Peninsula African Teachers' Association</i>
PTL +	<i>Progressive Teachers' League</i>
PTU +	<i>Progressive Teachers' Union</i>
SADTU #	<i>South African Democratic Teachers' Union</i>
SAFTA #+	<i>South African Federation of Teachers' Associations</i>
SAITA (I)*+	<i>South African Indian Teachers' Association</i>
SATA (W)*	<i>South African Teachers' Association</i>
SAOU (W)*	<i>Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie</i>
SIG +	<i>Students' Information Group</i>
STAC +	<i>Soweto Teachers' Action Committee</i>
SWATA (A)*+	<i>South West African Teachers' Association</i>
TAC +	<i>Teachers' Action Committee</i>
TASA (I)*+	<i>Teachers' Association of South Africa</i>
TFC *#	<i>Teachers' Federal Council</i>
TIRA +	<i>Teachers' Improvement and Research Association</i>
TLSA	<i>Teachers' League of South Africa</i>
TTA (W)*	<i>Transvaal Teachers' Association</i>
TUATA (A)*	<i>Transvaal United African Teachers' Association</i>
TUF #+	<i>Teacher Unity Forum</i>
UTASA (C)*	<i>United Teachers' Association of South Africa</i>
WCOTP	<i>World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession</i>
WCTUF #+	<i>Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum</i>
WECTU +	<i>Western Cape Teachers' Union</i>

LIST OF ACRONYMS (continued)

Other Organisations or Institutions

ANC	<i>African National Congress</i>
BC	<i>Black Consciousness</i>
COSAS	<i>Congress of South African Students</i>
COSATU	<i>Congress of South African Trade Unions</i>
DEC	<i>Department of Education and Culture</i>
DET	<i>Department of Education and Training</i>
ECC	<i>End Conscription Campaign</i>
HōD	<i>House of Delegates</i>
HōR	<i>House of Representatives</i>
IRF	<i>Inter-Regional Forum</i>
ISCC	<i>Inter-Schools Coordinating Committee</i>
LP	<i>Labour Party</i>
MDM	<i>Mass Democratic Movement</i>
NECC	<i>National Education Coordinating Committee</i>
NEUM	<i>Non-European Unity Movement</i>
PAAG	<i>Pupils Awareness and Action Group</i>
PTSA	<i>Parent-Teacher-Student Association</i>
SACE	<i>South African Council for Education</i>
SADF	<i>South African Defence Force</i>
SAIC	<i>South African Indian Council</i>
SAIRR	<i>South African Institute of Race Relations</i>
SAP	<i>South African Police</i>
SIG	<i>Student Interest Group</i>
SPCC	<i>Soweto Parents Crisis Committee</i>
SRC	<i>Student Representative Council</i>
UCT	<i>University of Cape Town</i>
UDF	<i>United Democratic Front</i>
UWC	<i>University of the Western Cape</i>
WECSAC	<i>Western Cape Students Action Committee</i>
WECSO	<i>Western Cape Students Congress</i>
WCEF	<i>Western Cape Education Front</i>
WCNECC	<i>Western Cape, National Education Crisis Committee</i>

INTRODUCTION

The history of teacher politics in South Africa since the onset of Bantu Education has been riven with conflict. The conflict, in its broadest sense, has focussed on the ideologically-loaded concept of "professionalism". What is "professionalism"? Who defines it? Does it exist in some static, abstract way, or does it change over time? This dissertation argues that "professionalism" does indeed change over time, and has been used by the state to contain teachers and teachers' behaviour. Conflict arises within teacher politics when traditional "professional" attitudes and behaviour are challenged by groups, including groups situated within the ranks of teachers, in opposition to the state's "professional" construct.

South African teachers live in a socially-divided society, with firmly entrenched ethnic and class divisions which effect teachers, their organisations and their ideologies of "professionalism". The state, implementing its *apartheid* policies, has organised teachers, and education, into distinct, ethnically-defined departments, creating fundamental lines of division. Tensions arise in teacher politics when social and political forces both demand the assertion of "professional" ethnic identities and seek to reject and overcome ethnic divisions.

Teachers' class location, another aspect of "professionalism", also creates tensions within teacher politics. Teachers' class location is ambiguous at best, with teachers falling comfortably into neither the working class nor the middle class to which many teachers have aspired. Rather, tensions arise as both the middle and working-classes demand loyalty. At times of heightened political conflict, social and political forces both engender desire for middle-class status, and demand allegiance with working-class values and attitudes.

"Professionalism" proved a useful mechanism for various groups -- state and those in opposition to the state -- seeking to maintain or overcome these ethnic and class divides. To be a "professional" meant, to some, to be middle-class, and to be respected within the confines of a particular "population group". The South African government's "own affairs" strategy compartmentalized social mobility and status. On the other hand, the liberation movement of the 1980s engendered conflict by espousing non-racialism, and the "leadership of the working-class".

The nature of schooling also situates teachers in conflicted terrain. Schools are contradictory places, both offering space for democratic articulation of initiative and requiring obedience to hierarchical, authoritarian bureaucracy. Teachers, caught within such a contradiction, and feeling the disparity between the fundamental purpose of their work and its practical outcome, have reacted in a variety of ways, from quiescence to protest.

At times of political conflict, reflected in schools, sections of society, such as students, challenge the race and class assumptions which allow teachers to uphold "professionalism". Teachers are held accountable by two authorities: their employer, the state; and the communities and students for whom they purportedly work. When conflict arises between these two authorities, the basis for teacher "professionalism", for teachers' race and class location, is challenged.

This dissertation attempts to describe such a moment of challenge, and transition, within teacher politics in South Africa. Focussing primarily on black teacher groups, this dissertation will describe the remarkable events within teacher politics in the Western Cape in the 1980s, following from the Soweto uprising of 1976.

The decade of the eighties marked massive changes in the political and educational context within which teachers worked. After 1976, schools became the focus of opposition to the *apartheid* state. The atmosphere within schools changed as many students rejected the schooling proffered them by the state, and the "professional" implementation of state-schooling by teachers. The liberation movement grew as the decade progressed, bolstered by a militant black trade union movement. The liberation struggle expanded and community-based protest drew schools into a broader, societal opposition to the state. The nature of schooling changed, as students and other elements of the liberation movement rejected *apartheid* education, and began fostering alternative education. Most notably, People's Education articulated both a rejection of state education and a desire for relevant, democratic schooling.

For most teachers, the conflictual atmosphere at schools and the rejection by their students created crises of identity. Teachers and their organisations had to find new, *legitimate* places within schooling plagued by dissatisfaction and confrontation. It was a time of great ambiguity and questioning. Conventional "professionalism" was being challenged from both inside and outside the ranks of teachers.

Within this context, teacher organisations underwent transitions away from traditional "professionalism", towards a new way of defining their work and their locations in society. At the end of the 1970s, established teacher groups¹ operated within each department of education. Upholding "professional" ideals, these ethnically-defined groups cooperated with the state, aspired to an elite status, and remained antagonistic to "political" involvement. During the 1980s, however, such ideals became unacceptable to many elements of the liberation movement. Established "professional" associations were challenged by their students and the liberation movement to work for change and redress, rather than uphold a "professional" status quo.

A central catalyst for change within teacher politics grew from within the ranks of teachers. During the 1980s, new teacher organisations formed. These "emergent" bodies;

¹ Throughout this dissertation, the term "established" will refer to those establishment teacher associations recognised by the various departments of education.

as they came to be known,² espoused an "anti-professional" ideology. Aligning teachers with the working-class, engaging in political activity in opposition to the state and its education departments, these groups confronted the established teacher associations with the greatest challenge to their "professional" foundations. Allied with powerful elements of the liberation movement, the emergent teacher unions fostered a new, legitimate teacher "professionalism" based on non-racial allegiance to the working class in an overtly political context.

The various elements of the conflicts within teacher politics have been embodied in different teacher organisations. The organisations reflect certain ideological positions in relation to teachers' race, class and "professional" locations. Organised teachers' attempts to overcome conflict and contradiction within their ranks has thus taken the form of teacher unity. Teacher unity played a central role in teacher politics, especially in the 1980s, and reflected the changing discourse of "professionalism" as attempts were made to overcome divisions in race, class and "professional" locations.

In examining the unity process and teacher politics, this dissertation seeks to rebut facile ideas about teachers as lackeys, sycophants, or "anarchists".³ It hopes to dispel such popular and crude myths, and to take cognizance of action, not just reaction, at a particular historical moment. In this way, it hopes to set about altering popular misconceptions about "apathetic" teachers. As Baruch Hirson has written in the forward to his book on the Soweto uprising: "To tell the story, is little enough. Events do not occur fortuitously, nor are they preordained. Real live people have made the history recounted here, and ... it is their actions which have to be understood."⁴

Teacher unity as a challenge to conventional "professionalism"

Teacher unity has a long and complex history in South Africa. Separate organisations have constantly perceived a need to establish relations among themselves. Leo Sihlali, president of the Cape African Teachers Association (CATA), reflected the divisions when he said that "separate teachers' organisations are still with us.... [It is] high time these artificial barriers were knocked down..."⁵ Similar sentiments were evident when Randall Peteni, president of the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA), asked, "Why are teachers so racially oriented in outlook and so rigid in attitude towards other teachers' associations?"⁶ The fact that Sihlali spoke in 1952, and Peteni spoke in 1985, demonstrates historical

² Throughout this dissertation, the term "emergent" will be used to refer to democratically-aligned teacher unions formed in the 1980s.

³ This last term was used to describe "activist" teachers in "unions" by Mr. Mtshali, the KwaZulu Minister of Education and Culture. Mtshali, address, Graduation Ceremony, Esikawini College of Education, Esikawani, 18 May 1991.

⁴ Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash* (London: Zed Press, 1979) 1.

⁵ Michael James Cameron, "The Introduction of Bantu Education and the Question of Resistance: Co-operation, Non-Collaboration or Defiance? The Struggle for African Schooling with Special Reference to Cape Town, 1945-1960," M.Ed. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1986, 194.

⁶ *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1985): 21.

continuity and lends historical depth to the teaching community's fractures, and to the desires of teacher organisations' leadership to repair them.

There has been cooperation, but attempts at merging organisations based on ethnically-defined education departments have time and again proved unsuccessful due to a political context which actively encouraged division. In 1946, the Cape-based, white South African Teachers' Association (SATA) printed an article entitled "A National Association of South African Teachers" in its organ, *The Education Journal*. The author perceived important benefits in unity. He believed: "... there would be much benefit for all ... in the creation of a professional spirit which would help us rise above parochialism and the pettiness of racial antagonisms...."⁷

Six years later, after two years of planning, CATA and the predominantly Coloured-intellectual Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) met together for one day. The 590-person meeting, at which Sihlali spoke, aimed for political and educational unity.⁸ But Sihlali's "artificial barriers" remained standing; separate organisations remained intact largely because of state-constructed obstacles to unity.

In fact, these divisions remained in place during the following two decades of the South African Federation of Teachers' Associations (SAFTA), an organisation founded in 1958 by Coloured and Indian teachers' associations.⁹ In the seventies, the white Transvaal Teachers' Association (TTA) joined,¹⁰ as did the Cape-based SATA.¹¹ But SAFTA was not to survive the decade, for the political winds were shifting. Despite the fact that the Cape Teachers' Professional Association (CTPA), a Coloured participant, could in 1977 laud the "genuine desire towards inter-racial contact" expressed by different teachers' organisations,¹² two years later the CTPA withdrew from SAFTA. A resolution from the 1979 CTPA conference explained: "Conference held the view that a body federally constituted along racial lines the way SAFTA is, may quite easily serve to endorse racial notions and divisions in South Africa rather than to counteract them."¹³ As Peteni said at the 1979 CTPA conference, talking of the possibility of forming a single, united teachers' association, "There are many hurdles to clear: we fall under different departments of education, we live in segregated ghettos, and our children attend different schools."¹⁴ This commentary suggested a crucial issue for South African teacher unity: whether a federal organisation would clear such hurdles, or would perpetuate them.

⁷ *The Education Journal* January 1946: 3-4. Interestingly, in the February issue of that year, a front page editorial appeared to clarify "knotty points" raised by the unity article for members' discussion.

⁸ Cameron, 194.

⁹ Randall van den Heever, "The SAFTA and the UTASA: A Historical (sic) Appraisal," *Educatio* 4th Quarter (1978): 24-25.

¹⁰ *Argus*, 21 June 1976.

¹¹ Mike Reeler, SATA organiser, telephone interview, 5 April 1993.

¹² Randall van den Heever, "A Step Towards Normalizing Education in South Africa: CTPA and SATA Meet," *Educatio* 4th Quarter (1977): 10.

¹³ *Educatio* Conference Edition (1979): 2.

¹⁴ *Educatio* Conference Edition (1979): 7.

In December 1979, at a Southern African regional conference organised by the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), held in Mauritius, the "black R.S.A. delegation" discussed the formation of a single South African teacher body. "It was felt," reported the CTPA, "that a start should be made with a common interior secretariat as a forerunner to a single teachers union...."¹⁵ Over the Easter weekend in 1980, then, the Joint Council of Teachers' Associations of South Africa (JOCTASA) was created at Jan Smuts Airport. This council -- initially composed of the "Coloured" Union of Teachers' Associations of South Africa (UTASA) and ATASA, both federally-constituted national bodies -- sought to end "all discriminatory measures in education," among other things.¹⁶ JOCTASA met on and off during the first half of the eighties.

In 1983, ATASA and UTASA composed a Charter for Teacher Unity, but disagreement within JOCTASA ensued. ATASA, UTASA, the "Indian" Teachers' Association of South Africa (TASA) and both English and Afrikaans white organisations met on 14 April 1984; *Educatio*, the CTPA organ, reported that, "Many diametrically opposed views were aired."¹⁷ Petini, reporting on the meeting over a year later, claimed that "JOCTASA affairs seem to be at a standstill."¹⁸ It did survive the 1985 emergency to hold a meeting in 1986. But the participants -- the CTPA, the Peninsula African Teachers' Association (PENATA - a Cape Town ATASA affiliate), and TASA -- decided somewhat vaguely to organise at "grassroots" level.¹⁹ JOCTASA was for all intents and purposes abandoned to the maelstrom of 1985.

Clearly, there had been some movement away from the strictly racialistic thinking of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. But powerful tensions between racially-organised groups still existed. In 1985, three "progressive" teachers' organisations -- the Western Cape Teachers' Union (WECTU), the Democratic Teachers' Union (DETU), and Education for an Aware South Africa (EDASA) -- formed in Cape Town and set themselves up directly in opposition to the "apartheid thinking" of the established organisations.²⁰ The differences in approach were highlighted in 1987, when two separate unity initiatives were begun within a week of each other, one for the large established organisations, the other for the newer, more militant "progressive" unions.

Then, in April 1988, the African National Congress (ANC) and WCOTP, amongst others, invited all but the established white organisations to Harare for a watershed conference. What emerged were a series of guidelines for unity, a commitment on the part

¹⁵ *Educatio* 1st Quarter (1980): 3.

¹⁶ *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1980): 8.

¹⁷ *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1984): 7. Interestingly, "A proposal that a loose federation be established with all members retaining full autonomy and their own character, was defeated."

¹⁸ *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1985): 21.

¹⁹ *Sunday Times*, 27 April 1986.

²⁰ The Western Cape emergent organisations had been preceded in this by the establishment of the "progressive" National Union of South African Educators (NEUSA), which operated mainly in DET schools in the Transvaal from 1980.

of all organisations to participate exclusively in this new initiative, and, importantly, an external facilitator in the form of COSATU. This initiative led to the formation of the interim National Teacher Unity Forum (NTUF), and then to the creation of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) in October 1990.

Through all recent attempts to unify teachers, three contentious issues have emerged: should the structure of any combined organisation be federally-based on the existing structures of teachers groups, or completely unitary; should the proposed body be committed to a "professional" or a "trade union" ideology; and how should the vastly differing resources brought by different organisations be re-distributed?²¹ These are important and, one might argue, intractable issues. It would take a peculiar set of circumstances to overcome, or subsume them.

In 1990, with the launch of SADTU on the immediate agenda, many teachers and other interested groups believed such circumstances had, at long last, arrived. Reporting on comments made by COSATU General Secretary Jay Naidoo before the launch, *The Weekly Mail* stated that SADTU "... could evolve into South Africa's first truly non-racial national union."²² Estimates of its starting membership ranged above 100,000.²³ But even prior to the launch, which warranted no less a speaker than Nelson Mandela, tensions emerged from beneath the carpet where a most diligent, if hurried, process had swept them. The Transvaal United African Teachers Association (TUATA), an ATASA affiliate, decided not to participate, and both the Cape African Teachers' Union (CATU) and the Natal African Teachers' Union (NATU) "asked for more time to decide on their future." Also, the Natal Teachers' Society (NTS), the only established white organisation granted observer status at the launch, decided to pull out.²⁴ The overt opposition to SADTU grew into the creation of a rival national body, the National Association of Professional Teachers' Organisations of South Africa (NAPTOSA), which espoused both federalism and "professionalism". The saga of teacher unity, in other words, continued in remarkably the same, disunited vein.

Why did SADTU fail to fulfill the ideal of a single, non-racial, national union of teachers envisaged by its initial organisers? Or, articulated more broadly, why has teacher *disunity* proved so resilient in South African history? In attempting to answer this question, this dissertation -- focussing on one region, the Western Cape -- will argue that the history of teacher unity has been a search for a new "professional" identity, and for empowerment. This search has been influenced by a variety of groups with vested interests in schooling. The groups comprised the state, students, communities and a variety of "liberation" organisations.

Why, ultimately, did these interest groups want to influence teacher politics? The answer, within the context of teacher unity, concerns public identity and behaviour. How

²¹ These three areas were outlined by Peter Kallaway in a talk to a Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum workshop at UCT on 18 February 1990.

²² *The Weekly Mail*, 5-11 October 1990.

²³ *The Weekly Mail*, 5-11 October 1990; *South*, 4-10 October 1990.

²⁴ *South*, 4-10 October 1990.

teachers' groups chose to define themselves indicated an ideological context, a way of perceiving their educational and social world. The different interest groups, such as the state and the liberation movement, operated from fundamentally different ideological positions, and teachers' self-perceived identities put them on a scale between one or another of these positions. Teachers' self-perceived ideological foundations dictated behaviour. This had crucial implications for teacher unity. Differing ideological positions considered the style and necessity of teacher unity in different ways. The state, for example, enjoyed a disunited profession organised within the parameters of state-constructed departments of education. Elements of the liberation movement, on the other hand, sought a single, unified profession espousing the need for political change. Teacher organisations adopted positions between these two poles.

These groups wanted to dictate "appropriate" teacher behaviour. There were vast differences between interest groups concerning what should be taught in schools and how it should be taught. Also, these groups wanted teachers to behave in more or less overtly "political" ways. Should teachers engage in popular protest? Should they support their students' demands? Or should they work in allegiance with state forces to punish and control students?

The issues of identity and behaviour are captured within the ideologically-loaded concept of "professionalism", which has been of central importance in the process of teacher unity. If teachers aspire to "professional" heights, then the defining characteristics of "professionalism", in terms of identity and acceptable behaviour, have a large influence over teachers. The state, it will be shown, has defined "professionalism" for its own purposes. This definition was challenged in the mid-eighties, and the whole notion of "professionalism" underwent a period of transition among some sectors of the teaching profession as the decade drew to a militant close.

This history of teacher politics -- involving teachers' identity, behaviour and "professional" position -- is clearly a history of opposition in South Africa. The terrain of teachers contained contradictions -- apart from those inherent in race and class locations -- as a direct result of the oppositional nature of the interest groups influencing teacher politics. Generally, this can be perceived as the battle between the state and the forces of liberation working within South Africa, and working specifically within schools. More subtly, tensions operated among elements within both the state and the liberation movement in the 1980s. These elements, defining "professional" behaviour differently, demanding different action and understanding from teachers, and thus created contradictions. This is to a large degree why so many teachers' organisations have existed in South Africa, as different teachers have responded to such pressures differently and utilized their available political and educational space in different ways. The world of teachers has thus been a microcosm of the broad forces operating antagonistically during a tumultuous decade.

Why, then, have teachers' organisations in the Western Cape remained disunited? Why has unity proven so elusive? Because each group of teachers represents the organised

articulation of a set of values and ideologies. Due to the contradictory nature of social forces in *apartheid* society, the realm of teachers allows room for these values and ideologies to be vastly different. The interest groups seeking influence over teachers add particular weight to one or another of these ideologies. While at different historical moments one interest group, like the state, might be powerful enough to quiet its opponents, this was not the case during the 1980s. Instead, the social and political battles plaguing the country affected the ranks of teachers. The opposed interest groups played upon the structural contradictions, and utilized differing notions of "professionalism", to define teachers' identity, location and behavioural limitations. The history of teacher disunity in the Western Cape is therefore about power and "professionalism".

This dissertation attempts to understand the contradictions within the realm of teachers, and how these have worked to maintain disunity. It will trace the history of organised teachers in the Western Cape from 1976 to 1990 as they attempted to move towards unity. It will follow the varying pressures applied by interest groups during these years, as well as the changing understandings of "professionalism". The pressures changed over time. So did the organised teachers, as established associations shifted public positions and aspects of their identities, and as new organisations came into being to challenge the old, to utilize the space provided by changing political and educational climates.

Chapter One will provide the essential, thematic framework for an analysis of teachers' organisations in South Africa. It will explore the layers of contradictions -- social, school-based, and those created by interest groups -- as well as the ideological nature of "professionalism". Also, Chapter One will define the interest groups impinging on organised teachers during the eighties, and analyse their relationships with teachers and with schooling.

The history of disunity will begin with the 1976 student uprising in Chapter Two. The importance of this watershed event for schooling, for the liberation movement, and for teachers will be outlined. Also, this chapter will examine the established teachers' organisations in the Western Cape at that time. These organisations were highly "professional", firmly ensconced in the ethnically-divided departments of education, and completely unprepared for the shift in the balance of power caused by students. This chapter will then look at teachers' tentative responses to the events from 1976 to 1979.

Chapter Three will explore teachers' reactions in the face of the second wave of student revolt in the Western Cape, starting in 1980. With the resurgence of "liberatory" activity, including a growing trade-union movement, and more highly-organised student protests, teachers felt a greater need and an enhanced opportunity to respond actively, and began to challenge the assumptions of their "professional" locations. A new, short-lived teachers' crisis organisation formed in Cape Town, illustrating the growing discontent with the established bodies and their ways of perceiving teachers' "professional" location. The emphasis, however, at the beginning of the decade was still on ethnic divisions in the ranks of teachers.

This situation had fundamentally changed by 1985 -- dealt with in Chapters Four and Five -- when teachers, organisationally, challenged the ideological foundations of schooling and of their race, class and "professional" locations. As these contradictions heightened, as the liberation movement gained momentum, the three "progressive" teachers' organisations formed in the Western Cape, one in each of the African, Coloured and white departments. These organisations, responding in part to heightened contradictions, challenged not only the ethnic definitions and "professionalism" of their established counter-parts, but raised the issue of class. The crucial question of teacher unionism, central in debates around teacher unity, emerged strongly from the chaotic years of 1985 and 1986.

The following two years, as discussed in Chapter Six, were years of repressed political activity. The state asserted mighty and destructive pressure on its foes, and this effected organised teachers. Some form of teacher unity was still on organisational agendas, but the rift between established and newly-emergent groupings could not be overcome.

The desirability and importance of a unified profession, in the eyes of the liberation movement, became more apparent as the decade matured. Thus in April 1988, the ANC, WCOTP and others began a process of teacher unity facilitated by COSATU. Chapter Seven deals with these final two years of the 1980s. The process begun in April 1988 involved all the black organisations, and a few white ones. Over the two-and-a-half years before this process led to the launch of SADTU, the debates about "professionalism", and race and class identity, raged. The newly-claimed authority of students, trade-unionists and liberation activists created the space for the articulation of a challenge to state-constructed "professionalism". Established organisations shifted -- in one case dramatically -- to fall more firmly in line with the liberation movement, in opposition to the state.

The end of the decade, with its heightened social and political contradictions, created and allowed room for increased teacher militancy. This served to exacerbate the challenge to existing definitions of "professionalism". As the decade closed, and SADTU was launched, many organisers were disappointed that it was not the all-inclusive body it set out to become. But the challenge to traditional conceptions of teachers' locations existed in new forms. Alternative ideologies, alternative ways of perceiving their locations demanded alternative methods of organising. Many teachers chose to remain organised in familiar patterns, unwilling to give up their ethnically-defined identities, or their "professional", middle-class modus operandi. But teacher politics had been fundamentally altered and, through conflict, teachers had begun to empower themselves and assert a more legitimate "professional" ideology.

Avoiding facile views

Teachers have been perceived by many different observers in overly-simplified ways, which serve to divest teachers of their credibility. In the battle for control of schools, which

began in earnest in the 1980s, they were seen as siding with one camp or another, or as completely lacking in notions of "responsibility", however that was defined.

Attacks on the credibility of teachers, with sometimes violent repercussions, were a damaging form of harassment during the early period under study. The various interest groups described in detail in Chapter One include the state, students, liberation organisations, trade unions, and, of course, teachers themselves. Each, for their own reasons, utilizes generalisations and narrow perceptions to embrace the teaching corps. The state, for example, through its education departments and inspectors,²⁵ seemed wholly unable to recognize the human condition of teachers during times of tension at schools, to see teachers as more than pawns. *The Weekly Mail* reported in 1986 that circuit inspectors simply expected teachers and principals to carry out their decisions.²⁶ More concretely, in 1988 the Department of Education and Training (DET) sent a circular to the principals of its schools asking for the names of "radical" teachers.²⁷ By deciding that teachers must be "professionals" -- a state-of-being neatly codified in rigid codes of conduct -- and that, conversely, any deviation from this rendered a teacher "communistic" or "criminal",²⁸ the state's narrow vision has sought to damage the public image of teachers. This has had a range of negative impacts on the people themselves.

A second example of the harmful effects of facile perceptions concerns students. Students have often perceived their teachers as collaborators, rejecting their teachers as symbols of state control. This condition has changed over time from a militant rejection of teachers in 1976 and 1980 to a ready acceptance of those comradely educators who joined progressive unions and were harassed and detained alongside their students. But the term "collaborator" stripped teachers of credibility, created emotional stress, and, in some cases led to physical threats and violence.

Relations between teachers and students are relations of power, and are thus fraught with much greater complexity than some students would have us believe, especially at the point where the subordinate students rebel. Political scientist James Scott offers a useful understanding of such rebellion in his ground-breaking study of "hidden transcripts", the true thoughts, feelings and attitudes of subordinate peoples which must remain "hidden" in the face of domination. "The first open statement of a hidden transcript," writes Scott, "a declaration that breeches the etiquette of power relations, that breaks an apparently calm surface of silence and consent, carries the force of a symbolic declaration of war."²⁹ And all is fair in war, especially overly-facile constructions of the enemy. Students rebelled

²⁵ Here it is important to recognize the ambiguous and often difficult role played by school principals who are put under immense pressure to bridge the gap between education departments and restive teachers at times of political conflict.

²⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 27 March-3 April 1986.

²⁷ *Argus*, 10 September 1988.

²⁸ Three teachers, for example, lost their jobs for being present at a meeting of students in 1980 at which the possibility of a boycott was discussed. Elizabeth Everett, "Teachers and the Boycott," *South African Outlook* 110 (August 1980): 120.

²⁹ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 8.

against teachers as ideological lackeys of the state, a term which neatly subsumed the various other reasons for rebellion against a dominant authority. At times of open rebellion, students learned to articulate their many subtle grievances about teachers in generalised, simple ways.

This thesis seeks to counteract the simplistic versions of teachers' roles. The tensions forced upon teachers are myriad. As Scott has argued,

A view of politics focused either on what may be command performances of consent or open rebellion represents a far too narrow concept of political life -- especially under conditions of tyranny or near-tyranny in which much of the world lives.³⁰

Many South African teachers would accept that they have lived, at times, under near-tyrannical conditions. It would be fallacious, therefore, to accept their "command performances of consent". To avoid a facile focus on performances commanded by departments or by students, among others, this dissertation will attempt to interrogate the ideological domain of teachers and render it problematic.

Teachers and a historian's dilemmas

The various ways of influencing teachers could be divided into two categories: ways in which all teachers are influenced, and ways in which organised teachers are influenced. The former might refer to departmental codes, while the latter could include claims against the reputation of a particular organisation.

This division indicates an important dilemma for historians. While organisations provide some teachers with a voice, what of the majority of teachers who remain voiceless, who do not belong to organisations, or who belong in name only? Although formal organising is but one of many avenues open to teachers who wish to express dissatisfaction, it is the most accessible to analysts. Therefore, this thesis will focus on organised teachers while recognising the partial picture this offers of teacher politics generally.

A second analytical choice which has been made is to focus on the Western Cape, while placing teacher politics in a national context. In a relatively short project of this nature, it is important to be regionally specific, for situations within both the educational and political arenas vary greatly from place to place. The Western Cape saw the birth of three new organisations in 1985, including the only progressive white grouping in the country. The other two organisations worked neatly in opposition to their established counter-parts. Finally, too, the Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum (WCTUF) was arguably the most active region in the country, ultimately providing a president and a secretary for SADTU.

But politics in the Western Cape contains a set of ideological divisions quite apart from the fractures between teachers' organisations. There are regional aspects of the nation-wide divides between Charterist and Africanist and Black Consciousness groupings.

³⁰ Scott, 20.

This thesis runs the risk of favouring the former since the recent politics of teacher unity falls squarely into the Charterist camp; the SADTU initiative has been ANC promoted, and was COSATU-facilitated. At Harare in April 1988, in fact, there were no representatives from the other two traditions.³¹

The more troublesome ideological terrain is that of the Unity Movement and its Western Cape legacy, troublesome because its organisation and its effects are difficult to penetrate. Historian Bill Nasson contends that, "... the earlier conspiratorial texture of Unity Movement social practice has continued to influence the form and content of this essentially close-knit, self-enclosed political tendency."³² In the 1940s and 50s, a majority of Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) members were teachers,³³ an indication that teacher-politics were affected by the NEUM. Nasson, while admitting that now, "It is an organisationally tiny grouping," claims that, "The old Non-European Unity Movement has left a palpable 'Unity Movement' identity as a significant cerebral element in Western Cape political life and consciousness."³⁴ Educationist Linda Chisholm concurs.³⁵ Neville Alexander, educationist and Western Cape political activist, is more severe: "It [the NEUM] painted itself into a corner and dragged at least two generations of young people in the Western Cape into a political cul-de-sac."³⁶ For Chisholm, too, the Unity Movement legacy had limitations in the period under study here: "For the new generation, eager to organise and get to grips analytically with the new movements and forces shaping South Africa, the Unity Movement had few answers."³⁷

The "identity" described by Nasson has been maintained amongst some teachers through the TLSA, a Unity Movement organisation. While educational sociologist Frank Molteno claims that the TLSA was unpopular in 1980,³⁸ it has continued to exist, albeit on a very small scale. The *Sunday Times* wrote in 1985 that the TLSA often attacked its "traditional" opponent, the CTPA.³⁹ The state detained Helen Kies, the long-time editor of the TLSA organ, in 1985.⁴⁰ But the influence of the TLSA on the process of teacher unity was nominal, though WECTU sprang partially from the Unity Movement tradition.

³¹ Merry Dewar, "The Long Road to Unity," *Sash: Special Education Focus* 31.2 (September 1988): 18.

³² Bill Nasson, "Opposition Politics and Ideology in the Western Cape," in eds. Glenn Moss and Ingrid Obery, *South African Review* 5 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989) 94.

³³ Cameron, 60.

³⁴ Nasson, 93, 104.

³⁵ Linda Chisholm, "Education, Politics and Organisation: The Educational Traditions and Legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943-1986," *Transformation* 15 (1991): 1. She writes that the Unity Movement "... must go some way towards accounting for the particular character associated with Western Cape politics."

³⁶ Neville Alexander, "Non-collaboration in the Western Cape, 1943-1963," in eds. Wilmot James and Mary Simons, *The Angry Divide* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989) 187.

³⁷ Chisholm, 17.

³⁸ Frank Molteno, *1980: Students Struggle for Their Schools* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, UCT, 1987) 88.

³⁹ *Sunday Times*, 19 May 1985.

⁴⁰ *Cape Times*, 23 November 1985.

Its conspiratorial nature, its self-enclosed style, its size, its ideology may all have excluded the TLSA from unity talks. These will also exclude it from the scope of this thesis.

Also, as with elsewhere in South Africa, this study must contend with ethnic divisions which have been historically imposed from above. "Within the deeply seamed factionalism of Western Cape politics," writes Colin Bundy, "ethnic divisions have been an important axis of division."⁴¹

This thesis will discuss people who have chosen to organise within particular, ethnically-defined departments of education. Though their terms of reference may be ideologically "non-racial", for practical or ideological reasons the teacher organisations have been born and bred in separate ethnic arenas. For example, in 1984 TASA affirmed its commitment to "high quality formal education to promote upward mobility of the Indian community."⁴²

Such divisions are troublesome to the historian, for in utilizing categories imposed by the state, one runs the risk of perpetuating an unacceptable status quo. Ian Goldin, in a history of "coloured" identity, argues that the white ruling class fostered "coloured" identity to prevent an alliance with other black "enemies".⁴³ However, Gavin Lewis, author of a history of "coloured" people in the Western Cape, suggests that, "The solution to this dilemma ... is to accept that Coloured identity is a white-imposed categorisation. But it is one that for a variety of reasons came to be adopted by sections of the people so described."⁴⁴ Or, as Goldin has pointed out, "The survival of Coloured identity, however muted, has depended on the continued support of the working class and petty bourgeoisie."⁴⁵

The historian of contemporary South African events faces different sorts of problems, too. While still caught up in the throes of a popular struggle, it is difficult to tease out cause and reason. Much information comes to light only later when people are willing to speak more frankly outside a time and a place steeped in the possibility of repressive action. Time affords a certain beneficial distance. This study can therefore offer tentative first attempts at understanding the broad sweep of teacher politics in the 1980s.

Literature and methodology

Perhaps for some of the above reasons, secondary sources concerned with teachers of this period are scarce. This thesis will begin to fill a large gap in the literature, since little

⁴¹ Colin Bundy, "'Action, comrades, action!': The politics of youth-student resistance in the Western Cape, 1985," in eds. James and Simons, 211

⁴² *Herald*, 16 February 1984.

⁴³ Ian Goldin, "The Reconstitution of the Coloured Identity in the Western Cape," in eds. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987) 163-165.

⁴⁴ Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987) 4-5.

⁴⁵ Goldin, 156.

substantial historical work has been done on teacher unity. Monica Bot's recent article on the politics of teacher unity is a notable, albeit conservative, exception.⁴⁶ Ian Moll's article on the SADTU initiative adds to the academic literature, but remains little more than an abbreviated over-view and suffers from a SADTU bias.⁴⁷ There have not been any organisational histories done of the groups under study here, apart from in-house documents.⁴⁸ The work on teachers generally is negligible. Ken Hartshorne has produced an excellent chapter on teachers in his book *Crisis and Challenge*,⁴⁹ and Jonathan Hyslop is a notable exception, having produced a long paper on teacher resistance⁵⁰ and a discussion of "Teachers and Trade Unions".⁵¹ There have been, too, a number of short articles written about the plight of teachers at certain historical moments.⁵² South African education studies would benefit greatly from specific organisational histories as well as theoretical analyses of teachers' locations within South African schools.

More prodigious have been writings on educational struggles and student movements. There are good books available on the 1976 uprising, which set the stage for the developments discussed here.⁵³ Hyslop, too, provides a useful overview of "school student movements" from 1972 to 1987;⁵⁴ People's Education has been widely debated;⁵⁵ and school-based struggles in the Western Cape have been analyzed by Molteno in his important documentary book,⁵⁶ and by Colin Bundy in a subtle article focussing on 1985.⁵⁷ Activist Graeme Bloch has provided an overview of Western Cape school struggles from 1986-1988 from a Charterist perspective.⁵⁸ And two recent edited collections contain much that is useful for understanding recent schooling and teachers in South Africa.⁵⁹

⁴⁶ Monica Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," *SAIRR Spotlight* 1/92 (April 1992).

⁴⁷ Ian Moll, "The South African Democratic Teachers' Union and the politics of teacher unity in South Africa, 1985-1990," in eds. Unterhalter, et al, *Apartheid Education and Popular Struggles* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991) 185-202.

⁴⁸ An example of such an in-house history is Gareth Rossiter, "Developing, in a Selection of 'white' and private schools in the Cape Peninsula (sic), a facet of a counter hegemonic project?" B.Ed. thesis, UCT, November 1989.

⁴⁹ Ken Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ Jonathan Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance in African Education from the 1940s to the 1980s," ASSA conference paper, University of the Witwatersrand, June 1989.

⁵¹ Jonathan Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," *South African Labour Bulletin* II.6 (June-July 1986): 90-97.

⁵² See, for example, Monica Bot, "Black Teachers: Caught in the middle," *Indicator South Africa* 2.1 (March 1984): Urban Monitor, 10-11.

⁵³ Notably, see Hirson.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Hyslop, "School Student Movements and State Education Policy: 1972-1987," in eds. William Cobbett and Robin Cohen, *Popular Struggles in South Africa* (London: James Currey Ltd., 1988). This is the revised, published version of the paper cited under the same name elsewhere in this study.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Helen Zille, "People's Education: the irony and the tragedy," *Sash* 30.4 (February 1987): 3-8; and eds. Unterhalter, et al.

⁵⁶ Molteno.

⁵⁷ Bundy, 206-217.

⁵⁸ Graeme Bloch, "Organisation as Education: The Struggle in Western Cape Schools 1986-1988," in ed. Salie Abrahams, *Education in the Eighties: the proceedings of the Kenton Conference 1988* (October 1988).

⁵⁹ Unterhalter, et al, eds.; Mokubung Nkomo, ed. *Pedagogy of Domination: Toward a Democratic Education in South Africa* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990).

There has also been substantial work done on Western Cape politics. Wilmot James and Mary Simons have edited a book,⁶⁰ while other articles include those written by Nasson and Glenda Kruss.⁶¹ Gavin Lewis' work on "coloured" politics is seminal and sensitive; Ian Goldin has written on a similar theme.⁶² A recent book by historian Tom Lodge, and others, contains sections on the region and its ideologies.⁶³

The international literature on teachers is essential for anyone writing about teachers in South Africa, for the theoretical debates in England and the United States are absent from the literature here. Neo-marxist writers in England offer valuable insight into the concept of "professionalism" as well as the work and class location of teachers.⁶⁴ On education in the United States, Marjorie Murphy has written an elegant, detailed study of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association from 1900 to 1980 which examines many of the issues addressed in this dissertation.⁶⁵ Kerchner and Mitchell offer a study of *The Changing Idea of a Teachers' Union*,⁶⁶ and Carnoy and Levin situate teachers and schooling in a contradictory location within the American democratic state.⁶⁷

I have relied heavily on primary sources. Organisations have, unfortunately, been loath to allow a contemporary researcher access to in-house organisational documents, such as minutes. And the emergent organisations have suffered a series of raids and bannings which have deprived them of much organisational material. So the vast bulk of material is available from the wealthier established organisations. Still, newsletters and pamphlets do exist for all of the organisations under study here, and I was able to obtain access to some "progressive" in-house documents. And TASA provided me with invaluable notes and minutes from all the National Teacher Unity Forum meetings from Harare to SADTU. Also, papers presented by most of the key teacher-organisation players at a conference in 1985 have been collected, and offer a valuable insight into organisational thinking at that moment.⁶⁸

I have also relied on newspaper accounts of the events recorded here, especially from *The Weekly Mail, South*, the *Argus*, and the *Cape Times* during the period under study.

⁶⁰ James and Simons, eds.

⁶¹ Glenda Kruss, "The 1986 State of Emergency in the Western Cape," in eds. Glenn Moss and Ingrid Obery, *South African Review 4* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987) 173-186.

⁶² Lewis; Goldin.

⁶³ Tom Lodge, et al, *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: Ford Foundation, David Philip, 1991).

⁶⁴ Jennifer Ozga and Martin Lawn, *Teachers, Professionalism and Class: A Study of Organized Teachers* (London: The Falmer Press, 1981); Martin Lawn and Gerald Grace, eds. *Teachers: The Culture and Politics of Work* (London: The Falmer Press, 1987).

⁶⁵ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT & the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁶⁶ Charles Taylor Kerchner and Douglas E. Mitchell, *The Changing Idea of a Teachers' Union* (Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1988).

⁶⁷ Martin Carnoy and Henry M. Levin, *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

⁶⁸ M.J. Ashley, ed. *Teachers in a Divided Society* (Cape Town: Department of Education, UCT, 1985).

I also conducted twenty-two interviews during 1990. I did not attempt to obtain a sampling of larger teacher opinion; rather, I focused my interviews on those teachers who were either organisational leaders during the period under study, or had direct dealings with the process of teacher unity. Therefore, I interviewed most of the participants of the Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum, for example (without ever receiving official sanction or censure from that body). I used the interviews to obtain information about undocumented meetings and events, among other things, and, in particular, about the relations between organisations in the Western Cape. The interviews proved to be most interesting, informative and, in some instances of fact, unreliable. Specific information given, such as dates, sometimes proved incorrect. More significantly, for reasons that will be explored in this thesis, in 1990 some interviewees were guilty of revising their personal and organisational history. Where possible, I cross-checked interview material with newspaper accounts or with other interviewees. If a single informant's statement stands unsubstantiated, this is reflected in the text and footnotes of the dissertation. During 1989 and 1990 I also attended a series of organisational meetings, for which I rely on my personal notes for accounts of what transpired.

Overall, information and written material on teachers in African townships proved much more elusive than for the other groups under study. To a remarkable degree, newspapers dealt more extensively with Coloured and white education affairs than with African. Future research will hopefully begin to rectify the glaring absence of specific, detailed work on education struggles in Cape Town's African communities.

Finally, this project can be said to have failed methodologically in the fragile realm of democratic research procedure. Ideally, one's academic research should be of some use to the people whom one is writing about; what is taken out should be put back. Academic exercises should not result in the "word-ballets" removed from reality so aptly described by Paulo Friere.⁶⁹ But a project can also prove useful to people who have not participated in the process, if the project is relevant. This project, unfortunately, failed to win the co-operation or earn the censure of the Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum (WCTUF) -- the regional NTUF affiliate operating in Cape Town in 1990 -- though this was not for want of trying. A formal application was not responded to, tens of phone calls were not returned, and the mechanism of an interview of the researcher, though agreed to in principle, was never organised. Largely, I suspect, this was due to the overwhelming amount of work piled atop the WCTUF during the months leading up to the launch of SADTU. My choice was to abandon the work, or to continue without the desired formal cooperation. I hope some benefit will be derived from my choosing the latter option.

⁶⁹ Ira Shor and Paulo Friere, *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1987) 181.

CHAPTER ONE

**PLAYERS AND PAWNS:
THE CONTRADICTORY WORLD OF TEACHERS**

The climax of the process of teacher unity in the 1980s occurred at the end of the decade. Officially-recognized, "established" teachers' associations considered dissolving into a new, unified body whose ideology would reflect a marked change from their ethnic and *petite bourgeois* backgrounds. An array of much smaller, "emergent" teacher unions asserting a militant, anti-government style were poised to merge with the established groups. The resulting South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) would espouse non-racialism, non-sexism and an ideology defining teachers as workers. In 1989, the year prior to its launch, the emergent and established organisations cooperated in a number of ways which included teacher forums and joint protest actions in opposition to *apartheid*. The complex process of teacher unity, it seemed, was about to draw to a successful close.

But it did not happen. Several of the established organisations pulled out of the process. The crucial issues of appropriate teacher behaviour, of teachers' class location, and of teachers' "professionalism" were largely resolved for SADTU, but not for teachers generally. The contradictory nature of teachers' locations precluded unity.

What creates the tensions which render teacher unity so elusive? In other words, what are the political and social forces which influence teacher politics -- specifically teacher unity -- in South Africa? This chapter will attempt to answer this question. First, a structural background will be provided. Teachers will be situated within their place of work, and the tensions which exist within schooling will be discussed. This discussion will include a section placing teacher "professionalism" in international perspective. Then, the structural contradictions of teachers' race, class and "professional" location will be analyzed. This will be followed by a discussion of specific "interest groups" which seek to influence teacher politics in South Africa. Many of the "interest groups" vying to influence teachers' ideology and behaviour align themselves with social and political forces.

This overview of the social and political position of organised teachers will provide an essential context for understanding the history of teacher unity, from 1976 to 1990, which comprises the remaining chapters of this study.

An Introduction to the Tensions Within Teacher Politics

In order to understand the location of teachers in the social order -- articulated here in terms of race, class and an ideology of "professionalism" -- an analysis of the "place" of teachers and their organisations must recognize that the nature of this location is transformed in the context of changing historical circumstances. Social, political and economic forces pressure teachers to think and behave in certain ways. Groups, such as the state and the students, operating in conjunction with such forces influence the direction of

teacher politics. Since the groups are in competition, and the forces are often conflictual, the teachers' realm is seamed with lines of tension, which change over time.

Ideologies and "common sense" notions of behaviour necessarily become entrenched, so shifts in teachers' understandings of their race, class and "professional" locations usually occur gradually. During times of crisis, however, the tensions become particularly conflictual, and change occurs more quickly. South Africa experienced social and political crisis during the 1980s, and the crisis -- in many instances focussed on schools -- greatly affected teachers. The historical dominance of the state was challenged as students, and a broader liberation movement, asserted a new authority within teacher politics. This heightened the tensions inherent in the teachers' realm and removed the tensions from the shadows of assumed understandings. Historical assumptions of appropriate behaviour and "proper" ideological positions -- "professional" positions, in particular -- were challenged by a variety of opposing groups.

Teachers' organisations are an essential tool for understanding and grappling with both the challenges and the heightened tensions. Teachers' organisations embody different elements of societal tensions, and are more or less affected by the variety of forces and interest groups working to influence teachers. Divergent organisations reflect important ideological differences within the ranks of teachers. They reflect elements of contradiction; they are a mechanism utilized by groups in opposition, amongst which teachers themselves count very strongly. While any analysis of organised teachers necessarily ignores the high percentage of teachers outside such professional groups -- about fifty percent in South Africa -- teachers' organisations provide a valuable index to shifting tensions.

Teachers define their public identity by joining particular teachers' organisations, be they "professional" associations or trade unions. These organisations can be regarded as instances of teachers' assertions of their own strengths, of their own attempts to influence teacher politics. As their public identity is defined by their organisational assumptions and actions, so the variety of oppositional interest groups seek to define and redefine that identity by situating organisations within given parameters. In the past, the state has situated teachers in a "non-political" realm, fostering the organisations it officially recognized. Some students, on the other hand, demanded militant action of teacher groups, situating them within the liberation movement.

Teachers do not always respond to such prescriptions. The inner dynamics of the teachers' realm is largely determined by teachers acting as agents of their own world. Any understanding of teachers and their organisations must recognise their power, as well as the limitations of their power.

The Contradictions of Teachers' Power

One of the many tensions running through teacher politics concerns the structural power of teachers. This power makes it essential for the state to apply great pressure to ensure that

the power is channelled in "appropriate" ways. On the other hand, forces in opposition to the state also want teachers to use their power to affect political change in schools. Teachers, therefore, often feel contradictory tensions. Teachers' power explains why the interest groups outlined below strive to influence teacher politics.

Teachers are placed within a structurally powerful position because of both the importance of schooling in modern society and the primacy of their work within the schooling system. Much has been written about the significance of schools as social institutions. Viewed from the perspective of students, schools are vehicles for social and economic mobility. Aronowitz and Giroux, in discussing school reform in the United States, claim: "As the twentieth century matured it became increasingly apparent that the schools, more than other institutions, had become the wish mechanism for Americans: that more citizens placed hope for their children in them, and that those who worked in schools were charged with the awesome task of fulfilling the American dream."¹ While many theorists argue that school perpetuates inequality -- and here Ivan Illich stands out boldly² -- none deny its intrinsic and far-reaching effects. Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Maxine Greene and Henry Giroux, amongst a host of other educational theorists, argue that formal schooling abounds with possibilities for liberation, moral "wide-awakeness", personal empowerment and true democratic practice.³

The possibilities of schools as mechanisms of social reconstruction, however, do not negate the opposite interpretation of their role, as instruments for the status quo. French philosopher Michel Foucault has written that, "Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry."⁴ Schools perpetuate the governing ideologies of the day, and are thus important in that they "educate" students into existing racial⁵, class⁶ and, ultimately, capitalist ways of perceiving their world. Schools are state institutions, and are used by the state to justify and entrench its hegemonic position. Michael Ashley provides a useful overview of the relationships between state ideology -- Christian National Education, for example -- and schooling in South Africa.⁷ Thus, whether lauded for their potential for promoting equality and democratic values or disparaged for their entrenchment of inequities, schools are crucial mechanisms for -- contradictorily -- both social control and empowerment.⁸

¹ Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Education Under Siege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) ix.

² Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (London: Pelican Books, 1976).

³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1990); Shor and Freire; Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, c1978); Henry A. Giroux, *Schooling for Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁴ Quoted in Penny Enslin, "Science and Doctrine: Theoretical Discourse in South African Teacher Education," in ed. Nkomo, 79.

⁵ See, for example, Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991).

⁶ See, for example, Carnoy and Levin.

⁷ Michael Ashley, *Ideologies and Schooling in South Africa* (Rondebosch: S.A.T.A., 1989).

⁸ This idea provides one basis for Carnoy and Levin's thesis.

Teachers' power flows directly from the powerful place of schools in society. Teachers implement educational policy as it affects the content of schooling. Policy most obviously affects taught curricula. State policy moves far beyond taught curricula, however, into the realms of school structures, governance and methodology. Teachers play a crucial role in each of these areas. They implement curricula; and they serve as a crucial link in usually-rigid school hierarchies. Their methods, further, demand anti-educational, undemocratic obedience from students, or foster critical thinking.⁹ In this way, teachers help to engender social values in generation after generation of young people. The current wave of educational reform in America, centred on "restructuring", overtly recognizes the importance of empowering teachers for the successful improvement of schools.¹⁰

In South Africa, as opposed to America, the lines are more clearly drawn between state and anti-state forces in education, and the important role of teachers as implementors of *apartheid* education or as protagonists of an alternative order. The essential role of teachers in presenting an ideology other than the state's is inherent in discussions of People's Education, an alternative educational philosophy which emerged from the education crisis of 1985. In such a discussion, focussing on action research, Melanie Walker points out that "... teachers may potentially subvert state ideology."¹¹ Whether the ideology belongs to the state or the state's foes, teachers must implement its practical articulation in schools. Teachers are the crucial link between those who dictate school policy and those who are educated within it.

Outside of schooling, teachers are also powerful. They comprise a large number of civil servants bound together by their work. Because they live and work throughout any given country, a combined voice could reach into every corner. Many Filipino teachers, for example, added their combined weight to successful popular protest in the early 1980s to win political victories outside the sphere of education.¹² The same can be said of South African teachers in the same decade. Even earlier, teachers demonstrated their political importance outside of schools. In the late 1940s, it has been suggested, CATA was the Unity Movement's link to rural areas.¹³ Teachers are well-placed to affect change both within and beyond schools.

Teachers' organisations are one way of institutionalising teachers' power. Organisations, governed by particular ideologies, express teachers' beliefs and public identities. They allow solidarity among colleagues; they provide strength in numbers. In an overview of literature about voluntary organisations, Matiwana, Walters and Groener

⁹ Freire; Shor and Freire; Giroux.

¹⁰ For a good overview of current reform initiatives in the United States, see "Reinventing America's Schools: A guide to the ideas and programs that are driving education reforms," *Teacher Magazine* May/June 1992.

¹¹ Melanie Walker, "Action research and teaching for people's education," in eds. Unterhalter, et al, 161.

¹² Enrique D. Torres, "History of the Filipino Teachers' Movement," *Education Forum TAP* VIII (15-30 September 1988); Alliance of Concerned Teachers, "Years of Struggle: Years of Awakening: 1982-1988," *Teachers' Journal* 1.1-2 (January-June 1989): 39-46.

¹³ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 13-14.

define three incentives for joining organisations: material, "solidary" and purposive.¹⁴ Members of traditional, established teacher groups in South Africa have derived material benefits from belonging to such groups. The CTPA, for example, offers certain group insurance schemes and discounts on goods, such as car tyres. "Solidary" provides reason for belonging to both emergent and established bodies in that teachers' organisations can foster respect and prestige for teachers. The third incentive is the most powerful, for it concerns the expression and fulfillment of values. Teachers with similar values group together to project a more powerful rendering of their values, be they race, class or "professionally" based. Organisations offer havens for teachers with specific values, and can thus foster and enhance particular beliefs. Teachers' organisations constitute a powerful embodiment of group values and identities.

Despite their structural strength and the potential power of their organisations, teachers in South Africa often feel *powerless*. This is crucial for any understanding of the realm of teachers. Ironically, it is the potential power of teachers which renders them vulnerable. Teachers are vulnerable precisely because of the ideological content of their work, and their implementation of ideologically-based policy. Many forces and groups, outlined below, seek to influence teachers through a variety of means. The resulting conflicts and contradictions, the vulnerability of teachers in the face of immense controlling pressures, serve to make their position problematic. Further, teachers work within the public eye, and are seen to be safeguarding a nation's youth. This public position, as well as the "morality" of their task, was at the root of the McCarthy era loyalty oaths required of teachers in the United States in the 1950s,¹⁵ and the loyalty oaths demanded of teachers in KwaZulu government schools in more recent times.¹⁶

How have teachers responded to the above tensions within schooling? Education literature from South Africa in the 1980s presents a bleak picture of apathetic and demoralised teachers. Crain Soudien and Wendy Colyn, writing of a school in a squatter community outside of Cape Town in 1991, describe the apathy and disempowerment of teachers there. Teachers caught within a deteriorating system could not see beyond the familiar structures which had, in part, led to the deterioration.¹⁷ Ken Hartshorne, describing the phenomenon more generally, wrote in 1986:

Pressured and criticized from all sides, often for inadequacies for which they are not to blame, treated often by departments not as professionals but as instruments of policy (as in recent instructions on security in the

¹⁴ Mizana Matiwana, Shirley Walters and Zelda Groener, *The Struggle for Democracy: A Study of Community Organisations in Greater Cape Town from the 1960s to 1988* (Bellville: CACE, UWC, 1989) 17.

¹⁵ Murphy. See, in particular, Chapter Nine, "Iron Curtain in the Classroom," 175-195.

¹⁶ As a teacher at Shayina High School in KwaNgwanase, KwaZulu, in 1990, I was given a loyalty oath to sign.

¹⁷ Crain Soudien and Wendy Colyn, "The Safety of Theory: Working with Educators in a Squatter Community," unpublished paper (n.d.) 26.

schools), it is not surprising that in many areas the morale, confidence and self-image of teachers is at a low ebb.¹⁸

Even earlier, as Trish Flederman wrote after interviewing fifteen "coloured" teachers in 1980, "Teachers seem to have suffered extreme personal stress. There is little sign of their having received support from any quarter."¹⁹

Support, of course, could come from *within* the teaching corps, and it did. As suggested above, unity fosters strength to combat negative self-images and low morale. Disunity, a sense of operating in isolation under great pressures, enhances vulnerability and *feelings* of powerlessness. Teachers' organisations and the process of teacher unity had an important role to play in combatting such feelings. During the 1980s, teachers asserted influence within the "education struggle" by creating new teacher organisations and agitating for change within older groups. Teacher unity efforts expressed possibilities of enhancing that influence. Teacher unity had another important role to play in overcoming a set of disempowering contradictions in *apartheid* South Africa: those involving class and race.

Before attempting an analysis of race, class and "professional" constructs within South African teacher politics, it will be instructive to look at such theoretical discussion from an international perspective. In part, this will help to situate the South African context, and lend useful tools for understanding South African teacher politics. Also, such theoretical debate around changing ideas about teacher "professionalism" is largely absent from South African literature.

Teachers and Theories of Change: An International Perspective

In contrast to South Africa, a longer history of teacher unionism in the United States, Britain and, to a lesser degree, the Philippines has spawned an array of literature on issues crucial to the contemporary South African setting. While there is not space here to conduct a review of that literature, brief discussion of a few theorists will enable a more subtle understanding of South African teachers during the eighties.

Carnoy and Levin, in a remarkable book entitled *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State*, write of the contradictions inherent in capitalism and schooling in a capitalist state.²⁰ Discussing schooling in the United States, they argue that schools are underpinned by contradiction. While schools are indeed intended to reproduce existing relations of production -- through hierarchy and catering for employers needs, for example -- they also provide space and promote values which challenge existing social stratification

¹⁸ K[en] B. Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education: A Concept in Process: Opportunities in the next five years," in *People's Education: A collection of articles* (CACE, UWC) 119.

¹⁹ Trish Flederman, "Some effects of the boycott on the role of classroom teachers under the Department of Coloured Affairs," in eds. C.J. Millar and S. Philcox, *Some Aspects of the Educational Crisis in the Western Cape in 1980* (Cape Town: UCT, Centre for Extra-Mural Studies) 39-40.

²⁰ Carnoy and Levin.

and relationships of production. This contradiction ensures that struggle over the direction of schools always exists, and that the contradiction fuels change:

Although at any given time one of the forces [creating contradiction] may appear to dominate and achieve hegemony, the existence of underlying contradiction means that the struggle continues in various latent forms. Contradiction is at the heart of educational change by generating a series of continuing conflicts and accommodations that transform the shape of the schooling process.²¹

Contradiction breeds conflict, either overt or hidden, and conflict breeds change.

This contradiction can be specified to the terrain of teachers who, as primary agents of school maintenance, embody the contradiction most acutely. Teachers serve as agents for the maintenance of social and production relations. Yet, strong forces promote an assertion of democratic rights and the desirability of justice and equality. The latter forces are particularly relevant at times of educational reform seeking to empower teachers, reform which has become predominant in American educational discourse in the early nineties.²² Carnoy and Levin touch on this specific contradiction when writing about teachers as alienated labour. Teachers, they argue, cannot control important aspects of their "restrictive work environment". The authors conclude that tension is inevitable:

... the fact that schools are employers -- with relations of production between teachers and administrators that correspond roughly to those in capitalist private enterprises -- means that labor conflicts in the schools will occur and will take approximately the same form as in the private sector.²³

The same can be said of South African teachers; one simply needs to look at their specific grievances around work conditions and departmental control mechanisms.

Conflict is also inevitable according to the argument presented in Kerchner and Mitchell's book on *The Changing Idea of a Teachers' Union*.²⁴ Presenting a case for cycles of generational change, they believe that conflict alters the *idea* of teachers' organisations, their "professional" ideology and the relationship between teachers and their employers. "Generational development through cycles of conflict and accommodation," they write, "substantially alter how we understand unionism.... Not only will the daily working relationships between labor and management change, but the underlying assumptions and beliefs about the nature and purpose of that relationship change."²⁵ South African teachers would seem to be undergoing such a transition in the early 1990s. Applying Kerchner and Mitchell's theory, South African teachers are at a moment of intense conflict which will lead into a new generation of ideas about teachers' work and their unions.

Kerchner and Mitchell's argument is rooted in a history of United States teachers, a history which has been elegantly recorded by Marjorie Murphy.²⁶ In presenting a subtle

²¹ Carnoy and Levin, 144.

²² "Reinventing America's Schools: A guide to the ideas and programs that are driving education reform."

²³ Carnoy and Levin, 157.

²⁴ Kerchner and Mitchell.

²⁵ Kerchner and Mitchell, 42.

²⁶ Murphy.

view of "blackboard unions" from the turn of the century, Murphy documents the early and continuing tensions between professionalism and unionism, the "coming of age of teacher unionism" and the varied social and economic forces affecting the transitions. Of particular relevance to South African teacher militancy in the late eighties are her assertions that teacher militancy in the sixties in America was due to both economic factors and frustration with the mechanisms of bureaucracy,²⁷ and that, "Professional ideologies ... are *constructed* within a historical context of social hierarchy."²⁸ As South Africans began questioning *apartheid*'s social hierarchies, teachers began questioning their "professionalism".

Such recognition of the historical underpinnings of "professionalism" is also found in Lawn and Grace's edited collection, *Teachers: The Culture and Politics of Work*. One contributor states that in England in the mid-eighties, "The word 'professional' is certainly used [amongst teachers] but in a loose fashion indicating commitment, self-organisation, and a certain status.... Increasing numbers of teachers see an improvement in their pay and working conditions coming via trade union action rather than special pleading as a profession."²⁹ He relates this transition to the conservative Thatcher years. He quotes a teacher from a 1984 National Union of Teachers publication:

Morale is also low at a time when unemployment is so high and often frighteningly inevitable; one can no longer encourage with 'try and get some decent grades and you'll be o.k.' -- I have heard comments like 'What's the point? There are no jobs.' from second years!³⁰

Such sentiments resonate with South African teachers' experience in the 1980s.

Philippine teachers also began assuming more control over their work and engaging in more militant tactics in the early eighties. Referring to the progressive Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), based in Manila, one Filipino magazine published an article in 1984 entitled, "Once apolitical, the underpaid, overworked teachers get into the ACT." Documenting an array of economic and political hardships endured by Filipino teachers, resulting in a series of rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins and mass "leaves of absence", the writer asserts that teachers "... count among the most militant and courageous bureaucrats hereabouts -- and in the post-Aquino [sic] nationalist ferment, very much in the forefront of the struggle for freedom and justice." Suggesting interesting parallels with South Africa, she writes that the early eighties spawned many new teachers' organisations, including ACT which formed in June 1982. The first chairperson of ACT, Loretta Ann Rosales, is quoted as saying, "Teachers are tired of government neglect and broken promises."³¹

While, according to later ACT leader Enrique Torres, teacher organisations "flourished during the post-[World War II] period as teachers were inspired by the resurgence of the workers' trade union movement in the 1950s," and organisations were

²⁷ Murphy, 222.

²⁸ Murphy, 262, fn.

²⁹ Richard Pietrasik, "The Teachers' Action, 1984-1986," in eds. Lawn and Grace, 169.

³⁰ Pietrasik, 175.

³¹ Belinda Olivares-Cunanan, "Once apolitical, the underpaid, overworked teachers get into the ACT," *Mr. & Ms.* 24 February 1984.

established to campaign around economic issues, teachers suffered severe hardship under the Marcos regime. It was not until 1982 that the "golden years of the nationalist teachers' movement" would begin. Teachers then began playing a much more prominent political role outside the sphere of education.³² An *ACT Handbook* explains in elaborate prose the birth of ACT at that time: "Even as the standard of living -- and inescapably the quality of instruction -- of Filipino teachers deteriorated, the school system of which they were part became a handy tool of the government deceiving and misguiding the youth about the real state of the nation."³³ Thus canny similarities with South Africa are presented.

At the end of the decade, teachers in the Philippines staged a massive nationwide strike. In 1989, around 200,000 public school teachers participated in various forms of protest.³⁴ Militant action continued through 1990. When the government responded repressively, and dismissed nearly 2,000 teachers, ACT and other organisations took further militant action the following year. Then, when all but 357 teachers were reinstated, though over 1,000 remained suspended, twenty-nine teachers began a hunger strike on 17 November 1991.³⁵ The hunger strike lasted for a month before compromise was reached with President Aquino's government, requiring Aquino's intervention in the face of the education minister's intractable stand.³⁶ After it ended, Elena Dilag, one of the hunger strikers, said: "We have done the supreme sacrifice. What more can we do?" Reflecting an international condition, another striker said, "Instead of being rewarded we are being punished for rendering good services." A third, Jimmy Dayao, suggested a further point of similarity between motivations for protest in the Philippines and in South Africa. While reflecting on the former hunger-strikers continuing joblessness, he said, "I'm not really disappointed anymore. What can you expect from this kind of government? These people are very arrogant."³⁷

The important parallels between Filipino teachers' militancy and the South African militancy under discussion here is perhaps best articulated by an article in ACT's *Teachers' Journal* of January-March 1989:

When it was considered criminal to strike, ACT led teachers all over the county to launch national strikes. At least one major strike a year led by ACT since 1983 implanted in the consciousness of teachers that they still have the initiative to act collectively using the traditional tool of mass concerted action to improve their conditions.... Thus, the years of economic struggle have been also the years of political awakening for teachers.³⁸

Similarities in both plight and response can be seen in the histories of teachers' organising in the United States, Britain and the Philippines. Of most relevance for this

³² Torres, 10-15.

³³ *ACT Handbook* (Manila: ACT, 1988) 21.

³⁴ "The Teachers Nationwide Strike," *Teachers' Journal* 1:3 (July-December 1989): 3-5.

³⁵ Edward R. Kiunisala, "Justice, They Cried," *Philippines Free Press*, 21 December 1991: 6-8, 32.

³⁶ See *Philippine Daily Enquirer* and *Philippine Daily Globe*, from 26 November 1991 to 13 December 1991.

³⁷ Interview with seven former hunger-strikers, Manila, 5 January 1992.

³⁸ "Years of Struggle, Years of Awakening, 1982-1988," *Teachers' Journal* 1:1 (January-March 1989): 39.

study is the similar ways in which changing economic and political conditions, both in and out of schools, affected ideas about *how* teachers should organise, and about in what activities teachers should legitimately engage. Repressive state action, poor salaries and working conditions, growth of school populations, limited control over work and a growth of public discontent are all contributing factors to changing teacher attitudes about their work and their locations -- race, class and "professional" -- in society.

*Teachers and the Contradictions of Class and Race
in South Africa*

Harold Wolpe, in an important work on *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*, has warned against "... the inadequacy of the attempt to deal with political conflicts in isolation from an analysis of the structural context -- a context which both conditions and may be conditioned by these conflicts."³⁹ The concepts of class, race and "professionalism" provide such a structural context for a discussion of the place of teachers in society.

There have been attempts to determine teachers' location within the economic structures of capitalist societies. Jennifer Ozga and Martin Lawn, writing of England, suggest that teachers produce "invisible commodities" while selling their labour on the labour market.⁴⁰ This, along with work in a bureaucracy which curtails freedom and demands uniformity,⁴¹ goes some way towards explaining what Gerald Grace has called teachers' "intrinsic connections with the working class."⁴² Further, it has been argued in South Africa that teachers' class formation often hinges on the class location of their parents. J. Erntzen, a COSATU executive member, writes that, "A very large percentage of black teachers in South Africa come from the ranks of the working class and are therefore easily able to continue their identification with the cause of the working class."⁴³ Teachers' existing class interests, however, are socially constructed and not fully premised on family background. Whether or not black teachers have an "intrinsic connection" with workers in South Africa, the historical legacy of their profession has created "bourgeois aspirations."⁴⁴ Teachers, suggest some analysts, are socialized into an "acceptance of the dominant class ideology...",⁴⁵ which in South Africa is a middle class ideology. Teaching has been a rare opening for upward social mobility amongst black people in South Africa, which allowed access to a certain amount of middle class status.

Because of these structural pressures towards both working class and middle class ideologies, teachers are generally seen as occupying an ambiguous class location. It is

³⁹ Harold Wolpe, *Race, Class & the Apartheid State* (London: James Currey, 1988) 20.

⁴⁰ Ozga and Lawn, 44-50.

⁴¹ Shirley Walters, *The Role of the Teacher in South Africa*, unpublished paper, August 1981, 30.

⁴² Gerald Grace, "Teachers and the State in Britain: A Changing Relation," in eds. Lawn and Grace, 197.

⁴³ J. Erntzen, "Should Teachers' Organizations be Trade Unions," in eds. Millar, et al, *Breaking the Formal Frame: Readings in South African education in the eighties* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991) 307.

⁴⁴ N.S. Pillay, L.S. Jeevanantham and R.W. Naidoo, "Comments on Class Location as a Constraint on Teacher Transformative Potential," ASSA conference paper, University of the Witwatersrand, June 1989, 12.

⁴⁵ Pillay, Jeevanantham and Naidoo, 10.

"contradictory and stressful," writes Nicos Poulantzas.⁴⁶ Educational sociologist Jonathan Hyslop writes that teachers in South Africa "... should be seen as occupying a contradictory class position, in which they stand between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, and are subject to the political pressures of both groups."⁴⁷ Such an ambiguous class location creates a context for teachers which is subject to influence by contradictory forces, thus rendering teachers particularly vulnerable in times of heightened class conflict.

Attempts at locating teachers in terms of class can, however, lead to reductionism, particularly in the South African context. The assumption by some COSATU spokespersons that black teachers' filial affiliation with the working class should determine their behaviour is one example of the weakness of such an interpretation. Class is socially determined, as Richard Levin has argued, "... on the basis of material and political conditions."⁴⁸ This social determination requires an understanding of class within a broader, societal context. Wolpe refutes any attempt to analyse class in isolation from other structural influences. "The central theoretical question in the analysis of the South African social formation," he writes, "is how the *relationship* between race and class should be understood."⁴⁹

Teachers are indeed located within a political realm, and their political action -- or inaction -- is rooted in the contradictions of their class location, as described above, *and* their contradictory racial position in *apartheid* South Africa.⁵⁰ For teachers involved in organisations, and in attempts at unification, racial contradictions heightened during the 1980s as powerful elements of the liberation movement espoused "non-racialism" as a central unifying ideology.

A clear illustration of the antagonistic tensions of teachers' racial locations is provided by the simple fact that by the mid-eighties all teacher groups espoused non-racialism, yet all remained racially distinct. When a major teacher unity initiative began in April 1988, it was confronted with historical racial divisions amongst teachers. Each organisation represented at the unity talks was comprised of members from a particular education department. Under pressure from the state -- which utilized middle class values and notions of "professionalism" to support the racial status quo -- to maintain these divisions, ethnically-defined organisations found it difficult in practice to become non-racial. Race divisions, intertwined with class divisions, proved a remarkably durable obstacle to unity.

The racial divisions were not, as many apologists within conservative teacher organisations suggest, simply a product of separate bureaucracies and government

⁴⁶ Quoted in Ozga and Lawn, 52.

⁴⁷ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 90.

⁴⁸ Richard Levin, "People's education and the struggle for democracy in South Africa," in eds. Unterhalter, et al, 120.

⁴⁹ Wolpe, 10. Emphasis added.

⁵⁰ The ambiguous concept of "race" in the South African context has been widely discussed. See, for example Wolpe; Emile Boonzaier and John Sharp, eds. *South African Keywords: The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988); Gerhard Maré, *Brothers Born of Warrior Blood: Politics and Ethnicity in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1992); and Lewis.

departments. Separate organisations allowed for professional assertions of group identities, the groups being defined in terms of race and ethnicity. Sociologist Gerhard Maré writes that, "An ethnic identity is similar to a story, a way of dealing with the present through a sense of identity that is rooted in the past."⁵¹ The vast majority of Coloured teachers and their CTPA leaders in the Western Cape could not cast off their identities -- as Coloured "professionals", for many -- in response to gradually changing understandings of their work and their world. Maré continues: "Ethnic identities call on what has been, what appears to be known, and what we have some certainty about in an uncertain world."⁵² He further states that "... the emotional appeal of ethnicity stresses security and familiarity."⁵³ Apart from a desire to maintain material benefits, leaders of established organisations asserted traditional ideas because their traditional groupings were familiar. It made sense to maintain traditional group identity, reflected organisationally, rather than walk into the "vacuum" of unity described by leaders of established organisations.⁵⁴

Thus it can be understood why teachers within separate organisations, defined in terms of ethnic or racial identities, clung to these identities while articulating antagonism towards them. These contradictions of race intertwine with class contradictions in that social identities also imply class identity. In 1990, Yousuf Gabru, the WECTU chairperson, labelled the CTPA "entrenched leadership" as "racist", representing the "coloured middle class". "They have fear," he concluded, "the same fear as whites about being swamped in a non-racial South Africa."⁵⁵ Firmly entrenched ethnic identities connect to class identity in that status within an ethnically-defined community rested on both economic position and the continued existence of the ethnic identity. This connection could also be articulated within the highly-charged ideology of "professionalism".

Teachers and Professionalism

The concept of "professionalism" appears at the centre of race and class tensions amongst teachers. The contradictory nature of their race and class location, and their differing conceptions of "professionalism", largely contribute to divisions within the ranks of teachers.

"Professionalism" is an ideological construct. It is both a social mechanism of control, and an assertion of teachers' power. Ozga and Lawn believe that teachers "... have used professionalism strategically and had it used against them."⁵⁶ The state uses "professionalism" as a "strategy for control of teachers", they argue, while teachers use it as both "a weapon of self-defence" against "dilution", and to promote their autonomy.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Maré, 2.

⁵² Maré, 2.

⁵³ Maré, 12.

⁵⁴ Interview with Randall van den Heever, 8 March 1990; interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990. A complete list of informants appears in the bibliography.

⁵⁵ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

⁵⁶ Ozga and Lawn, 147.

⁵⁷ Ozga and Lawn, vi-vii, 2, and 123-124.

The concept comes to be used by the state and teachers as both a controlling and mobilizing mechanism. "Professionalism" therefore has multiple meanings.

One symptom of the contradictory "professional" -- and class -- location of teachers in South Africa has been contentious debate around teachers' organisations as professional associations or as unions. This debate played a prominent part in teacher unity. Monica Bot, in a recent article on the politics of teacher unity, states that, "The basic division is between teachers who see themselves as professionals and teachers who see themselves as workers and support unionism."⁵⁸

The terms of this debate, however, are mis-used and little understood. Neither "professionalism" nor "unionism" implies a static set of ideas. Both terms have historically specific meanings, which change over time.

"Professionalism" in South Africa is historically underpinned by middle-class values, and has been taken to imply status within racially-defined communities. It has also implied antagonism towards "political" involvement by teachers. However, the meaning of "professional" began to change in popular discourse toward the end of the 1980s, as some teachers aligned to emergent unions began to call themselves "professional workers". These militant teachers, along with other political groups, challenged the "professional" tradition based on racial and class status.

Another challenge to conventional "professionalism" emerged in the 1980s. The teaching profession in South Africa has been schooled in Fundamental Pedagogics, a theoretical framework which elevates teachers to the level of experts based on a scientific model.⁵⁹ The "professional" assumptions of Fundamental Pedagogics came to be questioned by educationists developing the ideas of People's Education in the second half of the eighties.

During this period of questioning and transition there was a great deal of ambiguity around "professionalism". Established organisations began using the vocabulary of the working class in an attempt to divest themselves of the increasingly negative perception of "professional" attitudes. These established teacher groups, however, did not allow such public posturing to affect their material conditions, or their position of relative privilege. Middle-class values were not erased overnight.

The ambiguity of "professional" location allowed room for increased cooperation between established and emergent teacher groups in the movement towards unity. But the ambiguity was artificial in the sense that professional associations generally used the shifting rhetoric to cover static ideas about their class position and desire for professional status.

The CTPA offers examples of such ambiguity. During the Defiance Campaign of 1989, it called a members' meeting in Bellville on 31 August 1989 to discuss the Mass Democratic Movement's (MDM) stay-away call for 5 and 6 September. The chairperson

⁵⁸ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 14.

⁵⁹ See Enslin.

explained that the meeting was to determine how members "felt" about the proposed stay-away. The meeting concluded with the understanding that individual teachers at individual schools had to decide for themselves whether or not to stay away.⁶⁰ This contradictory stand both allowed room for the possibility of the CTPA subscribing to militant action, and for the maintenance of a "professional" ethos. The meeting allowed for the possibility of "professionals" behaving militantly, but did not condone such behaviour. The organisation remained aloof from the shifting ideas about what "professionalism" implied.

Randall van den Heever, a CTPA president and a contradictory figure himself,⁶¹ reflected the CTPA's continuing ambiguity around "professionalism" when he said in 1990 that while the CTPA had built up "a professional culture", the "... success of the new [unified] union will be the success with which it can cater for both professionalism and politics."⁶² This reflects the CTPA's, amongst others, continuing insistence on defining professionalism as distinct from politics. Franklin Sonn also exemplified this with his notion of teachers as "comrades" *and* "professionals".⁶³

In 1988, a CTPA Conference resolution illustrated a central problem for the CTPA in the debate about "professionalism". "... [T]he teacher," stated the resolution, "is both a worker and a professional."⁶⁴ Could teachers really be considered "workers"? The answer had behavioural and organisational implications since workers joined trade unions, while professionals belonged to associations. In this ambiguous time, the CTPA debated its organisational definition in terms of the union-association dichotomy. In 1989, Sonn argued against a union of teachers, while ambiguously stating that, "... the voluntary professional association like the present established organizations are at present not very far removed from a trade union [sic]."⁶⁵ The established organisations did not want to engage in trade unionism despite rhetorically posturing as "workers"; "professionalism" remained the antithesis of unionism.

TASA, the established organisation for Indian teachers, also illustrated ambiguity about the professionalism-unionism dichotomy. Its National Council, at a meeting on 5 March 1988, decided that *union action* had become the only realistic method for negotiations.⁶⁶ Action engaged in by a professional association which diverged from past

⁶⁰ Personal notes, CTPA members meeting, Kasselsvlei, 31 August 1989.

⁶¹ Randall van den Heever, former president of the CTPA, left his organisation to become the first secretary of SADTU, and watched his former organisation withdraw from the unification he had worked diligently to achieve from *within* the CTPA. The CTPA's involvement in and withdrawal from SADTU will be explored in Chapter 7.

⁶² Interview with van den Heever, 8 March 1990.

⁶³ Franklin Sonn, "Address on the Occasion of the AGM of the Progressive Teachers Union in Johannesburg on Friday 26 May 1989," photocopy, 9.

⁶⁴ CTPA, "Resolutions," in *Education for a Democratic South Africa: 21st Annual Conference - June 1988 - Conference Papers* (Bellville: CTPA, 1988) 64.

⁶⁵ Sonn, 8.

⁶⁶ *Sunday Tribune*, 13 March 1988. This was at a time when TASA was protesting about the more than 1,300 newly-qualified teachers who were without permanent employment, and they were disillusioned with consultation through the HoD.

practices needed to be termed "union" action. This did not, however, render the professional association a union.

A further example of TASA's ambiguity concerning "professionalism" was a speech delivered to the 1990 AGM of TASA's Cape Regional Council by Kenny Ernest, Cape Town branch chairperson. Warning against the maintenance of entrenched attitudes he said, "The time for fear of losing our middle class status is long gone, for the march to freedom has inexorably begun."⁶⁷ The implication was that teachers should accept a loss of status in a liberation process led by the working class. This suggestion delivered by a member of a status-oriented, middle-class, ethnically-defined organisation was rhetorical, and ironic.

TASA, however, did move farther than other established teacher organisations towards resolving its "professional" ambiguity. In 1990, just prior to the launch of SADTU, only TASA of the established organisations had accepted the idea of becoming part of a trade union.⁶⁸ The established organisations' rhetorical alliance with "workers" and "unionism", which had been an important facilitator of unity efforts, proved to be largely superficial when, at the launch of SADTU, many opted for non-involvement in the new teachers' union. SADTU's style was deemed by them to be too "unprofessional", a fact reflected in the formation by the established bodies of a rival group, the National Association of *Professional Teachers' Organisations of South Africa* (NAPTOSA). Launched in 1991, a federal amalgamation of twelve teacher groups, NAPTOSA focussed "on the needs of the individual child", said its first president, Leepile Taunyane, who was also president of the Transvaal regional ATASA affiliate. Professor Maree, a NAPTOSA vice-president, said that desegregation of schools was a political issue, "and the members of this organisation are not politicians, but educators. If they want to be politicians they can become candidates in political organisations and not here."⁶⁹

One common simplification of this highly complex debate about "professionalism" throughout the unity process was the use of the words "professional" and "unionist" as synonymous with those who refused to strike and those who were willing to do so in specific circumstances. Bot opens a section on "Professionalism versus unionism" with the sentence: "Perhaps the issue on which teachers are most deeply divided is that of strategies."⁷⁰ But the dichotomy between these contending ideologies runs much deeper than behaviour. Behaviour is, rather, an expression of ideology. The ideologies imply certain behaviours and attitudes, and as the *ideologies* shift, so will the behaviours. Strategy does not dictate to ideology. Members of established associations strategically posed as "workers", but were precluded from behaving as such by an ideology of "professionalism".

⁶⁷ Kenny Ernest, "Chairman's Address," Tenth AGM of the Cape Regional Council of TASA, 5 May 1990, 1.

⁶⁸ "Seize the time," *WECTU newsletter* 2.3 (n.d. [1990]): 1.

⁶⁹ Quoted in the *New Nation*, 30 August-5 September 1991.

⁷⁰ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 14.

There are two central elements to an understanding of the dichotomy between "professionalism" and "unionism" which have been largely absent in the South African debate. The first concerns class. Historically, "professionalism" has been used by the state to entrench race and class divisions. The state has adopted a strategy of trying to co-opt teachers away from the working class, and thus bolster the middle-class values so important for a capitalist state. Also, teachers need to be co-opted away from a restive working class during times of revolt. "Professionalism" implies certain middle-class values, such as status, affluence and faith in existing, government negotiation channels. It is telling that in her SAIRR report on teacher unity, Bot's section on "Professionalism versus unionism" is devoid of any mention of class or the state's intentions.⁷¹ She reflects the existing dearth of class-analysis in popular, contemporary understanding of "professionalism", and thus fails to grasp the importance of entrenched class-location for a full understanding of "professionalism".

The second important aspect of this dichotomy concerns the contradictory nature of schooling as presented by Carnoy and Levin. According to these writers, schooling is contradictory in that it intends to reproduce existing social and labour relations, and yet it creates space for varied forms of resistance to such relations.⁷² The same can be said of the terrain of teachers. Teachers are expected to conform to government-imposed reproductive practices -- a "professional" standpoint -- and yet the very nature of teachers' space between conflicting constituencies and within practical realities (such as poor remuneration and poor working conditions) allows for resistance to such reproduction and resistance to static notions of "professional" behaviour.

Naturally, neither self-styled professional associations nor teachers' unions admit to such complexity, nor overtly recognize the confusion. At the first round of post-Harare teacher unity talks DETU wanted the unified structure to "be part of the labour movement"; WECTU stated "it must be a trade union and affiliate to COSATU"; the three older established groups -- ATASA, UTASA and TASA -- were not prepared to immediately accept the Harare Accord on Teacher Unity.⁷³ How, then, could unity be achieved? Socioeconomic and political pressures could simply be exerted on established organisations to force rhetorical posturing towards more broadly acceptable "professional worker" positions. The resulting ambiguity could serve as a gloss for more deeply-rooted commitment to "professionalism", and identities based on race and class. A DETU executive member believed in 1990 that such commitment comprised the substance behind the gloss. He said that, "... the CTPA is interested in privilege." He continued: "We could be united tomorrow, but they [the established organisations] are still worried about status."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 14-17.

⁷² Carnoy and Levin, *passim*.

⁷³ "Minutes of the Planning Meeting for Teacher Unity Held on the 27th August 1988."

⁷⁴ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990. Informants who requested anonymity are referred to by a letter of the alphabet. A complete list of informants appears in the bibliography.

Interest Groups and Political Tensions

A variety of "interest groups", impinging on the teachers' realm, create and enhance contradictions because of their desire to influence teacher politics, the definitions of "professionalism" and schools. They create tensions because they are oppositional.

Different teacher organisations are susceptible to different pressures. In other words, the pressures exerted by different interest groups do not uniformly affect teachers, nor do they uniformly affect organisations. This lack of uniformity in fact creates space for different organisations to evolve. But the pressures exerted by particular groups at specific historical moments can move organisations closer together, however superficially, as will be seen in the chapters below. The groups thus play an essential role in fostering both unity and disunity. The definition and specific motivations, as well as the actions, of these various groups will add to the context -- as did the contradictions of race, class and "professionalism" -- essential for an analysis of teacher disunity in the Western Cape.

The means to the end

Before examining the interest groups, and their influence over teachers, it will be useful to explore similarities in their style of operation which directly relate to the concept of "professionalism" discussed above.

One mechanism used by various interest groups to influence teacher politics involves defining the *credibility* or reputation of teacher organisations. Such definitions apply substantial pressure to teachers if enough support can be mustered by the interest group doing the defining. Much of the discourse about credibility is founded on attempts to redefine the role of teachers, to impose new visions, to re-create behavioural responsibilities, and to redefine and mythologise about teachers so-called traditional roles. Attempts to define what teachers ought to be is an indirect way of suggesting acceptable forms of behavior.

One example concerns a notion of historical legitimacy. "Part of the struggle for teacher unity," writes educationist Ian Moll, "is to once again put teachers back in their rightful place as one of the pillars of the education struggle."⁷⁵ The assumptions are that teachers have a prescribed "place", that they have been in that place before, and that they are historically obliged to engage in "the struggle" as defined by this writer. Every player with a vested interest in education engages in such prescriptions, linking teachers' credibility to their willingness to adopt particular attitudes.

"Professionalism" is also linked to credibility. Departments have rarely shied away from terming unwanted teachers "unprofessional", thus implying that there is something wrong with their behaviour, or that they are morally deficient. Attempts to define teachers'

⁷⁵ Ian Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," *South African Labour Bulletin* 14.1 (April 1989): 73.

class location, a central aspect of "professionalism", is an indirect means of influencing teachers, and is also rooted in attempts to suggest acceptable forms of behavior. The terminology of class lays out guidelines for teachers' proper deportment, be it "professional" or "working class". The ideologically-loaded concept of "professionalism" is used to dictate behaviour and "political" attitude, and it is manipulated by the interest groups.

Students engage in prescription when they term teachers "collaborators" and dictate the qualities of a "progressive" educator. At a time, during the eighties, when students' assumed an ascendent position of authority within many schools, their voice carried both a moral and an intimidating weight. Many educators agreed with the rectitude of student grievances, and were loathe to earn the public censure of students. Such censure could even, at times, assume violent proportions at an historical moment when "collaborators" were physically punished. Students thus claimed a right to dictate teachers' style of teaching, and, importantly, enhanced the public credibility of teacher organisations seen to be engaging in "the struggle" as allies of the students.

Other direct mechanisms of control were used by interest groups to influence teacher politics. These will be outlined in the sections below.

Teachers themselves

Teachers are the central players in the realm of teacher politics. They are both active and reactive agents in determining the shape of their political sphere. The heterogeneous nature of people grouped together according to a chosen job, notwithstanding the myriad motivations of individuals,⁷⁶ make the network of political cross-currents within the teachers' realm highly complex.

A large body of teachers greatly influences teacher politics through inaction. Some of these are teachers who sit quietly in the staff room awaiting the end of a boycott, who do not engage in organisational activities, who put pressure on their colleagues to keep quiet. These teachers are reactionary: they fully support the status quo. There are, of course, reasons for their passivity. If, as Shirley Walters has suggested, "Teaching has provided the most common channel for upward social mobility amongst the working classes,"⁷⁷ then many would be loath to abandon their means of escape from a lower social and economic status. Also, many would take no action which might jeopardize their job security. This was especially true during 1985, as *The Weekly Mail* pointed out: "With the recession biting deeper, there are not many alternative jobs for teachers."⁷⁸ State cooption provides incentives for "establishment" standpoints.⁷⁹ Teaching posts, for example, often include a variety of benefits, such as housing subsidies. Teachers with low qualifications make up

⁷⁶ Shirley Walters lists various motivations for becoming a teacher, gathered from a literature survey, including prestige, parental influence, and employment opportunity. Walters, 20.

⁷⁷ Walters, 19.

⁷⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 4-10 October 1985: 11.

⁷⁹ Walters, 19.

the majority of black teachers: at the end of 1985, 42,000 of the DET's 45,000 black teachers had less than a matric plus a two-year diploma⁸⁰; in that year, more than sixty percent of black teachers had a standard 8 certificate with a two-year diploma.⁸¹ The insecurity which comes from restricted access to other jobs, and jobs which are not necessarily as well-paying, is enough to dampen overt political involvement. So a large number of teachers passively influence their colleagues through inactivity.

Other teachers remain overtly politically passive because they disagree with prevailing strategies. Many teachers, for example those within the TLSA, decry school boycotts on moral and educational grounds. These teachers, whether or not they are members of organisations, influence teacher politics by eschewing involvement in the popular resistance movement.

There are many, on the other hand, who actively seek to influence teachers' behaviour, public identity, relations with the state and the community, and "professional" location. These, then, are the organised teachers, who group together around both conservative and progressive ideologies.

Teachers can influence their politics through the vehicle of organisations. Organisations need members, so organisations recruit teachers, set up the required structures to maintain members, and try to ensure that they remain relevant and attractive to their constituency. Organisations seek influence over larger and larger numbers of teachers because the teachers' bodies are of some practical benefit, for example, in terms of increasing pressure for better working conditions. The greater the numbers, the greater the pressure. Teachers also organise themselves to assert an identity. There can be organised responses to antagonism directed towards the teaching profession, as with the Teachers Action Committee (TAC) formed in response to the 1980 schools crisis in the Western Cape. If external groups try to undermine the credibility of teachers, organised teachers can offer a riposte.

While teachers within an organisation group together to affect both teachers within their body and potential recruits, teaching organisations also work to influence each other. Radical groups have tried to influence more conservative groups, attempting to shift the dominant thinking away from "professionalism" towards "liberation". Splinter groups and factions have agitated from within organisations, and have eventually broken away to agitate from without, as was the case with DETU.

When two organisations want to impress their agenda upon the same group of teachers in, for example, schools falling under the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) in the House of Representatives (HoR),⁸² criticism levelled at each other is common. This

⁸⁰ Monica Bot and Lawrence Schlemmer, "The Classroom Crisis: Black Demands and White Responses," *An Indicator SA Issue Focus* July 1986: 7-8.

⁸¹ H.H. Dlamlenze, "Teachers' Associations and Crises in Schools," in ed. Ashley, 76.

⁸² The HoR is the Coloured House of Parliament. The House of Delegates (HoD) is the Indian House. Both the HoR and the HoD have Departments of Education and Culture (DEC). The DEC under discussion at any given point in the text will be defined by the House to which it belongs.

criticism serves to influence the rival body by undermining credibility and support. When a new "progressive" teachers' organisation, comprising about 200 members, formed in the Eastern Cape intending to operate "in opposition to" the CTPA,⁸³ Franklin Sonn said: "A so-called new teachers' organisation in the Eastern Cape, if it still exists, is not a breakaway body from the CTPA."⁸⁴ A 1987 letter to *South* by "Concerned members of the Western Cape Teachers Union" focussed entirely on the CTPA, and was caustically titled "Naked Opportunism."⁸⁵ Such critical discourse works to influence reputation, to affect membership and to control an ideological terrain.

Perhaps most importantly for teacher unity, teachers who look towards controlling an organisationally unified profession do so to *resist* external control. As the president of the predominantly-Coloured Teachers' Educational and Professional Association (TEPA) said in 1965, "We must get together to talk about our problems to decide on a course of action. Unless we do so, we are at the mercy of others who will decide our destiny for us."⁸⁶ Teachers can assert control over themselves to resist domination.

This does not imply that teachers, or organised teachers, act in isolation. Alliances are struck between organisations, and with other interest groups, such as state agencies or liberation organisations, to enhance the power of a particular teacher group.

The state

Gerald Grace writes that the state, in the context of British education, can be perceived as too conspiratorial or as too abstract. Rather than as a single, unified entity, he argues, the state in education must be seen "as a set of agencies, departments, tiers and levels, each with their own rules and resources and often with varying purposes'...."⁸⁷ Many state departments and agencies have played prominent roles in South African education. From the numerous education departments, to the "own affairs" chambers of Parliament, to the state security apparatuses, the South African state has utilized a variety of methods to influence teachers.

Two distinct strategies cut through this spectrum of departments and agencies. The state has attempted to both repress and coopt teachers.

Firstly, as it attempts to maintain firm control over teachers, the state has utilized a battery of repressive mechanisms from threatening job security and service conditions to intimidation. In the 1950s, documents sent to classrooms for teachers' signatures warned black teachers in Cape Town not to participate in meetings or associations. "Teachers were

⁸³ *Sunday Times*, 19 May 1985.

⁸⁴ *Cape Times*, 18 June 1985.

⁸⁵ *South*, 19-26 November 1987.

⁸⁶ Quoted in *Educatio* 4th Quarter (1977): 10.

⁸⁷ Grace, 196.

afraid," said one teacher from that time.⁸⁸ In 1955, nine members of the CATA executive were dismissed.⁸⁹ Such repressive actions have continued into the 1980s.

Education departments clearly defined teachers' work and acceptable teacher behaviour. The state has implemented draconian codes of conduct, defining "misconduct" as public criticism of government departments, amongst other things. "Perhaps the most blatantly sinister provisions of the Coloured Persons' Education Act [of 1963]," states Molteno, "were those for the control of teachers."⁹⁰ Education departments also approve syllabi, and promote particular methodologies. Teachers who step outside of the acceptable pedagogical, political or behavioural boundaries are subject to a variety of repressive disciplinary measures meted out by the departments. Teachers can be dismissed, suspended or transferred. Salary cheques can be withheld. Further, housing subsidies have been threatened. Education departments have been very severe in their dealings with "agitators" and "leftist" school teachers. In September 1988 the DET sent a circular to its principals requesting the names of "radical" teachers,⁹¹ a clear form of harassment. Further, the state has banned and harassed teacher organisations in its attempts to influence teacher politics.

Another mechanism used by the state to influence teacher politics has been official, departmental recognition of teacher bodies. Recognised organisations, apart from being allowed access to departments for discussion and negotiation, are given important stop-order facilities. The state has denied stop-order facilities to officially unrecognised organisations, inhibiting them from gaining access to members and funds while bolstering the monies and membership of officially-sanctioned teacher groups. Soon after UTASA withdrew from DEC (HoR) structures in 1986 in protest against *apartheid* education, the Labour-Party-controlled Ministers' Council in the HoR threatened to cut off its stop-order facilities. The threatened loss of an annual R650,000, along with the implications about government control, warranted an emergency meeting of the heads of UTASA, ATASA, TASA and the white Federal Council of Teachers' Organisations. "We are not acting against teachers," claimed Allan Hendrickse, the Labour Party leader, "but against UTASA as far as membership fees are concerned. If teachers take a political decision they must be prepared for the consequences."⁹² SADTU executive members complained in 1991 that the state's failure to recognise the new body was inhibiting its organising and fund-raising.

Teachers also experience more violent state repression wrought by state security forces. Organisations can be banned, and prohibited from undertaking activities. Teachers during moments of crisis, can be subject to arrest and detention. Schools have been sites of struggle, and have often become violent battlefields where stones and batons and rubber bullets have been common weapons. Teachers feel intimidated by overt violence, and more covert threats. For example, Gareth Rossiter, a teacher activist, wrote of one white school

⁸⁸ Cameron, 159.

⁸⁹ Cameron, 199-200.

⁹⁰ Molteno, 12.

⁹¹ *Argus*, 10 September 1988 and 15 September 1988.

⁹² *Argus*, 27 August 1986 and 3 September 1986.

in Cape Town: "A student revealed to a teacher that he had been approached by a member of the security police who offered him money to report on the actions of teachers and students and on the content of lessons."⁹³

Allies won with a carrot are better than those got with a stick, however, and thus the state channelled energy into the second aspect of its dual strategy: cooption. The cooption of teachers centred on improving their material conditions and on perpetuating what Ozga and Lawn have described as "the myth of partnership and autonomy", which "can be traced to the needs of a State and its tactics in controlling teachers."⁹⁴ During the 1980s, the state altered teachers' salaries: it raised them; it promoted wage equality between different "population groups"; it eliminated disparity based on gender. The state also began offering promotions to black educators, and implemented various teacher upgrading schemes. It can be argued that teachers made certain "professional" gains through the state's implementation of such salary increases and programmes, and that the state, in fact, succumbed to the pressure of an increasingly powerful teaching force to improve teachers' conditions of service. This does not, however, negate the state's intention to coopt teachers into a more acquiescent position through the mechanism of service conditions.

State cooption was challenged by the "threat" of a national, non-racial, democratic teachers organisation, writes educationist Ken Hartshorne. The state feared the power of a unified teaching corps, which would undermine the state's "own affairs" reform measures. Therefore, using several of the above-mentioned repressive tools, the government maintained a policy of keeping teachers divided.⁹⁵ "Divide and rule" was state policy in education, as in other social and political spheres.

Students

Student-teacher relations are complex. Teachers participate in an education system which promotes authoritarian structures and top-down imposition of commands, ideas and even knowledge. Students, in the scheme of this structure and its implied relationships, remain on the receiving end of instructions and "facts". Resentment often lies behind aspects of their usual silence; such resentment usually remains part of James Scott's "hidden transcript". At times of relative calm, student dissatisfaction with schools and teachers might articulate itself as "boredom", "laziness" or random acts of anonymous vandalism, such as graffiti. This is what American educationist Ira Shor refers to as a "... performance strike by students who refuse to study under current social conditions."⁹⁶ The discourse alters completely when revolt occurs. "Especially after the banning of COSAS [in 1985],"

⁹³ Rossiter, n.p.

⁹⁴ Ozga and Lawn, 91.

⁹⁵ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 318.

⁹⁶ Shor and Freire, 5.

writes Johan Muller, "the frustrations of the students turned inwards towards student-student and student-teacher conflicts."⁹⁷

This is not to imply that real grievances against teachers do not exist. An *Indicator South Africa* survey, published in 1983, of black Standard 10 students in Johannesburg townships states: "The complaints of the students ... tended to focus around teachers. Not only did students feel teachers most hampered their progress at school..., but they were also seen as the most likely cause of boycotts...." The complexity of such anti-teacher feelings showed itself in various specific complaints of these matriculants: lack of good teachers, lack of teacher effort, sexual harassment, racism, drinking, corporal punishment, bad teaching methods and authoritarianism.⁹⁸

At a fundamental level, students have perceived teachers as complicitous in an education that students began overtly rejecting in 1976. This does not mean that students universally rejected their teachers; there was, in fact, some cooperation between teachers and students after the revolt. Many students, however, began decrying teachers as "stooges" and collaborators. Teachers implemented the education; teachers symbolized the system. Students therefore sought to counter-act teachers' repressive or authoritarian behaviour, to undermine teachers' hegemony within schools. "Student boycotts and the rising militancy of the students...", writes Kumi Naidoo, a student activist, "have served as a control on over-compliant teachers. In fact school boycotts transform the nature of teacher/student relations, and the power equation in the school is temporarily reversed."⁹⁹

Students, like the state, use a variety of methods to influence teachers. Students pressure teachers, generally, by their militant action at schools. As students disrupted schools in the 1980s by boycotting classes, running alternative education programmes, and battling with police, so the lives of teachers were disrupted.

After 1976, students also specifically pressurized teachers to engage in educational and political change. Firstly, students heavily bruised teachers' public prestige. Teachers were stripped of much credibility as students behaved disrespectfully, decreasing teacher authority in schools. Secondly, some students employed physical intimidation to influence teachers. Some teachers have been physically threatened by students and youth. The DET occasionally withdrew teachers from school premises because of threats by students.¹⁰⁰ In 1981, a principal wrote of a "Crisis of Authority" in schools, describing what he called a lack of discipline, arrogance and rudeness.¹⁰¹ In 1986, an article entitled "The teachers in fear of their pupils" appeared in *The Weekly Mail*. It described scenes from black schools where teachers were threatened not to fail students, and forced to sing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*

⁹⁷ Johan Muller, "People's Education for People's Power and the National Education Crisis Committee: The Choreography of Education Struggle," in *People's Education*, 107.

⁹⁸ Monica Bosschieter and Marianne Cullinan, "Black Matric Student Perceptions," *Indicator South Africa* 1.3 (1983): Urban Monitor, 10-12.

⁹⁹ Kumi Naidoo, "The Politics of Student Resistance in the 1980s," in ed. Nkomo, 129.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, *Cape Times*, 20 January 1989.

¹⁰¹ *Educatio* Conference Edition (1981): 8-9.

while being "paraded" in front of students. More dramatically, "The houses of several teachers have been the targets of arsonists and stone-throwers in the past year."¹⁰²

Certainly much pressure brought to bear on teachers was intended to humiliate and to punish. Colin Bundy writes of "an essential dualism to youth politics". "Youth-student politics in a time of crisis," he writes, "is a hybrid of precocity and immaturity."¹⁰³ In agreement with Bundy, Hartshorne wrote in 1986: "Pupils have experienced the heady feeling of power over their teachers and, as with all power that is not accountable, this has sometimes led to youthful arrogance in speech and action."¹⁰⁴

On a different level, students have also sought to win supporters for their demands, and have thus worked to participate in decision-making mechanisms at schools -- such as Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) -- thereby creating more democratic institutions for which they need the compliance of teachers. As the nature of protest around schools shifted in the mid-eighties to a stage where education was being fundamentally questioned and challenged, rather than simply rejected, students have needed alliances with teachers, who are essential allies for counter-acting inferior educational practices.

While many students may have been without specific political direction as they experienced their newly-won, heady power, many other students and student organisations understood that their educational and political agendas required the cooperation of teachers.

Liberation movements

Liberation organisations have also wanted to influence teachers. The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), the National Education Coordination Committee (NECC),¹⁰⁵ the Unity Movement (through the TLSA), and external liberation organisations such as the ANC and others have worked to gain the support of teachers. On 10 April 1990, Dullah Omar, prominent MDM lawyer, spoke at a "Mass Meeting" called in the name of the Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum. "I just got a call from the ANC," he explained. "The ANC ... is vitally interested in the process of unity that has begun and that must be developed.... The view of the ANC is that teacher unity is absolutely essential and nothing must stand in its way."¹⁰⁶

The ANC and other liberation organisations wanted to win support among teachers, and to use teachers to spread their message within schools. Similar to the state, they have wanted to spread their ideologies, particularly during the eighties when schools were an essential part of "the struggle". A writer in *Sash* further suggested that, by aiding the formation of a single teachers' body, "... the 'mass democratic movement' would be

¹⁰² *The Weekly Mail*, 27 March - 3 April 1986: 13.

¹⁰³ Bundy, "Action, comrades, action!" 217.

¹⁰⁴ Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 119.

¹⁰⁵ Though firmly aligned with the Charterist MDM ideology, the NECC can also be seen as an education body with an educational agenda.

¹⁰⁶ Personal notes, Teacher Unity Forum Mass Meeting, Hanover Park, 10 April 1990.

strengthened by improving its access, through teachers, to rural communities which are not yet organised."¹⁰⁷

Some liberation organisations also wanted to liberate the thinking of children "indoctrinated" by state education policy, to contradict and halt the state's educational intentions. People's Education has evolved from the work of various groups and individuals aligned with sections of the liberation movement. Those education organisations, in particular, who want to see People's Education become a reality have needed the support of teachers.

The trade union movement

The trade union movement in South Africa fell squarely within the liberation movement during the 1980s. It is, however, important to distinguish the trade union movement from the broader liberation movement as it impacted teachers. Trade unions, and in particular COSATU, had a very specific agenda for teachers and schools, and thus very specific reasons for seeking to influence educators. The trade unions under discussion here were broadly aligned to the MDM, and its Charterist politics. While a substantial number of other unions, such as those affiliated to the predominantly-Africanist National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), influenced the direction of trade union politics, they did not directly influence teacher politics, and would not have been interested in teacher unity involving white organisations.

Trade union activists want power over schools to further working class interests. Workers seek control over schools to present a particular ideology, and to counteract a capitalist hegemony within schools. As Alex Erwin, a COSATU national education secretary, wrote in 1986: "The power of the working class will be much greater if education in the schools deals with the history of the liberation movement and the struggles of the working class."¹⁰⁸

According to another COSATU spokesperson, trade unionists also sought to utilize teachers as intellectuals within the movement. "For the working class movement and trade union movement," said Erntzen in 1986, "it is essential that they have within their ranks persons, who can, from within, assist in the dissemination of ideas and the development of working class ideology and outlook."¹⁰⁹ Further, and more fundamentally, workers seek social transformation, and therefore want working class allies with a similar agenda. Erntzen stated: "I look forward to the day when we, workers and teachers sit together inside COSATU working towards a common solution for our social problems."¹¹⁰

For these reasons, trade union activists in South Africa have sought influence over teachers. COSATU, in particular, played a pivotal role in facilitating the teacher unity

¹⁰⁷ Dewar, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Alex Erwin, "Education and the working classes: COSATU's role," in eds. Millar, et al, 297.

¹⁰⁹ Erntzen, 307.

¹¹⁰ Erntzen, 310.

initiative which led to the formation of SADTU. While clearly located within its "one industry, one union" agenda, teachers represented a significant power bloc, and COSATU wanted a national teachers' trade union. For these ends it sacrificed a great deal of time and energy, and money, in the last two years of the eighties.

Communities

The "community" is a broad category for a pressure group, comprising elements of the students, liberation organisations, the trade union movement, and teachers themselves. It is also a highly problematic term, for a "community", while often assumed, is difficult to define. "The concept of community," writes educationist Wally Morrow, "has had a disturbed and troubled theoretical history over the past two and a half centuries."¹¹¹

The difficulty of defining "community" arises because of assumed, common-sense ideas about what a community is. In South Africa, the term has been used by the state, and accepted by some others, as synonymous with racially-defined "population groups". Thornton and Ramphela write that, "'Community' is a political term -- perhaps *the* political term." The definition of "community" largely depends on who is doing the defining. These two writers, in their attempt to define and understand the term, state that it denotes a group of people who have something in common.

The current popular conception of communities as being "... residential entities such as townships," claim Thornton and Ramphela, arose from the Black Consciousness (BC) movement of the 1970s. However, such a definition is subject to change. Communities, they argue, "... are the result of complex political processes and exist *in* history, not above it." Communities, they conclude, are created by people's belief in them and thus remain largely symbolic.¹¹²

For teachers, then, a "community" can apply pressure in so far as teachers *perceive* the people who live with and around them to be applying pressure. Established organisations, such as the CTPA, had a strong sense of ethnically or linguistically-defined communities. This dissertation, however, will adopt the conception of community popular within the MDM: it can be seen as comprising those who reside within the area of a teachers' school, those who send their children to that school, those who live alongside teachers.

It is a powerful group. In 1989 Morrow explained its powerful authority over teachers:

The word 'community' has a rich life in the language of the criticism or legitimisation of particular decisions, actions, practices, policies and strategies. It is locked into the practical language of justification -- the language of praise and blame, approval and accusation -- and the manner

¹¹¹ Wally Morrow, "Education and Community in South Africa," in ed. M.D. Masekela, *The Proceedings of the Kenton Conference 1989*, Kenton at Makgobaskloof, 17-30 October 1989, 82.

¹¹² Robert Thornton and Mamphela Ramphela, "The quest for Community," in eds. Boonzaier and Sharp, 29-30, 35, and 38-39.

of its use has important consequences for all of us, particularly, we may add, for those of us to whom fate has assigned the public role of professional teachers at this time.¹¹³

This authority carries great weight at times of heightened repression, for specific notions of "community" are possible within South Africa because of "repression by the apartheid state".¹¹⁴ "Community" pressures took several different forms in the Western Cape, since workers, students, parents, and other activists made up the people of any given community. "Community" pressures became particularly strong with the growth of alliance politics.

Alliance politics largely emanated from the trade union movement. As the union movement developed, it wielded greater impact over other organisations, particularly as it emphasised economic issues and their relation to politics, and working class issues, such as the necessity for working class leadership of "the struggle".¹¹⁵ In 1986 this led Hyslop to write: "... the current mass struggles have renewed working class pressure on teachers for an alliance."¹¹⁶ And Eric Molobi, NECC national coordinator, explained how the NECC, trade unions and teachers organisations "... are working together to formulate curricula for a new South Africa."¹¹⁷

Community pressures also took the form of various political tendencies in the Western Cape. Charterist tactics and ideology grew in the Western Cape during this period, and affected many of the emergent community groups. This ANC-oriented political culture was new to the Western Cape, a former stronghold of PAC, Unity Movement and Black Consciousness ideologies,¹¹⁸ ideologies which many teachers held and which were now being cast aside by large sections of Western Cape communities.

The World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP)

International bodies, too, have sought to direct teachers actions in South Africa. The World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) in particular has wanted a unified South African organisation as a powerful constituent member. It has a history of involvement in South African teachers' organisations. Prior to SADTU, only ATASA was officially recognised by WCOTP, though it met with other groups. Recognition by the world body would be a powerful feather in the cap of any organisation, especially when negotiating with the government. But WCOTP withheld this feather from ATASA's ethnically-defined counter-parts during the seventies and eighties. UTASA was

¹¹³ Morrow, 83.

¹¹⁴ Levin, 120.

¹¹⁵ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 28.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 95-96.

¹¹⁷ Eric Molobi, "South Africa: Education Under Apartheid," Keynote Address, NECC, Conference on US initiatives for the Education and Training of South Africans and Namibians, Michigan State University, 23 November 1986, in *People's Education*, 76.

¹¹⁸ Bundy, "Action, comrades, action!," 213; Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 16; Duncan Innes, "An Overview of the 1980s" in ed. Abrahams, 2.

particularly keen on recognition, and held a number of meetings with WCOTP during the late 1970s and through the 1980s.¹¹⁹

WCOTP may have been withholding recognition as an impetus for unity during these decades. In 1977, the President of WCOTP addressed a joint gathering of the CTPA, ATASA, and two Cape-based white teacher professional associations -- the South African Teachers' Association (SATA) and the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (SAOU). He spoke of the division amongst teachers the world over as a "disease". At that point, SAFTA was intending to apply for recognition by WCOTP.¹²⁰ Later, in 1980, when JOCTASA was formed it immediately decided to send a joint delegation to a WCOTP meeting in Brazilia.¹²¹ In 1987, at a conference in Switzerland attended by UTASA and ATASA, WCOTP decided to hire a curriculum developer in Johannesburg to work on a nationally representative curriculum.¹²² WCOTP was deeply involved in both the 1988 Harare gathering, and in the unity initiative which followed. As Hartshorne wrote about 1988: "For some time WCOTP had been very concerned that teacher unity was not being realized, as this not only weakened the power of the teaching profession in South Africa, but also prevented the SA profession from being fully represented in the deliberations of the world body."¹²³ WCOTP thus felt a responsibility to channel both time and money into the 1988 Harare conference, and the negotiations which followed.

Conclusion

Each of the interest groups described above has had a role to play in shaping teachers' behaviour and the process of teacher unity in South Africa. The state has actively attempted to keep teachers disunited for fear of the power of a unified teaching corps espousing a liberatory agenda. This was true at a time when the unity process was being facilitated by COSATU and fell squarely within the anti-government MDM. Conservative teacher groups have also distanced themselves from a unity process that would have required the dissolution of their familiar, ethnically-defined organisations. Other, more radical teacher bodies have actively struggled for a unified teaching corps to increase their influence over education in South Africa.

The interest groups taken as a whole help to perpetuate disunity because of the contradictions they create within the realm of teachers. Placed within the context of contradictions inherent in teachers' race, class and "professional" locations, teacher unity becomes an even more elusive goal.

Teachers respond to pressures as they work within their contradictory terrain. But teachers also actively take advantage of opportunity. While buffeted about by winds of change and the varying strengths of groups seeking to influence them, teachers still actively

¹¹⁹ *Educatio*.

¹²⁰ *Educatio* 1st Quarter (1977): 10.

¹²¹ *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1980): 8.

¹²² *Argus*, 6 April 1987.

¹²³ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 315.

engage in their own struggles for their own reasons. While remaining pawns in some senses, teachers must be perceived as active players in the processes of both educating children, and constructing and unifying teacher organisations.

CHAPTER TWO

NEW GROUND: THE WORLD OF TEACHERS 1976-1979

Two striking aspects of the teacher unity attempts begun in Harare in April 1988 were the number of teachers' organisations involved -- seven in the Western Cape alone -- and the membership figures of these organisations. The so-called "progressive" organisations throughout the process commanded a more powerful influence than that of the much larger established organisations. But the combined total membership of all progressive groups involved was around 5000, a fraction of the established organisations' more than 100 000 members.

Such a powerful voice could be accorded to relatively small numbers of teachers only within the context of popular resistance which favoured the progressive groups. This favoured position could only be fully utilized once two developments had occurred: the progressive organisations had to be born, and the traditional organisations had to be persuaded to negotiate on new ground. Both of these developments sprang directly from the fertile soil of the post-1976 social and educational terrain. Specifically, the period 1976-1979 saw the established organisations come under fire and begin questioning their place and role in the now-turbulent education sphere.

1976 and the several years following were thus extremely unsettling for teachers and their organisations. As Hartshorne has written: "Teachers and teacher organisations were ill-prepared for the events of the years from 1976-80."¹ Teachers, living with the various tensions described in Chapter One, had become accustomed to a state-dominated balance of power in schooling. Hyslop described the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s as "a decade and a half of careerist and cautious teacher activity". He claimed that during this time, "Teachers, seeing no chance of a different political order, opted for seeking the best possible deal from the authorities."² The state had assumed the only significant mantle of authority; the existing teachers' organisations -- apart from the secretive TLSA -- were recognized, professional bodies which did not dabble in "politics".

The revolt of 1976 brought a new era into schools. A new assertion of student authority upset the existing balance of power. School-based contradictions were heightened as students pitted themselves against the state in its various guises: the security forces, and education structures. Schools and teachers became symbols of "the enemy" in some students' eyes as black youth began to question school and teacher complicity in an oppressive *apartheid* system. } ✓

¹ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 303.

² Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," in ed. Nkomo, 94. This single reference refers to the revised, published version of the ASSA conference paper of the same title cited elsewhere in the text.

The state responded repressively to this new student militancy. Teachers and their organisations found themselves the targets of intense student pressure for change, as well as continued state pressure for a maintenance of the status quo. The intent and efficacy of *apartheid* schooling came into question, however crudely, in these early years, and teachers had no answers. These were years of crisis management for teachers as their former place within schools -- and control over compliant students -- was increasingly contested. Not only did many black students refuse to participate in the proffered schooling, but broader forces of liberation -- such as the trade union movement -- rejected the historical race and class divisions within the context of *apartheid* education. Most teachers continued to cling to established ideas of "professionalism". These ideas were familiar, and it was not yet clear that the challenge to schooling, spawned by students, would assert itself as a dominant aspect of liberation politics.

The end of the seventies was thus a tumultuous time for teachers and teacher organisations. This was the beginning of a period of intense questioning for teachers, the beginning of a *process* of change within teacher politics. In 1976, teachers began to take the new political opportunity to redefine their race, class and "professional" locations, which led to enhanced prospects for teacher unity at the end of the following decade.

The 1976 Revolt in the Western Cape

The impetus for the well-documented³ 1976 student uprising sprang from black schools in the Witwatersrand. The uprising did, however, spark off protracted student action in Cape Town, since the underlying causes were largely national.

The national factors which led to a restive climate of frustration, anger, despair and a desire for self-empowerment, and which provided fertile ground for the revolt, were varied. Firstly, increased worker militancy, begun in Durban in 1973, affected black communities. "The strikes of 1973 to 1976," writes Baruch Hirson, "helped create the atmosphere of revolt and showed that the Blacks were not powerless. It was by the multitude of strikes, small and large, that the example of resistance was taken into the townships."⁴ Such industrial action, engendered by an expanding independent trade union movement, linked worker and community struggles.⁵ Schools were directly affected by this worker militancy because of the large number of first-generation secondary students with working class parents.⁶

This expansion of first-generation students resulted from expanding numbers of high school students, which grew from 122,489 to 318,568 between 1970 and 1975, and gave

³ See, for example, Hirson; and Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind Before the Storm: The origins and development of the uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976* (London: International Defence & Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980).

⁴ Hirson, 156.

⁵ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 37.

⁶ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 4.

rise to other factors behind the revolutionary climate. Hyslop describes how this growth created a "sociological generation" in schools, a group with "its own generational consciousness." Surrounded by a new urban youth culture, these students and youth were freer than their predecessors to break from the generations which preceded them.⁷ Bundy concurs, stating: "Studies of the Soweto risings, notably, show how a self-aware age-group sought generational unity, distanced themselves from their parents, and spoke for 'we, the youth of South Africa.'"⁸ Students were less constrained by filial obligations; frustration and anger replaced obedience.

Part of this new generation's uniqueness came from the political awareness afforded by Black Consciousness (BC) and radical church groups.⁹ Though BC organisations remained small, their impact was widespread and marked by militancy.¹⁰

The expanding number of students put increasing pressure on a social and economic system which could not sustain such pressure. Economically, as Duncan Innes has written, "The phenomenal economic boom of the sixties gave way to a more subdued pattern of cyclical swings during the seventies in which each downswing was worse than the preceding one."¹¹ There were not enough jobs for the increasing numbers of school-leavers, and the growth of educational resources did not match student growth. Therefore, more high school students dropped out.¹² The situation was dire in Cape Town, where African high schools could not accommodate seventy-five per cent of the children who completed their primary education.¹³ Township youths not attending schools had nothing invested in education, and had much to resent.

The 1976 revolt, suggests Hyslop, also stemmed from international events, and a growing "sense that the [South African] regime was isolated and could be challenged." He points to the end of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique and Angola, the SADF's failure to successfully intervene in Angola, and the heightened military struggles in both Namibia and Zimbabwe.¹⁴

In black South African schools, the state helped to create a situation ripe for revolt by moving from a thirteen to a twelve-year schooling structure at the beginning of 1976. There was, according to Hartshorne, a "resultant bulge in secondary school numbers":

Pupils found themselves in large classes, often in temporary accommodation at a distance from the main school building, under teachers who were dealing with secondary school work for the first time....¹⁵

⁷ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 3.

⁸ Bundy, "Action, comrades, action!," 207.

⁹ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 37.

¹⁰ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 3. For a thorough discussion of BC and its impact see Hirson, especially chapters 4, 6, 15 and 16.

¹¹ Innes, 2.

¹² Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 3.

¹³ Hirson, 220.

¹⁴ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 4.

¹⁵ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 73-76.

This unwieldy situation was coupled with a second policy shift: the move to a dual-medium of instruction.

Starting in 1976, there was to be half English and half Afrikaans teaching in Standard 5, and in Standard 6, arithmetic, mathematics, history and geography were to be taught in Afrikaans.¹⁶ The initial outrage and grumbling from many quarters gave way to the first act of "overt violence" on 27 May 1976 when a teacher of Afrikaans was stabbed with a screwdriver at Pimville Higher Primary School.¹⁷ As the protest spread, schools themselves were often the targets of attacks. Hirson counted approximately fifty schools which were damaged or destroyed by fire in the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal during the ten days following 27 July.¹⁸ Such incidents, both during and following the explosion on 16 June, indicate clearly that students and youth were reacting, in part, against authority, class, and privilege. As Hirson writes, "There were also reports that the homes of 'collaborators' and some of the more prosperous were set alight."¹⁹ Hartshorne argues, in fact, that the context of schooling, more than the two new education policies, "... was to prove the decisive factor in its disintegration". He points to growing frustration in townships, distrusted administration boards, unemployment, and housing, rent and transport issues.²⁰ While students and youth protested against school policies, they also fought to undermine local state power structures and to redress economic inequality.

It took about two months from the Pimville attack for the conflagration to spread fully to Cape Town. Violence began sporadically with attacks directed at school buildings. On 24 June, the principal's office at a Nyanga primary school was burned, and two attempts were made to burn down Hewat Teachers' Training College in Athlone in early August. On 10 August, there were three explosions in a Cape Town primary school. And on 12 and 17 August fires were started at Modderdam and Arcadia High Schools in Bontehewel, respectively.²¹

The Cape revolt began to take a more organised form on 11 August when students from Langa marched through their township, followed by teachers (hoping to maintain order) and riot police.²² As the conflict spread, boycotts and violence affected both African and Coloured schools. "Before August was out," writes Hyslop, "in striking confirmation of BC's black unity line, students in the Cape Town 'Coloured' townships were drawn in, participating in militant demonstrations in central Cape Town."²³ Hirson, however, describes how African and Coloured students, though participating in the same flow of events, with similar causal roots, remained separate:

¹⁶ Hirson, 99; Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 74-76.

¹⁷ Hirson, 178.

¹⁸ Hirson, 209. For specific examples, see pages 190, 202, 209, and 212.

¹⁹ Hirson, 186.

²⁰ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 74.

²¹ Hirson, 226-230 *passim*.

²² Hirson, 228. Interestingly, a girl at Gugulethu High School claimed that a student from Soweto returned to Cape Town with details of events, thus sparking the Cape revolt (p. 192).

²³ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 5.

Two detachments of rebels faced the same central authority, had the same basic demands, and knew that they were allies in the same fight.... [But] [t]he physical separation of the two communities, each tied to their respective ghettos, prevented joint action and probably militated against the smooth functioning of a joint [student] committee...²⁴

Such divisions were but one aspect of the Cape Town revolt, which lasted into 1977 when a very troubled return-to-school plagued many of the country's schools.

The student resistance throughout the country directly affected teachers. In particular, it undermined traditional authority, and reduced "professional" credibility.

Teachers and 1976: New Pressures and Heightened Contradictions

By the mid-1970s, the traditional prestige of the teaching profession was battered. Several factors contributed to this decline. Physical conditions worsened in schools. Increasing tensions within schools, and an intractable state authority, disempowered teachers and lowered their morale. More importantly, however, the sharp increase of student activism, and the recriminations fired at teachers, began to take their toll. Teachers felt powerless in the face of the student revolts, partly because students were to some degree reacting against teachers. Teachers felt powerless, too, in the face of violent state reprisals which brought uniformed men onto school grounds.

Over-crowded classrooms, with teacher-pupil ratios of one to just under sixty in African schools and just under thirty in Coloured,²⁵ constituted part of the intolerable working conditions faced by some teachers within the national context. Salaries remained perennially low, even for qualified teachers; women still earned less than men;²⁶ and in 1974, 1330 teachers up to Standard 2 taught double sessions.²⁷

The complexity of teachers' positions was heightened by the recession of the mid-seventies, with its concomitant inflation growth. There was a teacher shortage, which allowed more, less-qualified teachers to enter the profession, while hundreds of people left teaching around 1976,²⁸ in part because they could obtain higher-paying jobs in industry or commerce.

Against this background, a shift in the balance of power among the various interest groups seeking to control teachers occurred. The perennial contradictions in the teachers' realm intensified as a direct result of the student revolt.

²⁴ Hirson, 229.

²⁵ Neville L. Robertson and Barbara L. Robertson, *Education in South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana: The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1977) 13.

²⁶ In the late seventies, a male African teacher with a Standard 10 and two years of teacher training would earn a starting salary of R210 per month; a woman earned R150 to R180. Ernst G. Malherbe, *Education in South Africa. Volume 2: 1923-1975* (Cape Town: Juta & Co, Ltd, 1975) 551. Troup gives the following figures for 1973: African men with a Junior Certificate and a professional qualification (possessed by about half of both male and female African teachers) started at R71 per month; women started at R56 per month. The corresponding figures for whites were R209 and R167. Freda Troup, *Forbidden Pastures: Education Under Apartheid* (London: International Defence & Aid Fund, 1976) 41.

²⁷ Malherbe, 551.

²⁸ William Finnegan, *Crossing the Line* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 243.

Increased pressure from students

The most significant aspect of teachers' increasingly untenable situation was the newly-claimed student authority in the context of schools. Students aggressively articulated what had previously been part of a "hidden transcript". Students attacked both the rule-makers and the rule-followers in schools. They pressured teachers to stop towing a government line. They questioned and undermined and, at times, ridiculed teachers' self-perceived "professionalism". Students struck out viscerally. They struck back at the mechanisms of their educational control, and teachers were part of those mechanisms. Students utilized the space for resistance always open to them in schools. While this would later serve as a model for teachers, and others, during those early years teachers remained disempowered. A *Rand Daily Mail* article written in 1976 stated: "In some schools, teachers admit they have lost their authority completely and are jeered at by pupils if they suggest it is time to get down to study."²⁹

Unwilling to endure the "crass stupidity" of "Bantu-ized" teachers,³⁰ students schooled in the new militancy of BC rejected what they considered their parents' passivity.³¹ "The adults" in Cape Town's townships, said Kittman Fresi of the Black Mamba People's Movement in August 1976, "have to listen to the youth. The best they can do is take orders."³² BC instilled pride and a spirit of defiance which, at least in the short term, detrimentally affected teachers. "It allowed youth to abandon fear," claimed a BC student from Natal. "Without fear" of traditional authorities in their parents' generation, "we are not afraid of teachers."³³

This lack of fear, and a willingness to fight with traditional authorities, marked the beginning of the process of teachers' transformation. Students did not construct contradictions for teachers in 1976. Rather, they brought contradictions to the surface. The state, of course, wanted the contradictions left below ground.

The state's continued control

The state fought back against restive students to maintain the status quo. In the escalating conflict with students and communities, the state applied pressure, demanding loyalty from teachers.

Teachers resisted confronting their employers, and for good reason. In 1976, "an African teacher ... may be demoted or discharged not only for inefficiency, but if the Department suspects misconduct.... There is no appeal or legal representation for the

²⁹ Quoted in Brooks and Brickhill, 105.

³⁰ The Editor, "The role of the black teacher in the community," *SASO Newsletter* 2.1 (March/April 1972): 116.

³¹ Hyslop states: "... a change in authority relations within urban black families has taken place since the 1950s which has undermined parental authority." Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 9.

³² Quoted in Hirson, 234.

³³ Interview with informant F, 18 March 1988.

teacher.... Misconduct may include criticism to the press of government policy, or of any Bantu Authority or School Board."³⁴ In 1979, the government passed the Education and Training Act which gave the Minister the power to hire, fire and promote teachers; which defined teacher misconduct; and which permitted teachers to criticize the DET at meetings of recognized teachers' associations.³⁵ This latter stipulation was particularly intended to bolster the state's construction of "professionalism".

Further, in 1976 security forces attempted to prevent political activity by basing guards within schools. "Teachers were expected to give lessons under the eyes of armed soldiers," stated a Black Sash writer.³⁶ A Soweto student at the time, Mark Mathabane, in his autobiographical *Kaffir Boy* added that, "Armed and camouflaged soldiers would from time to time burst into classrooms, interrupting lessons to read off lists of those suspected of subversive activities, rounding them up in armoured vehicles...."³⁷ And at Trafalgar High School in Cape Town, police beat a teacher in his classroom in the presence of his students.³⁸

At this early stage the state had not begun its strategy of material cooption of teachers. There was no real need in the sense that teachers and their organisations were rooted in a recent history of "professional" non-involvement in politics. The state, through its departmental codes of conduct, buttressed this ideology. In the aftermath of 1976, some teachers left their jobs as they found their working conditions unbearable. Thereafter, the state developed a sophisticated response to teacher resistance post-1980 when teachers remained and resisted *within* schools.

The workers' indirect effect

While organised workers were not yet articulating direct pressure on teachers -- the trade union movement would only expand dramatically in the following decade -- increasing worker militancy imbued urban communities with a nascent rebellious ethos. Worker militancy directly affected the student revolt of 1976, and thus affected teachers.

While teachers could be derided as lackeys of the state, their class allegiance was not the issue it would become in the eighties under pressure from a more powerful trade union movement and a liberation movement espousing socialist rhetoric.

³⁴ Troup, 41.

³⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1978*, 403-404; SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1979*, 490-491.

³⁶ Judith Hawarden, "Apartheid Education, 1986," unpublished paper presented at the International Federation of Free Teachers Unions' International Conference on Education Against Apartheid, Lusaka, March 1987, 7.

³⁷ Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Macmillan, 1986) 289.

³⁸ Hirson, 235.

Communities

Students and workers, and others, comprised the communities in which teachers lived and worked. As mentioned above, Hartshorne contends it was the background of schooling which most forcefully allowed its disintegration. "In the townships," writes Hartshorne of the 1976 period, "anger and frustration were growing...."³⁹

The 1970s politicized black communities, of which teachers were a part. Following from the 1973 strikes and the 1976 student uprisings, writes Harold Wolpe, "... broad sections of the black population (more particularly in the urban areas) were mobilised on an unprecedented scale, around a wide spectrum of social, political and economic questions. Everything was put in issue...." Seemingly disparate and localized issues were united under a single, anti-*apartheid* rubric largely because of the prominent re-emergence of ANC ideology, and because "... regulation by the state of the conditions of life of the black people and their subordination in every sphere to the structures of white domination, served both to politicise all demands and to link them, no matter how apparently disparate, to the apartheid system as such."⁴⁰

Heightened contradictions

All of these various tensions, some new, some old, served to throw teachers off balance, and to begin the process of re-shaping their complicated locations in society. The change in student attitudes lessened teachers' credibility in the eyes of students. Increased pressure from both students and state began eroding the myths of autonomy and prestige essential to self-perceived "professionalism".

The contradictions of teachers' race and class locations had not yet become articulated. Teachers' simply felt the sting of student attacks, and were forced to question their "professional" position. The tension between two groups, students and the state, seeking power over teachers intensified. Teachers themselves responded directly, but did not yet choose to engage in the battle for control of schools, of their work, of race and class and "professional" locations, or of ideology.

The Response of Individual Teachers

This is not to say that all teachers remained inactive, or docile, or removed. Even prior to 1976, teachers showed signs of resisting state policy. Educationist Lynn Maree visited several black secondary schools, mainly in Soweto, in April 1975. The history classes Maree visited "showed again and again the tendency to forge links with the real world, as it was experienced by the teachers and the students." Teachers often omitted parts of the civics syllabi. She noted:

³⁹ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 74.

⁴⁰ Wolpe, 77.

dislike of what was written in the textbook, and unease as to how to teach it to students who would ridicule. A young teacher said, 'How do you teach history, particularly South African history, to a class of Black Power students? They don't want historical objectivity.' An older teacher whom I observed read earnestly from the textbook and then allowed questions to interrupt her reading. That way, *she* had not raised any thorny issues.⁴¹

These observations capture teachers' contradictory position at that time. While beginning to fear "Black Power" students, teachers could not dismiss their obligations to their employers. Teachers were reactive, rather than active, but some involved themselves in the students' resistance.

Hirson also rejects notions of teachers' passivity. Upon hearing the proclamation about Afrikaans-medium instruction, he claims, "There was an immediate protest from the teachers." He does not, however, offer any examples.⁴² While some teachers would have objected to the teaching in Afrikaans for purely practical reasons,⁴³ others welcomed the renewed resistance against the education system. One Cape Town teacher, for example, said in mid-August 1976: "You must salute to Black power and most people are excited by this Black power, even though they know people are dying. Its after sixteen years of being bottled up and afraid. Adults have not forgotten 1960."⁴⁴ Teachers helped students to organise marches and protest rallies; in mid-1976, Hirson writes, "... lessons were replaced by debates on current affairs or on the shape of things to come.... Teachers joined pupils in these discussions."⁴⁵ Furthermore, 475 teachers in Soweto resigned at the request of students after the government took over forty post-primary community schools in August 1977.⁴⁶ The ranks of teachers had been gradually infused with younger, more "politicized" teachers who had been schooled in BC at universities and colleges in the late sixties and early seventies, and these younger teachers, like the students, began a rejection of the docility of older generations.

The Response of Organised Teachers

After 1976, teachers and their organisations began searching for a new place for themselves within the context of rapidly-changing schooling. The 1976 revolt thus fostered the beginnings of change in established organisations. In 1976, it seems, none of the organisations which would in the next decade participate in radically anti-*apartheid* discussions made a firm stand against state education policies.⁴⁷ However, 1977 saw the

⁴¹ Lynn Maree, "The Hearts and Minds of the People," in ed. Peter Kallaway, *Apartheid and Education* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984) 153, 155.

⁴² Hirson, 99 and 177.

⁴³ Hirson believes that African teachers were not proficient in Afrikaans, partly because all teacher training colleges, except one, were English-medium (99).

⁴⁴ Quoted in Hirson, 234.

⁴⁵ Hirson, 178.

⁴⁶ Hirson, 277; Hartshorne, in *Crisis and Challenge* (p. 304), states that in 1977, an "estimated 500 secondary school teachers had resigned their posts in protest against the situation in which they found themselves."

⁴⁷ Hyslop makes this claim about African teachers' organisations. "Teacher Resistance," 37.

formation of a short-lived, new body, the Soweto Teachers Action Committee (STAC) which coordinated the post-1976 resignations and tutored students.⁴⁸

To fully understand the shifting nature of the established organisations' policies and practice we turn to an overview of these organisations in the 1970s. Here we will focus on the four professional bodies active in the Western Cape: PENATA, the CTPA, TASA and the SATA.⁴⁹

The Peninsula African Teachers' Association

PENATA was first named the South West African Teachers' Association (SWATA), a body which formed in 1967. SWATA changed its name to PENATA in 1980 because the education department and organisational sponsors did not like "SWATA".⁵⁰ It was an affiliate of CATU, which itself was affiliated to the national body ATASA. Regional and local ATASA affiliates consistently followed the direction of their national leadership. PENATA's Constitution states under "Aims and Objects": "To co-ordinate the activities of the PENATA with those of C.A.T.U. the provincial body and A.T.A.S.A. the National body by establishing and maintaining connections with them."⁵¹ ATASA has been a cumbersome and top-down organisation; its leaders have exerted a strong influence over policy and programmes.

Founded in 1921 as the South African Native Teachers' Federation (SANTF), its name was changed to ATASA in 1962: "The primary function of this association was to serve as a link between the provincial associations for Black teachers and the government (Education and Training) on the one hand, and international teachers' associations on the other."⁵² From its inception, ATASA sought to improve teachers' salaries. Consistently mindful of the "professional" status of teachers, it came to focus additionally on the upgrading of teachers' qualifications.⁵³

CATU was formed in 1953 at Grahamstown, largely as a result of moderate dissatisfaction with the existing CATA. CATA, in 1948, had affiliated to the All-African Convention and the NEUM, and was thus considered too political by some teachers. A teacher involved in CATU's formation said of CATA that "...teachers' affairs are not being dealt with."⁵⁴

From these moderate beginnings, CATU went on to affiliate to ATASA, whose president, R.L. Peteni, remained conservative and opposed to political involvement during

⁴⁸ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 95.

⁴⁹ This dissertation will not deal with the Afrikaans SAOU, since it did not become involved in the unity efforts in the 1980s within the popular resistance movement. The TLSA will be excluded from this discussion for the same reason.

⁵⁰ Interview with Basie Nikani, 13 June 1990.

⁵¹ The Peninsula African Teachers Association, *Constitution*.

⁵² L. Pienaar, *The History of the Transvaal United African Teachers' Association (TUATA)* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1986) 97.

⁵³ Pienaar, 95-97.

⁵⁴ Cameron, 71, 205, and 210.

the 1960s.⁵⁵ This conservatism did not deprive ATASA of the unusual position of being the only teachers' organisation in South Africa recognised by WCOTP, a distinction it bore proudly from 1973.⁵⁶

The 1970s, as described above, brought new pressure to bear on teachers from students and state, and new pressures from within their own ranks. These pressures specifically challenged the conservatism of organisations like ATASA. Responding to this challenge, Peteni later offered public evidence of ATASA's "progressive" history. He claimed that in 1963 the government rebuffed ATASA's attempt to discuss the medium of instruction. "Although Atasa made strong representations again in January 1975 [12 years later] on the medium of instruction," continued Peteni, "the Department did not heed those representations until the riots broke out in June 1976." Also, in January 1975 ATASA urged education Minister M.C. Botha to work towards placing all "population groups" under one minister of education.⁵⁷ All of these representations took place within a tradition of negotiation and cooperation with government education structures. "Teachers policy," said the PENATA regional organiser in 1990, "was based on negotiation. Confrontation cannot solve any problem."⁵⁸ A PENATA constitutional aim was: "To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members by negotiating through recognised channels of communication with educational authorities to achieve acceptable conditions of appointment, service promotion, remuneration and superamunation [sic]."⁵⁹ ATASA, as an officially recognised body, had access to ministers and state education committees. The method of conveyance is as important as the message conveyed. So, while its secretary offered statements about the imposition of Afrikaans,⁶⁰ it was being further distanced from the students for whom it purported to work. It is further unclear what the "crisis meetings" it held with government education authorities in 1976 accomplished, judging from ATASA's silence on this issue.⁶¹

The students' perception of ATASA was not positive about ATASA's style and results. The ATASA offices were among the targets destroyed by arsonists in 1976.⁶² Also, the BC movement criticised ATASA during the seventies; ATASA "had trouble dealing with the growing number of politicised young teachers."⁶³

A good illustration of Cape Town teachers' dissatisfaction with SWATA in Cape Town was the launch of a new teachers organisation, the Teachers Improvement and

⁵⁵ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 31-32.

⁵⁶ Pienaar, 99.

⁵⁷ R.L. Peteni, "The Contribution Teachers' Associations Could Make Towards the Struggle for a Just Society in South Africa," in ed. Ashley, 34-35.

⁵⁸ Interview with Basie Nikani, 13 June 1990.

⁵⁹ The Peninsula African Teachers Association, *Constitution*.

⁶⁰ In 1976, the Secretary stated: "To say that the Blacks are opposed to the study of Afrikaans is a gross understatement.... In strict terms what we oppose now is the manner in which this is being done without regard to the interests of the children concerned. And if this trend continues without being checked then the education of the Black child will be seriously threatened." Hirson, 176.

⁶¹ Dlamlenze, *passim*.

⁶² Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 95.

⁶³ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 95.

Research Association (TIRA), in 1977. The idea for TIRA had been mooted in 1975, but the teachers concerned tried to set SWATA back on track by attending the CATU conference in Grahamstown, "at which the object of compelling SWATA to fulfil its obligations to all its members was largely achieved." Still, TIRA was formally created on 5 December 1977. According to a TIRA report on the need for its own building, "TIRA found itself to be the only available means of effective expression for a large number of African teachers who considered that SWATA ... was failing to represent their interests."⁶⁴ That TIRA did not perceive itself in political terms is obvious and informative. SWATA, therefore, was failing to a greater or lesser degree to meet its purported "professional" obligations.

ATASA faced a number of challenges from students, state, and teachers in the 1970s. In describing the reasons for its survival, Hyslop writes that, firstly, there was no effective organisational challenge. Secondly, teachers generally paid little attention to organisations as industry recruited them into better-paying jobs. And, thirdly,

the ATASA leadership cliques found ways of retaining control of their organisations. They had been given quasi-official status by the Department, and could use this to pressure recalcitrant teachers into paying subscriptions. Gerrymandering tactics, such as holding meetings in out-of-the-way towns were used to ensure that no untoward decisions were made. The patronage system continued with leaders using it especially to control less well paid female members.⁶⁵

ATASA, thus, continued after 1976 largely as it had done before that fateful year, though decidedly less comfortably.

The Cape Teachers' Professional Association

The CTPA, like CATU, is a regional affiliate of a national body. Unlike CATU, however, the CTPA has been instrumental in determining the policy of its national body, UTASA.

The CTPA was formed in 1967 in a move which united two older organisations -- TEPA and the Cape Teachers' Association -- and drew some members from the TLSA, which refused to participate in the unification.⁶⁶ The newly-constituted CTPA then played a significant role in the establishment in December 1969 of the national UTASA, a federation, like ATASA, of four provincial bodies. UTASA, however, was for Coloured teachers. As the CTPA reported: "The great role that the C.T.P.A. played in the establishment of this body is evident from the fact that the first President, Vice-President

⁶⁴ "The Teachers Improvement and Research Association - TIRA - project: proposed resource and cultural centre, Guguletu," booklet, n.d.

⁶⁵ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 95.

⁶⁶ Randall van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," CTPA 23rd Annual Conference, June 1990, 3; "The Establishment and Growth of the Cape Teachers' Professional Association," in CTPA, *21st Anniversary*, booklet, n.p.

and Secretary/Treasurer of this national body came from the C.T.P.A.⁶⁷ UTASA was formed to negotiate salaries, bonuses, service conditions for teachers, and the like. It was left to its constituent organisations to make representations on local issues.⁶⁸ A later commentator would claim that UTASA and its affiliates had the strongest research department and "theoretical base to its positions" of all South African teachers' organisations.⁶⁹

From the beginning, the CTPA rejected the efficacy of "non-collaboration" as a policy. As Franklin Sonn, CTPA president from 1976 to 1990, later wrote of the Coloured teachers who created the CTPA:

They realised full well that to make any headway they would be compelled to exploit the middle ground. They would have to come to terms with the realities of apartheid education, but at the same time not to compromise their principles. Fortunately they were able to reject as childish and silly a major hurdle, viz., the prevailing contention that negotiation was equal to collaboration.⁷⁰

It was in this light that the CTPA won official recognition for itself from the Administration of Coloured Affairs in 1970. This recognition, given when the CTPA had roughly 1200 to 1400 members (ten per cent of Coloured teachers in the Cape), allowed it stop-order facilities, and also placed the CTPA in various Departmental committees concerning syllabi, books, bursaries, and so on. They had access to "top" officials, who helped solve their members' problems.⁷¹ Also, the CTPA maintained close links with the Labour Party (see Chapter Four).⁷²

This early decision to fully cooperate with government structures set firmly in place the contradictions that would prove problematic to the CTPA when popular opinion swung against "collaboration". Time and again, the CTPA found itself publicly justifying its position. A 1977 editorial in *Educatio* stated the two CTPA "ideals" as being: "the concern with the satisfying of short term needs," such as salaries and syllabi; and "the realisation of long term goals," such as a single, colour-blind South African education system.⁷³ The following year an editorial in the same journal explained: "The CTPA is deeply conscious of the temptation to become so ideological and so embroiled in matters political only that it forgets the job at hand."⁷⁴ And echoing these sentiments in the 1981 UTASA annual magazine, the CTPA wrote:

⁶⁷ "The Establishment and Growth," n.p. See also the anonymous *Report on CTPA for NECC, 09.11.87*, 1. The report, written for the NECC, is a thorough critique of the CTPA for debate about whether the CTPA was to be allowed representation on the Western Cape NECC.

⁶⁸ Randall van den Heever, "The SAFTA: An Historical Appraisal," *Educatio* 4th Quarter (1978).

⁶⁹ Roger Burrows, "Beyond the Blackboard: Teacher Associations & Politics," *Indicator SA* 3.4 (Autumn 1986): Urban Monitor, 16. In this context Burrows appears to neglect the established white teacher associations.

⁷⁰ Franklin Sonn, "Teachers in Opposition: Strategic Alternatives," in ed. Ashley, 32.

⁷¹ *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 9.

⁷² *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 5.

⁷³ "Editorial: A Worthy Cause," *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1977): 3.

⁷⁴ "Editorial/Redaksioneel: Judge Us By the Facts," *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1978): 2.

the association has never shared the feeling that all present problems in teaching should be left untouched until the day an acceptable political dispensation is created in South Africa.... The organisation is therefore prepared to enter into dialogue with any institution if it could contribute to the alleviation of the suffering of our people on [sic] the short term.⁷⁵

Although the tension between "negotiation" and "collaboration" remained with the CTPA from its inception through the late 1980s, 1976 can be seen as a turning point. In 1988, Sonn reflected back on the early 1970s: "Initially, the organization adopted an extremely careful stance, consequently failing to create the image of an organization ready and able to articulate the sentiments of disillusioned teachers."⁷⁶ It was into this self-defined breach that he himself stepped in 1976. In the mid-seventies, Sonn claimed, he decided to "take over the CTPA from inside" rather than form a new teachers' body.⁷⁷ Sonn was elected president in 1976, and he brought a new momentum and political style with him.

"Since 1976," wrote van den Heever in 1990, "the CTPA clearly started to place its functions as a teachers' organisation within the broader context of the political struggle for liberation." How much of this was a rhetorical stance is unclear. But even van den Heever admitted that, "The organisation's main thrust, however, was to negotiate aggressively on teachers' rights."⁷⁸ While van den Heever's above claim in 1990 was dubious at best, certainly Sonn's tactics worked wonders for CTPA membership. "The metamorphosis which the CTPA underwent with Franklin at the helm was nothing short of breathtaking," writes van den Heever enthusiastically in the forward to a CTPA-published book devoted entirely to Sonn, and entitled *A Decade of Struggle*. The organisations 2000 members in 1975 grew to 13,000 by 1978.⁷⁹ The organisation's membership remained largely rural and very conservative. The CTPA maintained a Christian character.

The CTPA, true to its word, has focussed on educational issues that have been of practical benefit to teachers and students. Apart from continued negotiations to improve salaries and working conditions, the CTPA has set up a bursary fund which allocated no less than R250,000 worth of bursaries per year by the end of the 1980s. It also built a Teachers' Centre in Bellville.

It can be argued that Sonn achieved great organisational successes. However, he took office during a turbulent year. The student uprising and shifting popular pressures determined the CTPA's future direction as much as he did.

No amount of later rhetoric can disguise the CTPA's fundamentally ambivalent stance during that year. As an established, officially-recognized body, it had to be circumspect about public positions. Also, as a group which foregrounded its "professional" status, the

⁷⁵ "The Cape Teachers' Professional Association: Commitment to Dynamic Educational Growth and Progress," in *Teachers in Unity*, UTASA Annual Magazine, 1981: 12.

⁷⁶ Franklin Sonn, "The C.T.P.A.: An Historic Perspective," in CTPA, *21st Anniversary*, booklet, n.p.

⁷⁷ Personal notes from: Franklin Sonn, address, Lawyers for Human Rights conference, Stellenbosch University, 4 August 1989.

⁷⁸ van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 3.

⁷⁹ Randall van den Heever, "Foreword," in Franklin A. Sonn, *A Decade of Struggle* (Bellville: CTPA, 1986) n.p.

CTPA could hardly side with student tactics. "The CTPA," reported the *Cape Times* of 6 September 1976, "condemned violence of any kind, including stone throwing. It accepted that it was the task of the police, even under difficult circumstances to maintain law and order."⁸⁰ In his first presidential address, delivered in June 1977, Sonn included a section on "Unrest of 1976." Within this section, he talked of international student uprisings, universities, and the CTPA's participation in the Cillie Commission of Enquiry into the events of 1976. Nowhere does a CTPA position on the uprising appear.⁸¹

The CTPA prepared a forty-three-page memorandum for the Cillie Commission. The CTPA participated, Sonn claimed, "because of its basic inclination towards the positive and the constructive."⁸² This was clearly in line with its policy of cooperation with government structures, a policy which would come under greater and greater pressure from external forces as the seventies became the eighties.

The Teachers' Association of South Africa

TASA, a national association centred in Durban, traces its roots back to 1925 with the birth of the Natal Indian Teachers Society (NITS), which obtained official state recognition in 1926. In 1967, as Indian education became a concern of central government, NITS and the Transvaal Indian Teachers' Association joined to form the South African Indian Teachers' Association (SAITA). SAITA focussed on conditions of service and professional development, among other things. In 1968 it changed its constitution to allow non-Indian teachers to join.

Despite this constitutional change, and other changes in the mid-1970s which tried to allow more "grassroots" participation in decision-making, SAITA remained a top-down, "professional" organisation for Indian teachers. In 1975, Pat Samuels became president. Under his guidance, SAITA continued to emphasise professional development and service conditions.⁸³ "The teachers' association is concerned largely with conditions of service," he stated in 1985. "Basically [TASA] tries to protect the quality of the [school] programmes largely by way of the well considered resolutions it takes on, among others, pre-service and in-service education [sic]."⁸⁴ It was in 1979 that SAITA shed the "Indian" in its name, and became the Teachers' Association of South Africa.⁸⁵ But even in 1985, Samuels spoke of "my people" and "the Indian teachers' sense of community responsibility."⁸⁶

Unlike the CTPA, TASA did not publicly denounce *apartheid* education, or engage in such "political" rhetoric. But like the CTPA, TASA had a strong membership (about 8700

⁸⁰ Quoted in *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 5.

⁸¹ Franklin Sonn, Presidential Address, CTPA Conference, 20 June 1977, in *A Decade of Struggle*, 10-12.

⁸² Sonn, Presidential Address (1977) 10.

⁸³ "NITS - TITA - SAITA - TASA," paper delivered on behalf of the TASA Cape Peninsula Branch, 9 March 1990, n.p.

⁸⁴ Pat Samuels, "The Relationship Between Professionalism and Community Interests," in ed. Ashley, 41, 43.

⁸⁵ "NITS - TITA - SAITA - TASA," n.p.

⁸⁶ Samuels, 45.

at the end of 1989), its own building (the Teachers' Centre in Durban), and large financial revenue. Its 1989/90 budget included a total income of R954,000. TASA claims a gradual increase in membership during the years under study: from 4600 in 1969 to 5966 in 1981.⁸⁷

TASA, under its previous name of SAITA, arrived in Cape Town in 1976 with the opening of the first Indian secondary school, Rylands. A Cape Town branch formed in 1977. In 1990, the branch had 102 members.⁸⁸ This branch, far from head office in Durban, contending with regionally different ideological and political terrain, became more radical more quickly than the national leadership in the late 1980s. The end of the 1970s, however, was more confusing than directed for TASA teachers.

The South African Teachers' Association

SATA is the white, English-speaking teacher organisation in the Cape Province. Though a sister, Afrikaans-speaking organisation exists in the Western Cape, the SAOU, it remained isolated from the events recorded in this thesis.

SATA, the first conference of which was held in 1888,⁸⁹ has consistently avowed "professional" ideology, in antagonism to teacher unionism. John Stonier, president in 1975 and 1987, said in 1985: "The ideal would be to create a climate that encourages the highest level of professional pride and responsibility."⁹⁰ Contemporary officials echo the sentiment written of in its organ, *Education*, in 1944: "The special characteristics of a Trade Union render this type of organisation unsuitable for the teaching profession."⁹¹ It, like its established counter-parts, is officially recognised. In fact, it is an affiliate of the white Teachers' Federal Council (TFC), which was granted statutory recognition by the government in 1986. SATA possesses a stately building in Rondebosch, and ample resources. It focuses primarily on salaries and service conditions for teachers, though a 1944 article in *Education* claimed that, "conditions of service ... occupy only a secondary place in the deliberations of the Association."⁹²

Whether or not this was true at that time, or has continued to be true, "politics" certainly do not occupy the primary place. The SATA remained steadfastly apolitical, confining itself strictly to educational matters until the watershed of 1976. While it is true that SATA did not have the pressure placed upon it by students and parents that other organisations, which were directly involved in the revolt, did, it was witness to state repression, and it did feel pressure from other teachers' organisations with which it had contact.

⁸⁷ "NITS - TITA - SAITA - TASA," n.p.

⁸⁸ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

⁸⁹ A.R. Goodwin, *Centennial: A Brief History of SATA Conferences 1888-1987* (SATA, 1987) 1.

⁹⁰ J.L. Stonier, "The Importance of Professional Autonomy for the Teacher in the Classroom," in ed. Ashley, 61.

⁹¹ "The S.A.T.A.," *Education* January 1944: 147.

⁹² "The S.A.T.A.," 147.

A SATA document entitled "S.A.T.A. Mandate Concerning Non-Racial Education: Relevant Motions Passed Since 1977" lists SATA's "relevant" motions from 1977, the year following the Soweto uprising. The document begins with two 1977 motions, one suggesting further "contact with other racial groups" on sports fields, and the other requesting the white education department to allow "suitably qualified Black teachers to teach Bantu languages in white educational institutions." From there, SATA grew more daring. In 1982, it "urges the Government to act upon all of the principles and recommendations of the de Lange Report as a matter of extreme urgency," and called for one Ministry of Education.⁹³ And, in 1983, "the S.A.T.A. condemns apartheid as detrimental to education in South Africa."⁹⁴ This changing rhetoric illustrated the pressure and space the SATA felt in the years following 1976. However, it consistently maintained the rectitude of "professionalism", and sought to work across race divides, not to abolish them.

Cooperation and unity efforts among the established bodies

The recognized, established teachers' organisations have a history of cooperation, specifically aimed at looking into educational or service-condition matters which affected all of them.

The most notable example of this cooperation was the South African Federation of Teachers Associations (SAFTA - see Introduction). Formed in 1958, SAFTA comprised Indian and Coloured teachers. A TASA brochure explains that, "Initially SAFTA concerned itself with parity in salaries. SAFTA agreed to pursue the principle of `equal pay for equal work with equal qualifications.'"⁹⁵ However, when Indian and Coloured education were separated into different governmental departments, SAFTA encountered "practical difficulties," according to Muriel Horrel of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). Writing in 1970, she claimed, "The organisation still exists, but is dormant."⁹⁶ The TASA brochure offers the more enigmatic statement that when the separation occurred, "... SAFTA changed its emphasis to professional matters." In 1974, the white Transvaal Teachers' Association (TTA) joined. Before the end of the decade, both the Natal Teachers' Society (NTS) and SATA had officially participated.⁹⁷

But as the winds shifted after 1976, SAFTA collapsed. The CTPA withdrew, sensing that the time was no longer ripe for such federal negotiating structures. At their 1979 conference, a resolution was adopted which spoke of "... our ultimate goal of one unified

⁹³ The De Lange Report, commissioned by the state and composed under the auspices of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), made recommendations for the improvement of South African education. It will be fully discussed in Chapter Three.

⁹⁴ SATA, "S.A.T.A. Mandate concerning Non-Racial Education: Relevant Motions Passed Since 1977," photocopy (n.d.) n.p.

⁹⁵ "NITS - TITA - SAITA - TASA," n.p.

⁹⁶ Muriel Horrell, *The Education of the Coloured Community in South Africa 1652 to 1970* (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1970) 141.

⁹⁷ "NITS - TITA - SAITA - TASA," n.p.

teachers organisation."⁹⁸ Mike Reeler, a SATA participant in SAFTA, claimed in 1990 that the CTPA pulled out because of "political bitterness and political awareness". The three participating white organisations -- TTA, NTS and SATA -- were not prepared to adopt a "political stance", according to Reeler. "SAFTA felt absolutely impotent," he said, "so it fell apart."⁹⁹ According to a TASA member, "SAFTA failed because political thinking changed after 1976."¹⁰⁰ The official dissolution took place in 1984.

While SAFTA hobbled along before 1980, other initiatives were undertaken, seemingly outside the auspices of SAFTA. The *Sunday Times* reported on 26 June 1977 that "Cape Teachers Back One-Body Call," describing an idea for a "multi-racial umbrella for all teachers' associations in South Africa" which was supported by all the established bodies.¹⁰¹ TASA's arrival in Cape Town brought unity efforts. "When we came to Cape Town we tried to get all teachers together," said the TASA Cape Town branch chairperson in 1990. TASA called a joint meeting at Rylands attended by PENATA, CTPA, SATA, SAOU and TASA. Several meetings followed, including history workshops. "At that time we wanted to form a kind of federal structure," stated the TASA Cape Town chairperson. But this initiative, like others, "just faded away."¹⁰² After a CTPA vice-president attended a SATA conference in June 1977, and the executives of both organisations met to plan "a panel-discussion on the relationship between the senior and junior (first year) teacher," *Educatio* lauded this as "A Step Towards Normalizing Education in South Africa." This discussion took place on 9 September 1977 at Spes Bona High School,¹⁰³ where first Sonn and then van den Heever served as principals.

Specifically, the black organisations were finding it more and more difficult to cooperate in the same ways, focussing solely on things "professional." This became more acutely apparent following 1980. A 1981 meeting of representatives from "all population groups" to discuss the establishment of a statutory body for salary negotiations for all teachers was unsuccessful because of the African and Coloured groups insistence "that such an issue could not be discussed in isolation from political and socioeconomic issues."¹⁰⁴ This did not mean that cooperation between the established organisations would remain impossible. Unity efforts continued. Pat Samuels of TASA explained how cooperation continued in the early 1980s around conditions of service: "Minister De Klerk brought us here to Cape Town, all four associations were here, and we won an important victory on three aspects of the proposed cut-backs. The key memorandum was signed by the four National Presidents."¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ *Educatio* Conference Edition (1979): 11.

⁹⁹ Interview with Mike Reeler, 2 April 1990.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

¹⁰¹ Reproduced in *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1977): 5.

¹⁰² Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

¹⁰³ *Educatio* 4th Quarter (1977): 10. ATASA and SAITA were also represented at the SATA conference.

¹⁰⁴ Hendrik van der Merwe and Patrick J. Murphy, "The Need for Negotiation in an Unjust and Polarised Society: The Responsibility of Teachers in a Democratic Society," in ed. Ashley, 119.

¹⁰⁵ Samuels, 48.

Conclusion

That established organisations were coming under greater fire from students, authorities, and communities in the latter half of the 1970s may be one reason why SAFTA broke down. Clearly teachers needed to redefine their roles in relation to students and parents. As indicated above, all the established organisations began a gradual shift in the second half of the seventies. But by and large, the shift was slight, and tentative. There were no real internal threats to these organisations; teachers were not applying much pressure on their organisations.

Whether afraid of losing their jobs, or of militant students, teachers in 1976 were embattled. "Morale among teachers was low," writes Mathabane.¹⁰⁶ Teachers now felt they had to justify themselves, and students would not necessarily appreciate their justifications. Times had changed, and in 1978, writes Hirson, "students were quick to challenge teachers who tried to impose tight discipline in the classroom."¹⁰⁷ Post-1976 schooling also had to contend with "mass resignations" of teachers.¹⁰⁸ Apart from those who resigned at the behest of students, many "could not work within the confines of the Bantu Education system."¹⁰⁹ Further, the state characteristically dismissed teachers who had "sided" with students during the revolts.¹¹⁰ As the student uprising came gradually to an uneasy end in 1977 because of state repression and violence, the former, more authoritarian, system was being displaced. "For all their continuing criticisms of aspects of education," writes Hyslop, "teachers had come increasingly to find that their a-political, professional approach had placed them in a position where they could not attack Bantu Education without undermining their own social status."¹¹¹ New connections were being made between privilege and political repression, between class and power. It was becoming less acceptable for teachers' to uphold middle-class status. Students and some others within the broader community asked teachers to re-examine their positions; teachers needed to find a new place within their schools and their communities. By 1980, Cape Town teachers were more actively engaged in this task.

¹⁰⁶ Mathabane, 271.

¹⁰⁷ Hirson, 278.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Kallaway, "An Introduction to the Study of Education for Blacks in South Africa," in ed. Kallaway, 24-25. Many of these were from "the senior ranks of the profession and those with good qualifications...."

¹⁰⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 4-10 October 1985: 11.

¹¹⁰ Hirson, 269.

¹¹¹ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 32.

CHAPTER THREE

**ADAMANT CHALLENGE
AND TEACHERS' TENTATIVE SHIFT: 1980-1984**

Historian Tom Lodge has called the social and political upheaval of the 1980s "the most massive and prolonged rebellion in South Africa's history."¹ As the decade began, another wave of student boycotts swept across the country, and substantially affected the political life of the Western Cape. The growing trade union movement assumed an ascendent place within the country's political landscape. Also, as Lodge argues, the prolonged economic recession played a crucial causal role as the rebellion began and matured. Inflation and unemployment burdened township residents, adding to the restive climate.²

During 1980 and the years immediately following, teachers experienced growing pressure to redefine their traditional race, class and "professional" locations, more pressure than at the end of the preceding decade. Students, unions, communities and sections of the liberation movement rejected the "professional" foundation of established teacher organisations. The liberation movement broadened its base within oppressed communities, and created space for teachers to more actively challenge their existing organisations, and to establish new, more radical groups. Teachers remained embattled, caught in a web of political tensions, sometimes with stultifying effects. But some teachers also began a creative response to the renewed challenge presented by the anti-government, class-conscious rebellion.

The state adopted a policy of reform at the beginning of the eighties, which created an important context for resistance.³ This reform allocated certain benefits to teachers. The conflictual tensions within teacher politics remained taut. By 1984, teachers' traditional ideas about their race, class and "professional" locations remained firmly entrenched within some organisations, but the crucial importance of change in the context of rebellion infiltrated the realm of teacher politics, and was articulated by teacher groups, both old and new.

Boycott: The Western Cape Context

If the 1976 boycotts set off glowing sparks in the Western Cape, the 1980 boycotts burned brightly. In 1980, sixty percent of the Coloured population of Cape Town had moved to or been resettled on the Cape Flats. The resultant poverty, crime, parental absence and "alienation between parent and child" -- which existed in African townships as well -- were in part responsible for the way in which students and youth responded to the boycotts.⁴

¹ Lodge, 23.

² Lodge, 30-31.

³ Lodge, 30.

⁴ George Gibbs, "A community in crisis," in eds. Millar and Philcox, 23.

Hyslop, taking the point that the majority of the 1980 population was under twenty-one, argues that, "This ... provided part of the basis for a shift of the balance of power within the urban black family in which parents became increasingly unable to command the obedience of their children."⁵ Patterns from 1976 recurred.

The rebellious situation was compounded by the growth of gangs in the townships. In Bonteheuwel, for example, a new gang called the Hobos emerged, "reportedly 500 strong," and comprised "of young people," school boys who dropped out during boycotts.⁶

Other factors influencing the 1980 boycott were varied. A contemporary commentator, Edgar Maurice, defined several causes in Coloured schools in the Western Cape, echoing much from the 1976 revolts. There were increased numbers of students at schools, and these students comprised a new, post-1976 generation. Students from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and local training colleges lent direction, and acted in some instances as leaders.⁷ Nationally, between 1980 and 1984 African school enrollment doubled to more than a million.⁸

Schools' physical disrepair did much to heighten resentment. In the Western Cape, buildings damaged or destroyed in 1976 remained unrepaired. As one student said at a community meeting on 20 March 1980: "We want to learn, but we're not being taught. In fact, we can't be taught under the conditions at our schools and with the teachers and principals we have."⁹ The *apartheid* distinctions between education departments added to the resentment. The boycotts, insists Maurice, were caused by the "totality" of separateness: segregated schools, and different curricula.¹⁰ For, although the 1979 Education and Training Act replaced the 1953 Bantu Education Act, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) claims that "the diet remained the same."¹¹

Coloured students in 1980 boycotted classes for eleven weeks, while the boycott in African schools was more protracted.¹² In September the DET closed seventy-four Cape schools for the remainder of the year.¹³ White schools, of course, remained largely uninfluenced.¹⁴

⁵ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 4.

⁶ Gibbs, 25.

⁷ Edgar Maurice, "Some Aspects of the Crisis in Education in the Western Cape," in eds. Peter Buckland, et al, *The Education Debate: A selection of papers presented at an Extra-mural class series, UCT, April-June 1981* (UCT, Centre for Extra-mural Studies) 1-18 passim.

⁸ Lodge, 31.

⁹ Molteno, 27-28, 32.

¹⁰ Edgar Maurice, "The curriculum and the crisis in the schools," in eds. Millar and Philcox, 18-19.

¹¹ SAIRR, Cape Western Region, "The Political Crisis as it affected Educational Institutions under the Department of Education and Culture (House of Representatives), mid 1985 to early 1986," Regional Topic Paper 86/2, February 1986, 2.

¹² Maurice, "Some Aspects," 1.

¹³ Molteno, 146.

¹⁴ However, a white headmaster argued in 1981 that there was a "White Teacher crisis," caused by resignations due to low salaries, a decline in recruitment, and a lack of male teachers. He believed that improving white teachers' salaries would improve the position of "all" teachers. Brian Gilbert, "The White Teacher Crisis," in eds. Buckland, et al, 19, 27.

The Challenge to Teachers' Assumptions

Within this turbulent context, teachers' "professionalism" became less acceptable. "Professionalism", as described in Chapter One, is an ideological construct which changes over time. In the 1980s, established teacher organisations' beliefs in their "professional" location apart from politics and aspiring to the middle class was called more emphatically into question by a growing liberation movement. Students, trade unions and communities, in particular, challenged teachers to question their "professional" location, and redefine their self-perceived position in society. This was done through both class and race analyses.

Lodge claims that class-consciousness infiltrated large sections of the liberation movement. "In contrast to earlier phases of black opposition," he writes of the 1980s, "a class-conscious ideology was the essential motivating force among a large number of its rank-and-file activists."¹⁵ Students still comprised a large percentage of these activists. Student discourse during the 1980 boycotts was notable, states Hyslop, for its "high level of politicization". Students began expressing class-based analyses.¹⁶ Such analyses allowed a new articulation of the challenge to teachers. The students involved in writing an "Inter-School Manual" produced during that time, for example, stated their antagonism to teachers' material aspirations:

Without a doubt, teachers in general have once again demonstrated their bankruptcy.... Their sole concerns are their cheques, their bonds on houses, their cars and a host of other interests.¹⁷

Students such as these took much of their cue from the expanding trade union movement,¹⁸ and the growing primacy of "workers" in the liberation struggle. "New black trade unions," writes Lodge, "were beginning ... to shape the form and content of popular resistance."¹⁹ The oppressed masses in South Africa were mainly comprised of members of the working class, who were becoming increasingly vocal. Teachers could no longer assume superiority.

The pressure for a newly-defined "professionalism" had some effect. The "class consciousness" of teachers was altered, suggests one observer, as middle class teachers increasingly respected their lower class students.²⁰

Further, the aspects of traditional "professionalism" which implied racially-based status became more untenable as the ANC and a Charterist ideology began to assert a stronger position in the political spectrum of the Western Cape. Matiwana, Walters and Groener state that "... the theory of a non-racial national democratic struggle began to find favour with many activists."²¹

¹⁵ Lodge, 29.

¹⁶ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 7.

¹⁷ "Teachers - The Stillborn Radicals," *Inter-School Manual*, photocopied pamphlet (n.d.) n.p.

¹⁸ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 7.

¹⁹ Lodge, 30.

²⁰ Flederman, 35.

²¹ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 26.

The state, on the other hand, increased pressure on teachers to maintain their "professional" position. It continued a policy aimed at coopting teachers, and continued violently repressing "political" activity amongst teachers. The various interest groups seeking to influence teacher politics thus remained conflictual, perpetuating the contradictions inherent in the teachers' realm.

Interest Groups and Teacher Politics

The period 1980 to 1984 was a time of shifting tensions within teachers' political realm. While in the years immediately following the Soweto uprising, the central line of tension ran between students and the state, at the beginning of the eighties the students were becoming part of a much broader alliance of liberation forces. Teachers felt increased pressure from a number of sources within this broadened alliance, particularly the unions and the communities.

In 1980, students placed greater emphasis on cooperation with parents and workers.²² Education historian Linda Chisholm states that the Western Cape, in fact, was the only part of the country where an alliance between students and workers, albeit a weak one, came into being.²³ Such a bilateral alliance strengthened and generalised outwards to other sections of oppressed people. Bundy has noted that the period between 1979 and 1983 saw the emergence of "a decentralised, localised, radicalised community-based politics."²⁴

This development saw organisational expression in the 1983 launch of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The creation of the UDF, a broad front of ANC-aligned liberation organisations from every sector of the movement, "was a turning point in [the] shift in the balance of power between the South African government and the black opposition," writes Lodge. He continues: "The movement that the UDF headed was profoundly popular, infused 'from below' by the beliefs and emotions of 'ordinary people.'"²⁵

There was more room, in light of the growing rebellion, for "grassroots" political maneuvering. For example, many educational, research and information organisations formed during the 1980s. The reasons were varied, including the politicisation of schools, repression, the availability of funds, increased confidence in the future, and a deterioration of social and economic conditions.²⁶ People in the Western Cape were taking greater control of their lives, and traditional authorities, such as "professional" teachers, were challenged.

²² Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 40.

²³ Linda Chisholm, "From Revolt to a Search for Alternatives," *Work in Progress* 42 (1986): 17.

²⁴ Bundy, "'Action, comrades, action!'" 210.

²⁵ Lodge, 29.

²⁶ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 82.

The state's continued assertion of control

In direct opposition to the broadened liberation movement, and vying to maintain a strong influence over the behaviour and attitudes of teachers, was the state. Its various agencies continued utilizing a dual strategy of cooption and repression. The cooption of teachers, at the beginning of the eighties, fitted within the state's new policy of reform. "In the early 1980s," writes Lodge, "the state determined to strengthen its authority by abandoning direct coercion in favor of limited political and institutional accommodation."²⁷

In 1965, Leo Kuper wrote that "... there is an absolute barrier to African mobility. Members of the African bourgeoisie are pushed back toward the masses by an equal subordination."²⁸ Gradually recognising the danger inherent in this truth, the state sought to separate the "bourgeoisie" from the "masses"; organised teachers fell into the former group. The state responded to the events of 1980 with a series of reform strategies, in part aimed at coopting a section of the black middle class, of which many teachers formed an important part. "The political aim was to fragment black opposition through stratification," writes Hyslop.²⁹

In education, the state began improvements in earnest. In May 1980, after militant action by some teachers, the government promised that black teachers' salaries would be equal to white teachers.³⁰ The DET, in an *Educamus* supplement in 1980, laid out its strategy for improving black education: increased teachers' salaries, with service conditions equal to whites'; new teacher-training centres and in-service programmes; and other improvements.³¹ On 6 June 1980, a five-year plan for the improvement of Coloured education was announced, which included R2.6 million for improvement of teachers' qualifications.³² The new "own affairs" Coloured education department, the DEC (HoR), announced further service condition improvements in 1984. Married women teachers could now become permanent, the costs of transfers to senior posts would be covered, and breaks in service of up to one quarter of a school year would no longer result in salary and benefit losses.³³ The education budget for all departments for 1982-1983 included a fifteen percent salary increase for all teachers.³⁴

The state, in fact, undertook a complicated process of achieving salary parity for teachers within different "population groups". The highest qualified African, Indian and Coloured teachers achieved parity first, announced in 1981. This cost the government less than allowing all teachers parity, and it was part of the government's plan to motivate

²⁷ Lodge, 31.

²⁸ Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) 94.

²⁹ Hyslop, "School Student Movements", 8.

³⁰ Walters, 69.

³¹ Cited in Kallaway, "An Introduction," 26.

³² Molteno, 101.

³³ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 675.

³⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1982*, 466.

lower-qualified black teachers to improve their qualifications.³⁵ By 1986, there had been equalisation of qualified teachers' salaries across the colour bars.³⁶ Whether or not the state was responding to pressure from teachers to improve their conditions of service, the element of cooption was still strong. In a discussion of teacher organisations in the mid-eighties, Hyslop claims: "Many teachers were influenced towards an apolitical position by the considerable improvements in salaries and conditions of service which the state had granted over the previous decade."³⁷

Such blatant attempts at cooption were also apparent outside the field of education, where the state's "restructuring program" included the lifting of some restrictions on African workers and black businesses, the slow tolerance of a black urban class, privatisation, the removal of petty *apartheid* laws, and constitutional reforms which led to the tri-cameral parliament in 1983.³⁸ Many of these reforms clearly influenced teachers. One specific example was announced in 1984. A government official said that influx control regulations did not apply to African teachers, who were not required to have accommodation in urban areas before taking up positions there.³⁹

The De Lange Commission of Enquiry, established by the Human Science Research Council at the request of the state, was part of this reform process. The commission, according to Hyslop, was part of the government's plan for formulating a counter-revolutionary education policy: "Importantly, the strategy was aimed to intensify class differentials while reducing racial ones."⁴⁰ Sonn, the CTPA president, agreed to sit on the twenty-six-person committee which oversaw the commission.

The De Lange proposals included a call for a single ministry of education, and accepted the principal of free association in South African schools.⁴¹ That these proposals would be rejected by the government in its *White Paper* in response to De Lange is hardly surprising. And even though Sonn liked to claim that the Commission's recommendations had their "heart cut out" by the government,⁴² Chisholm denounced the De Lange Commission proposals:

Recommendations tallied with the 'total strategy' then in vogue: they aimed to modernise apartheid by improving urban social conditions in order to drive a wedge between urban and rural blacks, and between middle-class and working-class urban blacks.⁴³

³⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1981*, 335-336; SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1982*, 484, 488.

³⁶ Bot and Schlemmer, 12.

³⁷ Jonathan Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance in African education from the 1940s to the 1980s," in ed. Nkomo, 113. This single reference refers to the published version of the longer ASSA conference article cited elsewhere under the same title.

³⁸ Innes, 3-4, 6-7.

³⁹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 667.

⁴⁰ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 8.

⁴¹ Van den Heever, "Foreword," n.p.

⁴² For example, personal notes from: Franklin Sonn, address, Lawyers for Human Rights Conference, University of Stellenbosch,

⁴³ Chisholm, "From Revolt," 18.

Sonn later claimed that, "We walked out; the rest stayed to implement."⁴⁴

The committee which drew up the De Lange proposals proved to be an avenue for drawing educators from different "population groups" into an increased "professional" commitment. The South African Teachers' Council for Whites Amendment Act of 1984 embodied a further example of this. According to the SAIRR, the Act extended the council's period of office for two years, to March 1987, to "enable it, with other bodies, to investigate the establishment of a professional registration body for teachers of all race groups and professional councils for each race group".⁴⁵ This would attempt to entrench state-defined "professionalism". Popular resistance, however, overtook such efforts and the "registration body" never saw the light of day.

The process of state reform, while meeting with some success amongst teachers in upholding an ideology of "professionalism", heightened tensions within teacher politics by allowing room for greater political mobilisation on the part of the liberation movement. The state could not offer enough cooptive incentive to black teachers, who were part of communities of oppressed people. Continued attacks on black political groups, the "centralisation of white power," a more tightly controlled judiciary, and decreased press freedom demonstrated an ambiguity in state strategy.⁴⁶ The state continued its more heavy-handed approach to the teaching corps through continued repression, thus partially undermining its strategy of cooption.

During the turbulent years following 1980, state agencies did not hesitate to wield their considerable legislative control over the lives of teachers. The 1979 Education and Training Act defined teacher's "misconduct" as the criticising of the Department, among many other things.⁴⁷ A 1981 amendment to this Act invested the minister of education and training with the power, in misconduct cases, to determine the length of time that teachers should be denied appointment.⁴⁸ In March 1980, three teachers were dismissed for alleged involvement in the boycott.⁴⁹ One of the three, Elizabeth Everett, a white teacher fired from a Coloured school for attending a student meeting "just prior to the boycott", explained teachers' fear of their employers:

... "coloured" teachers can have their appointments terminated at any time during their five year probationary period when they are part of the temporary staff.... All teachers are well aware that no machinery exists for investigating or fighting unfair dismissal and that a teacher may be blacklisted without her/his knowledge and be permanently denied any opportunity of teaching in a government school.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Personal notes from: Franklin Sonn, address, Lawyers for Human Rights Conference, University of Stellenbosch, 4 August 1989.

⁴⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 682.

⁴⁶ Innes, 3-4, 6-7.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Peteni, 34.

⁴⁸ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1981*, 353.

⁴⁹ Walters, 68.

⁵⁰ Everett, 120.

Apart from fearing outright dismissals, there was further concern, for example amongst African teachers in August 1980, that teachers might be transferred to undesirable locations.⁵¹

The state publicly threatened teachers. At the end of July 1980, the DET stated that, "We have got to utilize teachers. They cannot sit around doing nothing and get paid for it." A few days later the DET added that during the boycott other departmental jobs might be found for teachers.⁵² Such threats clearly indicate the Department's frustration with what they regarded as teacher complicity. Taking such back-handed threats a step further, Minister Steyn announced in Parliament that:

If they do not restore order and normalize school attendance in this week, consideration will have to be given to closing schools, and in their interests, the future of the teachers will have to be considered.⁵³

The newly-created "own affairs" departments also harassed teachers who were antagonistic to their new employers. In 1984, for example, the deputy rector of Springfield College of Education compiled a "blacklist" of sixty-two new Indian teachers who had expressed opposition to the South African Indian Council (SAIC). The department then posted those teachers on the list to remote schools. The deputy rector admitted to compiling the list on the instruction of the rector of the college, and Mr de Klerk, then minister of internal affairs, said that an investigation of his department had discovered that the blacklist had indeed been prepared. The two "officers" responsible were transferred.⁵⁴ The tensions between established teacher groups and their respective departments will be further discussed below.

Continued pressure from students

During the boycotts of 1980, students expressed a "changed attitude" towards their education. They were dissatisfied.⁵⁵ As students in 1980-81 said, "The school and education is my salvation; I want to break with this low quality of life."⁵⁶ In 1980, however, Maurice contends that the students were "... not merely requiring identical curricula and syllabuses, as in the past, but making a radical demand for a total revision of the whole aim and purpose, the ideological orientation, and the content of their education."⁵⁷ A large number of students challenged teachers' former behaviour and attitudes which were no longer acceptable.

The challenge to teachers' authority was done, at least in part, with an alternative program in mind. As the student Committee of 81 -- which attempted to coordinate

⁵¹ Walters, 70.

⁵² Molteno, 140.

⁵³ Molteno, 58-59.

⁵⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 679.

⁵⁵ Maurice, "Some Aspects," 1-18 passim.

⁵⁶ Gibbs, 26.

⁵⁷ Maurice, "The curriculum," 18-19.

activities at Coloured schools during the 1980 boycott -- wrote in its "Manifesto" of 14 May: "We must demand an end to the teacher being the most important person in the classroom."⁵⁸ This demand was coupled with alternative education programs in schools, which served the dual function of educating students about relevant issues, and claiming the educational terrain.⁵⁹ Chisholm has suggested that in 1980, unlike 1976, students were involved "... in generating a pedagogy which questioned school hierarchies as well as the content and method of education."⁶⁰ Students "bombarde[d]" teachers with "continual questioning,"⁶¹ and, after the boycott one researcher noted that, "Every teacher with whom I spoke [fifteen in total] described pupils as far more 'assertive', 'questioning' or 'independent'."⁶²

As stated above, the students, as part of this process, began to look outwards towards their communities for support. This reaching outward increased student pressure on their teachers, particularly at a time when many student complaints -- focussing on the moral bankruptcy of their teachers, apart from pedagogical concerns -- would resonate within communities.

Molteno enumerates fourteen issues raised at a 13 March 1980 public meeting in Hanover Park of students, parents and teachers from Mount View and Crystal Senior Secondary Schools. The issues included drunk teachers, underqualified and unreliable teachers, and some teachers' practice of leaving schools on Wednesdays to place bets at the race course. Also, apparently, "Teachers had threatened that, if students did attend [the meeting], the security police would be called and they would be expelled."⁶³ More generally, educationist P.C. Luthuli wrote in 1982 that, "There is little doubt in the mind of every educator or educationist that an ill-qualified teacher force is ... likely to contribute to problems which have recently resulted in chaos in these schools because they do not understand or know which direction to take in leading their pupils."⁶⁴ The students involved in writing the "Inter-School Manual" during that time stated their position bluntly: "... they [teachers] are a misfit lot condemned to the Sewage Tanks of Athlone.... As a body, they cannot be trusted."⁶⁵

Such sentiments appeared in a variety of shapes and forms during 1980, but the message was always the same. The position of teachers was no longer unquestioningly accepted; the doubts raised in 1976 multiplied. As Molteno observed: "The authority of principals and teachers was removed overnight as students began to boycott."⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Quoted in Molteno, 91.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 7.

⁶⁰ Chisholm, "From Revolt," 15.

⁶¹ Henry Joubert, "Coping in a Crisis: a headmaster's case study," in eds. Millar and Philcox, 48.

⁶² Flederman, 33.

⁶³ Molteno, 29-30.

⁶⁴ P.C. Luthuli, *An Introduction to Black-oriented Education in South Africa* (Durban: Butterworths, 1982) 110-111.

⁶⁵ "Teachers - The Stillborn Radicals," *Inter-School Manual*, photocopied pamphlet (n.d.) n.p.

⁶⁶ Molteno, 125.

Students sought to influence teachers in more physically confrontational ways as well. Molteno offers a graphic example from Cape Town's African townships in 1980, where a crucial issue was the fourth term re-registration of all students demanded by the DET. During the night of 9 September, students "made examples of" one person from each of the four African high schools: a principal's home was burnt and his family terrorized; another principal's car was destroyed in front of his house; the windows of a teacher's house were broken; and a Langa student's windows were stoned. In a separate incident one week later, students killed a principal in New Alice.⁶⁷ In the following year, 1981, nine principals received death threats in the mail for supporting the government.⁶⁸ These incidents, if seemingly remarkable, were illustrations of the tensions which existed between students and teachers, and were extreme examples of ways in which students sought to influence teacher politics.

The growing influence of trade unions

Unions asserted indirect influence in the terrain of teacher politics by fostering a political climate premised on working-class ideology and class-consciousness. This posed a direct challenge to teachers' "professionalism". As trade unions influenced the broader liberation movement, so they influenced the pressure on teachers to abandon what were coming to be perceived as oppressive ideologies.

In 1979, the state legalised black trade unions through the Industrial Relations Act. In the same year, unity efforts amongst black unions led to the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). In 1979, through a series of bitterly-disputed strikes in the Cape Province, "community unionism" was born, and went on to assume an ascendant position in the union alliance.

The economic recession of the early eighties brought with it a massive increase in union activity. National union membership grew from 808,053 in 1979 to 1,406,302 in 1984. The number of strikes per year in South Africa increased from 101 to 342 between 1979 and 1981. Unions comprised an important force in the launching of the UDF in 1983. "In 1980," writes Lodge, "the strongest forces for mobilizing black protest and resistance were more often in the factories than in the townships, in trade unions rather than in political organizations."⁶⁹

The broader communities

Traditional assumptions within teacher politics were also influenced by other sections of the broader communities where teachers lived and worked. Civic organisations were one articulation of a community-based liberation movement. No fewer than thirty-two civic organisations, emphasising bread-and-butter issues such as transport costs and rents, formed

⁶⁷ Molteno, 146.

⁶⁸ Molteno, 149.

⁶⁹ Lodge, 28, 38-39.

in Cape Town's Coloured townships between 1980 and 1982. By 1983, and the launch of the UDF, the Western Cape could boast a strong civic sector.⁷⁰

Other sections of the community did not articulate themselves through organisations, but remained influential in the teachers' realm. Of crucial importance for teachers were parents, who asserted conflicting pressures on teacher politics.

Some parents fully supported their childrens' actions and demands. In 1980, an article in *The Capetonian* claimed: "A new sense of solidarity is the chief result of the mass decision to boycott classes. Parents, teachers and students have united in their struggle to achieve change -- in some cases for the first time." The article described an obstacle: "Meetings revealed a profound lack of communication between parents and teachers."⁷¹ With enhanced communication between students and their parents came enhanced pressure on teachers. Parents, too, wanted answers to hard questions about the positions of teachers.

Other parents, however, did apply pressure on teachers to ignore student calls. One parent, in a letter to a Cape Town newspaper, blamed teachers for the boycott, claiming that teachers wanted both higher pay and less work. A teacher, interviewed by Molteno, claimed that pressure from parents and, indeed, some students, had forced him/her to keep teaching during the boycotts.⁷²

Liberation organisations

Such developments took place in the context of a changing political terrain. In the years following 1976, the ANC experienced a period of increased support and reinvigoration. In the late seventies, the ANC escalated its guerrilla warfare, an example of which was the bomb attack on the SASOL plant in 1980.⁷³ This armed struggle, explains Hyslop, was attractive to the younger generation. About 4000 students left South Africa to join with the ANC's guerrilla activities after 1976: "In time some of them filtered back into the country, re-establishing more firmly the prestige and organisation of the ANC amongst the youth." After 1976, the ANC began to find widespread support amongst "the new political generation."⁷⁴

In the Western Cape, the ANC became the dominant force in liberation politics. "Before the 1980s" writes Bill Nasson, "the ANC had relatively little support in the Western Cape.... But the Soweto uprising and the protracted education crisis in the late 1970s exposed large numbers of Coloured youth to ANC political ideas and styles of expression; and the upheaval in the 1980s enabled the ANC, mainly through the activities

⁷⁰ Lodge, 40-41.

⁷¹ "Schools boycott -- why did it happen? Where will it end?" *The Capetonian* 2.8 (July 1980): 5. This article is based on interviews with parents, students, teachers and social workers.

⁷² Molteno, 63-64.

⁷³ Innes, 2.

⁷⁴ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 6.

of the UDF, to establish a hold on political loyalties in the region."⁷⁵ In other parts of the country, dormant Charterist organisations -- the Transvaal Indian Congress and the Natal Indian Congress, for example -- emerged,⁷⁶ just as the ANC's military exploits made it nationally more popular.⁷⁷

These developments had important implications for teacher politics and teacher unity efforts. Increasingly influential elements of the liberation movement espoused non-racialism, and completely rejected the implementation of the tri-cameral system of government in 1983. Established teacher groups who operated within the confines of the "own affairs" system were forced to question the political and moral efficacy of accepting these confines, and upholding their traditionally race-conscious "professionalism".

Embattled Teachers

Because of such student, departmental, and community stances, teachers' positions seemed to be as unenviable as in 1976. The principal of a junior secondary school wrote in 1981: "We teachers occupy perhaps the most invidious position imaginable and it would take the combined talents of Peter Weiss and Woody Allen to portray our almost bizarre, tragicomic role."⁷⁸ Another headmaster wrote of 1980:

Teachers were in fact very effectively excluded from the action, be it educative or otherwise. The initial stages of the boycott caused severe disorientation and temporary diminution of the teachers' status and self-esteem. Most teachers were simply left in a state of helplessness.... as pupils seemed to gain in self-confidence the teacher seemed to withdraw further.⁷⁹

One further observer, who interviewed fifteen teachers from nine schools, catalogued teachers' boycott-induced ills: their professional and personal identities, as well as their traditional authority, were threatened; communication with students had broken down; absenteeism and alcohol use were increasing; and the stress induced such physical traumas as ulcers and breakdowns. "Teachers seem," she concluded, "to have suffered extreme personal stress."⁸⁰

This unenviable position has been eloquently summed up by Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele in their book *Uprooting Poverty*, an overview of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty in Southern Africa, which took place in 1984. In describing teachers' "lack of morale", they claim:

... one of the most disturbing insights from the Carnegie Inquiry was the number of reports, seldom committed to paper, that were received of quite appalling breakdown in schools, with teachers often drunk, absent from

⁷⁵ Bill Nasson, "Political Ideologies in the Western Cape," in Lodge, et al, 214.

⁷⁶ Innes, 2.

⁷⁷ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 32. The ANC's military attacks increased from 44 in 1984 to 230 in 1986, to 322 in 1988.

⁷⁸ Brian O'Connell, "The Crisis of Authority in Schools," *Educatio* Conference Edition (1981): 8.

⁷⁹ Joubert, 43-44.

⁸⁰ Flederman, 39-40.

work, and (in some instances) assaulting -- even raping -- pupils. This loss of morale in what was long one of the most highly regarded professions amongst South Africans of all races has complex roots that take us to the heart of the South African crisis. For it has much to do with frustration, powerlessness, anger of the unfranchised [sic], combined with the ambivalence and loss of confidence that comes from attacks by schoolchildren who lash out at the teachers as the nearest symbol of an authority they reject. Caught between the government which pays their salaries and militant students intent on overthrowing the whole structure, teachers have little room to manoeuvre and many of them retreat under pressure from all sides into themselves where drink is often the only solace.⁸¹

Teachers' invidious positions led to an increase in the number of teachers who left the profession. Dr Gerrit Viljoen, the minister of national education, spoke in 1980 of the "crisis" of the shortage of teachers. An increasing number were leaving teaching to join private enterprise, he said, and the applications for student teacher bursaries and grants had dropped from previous years.⁸² In the following year, R. Thomas, the executive chairperson of the newly-formed progressive teacher group, the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), spoke of a worsening "critical shortage" of coloured and Indian teachers due to resignations.⁸³

Despite this malaise, to perceive teachers as being completely overwhelmed would be fallacious. Teachers and their organisations were challenged during the 1980 boycotts and their aftermath. Many teachers, both individually and organisationally, did not respond with resignation and apathy. The period 1980 to 1984 saw some creative response on the part of teachers, as well as significant questioning within established organisations.

Creative Response: The Teachers' Action Committee

During the 1980 boycott in the Western Cape many students decried teachers as "collaborators". Once again, however, we must move away from simple generalizations, and roughen the texture of teachers' terrain. There was growth and change during the boycotts. Teachers did, in some instances, overtly support the student boycott. Apart from the organised actions discussed below, at all of the community meetings teachers stated their support for students. And, according to Molteno, "Students at all schools had the support of at least a few teachers whom they characterised as 'progressive'."⁸⁴ This was in part due to a more politicized, younger generation of black teachers. In 1984, the Minister of Education and Training, Barend du Plessis, said that one-half of the teachers employed by the DET were under thirty years old. "In other words," he said, "we have young teachers, relatively inexperienced, and an older-than-average school population."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphela, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989) 144.

⁸² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1980*, 497.

⁸³ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1981*, 358.

⁸⁴ Molteno, 64,65.

⁸⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 658.

As the possibilities of the boycott became clear, even before the smoke dispersed, many activists began to understand the fundamentally important role teachers would have to play in re-shaping education. "Teachers," wrote one observer, "need support to channel this opportunity and build constructive change."⁸⁶ But even during the boycotts teachers were not without support; at least a group of teachers during the 1980 boycotts received it from the most obvious quarter: their own ranks.

During the third week of the 1980 boycott, a group of about 1200 teachers met several times, and established an ad hoc committee representing over one hundred schools. This ad hoc group became the Teachers Action Committee (TAC), and represented a fledgling attempt at a more radical, organised response to student boycotts within Coloured schools.⁸⁷ TAC was anti-government, pro-student, and it decided, at the third of its teachers' meetings in Cape Town on 1 May 1980, to "down tools".⁸⁸ Although this abortive attempt to show solidarity with student demands was called off after a week, and was supported by only a small number of teachers, it indicates the degree of teacher militancy present within TAC.

TAC, while comprising a relatively small group of teachers, had a large agenda. A TAC newsletter explained:

We need to create forums for discussing the tasks facing us, our role in the community, our stand against racism, our view on political developments in our country, the educational interests of our pupils and students, new ideas on teaching, the contents of the syllabi and ideas on solutions to the problems we face as teachers in an educational system based on a political ideology which we reject.⁸⁹

Further, the newsletter stated that, "Our schools should be run as democratic institutions in which parents, students and teachers have an equal voice."⁹⁰ In an article in the community newspaper *Grassroots*, a TAC member explained that, "The TAC was born of the need for alternatives -- alternatives to the status quo -- in the classroom, in the meeting place, in the community."⁹¹

To accomplish these broad goals, TAC organised itself into eighteen regions, produced **three** newsletters and a series of pamphlets -- on "A New Approach to Education" and "A History of Education in South Africa", for example -- and set up workshops and lectures. The workshops focussed on such aspects of education as, "How could we use

⁸⁶ Flederman, 40.

⁸⁷ In the Transvaal, parallel developments were occurring with the formation of the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) in May and June (preceded by the STAC). A NEUSA newsletter states: "During May 1980 a group of teachers and academics met to discuss the responsibility and role that could be played by educationists during that period of crisis in the educational arena. At this meeting, an interim committee was formed and set out to involve more teachers and ultimately to establish a non-racial union of teachers, academics, pupils and parents... the primary aim of the Union would be to work towards the establishment of a single non-racial education system which would be equal and appropriate for all in South Africa." *NEWSA* March 1981.

⁸⁸ This action came after 300 teachers downed tools in the Transvaal in April. Walters, 68.

⁸⁹ *TAC Newsletter No. 3*.

⁹⁰ *TAC Newsletter No. 3*.

⁹¹ TAC member, "New Teacher's Body Explains its Policy," *Grassroots* August 1980: 3, 15.

education for the benefit of the voteless people instead of preparing our students and pupils to become pawns of apartheid policies."⁹²

In interviews in 1990, DETU's Mr Mbekwa and PENATA's Mr Gqaji spoke of similar developments in Cape Town's African townships in 1980. A small group of teachers, elected from a teachers' meeting in 1980, also formed a Teachers' Action Committee (TAC). Mbekwa claimed that this DET school-based TAC met with students, who "were hard on us". He continued: "We had to prove our credentials. We had to undertake some actions like confronting the DET. Their [the students'] hatred lessened." Gqaji explained the PENATA was not pleased with this TAC in DET schools because "things were not done procedurally when working with the community". Mbekwa added that teachers in this TAC "had a paternalistic attitude to students". This small group of teachers in African townships thus began to tentatively respond to student challenges, but to respond from a "professional" position. While posing a threat to PENATA, according to Mbekwa, by "radicalising teachers", this TAC in DET schools illustrated the beginnings of change in teacher politics.⁹³

The stronger TAC, based in Coloured schools, appears to have been largely a reactive body. A need was apparent, for by the end of the second week, students were asking teachers to organise and join the boycott.⁹⁴ As students wrote in the "Inter-School Manual", "The Teachers Action Committee, like the Committee of 81, was an attempt to organise teachers during the crises."⁹⁵ An express purpose of TAC was to work with students, and the Committee. An 8 May 1980 statement by TAC declared: "We have demonstrated a unity of purpose between students and teachers."⁹⁶ "We have been without a voice," said one teacher at the second meeting on 29 April 1980, "and it is about time we show our solidarity with the students."⁹⁷ Shirley Walters has written that TAC was "established to try to help teachers analyse society in order to develop a new role for themselves."⁹⁸

A TAC member suggested a more active, rather than reactive, reason for the founding of TAC:

We have been asked: Are you a boycott organisation? The answer is simply no. The TAC was established ... during the pupils' boycott, yes. The TAC identified with the reasons for the pupils' boycott and their demands, yes. But its establishment was coincidental, inevitable.⁹⁹

The argument may be rhetorical, but the point suggests that progressive and radical teachers were ready to articulate a challenge to apolitical, traditional "professionalism".

⁹² *TAC Newsletter No. 3*; TAC member, 3,15.

⁹³ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

⁹⁴ Molteno, 59.

⁹⁵ "Teachers and Students," *Inter-School Manual*, photocopied pamphlet (n.d.) n.p.

⁹⁶ Molteno, 84.

⁹⁷ Molteno, 82.

⁹⁸ Walters, 98.

⁹⁹ TAC member, 3,15.

This challenge was articulated in part as opposition to the established association in Coloured schools. TAC and the teachers' meetings which formed it soundly rejected the CTPA as an established, conservative body organised along racial lines.¹⁰⁰ Van den Heever, the CTPA deputy president, himself admitted that, "... it was clear that there were a number of teachers who did not see the CTPA as providing a home for themselves in terms of the broader political agenda which they felt needed to be addressed quite fundamentally by teachers' organisations."¹⁰¹ He claimed in an interview that TAC comprised "teachers who did not belong to the CTPA",¹⁰² but such an assertion is reductionist. Teachers both within and outside of the CTPA's largely conservative constituency began responding to a radically-changing social and political climate.

The very nature of these initial responses, in relation to the creation of a crisis committee, made it difficult for TAC to survive. The meetings at which TAC was formed, wrote Molteno, "were a reflection of the intense pressure on teachers to take a public stand rather than of effective organisation. [sic] Much of what support for TAC there was, proved ephemeral." The militant rhetoric of TAC frightened some teachers, while others felt uncomfortable with TAC's rabid denunciation of the CTPA which was an effective teachers' association as well as an outspoken advocate of many of the ideals striven for by the students.¹⁰³ TAC's workshops, in fact, were attended by only a "few" teachers.¹⁰⁴ TAC disintegrated, in part because of victimisation of its leaders,¹⁰⁵ but, according to Molteno, especially after being perceived as arrogant by many of the students with whom it was trying to ally itself.¹⁰⁶

Although the TAC initiative was short-lived, it was an indication of growing teacher discomfort with the traditional "professional" style, and with non-involvement in the boycotts. Teachers wanted to reclaim their "voice", and their legitimacy which had been shaken in 1976 and 1980. TAC was a form of teacher empowerment. TAC emerged because of student pressure for greater teacher involvement in the boycotts, and as a reaction against an established teachers' grouping which appeared to some incapable of responding effectively to a new and militant situation within schools. TAC emerged, more generally, because the political turmoil of 1980 in Western Cape schools profoundly influenced teacher politics.

The Response of Established Teacher Organisations

While some teachers grouped together within the more radical TAC, others responded to the 1980 boycott, and the broadening liberation movement, *within* the ranks of the

¹⁰⁰ Molteno, 82-83.

¹⁰¹ Van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 3.

¹⁰² Interview with Randall van den Heever, 8 March 1990.

¹⁰³ Molteno, 85.

¹⁰⁴ Molteno, 85.

¹⁰⁵ Van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 3.

¹⁰⁶ Molteno, 85.

established organisations. The established bodies were still politically hampered by notions of "professionalism". But growing tensions within teacher politics, in the face of state reform and particular departmental pressures, took the form of tentative questioning and some public posturing for political credibility in the eyes of students.

African and Indian education

In Cape Town during the 1980 boycotts, PENATA remained quiet, perhaps in part because of its continuing low public profile. The Cape branch of TASA, like PENATA, did not publicly engage with the boycotts. It is interesting, however, that the Lenasia branch of TASA was the sole teachers' organisation publicly in opposition to the boycott. On 7 May 1980 it stated: "... the students have made their point.... The students should ignore all support for the continuation of the boycott."¹⁰⁷

Tensions were emerging from within TASA, however. In 1980, neither the director of Indian Education nor his deputy attended the TASA July congress in Durban, although the deputy was scheduled to deliver an address. This snub was thought to be a result of a teachers' meeting in Pietermaritzburg at which the director and his deputy were called upon to resign.¹⁰⁸ Further tension existed between TASA and the SAIC, which took control of Indian education in 1976. From the SAIC's inception, TASA had refused to deal with it. In October 1982, the power over promotion of Indian teachers was removed from the director of Indian education and vested in the SAIC. TASA condemned the change on the grounds that the SAIC was a political body. The chairperson of the SAIC, A. Rajbansi, demanded TASA's cooperation, threatening to withdraw TASA's stop-order privileges if it did not comply. The tension continued into the following year when, in June 1983, the SAIC required any communication from TASA to the Department of Internal Affairs to be channelled through the SAIC. Direct communication was prohibited.¹⁰⁹ This was a means of entrenching the SAIC's power over Indian "own affairs", and a method of forcing TASA to work with the SAIC.

Such tension exemplified the growing conflict between established organisations and their respective departments. Teachers were challenged to respond to the education crisis, and to reject the education system created by an *apartheid* state. TASA began to do so in the 1980s.

Coloured education

Amongst the few teachers' organisations in the Western Cape at the time, only the CTPA lent immediate and public support to the students' grievances, though not to their tactics. "It should ... be clear," Randall van den Heever wrote in *Educatio* in 1980, "that the

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Molteno, 89.

¹⁰⁸ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1980*, 490.

¹⁰⁹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1982*, 488; *Annual Survey 1983*, 448.

C.T.P.A. did not suddenly become aware of problems in teaching when pupils started boycotting, but that its involvement in the current climate of dissatisfaction is based on a commitment which the organisation has consistently carried out over the years."¹¹⁰ Its "involvement", however, was a matter of debate, both during and after the boycott. In 1980, with 17,000 members, the CTPA's strength lay in rural areas; Molteno claims it was "... weakest in the Cape Peninsula's southern suburbs where it was virtually denied consideration by teachers and students alike."¹¹¹ And historian Gavin Lewis writes that in 1980, "In the Western Cape, youth leaders sharply criticised the established Coloured political organisations [the Labour Party, the CTPA, and the TLSA]."¹¹² Criticism of the CTPA thus formed part of the students' broader political complaints.

The student pressure, pressure from within their membership, and teacher agitation expressed through TAC led to a CTPA/UTASA meeting in Bellville South on 3 May 1980. Five hundred teachers met and agreed unanimously upon a five point resolution, which denounced *apartheid* and detentions, called for a single education department, lauded the students' conduct, and requested "an urgent interview with the Prime Minister". No decision was taken about teachers' boycotting classes because "it was felt that it would be difficult to enforce a resolution in this regard".¹¹³ The CTPA response remained in the realm of rhetoric and negotiation.

The mandated meeting with Prime Minister P.W. Botha took place two days later, on 5 May. At the meeting, the UTASA/CTPA delegation supported the student demands. Sonn recognised the unpopularity of negotiation at the time, and declined to appear on television with Botha, thus refusing the state president the political mileage of appearing on television with a Coloured leader.¹¹⁴

The results of this meeting are unclear. Sonn later stated that he had met Botha "against the wishes of my community".¹¹⁵ And the Committee of 81 made their resentment known in their 14 May "Manifesto": "The suspension of the boycott has been decided upon by the students at all schools represented by the Committee of 81. We have not made our decision in response to PW nor because creepy crawly Sonn saw and negotiated with the regime against the wishes of the boycotting students."¹¹⁶ But van den Heever writes that, "At the end of the meeting the P.M. for the first time in S.A. history pledged his government to the principle of equality in education. He also appointed a commission of enquiry which would make an in-depth investigation of the ills besetting S.A. education."¹¹⁷ The CTPA thus implied that its meeting with Botha gave rise to the De Lange Commission.

¹¹⁰ Randall van den Heever, "Consistency or Opportunism: An Assessment of Teachers Involvement in the Current School Crisis," *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1980): 4.

¹¹¹ Molteno, 86-7.

¹¹² Lewis, 281.

¹¹³ *Cape Times*, 5 May 1980, in "CTPA Statements in the Press," *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1980): 6-7.

¹¹⁴ Molteno, 78, 79; *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1980): 6-7.

¹¹⁵ Personal notes from: Franklin Sonn, address, Lawyers for Human Rights Conference, University of Stellenbosch, 4 August 1989.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Molteno, 92.

¹¹⁷ Van den Heever, "Foreword," n.p.

Further, in 1980 a group of CTPA teachers associated themselves with students at a funeral of two youths whom the police had killed.¹¹⁸ This gesture, both symbolic and practical, underlines the ambiguous, because shifting, stance of the CTPA. "In 1980," writes van den Heever, "... with the outbreak of protracted unrest at high schools in the Western Cape the focus shifted from the service conditions of teachers to the political struggles of the community."¹¹⁹

Despite such claims, the fundamentally "professional" and reformist approach of the CTPA remained clear. It continued cooperating with the state. In 1982, Sonn attended the Labour Party's Eshowe conference and was involved in their dramatic decision to participate in the tri-cameral parliament. The *Sunday Times* reported that he subsequently sent a message of goodwill to a Labour Party congress in Port Elizabeth, a message which Hendrickse announced.¹²⁰ This illustrated the reform-minded, cooperative approach the CTPA maintained towards the state during these years.

Franklin Sonn later said of 1980 that, "We never actively supported the boycott," for the CTPA did not agree with such tactics although they stood behind the grievances. The CTPA was caught between anxious parents and members who worried about the children, and militant students. "We felt our role as teachers was to use the pressure the students placed on us to bargain for improvement, for reform - but the kind of reforms the Government couldn't afford to make," said Sonn.¹²¹ The somewhat ambiguous response of the CTPA, reflected by Sonn is this enigmatic statement, was therefore geared entirely towards non-confrontationist negotiations. They participated in a the De Lange Commission, and, at their 1981 June conference, they passed the following resolution under the general heading, "The Crisis of Authority in Schools":

This conference wishes to appeal to students and pupils to refrain from negative and destructive acts of disrespect, unruliness and vandalism where it occurs. We are furthermore distressed to note that pupils are at times playing havoc with their futures and inflict personal harm on themselves in an effort to give vent to frustration and rage, and we want to implore them to secure their futures by diligent study and disciplined scholarliness. Our education and preparation for the future is after all not expendable.¹²²

White education

While the government's reform strategy took shape in black schools, interesting developments were occurring in white schools. In white education, the government's reform plans aimed to include parents in virtually all aspects of schools, from finance and admission to curriculum development. As educationist Michael Ashley has written, "The

¹¹⁸ Molteno, 115.

¹¹⁹ Van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 3.

¹²⁰ *Sunday Times*, 16 June 1985.

¹²¹ Molteno, 86.

¹²² "Conference Resolutions: The Crisis of Authority in Schools," *Educatio* Conference Edition (1981): 31.

same developments have not occurred in black education.... the state cannot rely on the same degree of loyalty and therefore cannot delegate in the same manner."¹²³ But the expected loyalty was being called into question as early as 1982 with the formation of a "progressive" students' and teachers' group called the Social Issues Group (SIG). Primarily a discussion group, SIG created a forum for those who worked and studied within Christian National Education to more fully understand their place within *apartheid* education, and to begin articulating a rejection of some of its tenets. It was a small group, but significant for the terrain in which it operated. SIG, in fact, presaged EDASA.¹²⁴

Established white groups also began to question their past "professionalism" in the face of their own education "crisis". In 1980, dissatisfied with the government's failure to announce any salary increase the previous year, white teachers held protest meetings, and threatened to strike or refuse participation in extra-mural activities. The white Federal Council of Teachers' Associations went so far as to claim that teachers might form a trade union.¹²⁵ In the Transvaal in 1984, just such a circumstance arose, albeit on a small scale. A group of white teachers formed the South African Teachers Guild, and affiliated to the conservative Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). Although the English-speaking, established teachers' body, the TTA, attacked the guild as harmful to "professional" status,¹²⁶ the guild illustrated the ambiguity of teachers' "professional" locations, even in more privileged white schools.

Established Teacher Unity Efforts

One indicator of the tensions within teacher politics was an increased desire for teacher unity on the part of the established organisations. Federal unity was a way for the established bodies to come to terms with non-racialism and the increasingly restive political climate. It was clear that their isolation within racially segregated departments of education was no longer acceptable to many students, others within the liberation movement and some teachers. The teacher unity efforts of these years reflected tentative moves towards a more credible and acceptable position in the eyes of the liberation movement and some members of the teaching corps.

Specifically, the black organisations were finding it more and more difficult to cooperate as they had in the past by focussing solely on things "professional". This became more apparent following 1980. A 1981 meeting of representatives from "all population groups" to discuss the establishment of a statutory body for salary negotiations for all teachers was unsuccessful because of the African and Coloured groups insistence "that such an issue could not be discussed in isolation from political and socioeconomic issues".¹²⁷

¹²³ Ashley, 17-19.

¹²⁴ Rossiter, n.p.

¹²⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1980*, 494.

¹²⁶ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 655.

¹²⁷ Van der Merwe and Murphy, 119.

This did not mean that cooperation between the established organisations was impossible. Unity efforts continued. UTASA and ATASA met and established a new unity organisation, the Joint Council of Teachers' Associations of South Africa (JOCTASA). Formed in April 1980, it sprang from "... the need for greater unity between the oppressed community of teachers." Randall van den Heever, a participant in the talks, explained: "The main purpose of the emergence of JOCTASA was for a united thrust by the 80,000 teachers in the council towards the realisation of education equality *and full citizenship* for all South Africans."¹²⁸ Its stated aims were thus overtly political, straying from matters strictly educational.

JOCTASA's first conference was held in East London between 8 and 9 January 1981. It can be seen as an attempt by these two established bodies to grapple with their new terrain. SAFTA had only recently fallen apart. And during the boycotts both ATASA and UTASA were often criticised as racist, so cooperation could only help their popular reputations. Also, the conference theme was "Education for the Future." 1980 showed how unpredictable that future might be. "Many speeches at the J.O.C.T.A.S.A. conference forced teachers away from clichés and slogan-slinging," reported the *Argus*, "...into a more sophisticated and profound look at the sort of education system they really want." The students had asked hard questions, and put teachers in difficult places. This new teacher unity effort was a tentative answer.¹²⁹

In 1983, as part of this effort, UTASA drew up a Charter for Teacher Unity (see Appendix A) which was adopted by JOCTASA, and later accepted by other organisations.¹³⁰ This document rejects *apartheid*, calls for a single education ministry and a single teachers' union, and a "democratic system of education," among other things. However, there are two aspects of the Charter which illustrate the inherent "established" bias. Firstly, it states: "... we undertake to enter into discussions with the existing educational authorities on matters requiring immediate and urgent attention." Secondly, it claims: "Given the essentially separate basis of education policy and practice in South Africa, we realistically recognise and appreciate ... the difficulties inherent in establishing and effectively organising and operating teachers' associations on a practically open basis...."¹³¹ Though rhetoric was shifting, actions remained consistent with the federalism and government-cooperation of the past.

This was further illustrated in 1984 when JOCTASA called representatives of all South African teachers' organisations to Cape Town. The gathering discussed a national, non-racial organisation, and even established a steering committee. But NEUSA, a radical

¹²⁸ Van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 4. Emphasis added.

¹²⁹ *Teachers in Unity*, UTASA Annual Magazine 1981: 15-17. *Argus* 12 January 1981, quoted in this journal.

¹³⁰ "Other organisations" claim by J.F. Steyn, "The Present and Future Role of Teacher Organisations in South African Education," in ed. Ashley, 90-92.

¹³¹ *J.O.C.T.A.S.A. Charter for Teacher Unity*.

teachers' body which enjoyed credibility within the liberation movement, rejected the initiative on the grounds that the proposed charter for unity did not go far enough.¹³²

Conclusion

While much can be said about educational and political gains won during the 1980 boycott, the reality was more grim. After the boycott, Molteno reports, "... teachers were relieved still to have their posts and preoccupied with getting through the syllabus."¹³³ It is true, however, that a fire had been started, and it continued to burn.

1980 was a significant year for teachers in that once again they found the ground shifting beneath their feet as students, the state and elements of the liberation movement attempted to influence them and guide their activities. Established organisations grappled in their own, professional ways, and a new organisation, TAC, illustrated the latent frustration and potential of radical teachers. In 1980, students demanded a new role of teachers,¹³⁴ both educationally and politically. Students emphasised the need for unity between workers, teachers and themselves.¹³⁵ And, as Maurice writes, the boycotts "... brought a renewed sense of political awareness to a whole community of people, perhaps grown lethargic and indifferent because of frustration, disillusionment, and a feeling of hopelessness."¹³⁶

Such awareness was not lost in the years between 1980 and 1984. There were attempts at state reform, at cooption, but the pressures "from below" were also strong. Teachers, too, were discovering a voice, a new role they could, and had to, play in their communities, not just in their schools. So organisations shifted. All the revolutionary strains of 1980 recurred in 1985, only more forcefully.

¹³² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1984*, 655.

¹³³ Molteno, 1.

¹³⁴ Flederman, 34.

¹³⁵ For example, Molteno, 60.

¹³⁶ Maurice, "Some Aspects," 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY IN 1985-1986

The period 1985 to 1986 was arguably the most significant moment in Western Cape teacher politics in the decade. Prior to 1985, elements of the growing liberation movement, primarily students, challenged teachers to break with past "professional" attitudes and to work against rather than with the state. Teachers responded tentatively, reeling from the shock of a new, aggressive student authority and from a changed school realm. In 1985, the atmosphere at schools and in communities drew teachers into more militant action, and increased their antagonism towards *apartheid* education and the state. Traditional, established teacher organisations remained vocal and visible, and adopted increasingly political positions, but they remained within the framework of conventional *apartheid* society. The "professionalism" they espoused implied a commitment to cooperation with state structures. In 1985, elements of the liberation movement challenged teachers to end such cooperation, and to engage in overtly "anti-professional", political action within the context of the popular resistance movement.

The smaller, "emergent" teacher unions formed in 1985 in the Western Cape -- and their national allies such as NEUSA -- maintained highly visible positions because they moved within the high profile context of resistance politics. The disparity between these emergent groups and traditional teacher bodies posed dilemmas for the ANC and its allies as they sought to influence teacher politics. Should the liberation movement bestow "legitimacy" on its allies within the emergent teacher unions for loyal revenue, or should the ANC attempt to draw the established associations onto its side at the risk of alienating its emergent teacher allies? The pressure from the resistance movement, in 1985-1986, was shaped around both options. But already it was becoming clear that winning the allegiance of the established organisations was moving to the centre of the ANC's strategy.

Gradually, teachers adopted more "political" positions. The specifics of the education and liberation struggles also influenced the race and class aspects of teachers' locations and "professionalism": the community-based rebellion upheld a working-class ideology and more forcefully espoused non-racialism.

Teachers, under pressure to respond, but also taking advantage of an opportunity to articulate their own antagonism to oppression and exploitation, asserted themselves within the liberation struggle. In 1985, within the context of a violent wave of unrest and state repression, "progressive" teachers in the Western Cape rallied to create a number of highly politicized teachers' unions after the fashion of NEUSA in the Transvaal. These unions -- WECTU, DETU and, in a different vein, EDASA -- established immediate credibility within a changing liberation movement, and asserted an organised, radical voice in teacher politics.

The "emergent" unions, as they came to be known, posed a direct challenge to "professionalism" and to the established teacher associations, which also felt increasing pressure from community-based liberation organisations to abandon state-supported notions of "professional" behaviour. The MDM-aligned National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in particular adopted a strategy of cooperation with the established groups, rather than a principled rejection of them, in order to allow them an opportunity to work with elements of the opposition movement.

The birth and growth of the emergent unions, and the shifts in the established bodies, dramatically altered teacher politics in the Western Cape. These changes both built on teachers' tentative shifts in 1980-1984, and set the stage for the unprecedented unity efforts of 1988-1990. Political forces operating within and outside schools gave progressive teachers the space to boldly articulate their own antagonism to the mechanisms of *apartheid*. The changed political context afforded the small numbers of teachers within emergent groupings a much louder political voice, within the context of the liberation movement, than the established groups whose "professional" voice was effectively silenced. The progressive teachers influenced both the "professionalism" of the established associations and teacher unity efforts.

The significance of these events warrants two chapters in this study. Chapter Four will provide the essential structural background, analyzing the sociopolitical forces affecting teacher politics in the Western Cape at the time. Chapter Five will examine teachers' action and reaction, within both the emergent and established groups. Teacher unity efforts of this period will also be discussed as an indicator of seemingly intractable obstacles to a unified profession, and of continued tensions within teacher politics.

Western Cape Context: The Political and Social Climate

The political and social unrest in the Western Cape during 1985-1986 challenged the apolitical, middle-class and ethnically-defined nature of "professionalism". In a climate of rebellion, in which non-involvement in struggle was often deemed "collaboration" with an oppressive state, perceived teacher passivity became increasingly unacceptable to students and those committed to democratic, political organisations. In a worsening economic climate, which partially fostered a powerful trade union movement, the middle-class values of teacher "professionalism" became increasingly untenable. Further, as the education struggles of the recent past merged more completely with the broader political struggle, teachers were challenged to reject *apartheid* education and the *apartheid* distinctions between their "professional" associations. The state's response, which escalated the conflict undermining teachers' "professional" positions, shattered a myth of "professional" autonomy.

The economic climate, fueling rebellion, looked bleak. In 1984 South Africa experienced its worst recession since 1929, and by 1985 the rising unemployment was at its

highest rate ever.¹ Inflation stood at sixteen percent, and this would rise to over twenty percent in 1986.² The cost of basic foods went up greatly, and GST increased twice.³ Matriculants were finding themselves in the ranks of the urban unemployed, side-by-side with those who had dropped out of school. As a result, there was growing restiveness amongst students and teachers about the efficacy of the education being offered by the state.

The Western Cape had been "politically quiet" except around the Coloured elections in 1984. Student revolt began after the first, limited State of Emergency was imposed on 20 July 1985. The Emergency, as initially declared, did not include Cape Town,⁴ but DEC (HoR) schools were boycotting within a week. Cape Town's DET schools joined soon after. The upheaval lasted for three months, and involved street battles, consumer boycotts and severe repression.⁵ At schools, a "cycle of violence" was set in motion. Peaceful protest led to violent suppression, which in turn led to student anger, and more police brutality.⁶

Bundy claims that "the state's heavy-handed coercive measures" were the *main* force behind the rising student-youth militancy.⁷ "In the 1985 emergency," writes Glenda Kruss, "government seemed to have lost control; it acted wildly in all directions to crush opposition political activity."⁸ The total deaths in that year's political violence numbered 879.⁹ Officially, 201 children died at the hands of police. Information gathered in this regard caused the Lawyers for Human Rights in New York to decry state action as a "war against children".¹⁰

The state detained thousands of people during the unrest, including many children. When the government extended the State of Emergency to include the Western Cape on 26 October 1985, the police detained about 400 people.¹¹ Nationally, people under twenty-five years old accounted for more than sixty percent of those detained. "Unimaginable mental, psychological and emotional damage has been inflicted on thousands of children," writes Linda Chisholm.¹²

State repression continued feeding into the cycle of violence. *The Weekly Mail* reported in November: "In short, the townships of Cape Town have become the frontline in a war of attrition being waged by people who see themselves as guerillas in a struggle

¹ An unofficial estimate put it at thirty-seven percent of the economically active population. Innes, 2. Bundy, however, offers a more cautious fifteen-to-thirty percent of the workforce. Bundy, "Action, Comrades, action!" 209.

² Innes, 2, 6.

³ Chisholm, "From Revolt," 17.

⁴ It was extended to much of South Africa by 7 March 1986. A second, national State of Emergency became law on 12 June 1986. Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 235.

⁵ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," *passim*.

⁶ Wilson and Ramphela, 149.

⁷ Bundy, "Action, Comrades Action!" 211.

⁸ Kruss, 173.

⁹ Thompson, 229.

¹⁰ Wilson and Ramphela, 149.

¹¹ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 56.

¹² Chisholm, "From Revolt," 19.

against the government."¹³ Trained guerillas were also at work, as the number of insurgency attacks around the country increased to 136 in 1985.¹⁴

Once again the schools were at the centre of the national liberation struggle. According to government figures concerning 1985, seventeen "Black" (as opposed to "Coloured" and "Indian") schools were destroyed; thirty were "seriously damaged"; and 247 were "slightly damaged."¹⁵

During 1985, writes Hyslop, "the student movement had shifted its focus from educational demands as such to broadly political ones." As students worked to build strong student coordination,¹⁶ trade union action increased, with 290 strikes throughout the country involving 240,000 workers in 1985.¹⁷ Bonds were being formed between different elements of "the struggle". Communities were being drawn in, and were empowering themselves. Between 1985 and 1988 in Greater Cape Town, about 145 new organisations were established, almost twice the number established in the first half of the decade.¹⁸ Such activities heightened local militancy, which was also partly enhanced, according to Bundy, by "the growth locally of popular support for the ANC...." He wrote that, "'Charterist' sympathies and allegiances spread rapidly, especially in some DEC schools where they had previously scarcely existed."¹⁹ An ANC strategy in the eighties was to, "Make the system unworkable and the townships ungovernable."²⁰ The "system" included schools.

Although the militancy of students has been criticised -- because it fostered disunity, for example²¹ -- Hyslop maintains that during the period between 1984 and 1987, "Student protest provided the detonator for an explosion of worker and community struggle which posed the dominant classes with their greatest ever challenge."²² This time of great social and political upheaval created a much greater sense of the possibility of liberation.

A divided region

As discussed in the Introduction, communities in the Western Cape remained divided along *apartheid* lines. This continued having profound influence on teacher politics, since both emergent and established organisations operated within distinct education departments. Since other sections of their communities were only beginning to overcome *apartheid*

¹³ *The Weekly Mail*, 8-14 November 1985: 7.

¹⁴ Thompson, 229.

¹⁵ *South African Yearbook 1987-1988* (Pretoria: South African Bureau of Information) 515.

¹⁶ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 16.

¹⁷ Thompson, 229.

¹⁸ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 47.

¹⁹ Bundy, "'Action, Comrades, action!'" 213.

²⁰ Innes, 12. This was, interestingly, at the same time as South African business met with the ANC, and, "hopes for a peaceful change soared." Anthony Sampson, *Black and Gold*, discussed in *The Weekly Mail*, 27 February to 5 March 1987.

²¹ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 20. Parents withdrew children from schools; unemployed youth took advantage of the militancy; "homelands" were unaffected.

²² Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 1.

distinctions, the pressure on teachers to retain ethnic identities was strong, and affected "professionalism" and unity efforts. However, there were contradictory pressures in the form of greatly increased support for the non-racialism of Charterist organisations.

It was difficult for teachers and their organisations working within different contexts to unify. The differences were particularly marked between black and white schooling. The 1985 boycotts, also, followed different courses in African and Coloured areas. "While all students were initially part of [a single, organising body], conditions in the different areas later on (particularly after the extension of the State of Emergency to the Western Cape) tended to separate the students [into their distinct education departments] and forced them to work autonomously," wrote the Western Cape SAIRR in 1986.²³

During 1985 and 1986, students and popular organisations, like the UDF and the NECC, worked at overcoming these divisions between African and Coloured groups. Ihron Rensburg, the national secretary of the NECC, said in a 1986 interview that the Western Cape "... is divided, with one CEC [Crisis in Education Committee] based in the coloured community and another in the African community. This is not an ideological but a geographical divide, which we are trying to resolve."²⁴ Supporting this statement, Graeme Bloch, Cape Town activist, explained that in early 1986 there were three student groupings: the Joint SRCs in township schools; the Athlone Student Action Committee; and a loose alliance of Student Action Committees in Coloured areas like Mitchell's Plain and Mannenberg. Bloch wrote that a UDF education conference in March 1986 "... helped to consolidate a drive for unity within student ranks...."²⁵

In 1985, the divisions were firmly entrenched and remained an important aspect of the school boycotts that year. Like students, teacher groups, including the new unions, remained separated by departmental distinctions, and the different schooling contexts these created. But there were efforts to resolve the differences, and powerful elements of the liberation movement worked to overcome the distinctions, and thus undermine a racially-based teacher "professionalism".

The repressive atmosphere within disrupted schools, created by students, youth and the state, greatly influenced teacher politics, urging teachers away from the limited political profile of "professional" passivity. The specific factors which engendered the change in teachers' locations described in Chapter Five included student action, a strong community-based liberation movement, and the state's dual strategy.

²³ SAIRR, Cape Western Region, "The Political Crisis as it affected Educational Institutions under the Department of Education and Culture (House of Representatives), mid 1985 to early 1986," Regional Topic Paper 86/2, February 1986, 5. Henceforth referred to as SAIRR, CW Region.

²⁴ Ingrid Obery, "People's Education: Creating a Democratic Future," [interview with Ihron Rensburg] *Work In Progress*, 42 (May 1986), in *People's Education*, 12.

²⁵ Bloch, 118-9.

The Boycott and Student Challenges

In 1985, during a time of great soul searching, a CTPA editorial posed the following question: "We should ask - why is it that our young appear hesitant to enter the future which we, as teachers, hold out to them? ... Where have we failed to fight the right battles so that our children might confidently remain at their desks?"²⁶ These questions reflect the significant influence student action had over teacher politics. Students rejected teacher attitudes and ideologies which were theoretically premised on concern for students' best interests. These attitudes and ideologies, in order to become more acceptable to large numbers of students, needed reshaping by teachers.

The atmosphere within schools during 1985-1986 politicized teachers more than in preceding years; the revolt had become protracted. Student action helped create an atmosphere of conflict and repression. Teacher politics shaped during a time of student quiescence were ill-suited to a time of student rebellion.

The Western Cape school boycotts: a chronology

In order to situate teachers within a clearer context, a brief outline of events in Western Cape schools during 1985-1986 will here be undertaken. Such a chronology does not exist in the current South African education literature. Once again, it must be stressed that developments in African areas are vastly underrepresented in the available sources, such as newspaper accounts from the period.

During 1984 students nationally began a more coherent programme of organisation than during 1976 to 1983. Students organised within the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), and, along with unemployed township youth, built youth congresses. "[T]he students of 1984," writes Hyslop, "especially through COSAS, had a real national organisation that could make calls to action which could evoke a national response."²⁷

The Western Cape students became involved in a national wave of political protest at the time of the Coloured elections on 22 August 1984. Hundreds of thousands of mostly Coloured students boycotted. Though the boycott faded in the Western Cape, in the Transvaal and Eastern Cape student protests continued. "It was the riots and police killings that took place in the `Vaal Triangle' industrial area's townships at the beginning of September [1984]," writes Hyslop, "and the subsequent deployment of the SADF in this area that transformed school boycotts into a leading sector in a national political struggle."²⁸

The following year the Western Cape became a fiery centre of student revolt. As in the rest of the country, student boycotts which focussed on education grew to encompass broader political issues. The murders of four Eastern Cape community leaders, including the teacher Matthew Goniwe, and the imposition of the first State of Emergency on 20 July

²⁶ "Editorial: The CTPA and the Boycotts," *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1985): 2.

²⁷ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 13.

²⁸ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 12-14.

1985, rekindled student protests. Although neither event directly impinged upon Western Cape schools, students and university students organised an 8000-strong rally at UWC on 26 July. Police used sjamboks to eject 200 Mitchell's Plain students from their buses en route to the rally.²⁹ At the rally, students demanded the reinstatement of a Scottsdale High School teacher, an end to the Emergency and the withdrawal of troops from townships. Support for a boycott was voiced.³⁰ On 29 July, a boycott of classes began.³¹

The Weekly Mail reported that students boycotted in solidarity with the UDF and with detained student leaders, and in opposition to "gutter education".³² At the beginning of August, participants included about forty schools, colleges and universities in African and Coloured areas. The escalating cycle of violence had begun, as police doing battle with students in Gugulethu, for example, killed one youth and injured others.³³

A separate Western Cape student organisation, formed within the initial three weeks of the boycott,³⁴ grew into a "strong" coordinating organisation,³⁵ comprised of representatives from schools, colleges and universities.³⁶ It began as the Inter-Schools Coordinating Committee (ISCC), representing about twenty-five schools in and around Cape Town. Along with educational issues, the ISCC made such broadly political demands as the release of political prisoners, withdrawal of troops from the townships and the resignation of community councillors, MPs and "collaborators" in general.³⁷ The ISCC became the Western Cape Student Action Committee (WECSAC), made up of ten action committees, and encompassing forty educational institutions.³⁸ At its peak, this number grew to eighty.³⁹

The growth of WECSAC meant that the Western Cape was not as affected by the 26 August 1985 banning of COSAS as other parts of the country. Some areas now had no effective coordinating body,⁴⁰ although Hyslop claims that COSAS was "... too elementally powerful a movement to be stopped by decapitation...."⁴¹

Three days after the COSAS banning, on 29 August, a watershed event occurred for the 1985 unrest in Cape Town. A peaceful march to Pollsmoor Prison, asking for the release of Nelson Mandela, and attended by thousands of students, was first banned and then violently dispersed by state forces: twelve people were killed and many injured. Over

²⁹ SAIRR, CW Region, 4.

³⁰ *The Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985: 3.

³¹ SAIRR, Cape Western Region, 4.

³² *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 October 1985: 7.

³³ *The Weekly Mail*, 2-8 August 1985: 6.

³⁴ SAIRR, CW Region, 4.

³⁵ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 16.

³⁶ SAIRR, CW Region, 4.

³⁷ *The Weekly Mail*, 2-8 August 1985: 6.

³⁸ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 153; SAIRR, CW Region, 4.

³⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985: 3.

⁴⁰ Muller, 106-7.

⁴¹ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 16.

the next three days, the official death toll rose to thirty-one, with more than 150 injured.⁴² The SAIRR claimed that, "A new and ugly tone had been set."⁴³

Continued confrontations maintained a high level of violence. Students organised within the Inter-Regional Forum (IRF), which took the place of WECSAC, and which had the organisational advantage of excluding tertiary institutions. The IRF wanted the boycotts to continue. "Normal schooling" was rendered even more difficult by the 15 October "Trojan Horse" killing of three school children in Athlone, and the mass funerals which followed.⁴⁴ On 26 October, the State of Emergency was extended to Cape Town. In the Western Cape, the SAP's divisional commander, Brigadier Swart, gave orders which supplemented the Emergency, particularly aimed at containing school unrest and mass funerals.⁴⁵ Johan Muller writes that this put SADF personnel in schools and produced "a fraught learning environment and a situation of constant confrontation and provocation".⁴⁶

As the year-end approached, the examinations became a burning issue. In the middle of October, as the Director of Education and Culture (HoR) in the Western Cape told forty-four Coloured-school principals that examinations would go ahead as scheduled,⁴⁷ the Athlone Student Action Committee - representing sixteen high schools - and twelve Mitchell's Plain schools decided to boycott their examinations.⁴⁸ While some teachers, notably within WECTU, fully supported this decision, and paid for their refusal to invigilate with dismissals and salary docking (see Chapter Five), many parents did not support the examination boycott.⁴⁹ The IRF, however, came out on 28 October in favour of not writing.⁵⁰

The SADF supervised most internal examinations, and many matriculation candidates wrote at the Goodwood Showgrounds, Wingfield military base, and the Cape Corps base at Faure. Internal exams at Cape schools were described by *The Weekly Mail*: "The sight of Casspirs and buffel armoured personnel vehicles surrounding schools has become commonplace. Soldiers and policemen stand guard inside the grounds."⁵¹

Of the 25,584 students who registered for Standard 10 in DET schools around the country in 1985, only 10,523 wrote the examinations. Of the 25,584, only 19.1% passed on the ordinary grade; 5.2% obtained their matriculation exemption.⁵² An official DEC (HoR) statement of its own results claimed that 11,052 wrote the examinations (out of an undisclosed possible number), of which 64.4% passed, and 1,381 obtained matriculation

⁴² *The Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985: 3.

⁴³ SAIRR, CW Region, 6.

⁴⁴ SAIRR, CW Region, 14-16.

⁴⁵ Kruss, 174.

⁴⁶ Muller, 106-7.

⁴⁷ *Cape Times*, 17 October 1985.

⁴⁸ SAIRR, CW Region, 16.

⁴⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985: 3.

⁵⁰ SAIRR, CW Region, 17.

⁵¹ *The Weekly Mail*, 15-21 November 1985: 7; see also SAIRR, CW Region, 17.

⁵² Muller, 107.

exemption. In the Wynberg, Athlone and Bellville (but excluding Mitchell's Plain) regions, 53.9% of registered students sat for their examinations.⁵³

The crisis in black schools, especially around the examinations, manifested itself in poor results and an unsettled beginning of 1986. Due to the absenteeism and low results, schools faced a massive dilemma concerning promotions. Initially, the DEC (HoR) took a hard line on matriculants, sending letters to matriculation students at the end of 1985 saying that re-registration for March supplementary examinations would only be considered with affidavits and statements from principals swearing the December exams had not been written.⁵⁴ On 2 January 1986, the Labour Party leader Allan Hendrickse extended the deadline for re-registration to 14 January.⁵⁵

Internally, marks were added to students' results to facilitate promotion in a large number of schools.⁵⁶ In 1986, too, many students seem to have simply promoted themselves.⁵⁷ Belatedly, on 7 February Carter Ebrahim, the minister of education and culture (HoR), announced that planned promotions of those who participated in the boycott would be allowed, and that schools could opt for re-examination at their discretion.⁵⁸ In the Western Cape generally students returned to school on 28 January in line with an NECC call, emphasizing the suspension, not the end, of the boycott.

Despite the return to school, protest action continued. In late February, for example, forty-one Bonteheuvel students were detained for two days, which prompted a 2,500-strong protest meeting, and added to student militancy in that area.⁵⁹ In April, after the March NECC conference in Durban, 100,000 students were boycotting country-wide.⁶⁰ Students at ID Mkhize and Sizamele High Schools, in Gugulethu and Nyanga, rejected a minor government concession by burning their free exercise books because they were too thin.⁶¹ By the time the second State of Emergency was declared in June 1986, the DET closed seventy-three schools, located mainly in the Eastern Cape, due to "endemic" boycotts. The school re-opening was postponed; re-registration was required; new security measures were implemented. The Department excluded more than 300,000 students around the country who refused to re-register.⁶²

While these violent eruptions and militaristic state interventions beleaguered Cape Town's black schools during the latter half of 1985, their white counter-parts remained largely unaffected. Some political action did occur, however, on a very small scale. On 4 September 1985, for example, a group of about twenty white school students staged a peaceful march in central Cape Town, and were met with characteristically brutal

⁵³ *Sunday Times*, 5 January 1986.

⁵⁴ *Argus*, 3 December 1985.

⁵⁵ *Cape Times*, 3 January 1986.

⁵⁶ *Cape Times*, 4 December 1985.

⁵⁷ *The Weekly Mail*, 14-20 February 1986.

⁵⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 14-20 February 1986; *Cape Times* 7 February 1986, quoted in SAIRR, CW Region, 23.

⁵⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 28 February to 6 March 1986.

⁶⁰ Muller, 109.

⁶¹ *The Weekly Mail*, 11-17 April 1986.

⁶² Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 25.

repression at the hands of police.⁶³ Also at the beginning of September, a small group of white students meeting clandestinely in an Observatory home formed the Pupils Awareness and Action Group (PAAG). Their initial campaign involved a three-day stay-away called in solidarity with black students, involving "alternative programs" at UCT. Gareth Rossiter, a teacher-activist involved in the initiative, wrote that about sixty students participated.⁶⁴ *The Weekly Mail* offered a more conservative estimate of twenty students who joined the boycott. Around one hundred students attended an afternoon meeting protesting, among other things, "tight governmental control over 'white' educational system".⁶⁵ There was another small progressive group of mainly teachers in which white students became involved, wrote Rossiter, called the Students' Information Group (SIG). It was a resource and discussion group, and worked in about twenty English-language high schools in 1985 and 1986. "At the height of [SIG's] activities," Rossiter stated, "the working group was not larger than fifteen people although the network of supporters was much wider."⁶⁶ PAAG, along with the End Conscriptio Campaign (ECC) and the Black Sash, took up a protest against the cadet system in white schools, campaigning under the slogan: "Schoolyard today, townships tomorrow."⁶⁷

White schools were not affected by the unrest in black schools, although some white teachers and students offered small gestures of solidarity and support. Teachers in black schools, on the other hand, lived with conflict, tensions and violence.

Student influences on schools and teachers: repression and liberation

The general climate created by protesting students immediately affected teachers. The boycotts fostered both a repressive and liberating atmosphere in schools. Teachers reassessed their "professional" attitudes and behaviour within schools because teachers were subject to both student and state aggression -- as witnesses and as victims -- and because the renewed student militancy brought with it a sense of the possibilities for change.

Student aggression against "professional" teachers, challenging them to engage with an ideology of liberation within schools, took several forms. Firstly, students took advantage of drastically altered school dynamics to break free of previous social strictures which had been eroding since 1976. Whether this meant ignoring teachers, defying them, or verbally haranguing them, the effects were similar: teachers were stripped of previous authority and credibility. During 1985, students "humiliated" teachers.⁶⁸

Secondly, the new student authority did not allow room for a questioning of its tactics. Many students asserted a policy of "non-collaboration", an example of which was

⁶³ SAIRR, CW Region, 7-8.

⁶⁴ Rossiter, n.p.

⁶⁵ *The Weekly Mail*, 13-19 September 1985: 8.

⁶⁶ Rossiter, n.p.

⁶⁷ *The Weekly Mail*, 7-13 February 1986.

⁶⁸ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 35.

their refusal to write examinations at the end of 1985. Duncan Innes wrote of this phenomenon: "... in effect the boycott strategy has come to be regarded as virtually inviolable. Thus, not only do most popular organisations refuse to participate in official state structures, but they also refuse even to negotiate directly with the state."⁶⁹ Established teacher organisations premised their "professional" activity on cooperation with the state in administering education. Students, however, refused to cooperate, and challenged teachers to adopt a similar strategy.

A third aspect of student action in schools which rendered teachers most fearful was the use of violence. In 1980, teachers were sometimes targets of students' physical attacks. This circumstance repeated in 1985. Students and youth engaged in acts of physical violence directed at teachers and the property of teachers around the country, both in and out of schools. *The Weekly Mail* recorded, for example, that the homes of two Madibane High School teachers in Soweto were attacked.⁷⁰ *The Cape Times*, further, reported that Soweto teachers had not gone to their schools for several days "for fear of injury" from youth.⁷¹ Students petrol bombed some principals' homes, and in February 1985 threatened to burn the homes of teachers who were contemplating accepting their departmental transfers from Cradock to Graff-Reinet.⁷²

Randal Peteni, ATASA president, summarised the important role that fear of students played in facilitating change within teacher politics:

Most of our negotiations must take the form of fighting for a just society, for an end to discrimination and apartheid, otherwise we are in danger of becoming the targets of the anger of our own students, just as all supporters of the system, such as the community councillors, and the police, have become the victims of our angry young people.⁷³

This comment, made at a conference in 1985, illustrated a shift in ATASA's public position. This "professional" association had begun to distance itself from its former, collaborationist positions, if only publicly at this point.

Aggressive student action, however, was only one aspect of the boycotts which facilitated change within the location of teachers, who also gained some inspiration from their students. The boycotts fostered a greater sense of the *possible* within schools. As teachers looked for ways of reestablishing a constructive position within schools, they took some cues from the protesting students.

Students in 1985 had built more effective organisations than in 1980. COSAS nationally and WECSCO locally serve as examples of this. More effective student organisation based on broader political aims resonated with teachers more than the past rejection of education, and won teachers' respect. It was through these organisations that students consulted with teachers, and, as DETU chairperson Andile Jonas said in an

⁶⁹ Innes, 11.

⁷⁰ *The Weekly Mail*, 4 to 10 October 1985: 11.

⁷¹ *Cape Times*, 18 October 1985.

⁷² Dlamenze, 73, 77.

⁷³ Peteni, 37.

interview with *South* in 1988, student consultations with parents and teachers persuaded teachers to support students.⁷⁴ Bundy reminds us, however, that in 1985, "The unity sought across generational lines was repeatedly stretched thin, and on occasions frayed."⁷⁵

Student organisations, further, took up teachers' issues as well as their own. Student demands at the time often included the release of teachers from detention, and the reinstatement of suspended and dismissed teachers. WECSCO, for example, took up an issue of central concern to teachers organisations: the reinstatement of all teachers dismissed, suspended or transferred during the 1985 end-of-year repression.⁷⁶

Student action at schools also drew teachers towards a redefined "professional" location by continuing to reject state education while implementing alternative education programmes. One analyst suggested that students were, in fact, engaged in *power-struggle*, making demands, for example, via SRCs about school policy and teachers' behaviour.⁷⁷ At the very least, the State education reform strategy was rendered ineffectual.⁷⁸ The teachers and the departments no longer dictated the form and content of learning. Western Cape students, in particular, concerned themselves with alternative education. "Organised programmes" began after July 1985,⁷⁹ with both SRCs and the nation-wide COSAS encouraging discussions on education and strategy.⁸⁰ WECSCO called for a continuation of alternative education programmes during the boycotts.⁸¹ Teachers were drawn into such programmes, and began to play a significant role.

Finally, students influenced teacher politics by broadening both students' aims and their strategies. Student protests focussed on broad political concerns, and often fell within a growing alliance of elements within the liberation movement. Students were no longer isolated at the forefront of the movement. The broadened base of liberation politics allowed more room for teacher involvement, and increased the pressure from all sides. "Should the authorities not listen to our demands by March," explained a WECSCO representative at the beginning of 1986, referring to an NECC-initiated strategy, "then in consultation with parents, teachers and workers, we will decide on a national basis what further action to take."⁸²

Community Action and Alliance Politics: the Influence Over Teachers

Teacher politics were influenced a great deal by the broader political alliance developed between students, parents, community-organisations, elements of the liberation movement

⁷⁴ *South*, 13 October 1988.

⁷⁵ Bundy, "Action, comrades, action!" 216.

⁷⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 17-23 January 1986.

⁷⁷ Chisholm, "From Revolt," 16.

⁷⁸ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 18.

⁷⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 October 1985, 7.

⁸⁰ SAIRR, CW Region, 4.

⁸¹ *The Weekly Mail*, 31 January to 6 February 1986.

⁸² *The Weekly Mail*, 31 January to 6 February 1986.

falling into the increasingly popular Charterist camp, and unions. Teachers lived in communities which began to espouse a politics of "people's power". This challenged teacher organisations to assert a newly-defined "professionalism" or risk political isolation. "The slogan one often hears now," reported *The Weekly Mail*, "is, 'The Western Cape will liberate South Africa.'"⁸³ Activists from many sectors believed that "victory is certain," and that the state could indeed be beaten by "people's power".⁸⁴

Alliance politics became firmly rooted in contemporary political strategy focussing on people's power,⁸⁵ as students were drawn into broader community-based struggle. *The Weekly Mail* reported in October that, "... what has the authorities worried is that student/pupil action seems to be arousing perceptible sympathy in the community as a whole".⁸⁶ Ian Moll echoed this belief, contending that an important qualitative difference between the uprisings of 1985 and their predecessors was that: "education struggle had become rooted in communities as a whole".⁸⁷ Many people in 1985 were prepared to confront police; they were less afraid.⁸⁸ Bundy stated that student-youth perceptions of their own achievements included a recognition of the need for alliances with the working class, and the linking of "struggles over educational grievances" with "broader political objectives...."⁸⁹ In Bontheuwel, for example, the students' coordinating body prioritized organising and mobilizing parents by May of 1986.⁹⁰

The communities' unofficial re-opening of some schools closed by two departments served as a "highwater mark" of this unity around schools.⁹¹ On 6 September 1985, the DEC (HoR) closed 464 Coloured schools and colleges in the Western Cape. The DEC (HoD) also closed its only high school in Cape Town. This act angered some parents and teachers, as well as students, who refused to accept the HoR DEC's planned reopening of schools at the end of the official September holiday.⁹² While the *Cape Times* claimed that the closure "... politicizes the parents, who are paying taxes to have their children educated,"⁹³ *The Weekly Mail* claimed that, "Parents and teachers threw their weight behind the students' struggle."⁹⁴

Indeed, both progressive teachers and parents joined students on 17 September 1985 as thousands unofficially "re-opened" their schools. Many were dispersed by police without incident, though Rylands High School -- in the Indian department -- was

⁸³ *The Weekly Mail*, 8-14 November 1985, 7.

⁸⁴ Alan Fine and Eddie Webster, "Transcending Traditions: Trade Unions and Political Unity," in eds. Moss and Obery, *South African Review* 5, 260.

⁸⁵ Bundy, "'Action, comrades, action!'" 212.

⁸⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 October 1985: 7.

⁸⁷ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 62.

⁸⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 25-31 October 1985: 12.

⁸⁹ Bundy, "'Action, comrades, action!'" 216.

⁹⁰ *The Weekly Mail*, 16-22 May 1986.

⁹¹ Bundy, "'Action, comrades, action!'" 212.

⁹² *The Argus*, 30 September 1985; Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 56; SAIRR, CW Region, 9.

⁹³ *Cape Times*, 11 September 1985, quoted in SAIRR, CW Region, 10.

⁹⁴ *The Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985: 3.

successfully re-opened.⁹⁵ At Alexander Sinton Secondary School in Belgravia, 173 people were arrested.⁹⁶ Police briefly detained twenty-five teachers and ten students in Grassy Park.⁹⁷ Then, in an act of continued defiance, the official school re-opening on 1 October was ignored as more than 5000 students met at UWC, chanting ANC slogans. A student at the meeting said: "What is different is that now the youth have faced the authorities."⁹⁸ Also, it was significant that the youth had faced the authorities with the support of much broader elements of the liberation movement, including teachers.

A central element in the broadening alliance was the involvement of the trade union movement. The unions continued to impact teachers indirectly by injecting class discourse into the liberation movement, thereby continually undermining teachers' "professional" assumptions about their class locations. "More prominent in the discourse than in 1976 or 1980 is the language of class struggle, class alliances, and working-class leadership," wrote Bundy of 1985.⁹⁹ The trade unions moved more fully into the national democratic struggle. For example, COSATU, formed in 1985, opted to join the NECC as part of "national co-operation between COSATU and other progressive organisations," said a COSATU office-bearer in 1986.¹⁰⁰

There are at least two distinct traditions within South Africa's union history. One, the "community unionism" described in Chapter Three, comprises a "national-democratic tradition," which focuses on the need for a multi-class alliance under the leadership of the ANC. The second tradition, characterized as "shop-floor unionism", did not engage in broader political movements for fear of dilution and of sacrificing true workerist goals. In 1983, many of the former unions affiliated to the UDF.¹⁰¹ During the first half of the eighties, there was a gradual shift away from "shop-floor unionism" in favour of "community unionism".

In 1985 and 1986, unions became increasingly involved in community-based protest politics, particularly as the general political climate changed.¹⁰² Unions engaged with both national political questions as well as the student-led township revolt.¹⁰³ "Finally," two union analysts claim, "it was the process of intensified struggle, where workers confronted the crisis in the townships daily, rather than in refined debate over the problems of 'populism', which marked the decisive break with political abstentionism." The unions increased willingness to work together, and to work with community groups, led to the formation of COSATU in December 1985.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵ SAIRR, CW Region, 11.

⁹⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985: 3.

⁹⁷ SAIRR, CW Region, 12.

⁹⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 4-10 October 1985: 3.

⁹⁹ Bundy, "Action, comrades, action!" 214.

¹⁰⁰ Ermtzen, 312.

¹⁰¹ Fine and Webster, 257.

¹⁰² Fine and Webster, 260.

¹⁰³ Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, "The re-emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa?" in eds. Cobbett and Cohen, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Fine and Webster, 259.

COSATU demonstrated a commitment to the national liberation struggle with an early 1986 visit to the ANC in Lusaka. A joint ANC-SACTU-COSATU statement firmly aligned COSATU with the national democratic struggle: "As a representative of our working class, COSATU is seized with the task of engaging the workers in the general democratic struggle, both as an independent organization and as an essential component of the democratic forces in our country."¹⁰⁵ COSATU would extend this commitment within teacher politics towards the end of the decade through its involvement in the NTUF.

Broadened community involvement in asserting a politics of "people's power" which rejected cooperation with the state had some harsher effects as well. Teachers, in this vein, had reason to fear continued "professional" engagement with state structures. In 1985 and 1986, community-members murdered several hundred people considered collaborators. State President Botha said that between September 1984 and April 1986, "508 people, mostly moderate blacks, were brutally murdered by radical blacks," and arson damaged or destroyed more than 6000 township buildings.¹⁰⁶ "Many of these acts," writes Neville Alexander, "were the consequences of maturing political and socioeconomic conditions of heightened class conflict."¹⁰⁷ Powerful elements of the liberation movement drew a distinction between "collaborators" and those people committed to a working-class struggle.

Groupings of teachers, starting with NEUSA in 1980, and extending to the new unions of 1985, moved within the latter context, and can therefore be seen as part of the liberation movement which pressurised the established teacher associations into reassessing their location and legitimacy. The established groups also needed to resist the threat of teacher defection to the emergent teacher unions.

The NECC and People's Education

One of the most significant developments of 1985 and 1986 in the educational arena, and specifically for teacher politics, was the formation of the NECC. The NECC worked within community-based politics to create an alternative education programme in the form of what came to be known as People's Education. From its inception, the NECC recognized the importance of including teachers in the process of developing People's Education, and of resisting the state's oppressive educational agenda. The NECC thus included both emergent and established teachers' groups in its deliberations and structures. For the first time, a powerful element of the liberation movement did not reject established teachers' organisations and their entrenched "professional" ideologies. Rather, it sought to influence those bodies to change their attitudes towards the current education system and crisis, and their locations within the conflicted education arena. The NECC utilized strategies of debate and negotiation. It also challenged teachers to involve themselves in

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Lambert and Webster, 31.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Innes, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander, 180.

Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs), the crucial mechanism for the implementation of People's Education.

Established in the middle of the education crisis of 1985 as the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee (SPCC), this body organised a consultative conference at the University of the Witwatersrand in December 1985. In preparation for the conference, the SPCC held discussions with various groups, including teacher organisations,¹⁰⁸ and eventually invited 160 organisations of various types to attend.¹⁰⁹

The SPCC defined three tasks for itself. Firstly, it attempted to involve parents in the crisis. Secondly, it aimed to provide leadership and direction for the various student movements. To this end, an SPCC delegation met with the ANC in Harare on the eve of the conference to gain support for its rejection of the slogan "liberation before education". Thirdly, the SPCC hoped to unify teachers and students.

These goals were combined in the SPCC's "People's Education for People's Power" campaign, which challenged and redefined education rather than simply protesting against it.¹¹⁰ In his keynote address at the December conference, Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa spoke of "... drawing on the anger and drive for action of thousands of people who reject their present misery, towards concrete actions and activity"; and taking the struggle "... to places or arenas not previously penetrated."¹¹¹ The conference agreed to a list of short-term demands, and decided to meet again in March 1986 to assess whether their demands had been met.

In March, the NECC conference in Durban comprised regional representatives from parent, student and teacher organisations. This highlighted the fact that the NECC was, as NECC National Secretary Ihron Rensburg stated, "a specialized educational organisation of the people...."¹¹²

In March the NECC again focussed on uniting various elements of the education struggle, and Zwelakhe Sisulu suggested in his keynote address that students merge into a broader community struggle rather than maintain their position at the forefront. To facilitate this, and in complete concord with the December initiative, the NECC established a formal network of student, parent and teacher organisations, and PTSAs.¹¹³ Hyslop points out that, "... the NECC had succeeded in convincing the majority of students to organise themselves within the schools rather than move back to indefinite boycotts."¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ "Report on National Consultative Conference on the Crisis in Education," SPCC conference, University of the Witwatersrand, 28-29 December 1985, in *People's Education*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Obery, 9.

¹¹⁰ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 21-22.

¹¹¹ Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa, Keynote Address, in "Report," in *People's Education*, 7.

¹¹² Obery, 9.

¹¹³ Muller, 108-109. On the alliance between students and other forces facilitated by the NECC, see Richard Levin, et al, "The specificity of struggle in South African education," in eds. Unterhalter, et al, 240.

¹¹⁴ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 25-26.

This was despite the fact that the NECC adopted a strategy which allowed it to negotiate with departmental authorities.¹¹⁵

The NECC maintained its aim to smooth the troubled waters between teachers and students.¹¹⁶ To this end, the SPCC and then the NECC specifically targeted ATASA, and, through its two leaders, Peteni and Dlamlenze, drew the conservative organisation towards the progressive movement. There was, in fact, ATASA representation on the SPCC delegation which met with the ANC in December.¹¹⁷ This controversial alliance drew ire from progressive teachers, but it allowed Zwelakhe Sisulu to speak of more than just progressive groups in his March keynote address when he said: "... teachers are coming into the fold of the people.... We now have to ensure that this process is accelerated, that teachers fully identify with the aspirations and struggles of the people."¹¹⁸ As a political group the NECC wanted an *organised* profession aligned to it, working to spread its message and implement its ideas.¹¹⁹ The envisioned vehicles for this would be a united, progressive teachers' union, and a network of PTSAs.

Those encouraging PTSAs saw these significant, school-based groupings as fulfilling several functions. On one level, as Bundy explains, they were an attempt to bridge gaps and facilitate communication. "The question of cooperation across generations," he writes, "recurred frequently. Time and again, leaflets and speeches by youth and student militants stressed to their comrades the desirability of making common cause with their parents. The formation of PTSAs was an important attempt to realise this."¹²⁰ Lungile Daba, chairperson of the Joint PTSAs in the Cape Town area, also explained how PTSAs had to "... increase the critical awareness of parents on questions which affect the education of the child."¹²¹

Fundamentally, proponents saw the possibilities of utilizing PTSAs as a more democratic way to control schools. Muller explains how the NECC regarded PTSAs as "shadow school management committees," which would deal with crucial educational issues, such as vetting "curricular proposals and curricular materials."¹²² The Western Cape SAIRR agreed with this assessment of their potential, stating: "The PTSAs aimed to replace the existing school committees which excluded students and were not representative of the communities from which the students at a particular school were drawn."¹²³ The PTSAs could also be seen as an important tool for the implementation of People's

¹¹⁵ Jon Campbell, "The NECC: Doing Battle with the DET," [interview with Eric Molobi] *Work In Progress* 45 (November/December 1986), in *People's Education*, 17; Levin, 124.

¹¹⁶ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 35; Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 21.

¹¹⁷ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 35-36.

¹¹⁸ Zwelakhe Sisulu, "People's Education for People's Power," Keynote Address, NECC, 29 March 1986, *Transformation 1* (1986), in *People's Education*, 109.

¹¹⁹ For a list of NECC goals, see Ashley, 48-49.

¹²⁰ Bundy, "Action, comrades, action!" 212.

¹²¹ Lungile Daba, "The Parents Teachers Students Associations (PTSAs)," *Sash: Special Education Focus* 31.2 (September 1988): 32.

¹²² Muller, 111.

¹²³ SAIRR, CW Region, 10.

Education. Ihron Rensburg said that, "The Crisis in Education Committees and eventually the Parent-Teacher-Student Associations will lay the foundations for future education structures. In some cases they have already taken on local education responsibilities."¹²⁴

Another important aspect of the PTSAs revolved around the roles teachers played in them. Relying on progressive teachers for their success,¹²⁵ PTSAs also sought to mobilise teachers who were reticent to engage in "political" struggle. "For those of you struggling on the education front," said Sisulu in his March NECC keynote address, "your task is to deepen people's control over education. This means strengthening democratic teachers organisations..., setting up SRCs in every school, and parent, teacher, student committees to control education in these schools [sic]."¹²⁶ During 1985-1986, the PTSAs which existed served to increase contact and cooperation between teachers and parents. They remained primarily crisis organisations, however, and proved difficult to maintain. Educationist Michael Ashley, writing later when such PTSAs were "common" stated: "Their effect is to impress on teachers that they are part of the community they serve, hence breaking down the hierarchical distinction between the well-educated and the less well educated...."¹²⁷ Teachers' traditional "professionalism" relied on hierarchy and status. PTSAs attempted to redefine "professionalism" into a less status-conscious ideology.

The PTSAs met with some success, especially in the Western Cape where a strong PTSA network was established in Coloured schools.¹²⁸ By the end of 1985, there were twenty-six PTSAs in the Western Cape, which helped the area to cope with the banning of COSAS, and to avoid a myopic focus on single-issue grievances.¹²⁹ The Western Cape regional report to the December SPCC conference stated that these roughly twenty-six PTSAs would launch a federation in January.¹³⁰ Matiwana, Groener and Walters' survey of all voluntary organisations in the Western Cape during this period lists "PTSA" formed in 1985 with "18 affiliates," and a Western Cape Federation of PTSAs, launched the following year.¹³¹ The interim committee for the formation of the PTSA Federation was operational even before the December conference. In mid-December it released a militant statement telling students not to apply for the March supplementary examinations; asking for the reinstatement of all victimised teachers, the release of detainees, the withdrawal of the SADF and the SAP from schools and townships; and demanding that the 1985 final examinations be declared null and void. Since many students had not written examinations,

¹²⁴ Obery, 8.

¹²⁵ One analyst claims that the PTSAs were "dependent" on "teachers unions (preferably one, representing all teachers)." Michael Gardiner, "Liberating Language: People's English for the Future," *History Workshop*, Wits, February 1987, in *People's Education*, 57.

¹²⁶ Sisulu, 40.

¹²⁷ Ashley, 49.

¹²⁸ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 21.

¹²⁹ Muller, 108.

¹³⁰ "Regional Reports: Western Cape," in "Report", in *People's Education*, 23.

¹³¹ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 84-134.

and others wrote under difficult conditions, the PTSA Federation demanded that the results be scrapped.¹³²

Such militant stands, along with their undisguised challenge to state educational structures for control of schools, made the PTSAs very unpopular with the authorities. Although a ruling by the Supreme Court gave them the right to continue meeting, the DET maintained a right to bar them from schools.¹³³ Molobi said near the end of 1986 that the State of Emergency had hurt PTSAs.¹³⁴

With or without fully operational PTSAs, however, People's Education would prove an important influence on education and teacher politics in the following years. Wolpe and Unterhalter write: "The transformative role of people's education was not, in the first place, seen to be in the content or character of people's education but rather in its use as a means of mobilising and organising teachers, students and parents as a political force in a particular sphere of the struggle for national liberation."¹³⁵ "... [I]t is intimately linked to the wider political struggle," wrote Peter Randall, director of Teacher Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.¹³⁶ People's Education has meant many things to many people. But, pragmatically, it was soon realised that educational transformation would occur within schools, utilizing existing structures. As Father Mkatshwa said in his keynote address to the December SPCC conference, "... current schools must be taken over and transformed within...."¹³⁷ All those parties interested in implementing a version of this ideal recognised the absolute necessity of securing teachers' cooperation.

One analyst suggested the difficulty in grappling with the nebulous concept of People's Education: "... there is no brief answer to the question, 'what is People's Education?', for it is quintessentially developmental, a process involving entire communities, and which is being explored in the teeth of ferocious opposition."¹³⁸ The guiding philosophy would focus on a democratic community-based education aimed at dismissing authoritarian pedagogy in favour of relevant, "creative-thinking" practices. This challenged teachers to re-shape their entrenched attitudes about "professional" teaching and curriculum development.

Beyond this, the political aspects of People's Education remained clear. Black Sash writer Helen Zille specified that, "It represents perhaps the most significant shift in resistance strategy this decade...." She continued:

In essence, the NECC, with the backing of the ANC and the most important internal resistance movements, was opting for transformation

¹³² *Argus*, 17 December 1985; *Cape Times*, 19 December 1985.

¹³³ Editorial comment, *Sash: Special Education Focus*, 32.

¹³⁴ Campbell, 17.

¹³⁵ Harold Wolpe and Elaine Unterhalter, "Reproduction, reform and transformation: the analysis of education in South Africa," in eds. Unterhalter, et al, 11.

¹³⁶ Peter Randall, "Getting Down to Brass Tacks," *Leadership SA* 6.2 (1987): 68.

¹³⁷ Mkatshwa, 12.

¹³⁸ Gardiner, 56.

from within the present education system rather than the revolutionary goal of making education ungovernable.¹³⁹

Another analyst, Johan Muller, explained that People's Education's "evolution" during the conferences was a "... movement from a strategy of potentially militant struggle which temporarily has to forfeit education, to a strategy of emancipatory education as an *alternative* to militant struggle."¹⁴⁰

For many, including many teachers, the "political" nature of People's Education rendered it frightening or inappropriate. Others, too, found fault with its ideological base. Kallaway, for example, believes it to be a repetition of liberal education theory, one which did not include an essential reconsideration of education and its role and possibilities in a capitalist society.¹⁴¹ However, the importance of the movement cannot be denied. As Hyslop persuasively argues, it "... saved the student movement from devouring itself and gave it a renewed role in the political conflict." People's Education offered students a motivation to return to schools, formed the basis of non-boycott tactics, and established space for discussion of alternative curricula.¹⁴²

It was within this last area that responsibility rested on teachers. "People's Education for People's Power ... redefines the role of the teacher in the community," said Gardiner.¹⁴³ And some teachers did choose to break with former "professionalism" and redefined their role. Randall van der Heever wrote: "... the call for People's Education challenged [the teacher] to a more direct involvement in the struggle for an alternative society." He specifically mentioned methodology and alternative curricula.¹⁴⁴ The pressure exerted on teachers to join this developing process came mainly from the NECC and its allies within the democratic movement. In 1986, also, African students were demanding that teachers work in progressive groups to facilitate People's Education.¹⁴⁵ Such students, along with the NECC, realised what Ken Hartshorne articulated:

No post-apartheid education will be possible without post-apartheid teachers: changes in the control of education will inevitably come about by political means; new policies, instructions, curricula and syllabuses can be introduced by political fiat; but, in the end, teachers remain the most potentially powerful group of change agents, particularly if they were to be freed from present constraints.¹⁴⁶

As Rensburg said in an interview, "We will have to rely particularly on teachers currently involved in democratic teachers organisations, as the most effective people to implement

¹³⁹ Helen Zille, "People's Education: the irony and the tragedy," *Sash* 30.4 (February 1987): 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ Muller, 110.

¹⁴¹ Peter Kallaway, "Education and the State: From Mass Education to Bantu Education to People's Education. Some Preliminary Notes," in eds. Douglas Young and Robert Burns, *Education at the Crossroads* (Rondebosch: The School of Education, UCT, 1987) 52.

¹⁴² Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 21, 26.

¹⁴³ Gardiner, 57.

¹⁴⁴ Randall van den Heever, "The Role of the Teacher in the 'Struggle,'" in *The People Shall Govern*, booklet (Kasselsvlei: CTPA People's Education Publication, December 1989) 9-10.

¹⁴⁵ Chisholm, "From Revolt," 15.

¹⁴⁶ Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 131.

people's education."¹⁴⁷ Rensburg was highlighting the crucial alliance between the NECC and progressive teacher groups such as NEUSA and WECTU. This alliance within the context of popular struggle pressurized established teacher bodies to cooperate with these liberation organisations or risk alienation from an increasingly popular liberation movement.

The transition from past practices to a new ideology would not be easy for teachers. "While the NECC stressed participatory, non-authoritarian learning," writes Hyslop, "the teaching profession was steeped in authoritarian practice."¹⁴⁸ This emphasises the conservatism of teacher politics, including a traditional anti-democratic pedagogy. The gradual shift in teachers' understandings of their location in a politicised society was mirrored by a shift in their understandings of their teaching practice. The NECC and progressive teacher groups sought to erase the "professional" distinction between the two -- politics and pedagogy -- but, as Hyslop pointed out, this would prove very difficult.

The State's Repressive Response

The state remained the primary antagonist of the growing community-centred revolt, and thus continued to create a contradictory tension within the realm of teacher politics. The state utilized its battery of control mechanisms to enforce a "professional" ethic amongst teachers. The Minister of Education and Development, Gerrit Viljoen, at a graduation ceremony of the Sebokeng Teachers' Training College in March 1986, said that the strength of teachers lay in "professionalism" and in an avoidance of politics. Teachers, he reminded the graduates, were not political appointees.¹⁴⁹ This "professionalism" implied a rejection of "political" activity, a maintenance of middle-class status and the upholding of divisions between "population groups". State attempts to contain teacher political activity, however, had the converse effect amongst some teachers who found it difficult to maintain "professionalism" in the context of heavy-handed repressive measures directed at teachers. Also, in the face of state violence directed at students, some teachers could not abide the complicity of their education departments in the harassment of students.

Despite this contradictory effect of repression, the state continued during 1985 and 1986 to use both its security apparatus and "own affairs" departments to quell the rising tide of teacher political activity.

Violence burgeoned in the Western Cape as the antagonism between state and communities heightened, and teachers were caught within this context. Teachers at Kasselsvlei Senior Secondary reported: "A Casspir rode our school fence completely flat and police followed, firing teargas, rubber bullets and birdshot after people trying to escape"; and a teacher was shot with birdshot "as he tried to hurry children into classrooms

¹⁴⁷ Obery, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 27.

¹⁴⁹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1986*, 440.

when police stormed the school grounds."¹⁵⁰ Burning street barricades crossed roads in some townships, and petrol bombs replaced some stones. At the beginning of September, almost thirty people were dead in the Western Cape, and 238 had been arrested.

Unfortunately, reported the Western Cape SAIRR, "... the police response to the escalating violence and their own inability to control it came in two rather different ways: the beginning of a clampdown on news reporting and the use of live ammunition."¹⁵¹ State repression was, if anything, more severe than in previous years.

Within the context of escalating battles and some activists' inflated sense of the possibilities of change, teachers more readily defied the state, and the state, in turn, more readily strove to impose tighter control. The state, as it lost control over schools, struck out at teachers as agents who had failed to maintain discipline. Also, teachers were sometimes blamed as *provocateurs*. The state was, in many respects, under siege, and it fought back. If, ironically, the methods used sometimes put greater distance between the state and teachers, this was because in this time of crisis the state often overreacted.

In August 1986 Ken Hartshorne wrote that the state "... regards teachers as employees... and is claiming total ownership of their thoughts, actions and behaviour."¹⁵² The myth of "professional" autonomy, upheld by established teachers' organisations, was difficult to maintain. It is instructive that the most recent phase of teacher-state relations in England, according to British educationist Gerald Grace, has been the disruption of a "... social democratic and professional consensus and the return of a politics of confrontation (1970s-1980s)."¹⁵³ Such confrontation, as in South Africa, undermines assumptions of "professionalism," possibly irreparably replacing them.

Confrontation occurred as security forces worked to repress teacher activity. Firstly, troublesome teachers were often detained. On 17 October 1985, for example, police armoured vehicles surrounded a school in Bellville South, where they proceeded to detain three teachers because of "undesirable" educational charts and newspaper clippings on their classroom walls.¹⁵⁴ On 20 November, in Lansdowne, police detained three teachers in front of their colleagues and students, after the police, claimed a local police spokesperson later, "... were called in when teachers prevented pupils from writing examinations."¹⁵⁵ By the end of November, of the about 500 people detained in the Western Cape, at least forty were teachers.¹⁵⁶

Along with such detentions came bannings. Both individuals and organisations were banned. By the first day of October, the Coloured education department had prohibited all student and teacher bodies not recognised by the department from meeting or functioning at

¹⁵⁰ *The Argus* 30 August 1985, quoted in SAIRR, CW Region, 7.

¹⁵¹ SAIRR, CW Region, 8.

¹⁵² Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 131.

¹⁵³ Grace, 198-199.

¹⁵⁴ *Cape Times*, 10 October 1985.

¹⁵⁵ *Cape Times*, 21 November 1985.

¹⁵⁶ SAIRR, CW Region, 19.

schools.¹⁵⁷ The larger state apparatuses went further on 27 October, banning the meetings of one hundred Western Cape organisations, including teachers' groups, such as WECTU, and combined bodies such as the PTSA's.¹⁵⁸ By 10 January the following year, fifteen individual teachers had also been banned in the Western Cape.¹⁵⁹

The security forces cooperated with state education departments as an overall state strategy was developed. It was a time, claimed an activist-teacher, when "Teachers were more afraid of the inspectors and administration than of the police."¹⁶⁰ There is some evidence to suggest that the DET attempted to repress school unrest in ways similar to the security forces "dirty tricks" departments. The Van den Heever Commission into corruption within the DET published a report in December 1989. The report called for an investigation into allegations, made to the commission, that DET officials belonging to a secret section of the DET, *Gemeenskapskommunikasi* (Gemkom), had defrauded the department of millions of rands. According to the allegations, Gemkom was formed in 1985, and financed at least one journalist to publish a newspaper in Cradock to suppress student unrest in that area. According to an SAIRR *Annual Survey*, Gemkom attempted "to influence African thinking and education in various areas".¹⁶¹

The education departments specifically repressed teacher activism as well. For example, Carter Ebrahim, the Minister of Education and Culture in the Coloured House of Representatives, announced on 22 October 1985 that forty-two teachers and principals suspected of "assisting" the boycotting students were being investigated (WECTU took up this issue, and it will be fully discussed below).¹⁶² Also in October, Ebrahim threatened headmasters that if they were found to be in support of the boycott, they would be dismissed.¹⁶³

Other very clear examples of direct state control over teachers surfaced during the year-end examination crisis. As the school boycotts continued, and, as discussed above, some student bodies decided to boycott the examinations as well, a group of teachers, mostly affiliated to WECTU, decided not to invigilate examinations because they considered the examinations, in light of the ongoing schools boycott, to be farcical and non-educational. By the end of November the *Argus* reported that about 200 teachers in the Cape Peninsula had opted not to participate in the examinations.¹⁶⁴ *The Weekly Mail* reported: "A number of teachers from at least seven Cape Town secondary schools are standing by their refusal to administer end-of-year examinations, in the face of a strong police and army presence at some of the schools.... Teachers say they are working under a lot of stress, whether or not they are among the minority refusing to participate in the

¹⁵⁷ *Argus*, 1 October 1985; *Herald*, 12 October 1985.

¹⁵⁸ *Cape Times*, 28 October 1985; SAIRR, CW Region, 17.

¹⁵⁹ *Cape Times*, 10 January 1986.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

¹⁶¹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 778-781.

¹⁶² *Argus*, 22 October 1985.

¹⁶³ *Herald*, 26 October 1985.

¹⁶⁴ *Argus*, 30 November 1985.

examinations." The newspaper quotes one teacher as saying, "Those who are going through with it feel very bad, but they are afraid of losing their jobs."¹⁶⁵ At Cathkin High School, where twenty-five of forty teachers refused to set examinations, "The inspector came to school and threatened suspension or dismissal. A lot of the teachers had subsidies."¹⁶⁶

These refusals of teachers to set and invigilate the end of year examinations in DEC schools were largely coordinated by WECTU, the emergent organisation formed in 1985 in this department. The antagonism between WECTU and the Department partially explains the state's severely repressive response.

The state responded to these refusals in four ways. First, the Coloured department suspended some teachers. By 30 November 1985, three deputy principals and six teachers had been suspended indefinitely.¹⁶⁷ Most of these came from Cathkin High School in Heideveld where twenty-seven teachers refused to invigilate; the seven suspended from Cathkin were the deputy principal and six heads of department.¹⁶⁸ The principal of Crestway in Steenburg was suspended, as was the deputy-principal of Alexander Sinton.¹⁶⁹ Suspended teachers seemingly had no recourse to the courts, for an urgent application to the Supreme Court by eight suspended teachers for reinstatement was dismissed with costs on Christmas eve. Suspended teachers could not enter schools, and, Ebrahim explained, suspended teachers were being investigated on charges of misconduct during the boycotts.¹⁷⁰ By January 1986, nineteen teachers had been suspended by his Department.¹⁷¹ Teachers had actively begun rejecting the implementation of state education policy, and had begun alienating themselves from the mechanisms of *apartheid* education.

Second, the Coloured education department withheld teachers' salary cheques to influence teacher behaviour, using their dictatorial authority as employers. At Alexander Sinton in Athlone, after all fifty-four teachers suggested a postponement of examinations, the department threatened to withhold salary payment. Eleven of the fifty-four changed their minds, but forty-three teachers' salaries were withheld for November and December.¹⁷² The entire staff of Harold Cressy in Cape Town, which took a stand against the examinations, was told to return their November and December paychecks.¹⁷³ Ultimately, about one hundred teachers at Crestway, Cathkin, Harold Cressy and Alexander Sinton suffered the same fate.¹⁷⁴ November salaries were, however, paid after WECTU threatened the Department with court action.¹⁷⁵ As an added punitive measure, in January

¹⁶⁵ *The Weekly Mail*, 22 to 28 November 1985.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

¹⁶⁷ *Argus*, 30 November 1985.

¹⁶⁸ *Cape Times*, 23 November 1985; *Argus* 23 November 1985.

¹⁶⁹ *Cape Times*, 23 and 29 November 1985.

¹⁷⁰ *Argus*, 27 December 1985; *Cape Times*, 27 December 1985.

¹⁷¹ *Cape Times*, 10 January 1986.

¹⁷² *Cape Times*, 20 and 22 November 1985.

¹⁷³ *Cape Times*, 27 November 1985.

¹⁷⁴ *Sunday Times*, 1 December 1985.

¹⁷⁵ *Argus*, 3 December 1985; *Sunday Times*, 1 December 1985.

those teachers who had been suspended or dismissed, and then reinstated, received only half of their January salaries, as if they were newly-appointed to their posts.¹⁷⁶

Along with salary cheques, the state provides a number of other financial services to its teacher-employees. Allan Hendrickse reminded teachers of this when he warned those in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, after a strike had been suggested to protest the transfer of three colleagues, that they were placing their housing subsidies in jeopardy.¹⁷⁷ This threat manifested itself at the LP's October Congress, where a resolution depriving troublesome teachers of benefits such as housing subsidies was approved.¹⁷⁸

Third, in terms of departmental pressure, it wielded its most threatening axe by dismissing a number of teachers. At the beginning of December, two teachers at Valhalla High School were dismissed, though both had invigilated. It was thought that the government disapproved of their affiliations with community organisations.¹⁷⁹ Other dismissals especially hurt temporary teachers, who were on 24-hour notice. Eleven temporary teachers were fired at Harold Cressy, seven at Groenvlei in Lansdowne, and six at Bonteheuwel Senior Secondary.¹⁸⁰ As the new year began, a total of sixty-eight teachers had been dismissed.¹⁸¹

Lastly, education departments transferred teachers in an attempt to prevent *reduplication of* "unprofessional" activity. The *Cape Times* reported that two teachers had been transferred by 10 January 1986, presumably from a Coloured school.¹⁸² Once again we are confronted by the paucity of written evidence about African township schools. However, it will be instructive to look at the case of an Indian high school in the Peninsula. At Rylands, the state illustrated its repressive tactics, including the use of transferrals. Once again, an education department's repressive measures precipitated increased politicisation amongst the teachers and community of Rylands.

On 9 December 1985, more than half of the forty-three teachers at Rylands received notice that they were being dismissed or transferred: eleven were fired, and eleven re-located to Piet Retief, Barberton and Lenasia. The department gave no reasons, although the preceding inspectors had questioned teachers at the school about the boycotts, which saw only 200 of the school's 750 students write internal examinations. Pat Samuels, the president of TASA, said: "The unprecedented scale of the dismissals and transfers makes it obvious they are a punitive measure." The official school committee resigned in protest, a petition began circulating, and the PTSA began to fight back.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ *Cape Times*, 4 February 1986.

¹⁷⁷ *Cape Times*, 6 March 1985.

¹⁷⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 October 1985. The resolution, however, does not appear to have been implemented.

¹⁷⁹ *Argus*, 2 December 1985.

¹⁸⁰ *Cape Times*, 5 December 1985.

¹⁸¹ *Cape Times*, 10 January 1986.

¹⁸² *Cape Times*, 10 January 1986.

¹⁸³ *Argus*, 10 and 11 December 1985; *Cape Times*, 10 December 1985.

Within two weeks the DEC (HoD) had succumbed to pressure from TASA, including court action, and withdrew the transfer notices after settling out of court and agreeing to pay costs.¹⁸⁴ The court battle concerning the dismissed teachers was scheduled to begin on 19 February,¹⁸⁵ and in the meantime a battle was waged at the school.

At the beginning of the 1986 school year, the DEC (HoD) sent fourteen replacement teachers from Durban to Rylands. On Monday, 13 January, more than 300 resentful parents, students and teachers persuaded these "scabs" to leave the school grounds. On Tuesday, they returned, but were clearly isolated. Angry students again forced them to leave school on Wednesday. Police arrived on Thursday in an attempt to enforce calm, but on Friday most students boycotted school in protest.¹⁸⁶ In February, protests continued. On 19 February, about 500 students would not enter their classrooms because of the continued presence of the "scabs".¹⁸⁷ The following day, the principal, claiming that he could not guarantee their safety, told the fourteen to report for duty at another school that day.¹⁸⁸

The court case for reinstatement began in late February, and the teachers argued that they had not been given reasons for their dismissals, and that the dismissals were "for an ulterior political purpose".¹⁸⁹ However, despite the protests and their arguments, the teachers lost their case. In upholding the dismissals as lawful, Mr. Justice Thirion said: "It is clear the teachers had lost control of the pupils and they were unable or unwilling to regain control."¹⁹⁰ These words serve as a good reminder of who the state blamed for the ongoing boycotts, and why they asserted control over teachers.

The Softer Gloves of the State

The state utilized other, indirect methods of influencing teacher politics and upholding a "professional" ideology. These "softer" methods took two general forms during 1985. First, there were the machinations of political parties seeking support among their "own affairs" groups. The best-known example emerged in KwaZulu where Inkatha required all its teachers to swear affiliation and loyalty to the chief minister and the KwaZulu government.¹⁹¹ The CTPA accused the Labour Party (LP) of similar, albeit more subtle, activities. In December 1985, the CTPA claimed it would investigate allegations that LP ministers used lists of teachers who were candidates for promotion posts as a basis for membership drives.¹⁹² In January 1986, the LP also made an announcement which seemed

¹⁸⁴ *Cape Times*, 24 December 1985.

¹⁸⁵ *Cape Times*, 24 December 1985.

¹⁸⁶ *Cape Times*, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 January 1985.

¹⁸⁷ *Cape Times*, 20 February 1986.

¹⁸⁸ *Argus*, 20 February 1986.

¹⁸⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 21 to 27 February 1986.

¹⁹⁰ *Argus*, 11 June 1986.

¹⁹¹ Also, "Teachers supporting the UDF have been threatened with dismissal by a KwaZulu chief minister." Natal Regional Report, "Report", in *People's Education*, 26.

¹⁹² *Argus*, 3 December 1985; *Cape Times*, 6 December 1985; *Herald*, 14 December 1985.

to be a bid to curry favours, such as membership and support, from less-qualified rural teachers. "From now on," proclaimed Allan Hendrickse, "promotion will be on merit. The old stalwarts, who have always formed the backbone of education and who have the necessary expertise on the basis of experience, will be evaluated by independent inspectors of schools, and promoted on merit." This was a move away from the official paper-qualification promotions of the past.¹⁹³ This could be seen as an attempt to win loyal supporters in return for promotions through a system of patronage. Such a system was not unknown to the department, and the CTPA had, in fact, always operated on a patronage system.¹⁹⁴

The second, softer angle of approach adopted by the state as it worked to influence teachers took the form of cooption. The state, while crisis-managing the school and community unrest, was not blind to the necessity of longer-term solutions. The early and mid-1980s reforms were an important part of such solutions, and the development and cooption of an urban, monied, black middle-class was an important part of the reforms. As Innes wrote in 1988, "The more positive features of restructuring are clearly designed to create greater freedom in a variety of spheres for urban black South Africans, so as to assist in building up a black middle class inside the country."¹⁹⁵ Teachers, many of whom were aspirant middle class holding onto the ideologically loaded concept of "professionalism", felt the effects of this broader strategy. Ken Hartshorne, while discussing a government "Ten Year Plan," wrote in 1986, "... clearly there is to be an improvement in material resources and in the financial position of black teachers."¹⁹⁶ The "stop gap measures softening some existing policies" included new teacher-upgrading programmes.¹⁹⁷

In keeping with reform strategies, the state also used the mechanism of salary-improvement. At the end of March 1985, President Botha announced that austerity measures would include bonus cuts for teachers and other civil servants. Importantly, teachers in Category A and lower would be excluded, and would, in fact, receive an increase.¹⁹⁸ The increase affected a large number of teachers since, in 1983, seventy percent of African teachers had less than a matriculation qualification.¹⁹⁹ In May 1985, Indian teachers received a R5,085,000 pay increase on top of a special dispensation previously announced.²⁰⁰ In July, Minister of National Education F.W. de Klerk announced that salary parity across education departments would be achieved by October,

¹⁹³ *Sunday Times*, 5 January 1986.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with informant G, 10 February 1993.

¹⁹⁵ Innes, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 117.

¹⁹⁷ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 6.

¹⁹⁸ *Herald*, 30 March 1985. The CTPA claimed that this exclusion was a direct result of a meeting they held with Botha. So it can be seen as a government attempt to mollify a powerful teachers' body, as well as a large number of unqualified black teachers. The end is the same.

¹⁹⁹ Bot and Schlemmer, 7-8. Although this statement must be qualified; most unqualified teachers work in rural primary schools, a different scenario to politicised urban high schools.

²⁰⁰ *Cape Times*, 23 May 1985.

with R56 million being spent to benefit about 100,000 teachers.²⁰¹ The following year, Viljoen announced that full parity would actually be achieved in December 1986.²⁰² In February 1986 teachers and other civil servants were given a ten percent salary increase.²⁰³

Such attempts at material cooption certainly had an effect. But at moments of crises, with other influences such as physical intimidation at the fore the actions of teachers were not always based on their desired bank-balance or material status.

The state adopted a policy of "professional" upgrading as well. Educational reform involved the creation of a "multiracial" advisory body, the South African Council of Education (SACE), in which teachers organisations could participate. A new department of national education, to set general education policy for all "race groups", and governed by principles espoused in the De Lange Commission report of 1981, was created in 1985.²⁰⁴ Then, in February 1986, Viljoen announced a policy aimed at involving African educationists in structures concerning education policy. ATASA was invited to nominate "experts" for advisory committees on policy. African educationists were also being appointed to senior departmental posts. In February, for example, there were seven African deputy directors at the seven regional DET offices.²⁰⁵

These departmental policy changes attempted to persuade increasingly alienated black teachers that they could benefit by cooperating with their departments. "Professionalism" would provide material comfort and upward mobility. By bettering teachers' material conditions and allowing teachers access to ethnic hierarchies, the state hoped to bolster the "professional" commitment to *apartheid* departments.

Conclusion

Randal Peteni, ATASA president, offered a grim warning in 1985. After talking of "in-fighting" between student organisations, and political conflict amongst blacks, and of "gruesome deaths", he concluded: "If [teachers] stand aside, they do so at their peril."²⁰⁶ Peteni, here, reflected the pressure his conservative, "professional" association felt in 1985. Such a public reassessment of former positions, in the face of political pressure, illustrated the significance of 1985 for teacher politics.

In 1985 and 1986, teachers did not stand aside. They actively participated in resistance politics. A liberation movement resistant to state structures created an atmosphere in communities and schools which rendered overt cooperation with the state difficult for teachers to sustain in the public arena, and rendered the "professionalism" of quieter times obsolete. Teachers expressed their own resistance to the oppression of

²⁰¹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1985*, 368-369.

²⁰² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1986*, 419.

²⁰³ *Cape Times*, 21 February 1986.

²⁰⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1985*, 363-364.

²⁰⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1986*, 409.

²⁰⁶ Peteni, 36.

apartheid and *apartheid* education in the space created by the unrest. This expression was both reactive, in part due to the fear expressed by Peteni, and active, in that many teachers took advantage of an historical moment to break free of state structures.

Past "professionalism", based on an apolitical, middle-class, ethnically-defined ideology, was rejected by many teachers who worked to re-shape the definition of their place in society and the nature of their work. For many teachers, the silencing of "professional" attitudes was a product of political unrest, and would prove temporary as the state repressed political opposition in 1987-1988, and as the political climate shifted again, after a renewed wave of militancy in 1988-1990, at the beginning of the following decade. But 1985 allowed the birth of a new "professional" ideology, one which allied teachers with workers, with the non-racial liberation movement and with democratic education. This new "professionalism" was institutionalised in the emergent unions and significantly influenced the established teacher associations. These organisational developments are discussed in the next chapter on teachers' responses to the social and political upheaval of the mid-eighties.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVOLVING TEACHER "PROFESSIONALISM" IN 1985-1986

In 1985-1986, many changes occurred in the realm of teacher politics. Forces and organisations, described in Chapter Four, which opposed the state and the state's education created space for "rebellious" teachers to voice their antagonism to *apartheid* policies. State repression, in response to the new climate within schools and teacher politics, exacerbated the antagonism between teachers and the state. "Teachers have been detained or questioned," said a teacher in November 1985, "simply for saying they have sympathy with the kids, or worse, because some faceless spy has said they support the kids -- how can we not support them in the face of this endless repression?"¹ Teacher action in support of their students involved protecting students from police action, refusing to administer examinations, and joining student boycotts.²

The teaching profession was being infused with a large number of politicized younger teachers.³ Some teachers began exhibiting a public spirit of defiance. For example, a teachers' meeting in August 1985 expelled a secret policeman, after teachers present at the meeting tore up his notes, confiscated his firearm and stink bombs, and gave him "a few smacks" on his way out.⁴

Teacher action, however, was not simply visceral reaction to repression. Contradictions within the realm of teachers emerged more strongly than over the preceding decade, as a shift in the balance of power away from the state and towards the liberation movement took place. Political scientist James Scott suggests that when state control is weakened, or confronted in a powerful way, an opportunity arises whereby hidden political dynamics -- the "hidden transcript" -- can become public:

The problem we face in examining a public transcript of deference amounts to this: how can we estimate the impact of power relations on action when the exercise of power is nearly constant? We can only begin to measure the influence of a teacher's presence on a classroom of students once he or she leaves the room - or when they leave the room at recess.⁵

¹ *Cape Times*, 23 November 1985, in SAIRR, CW Region, 19.

² In August 1985, for example, 600 teachers went on strike for two days in the Western Cape. The *Cape Times* reported, as well, a "'solidarity' boycott" of their lessons by all Mitchell's Plain teachers. See, respectively, *The Weekly Mail*, 23-29 August 1985; *Cape Times*, 20 August 1985.

³ There was an infusion of younger teachers schooled during the post-1976 climate. There are many examples of student-teacher militancy in 1976 and 1980. See, for example: Hirson, 188; Molteno, 115. The Western Cape teaching corps was greatly effected by students graduating from UWC, where they had highly politicizing experiences. Moll claims that the emergent unions appealed to these younger teachers. See Moll, "Towards one South African Teachers' Union," 64.

⁴ *Cape Times*, 21 August 1985. Three days later a Mitchell's Plain man was detained, possibly in connection with the incident. *Cape Times*, 24 August 1985.

⁵ Scott, 25.

In 1985, with the state's hegemonic position faltering, some teachers publicly expressed their antagonism -- the "hidden transcript" -- to implementing *apartheid* education. Political ideas and attitudes antagonistic to traditional "professionalism", which was premised on race and class divisions, could surface and be given organisational expression.

In the Western Cape, three new "emergent" teacher organisations -- WECTU, DETU and EDASA -- directly contradicted conventional "professionalism" and thus found themselves in opposition to established teacher associations which espoused it. The emergent groups reclaimed faltering teacher credibility within the liberation movement. As elements of the liberation movement rejected "professionalism", the emergent unions redefined their work according to a new ideological framework. They redefined "professionalism" to fit their new, turbulent circumstances.

In the context of the national democratic movement, traditional "professionalism" had several aspects which the emergent unions rejected. "Professionalism" implied an aversion to overt "political" activity, and the new teacher groups supported the anti-*apartheid* liberation movement. "Professionalism" necessitated cooperation with the various education departments, which the new unions rejected. "Professionalism" implied status within ethnically-defined "population groups", and the emergent unions fully supported -- and eventually began to practice -- non-racialism. They also rejected the status, and middle-class aspirations, supported by "professionalism"; they defined their organisations as unions, and themselves as workers.⁶ The three new groups did not prioritize the material conditions of teachers. Gareth Rossiter, an EDASA activist, said in 1990: "We haven't really dealt with bread and butter issues."⁷ Barbara Houghton, an early WECTU participant in Cape Town, added: "Unlike the CTPA, the higher salary issue was never ever a concern."⁸ These comments illustrate that the emergent groups, though aspiring to become fully-fledged unions, deliberately stepped out of a self-centred "professional" role.

Because they adopted these positions in opposition to traditional "professionalism", the three new teacher organisations utilized tactics and strategies that were often criticized as being "unprofessional", by their employers and established teacher organisations. They supported boycotting students, under certain conditions; some members refused to invigilate examinations; and they were publicly antagonistic to the state and their immediate employers. The state responded in a predictably repressive manner. Victimisation and harassment of leaders and members, as well as the bannings of groups and individuals, greatly curtailed organisational activity.

The transition to a new concept of "professionalism" was problematic. An entrenched set of practices could not be redefined overnight. Rather, 1985 marked the beginning of an institutionalized *process* of changing "professionalism" and of changing attitudes about teachers' work. The new unions were ethnically defined, despite their espousal of non-

⁶ At first, EDASA did not define itself as a union, although later, during the process of teacher unity begun in Harare in 1988, it fully supported the ideas of teachers as workers, and teachers' organisations as unions.

⁷ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990.

⁸ Interview with Houghton, 22 March 1990.

racialism. Their desired unity was rendered problematic by their racial distinctions, as well as by sectarian conflict within WECTU and DETU. Also, the new organisations were crisis-born, and experienced their greatest support at the peaks of political conflict. They acted within politicized high schools, depriving themselves of a much broader support base to be had within primary schools, a traditional stronghold of the established teacher groups.⁹ And, partly due to a lack of official recognition which deprived them of stop-order facilities, the emergent unions were constantly short of funds. In 1990, Monde Tulwana, an executive member of DETU, lamented: "Members are still using money from our own pockets. We travel with our own cars."¹⁰

The emergent teacher organisations, rather than harbingering immediate change, represented the possibility of change. Born of crisis in 1985, these progressive groupings institutionalized a desire to break with past notions of "professionalism" and to redefine teachers' work in *apartheid* South Africa.

The forces shaping the emergent unions, and the unions themselves, threw the established teacher organisations -- the CTPA, PENATA, TASA and SATA in the Western Cape -- off balance as their "professional" attitudes were increasingly under attack. During 1985-1986, the new teacher groups and a changing sociopolitical climate stripped the established organisations of much of their credibility. The established groups appeared incapable of dealing with the new educational and political terrain. They suffered internal tensions, and adopted ambiguous positions which reflected their increasingly untenable, "professional" positions. Their traditional voices were effectively silenced within the context of popular resistance. Clinging to an older style of "professional" behaviour, many of their actions now seemed inappropriate to large numbers of students, teachers and others within the liberation movement. Experiencing internal contradictions, and under pressure from elements of the liberation movement, the CTPA and PENATA -- the latter completely under the influence of ATASA -- began to question and shift away from their traditional "professional" positions. Both, for example, withdrew representatives from their respective departmental structures in 1986.

Tensions and contradictions thus emerged strongly in teacher politics in 1985-1986. Teacher organisations -- both new and old -- reacted to the pressures described in Chapter Four. They also acted to define a new credibility, and to find a new "professional" place within a changing educational and political terrain.

***A Time of Birth and Troubled Growth:
The Emergent Unions and "Anti-Professionalism"***

Set up as antagonists of the state and *apartheid*, calling for educational and political change, the emergent organisations embodied a spirit of defiance that was not new. The Western Cape SAIRR wrote of progressive Coloured teachers, for example, "who, over the years,

⁹ Interview with Houghton, 22 March 1990.

¹⁰ Interview with Monde Tulwana, 7 March 1990.

had seen fit not to join the CTPA but whose efforts had largely been disparate and unorganised."¹¹ The TLSA, neither disparate nor unorganised, had a long heritage of antagonism to *apartheid* and to the CTPA and its "collaborationist" tactics.¹² The short-lived TACs in the Western Cape in 1980, and NEUSA nationally since 1980, were earlier expressions of teachers' "anti-professional" sentiments. That background, plus the experiences of teachers during 1976-1984, gave rise to the new organisations which focussed the dissatisfaction and gave expression to underlying historical forces. "I believe," said WECTU chairperson Yousuf Gabru in 1990, "that it was the 1976-1980 experience that gave rise to WECTU."¹³

In part because they represented historical tensions within the teachers' realm, and in part because they had the support of sections of the liberation movement, the emergent teacher groups could pressure the established bodies more specifically than students or the NECC. These were teachers who battled on the same terrain, who offered different models of teacher behaviour to students and the community. These were teachers who gained organisational support and credibility, and thus strength to wage campaigns in schools and in staff rooms. None of the emergent groups, in the long run, could boast memberships which threatened the established organisations. But their voices were loud, and could not be ignored. As a COSATU speaker at a WECTU conference claimed in 1986: "Such was the pressure from the masses [over the last few years] that the more progressive teachers were able to play a role which was more significant than their numbers."¹⁴

What role did they play in redefining "professionalism"? This question will be answered within the historical context of each organisation.

The Western Cape Teachers' Union

WECTU, formed in the education crisis of 1985, became the strongest emergent union in the Western Cape. It exerted strong influence within the region's teacher politics, and significantly effected both teachers' "professional" ethic and the CTPA's "professional" position. Born of crisis, WECTU did not become another TAC; it did not remain a crisis organisation, nor did it dissolve as the crisis waned. Despite initial internal debate about whether to remain a small pressure group, or move towards becoming a broad-based union,¹⁵ WECTU institutionalized and perpetuated a movement away from traditional "professionalism".

¹¹ SAIRR, CW Region, 5.

¹² Chisholm, "Education, Politics and Organisation," *passim*.

¹³ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

¹⁴ Emtzen, 308.

¹⁵ "A continuing debate in WECTU has been the nature of the organisation," said Gabru. "Are we going to continue to act as a pressure group or are we going to try to build a mass organisation that operates as a trade union...?" Yousuf Gabru, "WECTU. Chairperson's Report 25 May 1986," photocopy, 5. An article entitled "Whither WECTU" in the October 1986 issue of WECTU's newsletter contained an identical question: "... should this be a broad-based mass organisation that attempts to take large numbers of teachers along towards a more progressive viewpoint and practice than their objective conditions allow for? Or should WECTU be a

WECTU's birth in crisis

On Friday, 9 August 1985, teachers and lecturers met at UWC out of concern for the recently-begun Western Cape schools' boycott. Participants at the meeting planned another meeting for the Samaj Centre in Rylands to be held on 15 August.¹⁶ In 1987, a WECTU executive member would recall: "I remember when word went around in '85 that there was to be a mass meeting of teachers at the Samaj Centre in Athlone. There was no debate about it. We didn't wonder whether we should go. We all just went without question."¹⁷ Between 700 and 3000 teachers¹⁸ went to the Samaj Centre that Thursday. They heard a variety of UDF and church speakers, and resolved several crucial issues for teachers. A solidarity boycott of classes was planned for the following Monday and Tuesday, during which teachers would engage in "awareness programmes" and relevant discussions. While setting up an interim structure, the Concerned Teachers' Coordinating Committee (CTCC), teachers also expressed a desire for a more permanent, formal organisation. The idea for WECTU was thus publicly born.¹⁹

At this 15 August meeting, a participant later recalled, there was a "... haranguing of teachers from every speaker virtually, ... a negative attitude.... It doesn't give teachers their due. Some have the students at heart."²⁰ The decisions of the meeting must have satisfied teachers' most vociferous critics. Apart from the two-day "chalk-down," teachers present declared their support for a consumer boycott underway in the Western Cape. The CTCC immediately issued a pamphlet declaring that, "teachers are firstly part of the oppressed community and should be an integral part of the struggle for freedom," and demanding an end to the State of Emergency (not yet extended to the Western Cape) and the "Dismantling of apartheid," among other things. The pamphlet, intended to advertise the "chalk-down", talks of preparing "the groundwork for the launching of a dynamic progressive organisation to represent teacher [sic] to fight apartheid."²¹

The teachers' boycott of classes involved about 1000 teachers within the DEC (HoR).²² A planned assessment meeting at the Samaj Centre on 20 August once again attracted between 700 and 2000 teachers and lecturers from seventy-nine institutions.²³ Participants at this meeting voted to continue their class boycott²⁴ (a decision soon aborted), and took a strong stand on the need for an organisation, not just an action committee.

smaller, more politicised grouping that acts as a radical pressure group." *WECTU newsletter* 2 (December 1985): 2.

¹⁶ *Argus*, 14 August 1985.

¹⁷ *Argus*, 2 September 1987.

¹⁸ *Cape Times*, 19 August 1985; *Argus*, 2 September 1987; interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

¹⁹ *Cape Times*, 19 August 1985; *Argus*, 16 August 1985; *Herald*, 24 August 1985; interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990; interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

²⁰ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

²¹ CTCC, "Teachers Unite!" pamphlet, n.d.

²² SAIRR, CW Region, 5.

²³ *Argus*, 21 August 1985; *Argus*, 2 September 1987.

²⁴ *Argus*, 21 August 1985.

Teachers at the meeting "... looked back at TAC," said a participant, "which had petered out."²⁵

WECTU was duly launched a month later in Athlone, on 29 September, after "a hell of a turbulent period" with "lots of crises."²⁶ Though the *Cape Times* claimed a pre-launch membership of 1500 DEC (HoR) teachers,²⁷ Chairperson Yousuf Gabru said 800 teachers were members at the launch. Yet despite these auspicious beginnings, the organisation remained small. Giving a first Annual Report, the Wynberg branch Chairperson would lament that, unless action was taken, "... we will continue having 250 teachers out of a supposed membership of 1800 - 2,000 prepared to participate."²⁸

The "anti-professionalism" of WECTU

WECTU rejected traditional "professionalism" in several ways. Primarily, it refused to accept apolitical parameters, and actively engaged in working for political change in opposition to the state. This overtly political position was anathema to established "professional" ideology. "The formation of WECTU," claimed WECTU's first newsletter, "... has the potential of breaking through the silence and apathy shown over long periods by teachers in schools of the oppressed."²⁹

Its political position was to a large degree influenced by student politics. "The struggle of the students is our struggle," stated the CTCC pamphlet.³⁰ WECTU aligned itself with the broader, community-based struggle as well. According to its newsletter, "WECTU has placed itself firmly in the fold of all other progressive organisations in this country struggling towards a S.A. free of oppression and exploitation."³¹ WECTU demonstrated its community involvement by, for example, picketing in Athlone for the release of all detainees on 1 October 1985.³² The CTCC pamphlet requested "Teachers and students to inform the community of their stand on the emergency, student struggle and consumer boycott."³³

In part, WECTU's overt political position was an attempt to regain political credibility within the broader liberation movement. "For many," wrote the Wynberg Chairperson, "WECTU membership merely means political respectability."³⁴ Barbara Houghton, active in the Cape Town branch in WECTU's early years, also claimed that, "At certain schools all people signed up to be seen as progressive in the eyes of the students."³⁵

²⁵ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

²⁶ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

²⁷ *Cape Times*, 28 September 1985.

²⁸ Chairperson Wynberg, "Annual Report," photocopy (n.d. [1986]) n.p.

²⁹ "2000 Teachers Unite," *WECTU newsletter* 1 (November 1985): 1.

³⁰ CTCC, n.p.

³¹ "Editorial," *WECTU newsletter* 1 (November 1985): 3.

³² *Cape Times*, 2 October 1985. Thirty teachers were involved in this demonstration organised by the Athlone Central region.

³³ CTCC, n.p.

³⁴ Chairperson Wynberg, n.p.

³⁵ Interview with Barbara Houghton, 22 March 1990.

WECTU's political stance, however, was not simply reactive. According to Hyslop, WECTU "... was formed to draw teachers into political action."³⁶ This supposition was born out in a paper entitled "The Political Economy of Education in South Africa," presented at the WECTU launch. The paper concluded: "... we believe that teachers in all apartheid schools, including 'white' schools, *cannot be neutral*. They are either on the side of *progress and liberation* or they support the forces of *oppression and exploitation*."³⁷

Apart from political change, WECTU also broke from past "professionalism" by focussing on educational change. An articulated reason for the formation of WECTU was to support the students' position against apartheid education.³⁸ One of WECTU's constitutional goals was, "To work towards democratic control over the education system and to militate against the propagation of oppressive education."³⁹ Its educational critique expressly followed that of Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire. The front-page article in its second newsletter was "Education for Liberation," a theoretical piece on certification, and Freire's notions of "banking" and a "culture of silence." An attached suggested reading list included Freire and Ivan Illich.⁴⁰ WECTU thus engaged in thought-provoking examinations of the nature of education.

WECTU attempted to influence education, to re-shape and re-direct it, along with other similarly-inclined progressive bodies. The first newsletter reported: "In various workshops, meetings and discussions, teachers have begun to identify what makes up the system of gutter education that frustrates them as educators."⁴¹ This desire for educational change manifested itself practically in WECTU's support for PTSAs. WECTU was involved in the SPCC and NECC conferences, and in PTSAs: "... those schools with well established PTSA's were most successful in mobilizing community support," said Gabru in 1986. "... We must continue to organise strong PTSA's at all times and not only at a time of crisis."⁴² The Cape Town region held a workshop on PTSA's and how to form them.⁴³ And the ideal was rendered constitutional under "Aims and Objectives": "To bring together and work jointly with parents, teachers and students in democratically elected P.T.S.A's and P.T.A's."⁴⁴ An example of this cooperation occurred after DEC (HoR) Minister of Education Carter Ebrahim announced the closing of DEC schools on 6 September (see Chapter Four). "While the CTPA prepared to 'make urgent representations to the

³⁶ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 21.

³⁷ "The Political Economy of Education in South Africa," a paper delivered at WECTU's founding conference on 29 September 1985, photocopy, 6.

³⁸ *Cape Times*, 26 August 1985.

³⁹ WECTU, *Constitution*, photocopy (n.d.) n.p.

⁴⁰ "Education for Liberation," *WECTU newsletter 2* (December 1985): 1-2. Although it was meant to be the first in a series, the only other appeared in its third newsletter. Called "Towards Progressive Education," this article offered criticism of the existing system, linked education to politics, and suggested some democratic teaching guidelines. "Towards Progressive Education," *WECTU newsletter 3* (January 1986): 8-9.

⁴¹ "2000 Teachers Unite," 2.

⁴² Gabru, 3; "NECC: 'a watershed in the liberation process'," *WECTU newsletter 5* (May 1986): 3-4.

⁴³ "Forming PTSA's," *WECTU newsletter 4* (March 1986): 3.

⁴⁴ WECTU, *Constitution*, n.p.

authorities' for the reopening of schools,"⁴⁵ the CTCC was crucial to the joint re-opening of schools by parents, students and teachers.⁴⁶

A further practical application of WECTU's "unprofessional" strategies for educational change concerned "alternative education". In October 1985 *The Weekly Mail* reported that, "There is a wild card in the dissemination of alternative education in the Western Cape, and that is the newly formed [WECTU]."⁴⁷ Alternative education programmes were attempts, in part, to model future education. They hoped to foster critical reflection about society, reflection necessary for action and for change.

WECTU thus broke with past "professional" practice by working towards both political and educational change. "If we stand together in our union," the launch conference paper stated, "we can and we will succeed in winning control over our schools."⁴⁸

The desire for educational change brought WECTU teachers into conflict with their employer, the DEC (HoR), and illustrated another example of WECTU's rejection of "professionalism". Traditional "professionalism" implied cooperation with the departments "in the interests of the children and education", while WECTU became critical to redefining these terms.

WECTU's call for the cancellation of year-end examinations in 1985 illustrated its "unprofessional" antagonism towards the education departments. As early as 24 October, the *Argus* reported that WECTU had asked teachers not to administer the year-end examinations.⁴⁹ The issue was contentious, but at a meeting held at UCT on 25 November, at which 300 teachers from most WECTU regions were present, the vote went against invigilation; perceived in the context of on-going boycotts and political action, external and internal examinations were considered harmful and "anti-educational". A 27 October WECTU statement supported the vote, requesting teachers not to participate in either internal or matriculation examinations. WECTU even threatened court action to get the examinations declared invalid.⁵⁰

WECTU's reasons were practical. "From an educational point of view," stated an article in the November newsletter, "it was impossible to support exams. Furthermore, students were psychologically unprepared to write at a time when teachers and students were being arrested and detained, and the community intimidated and harassed."⁵¹ The school year had been so disrupted that examinations would have been a "mockery".

In the event, examinations were held under difficult circumstances and the department belatedly, in February 1986, announced a selective promotion scheme. The scheme

⁴⁵ SAIRR, CW Region, 10.

⁴⁶ *Cape Times*, 28 September 1985.

⁴⁷ *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 October 1985: 7.

⁴⁸ "The Political Economy of Education in South Africa," 6.

⁴⁹ *Argus*, 24 October 1985.

⁵⁰ *Argus*, 18 November 1985 and 26 November 1985; *Cape Times*, 26 November 1985, 28 November 1985 and 30 November 1985; *The Weekly Mail*, 1-7 November 1985.

⁵¹ "Dilemma," *WECTU newsletter* 1 (November 1985): 5.

announced by Carter Ebrahim essentially allowed principals to decide about promotions; students could opt for March examinations, or be promoted *en masse*. There was great confusion during this period, and WECTU publicly condemned the department's scheme for promoting "confusion and division in schools and communities".⁵²

WECTU publicly rejected the education facilitated by state departments. WECTU's antagonism towards the education departments further manifested itself around departmental harassment of teachers during the student unrest. As early as October 1985, Carter Ebrahim announced an "investigation" into the actions of forty-two teachers and principals during the boycotts; all had allegedly helped the students. The number was later raised to seventy-three. WECTU responded in earnest. Gabru claimed that, "The whole of WECTU will react to any action taken against the 42 teachers now being investigated by Mr. Ebrahim."⁵³ The seventy-three were charged with misconduct, which centred around the failure to invigilate examinations, in a saga that continued for two years, including a May 1986 petition delivered to the DEC (HoR) Roeland Street offices by about 250 teachers and students, and WECTU's "Hands Off Our Teachers" campaign. In 1987, Hendrickse announced that charges were being dropped.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, WECTU kept up its defense of teachers who had already suffered dismissal or suspension at the hands of the departments. WECTU had indeed pledged, as early as the Samaj Centre meetings, to "come out in support of our colleagues who may be victimized by the education authorities."⁵⁵ This support took several forms. At the end of November, WECTU appealed for community contributions to a fund for suspended teachers; WECTU members agreed to contribute R50 each month.⁵⁶ "Within the space of a week we collected over R20,000 to establish a Trust Fund to assist victimized teachers financially," claimed Gabru.⁵⁷ In part, this fund helped finance legal action. Affidavits from thirty schools were collected for a legal application which was launched on 12 December for the reinstatement of all teachers.⁵⁸

Although a member would later claim that the organisation got "bogged down" in court cases,⁵⁹ and WECTU lost the case launched on 12 December one week after the application,⁶⁰ these and other pressures met with some success. Other pressures included, for example, an Athlone Central region newspaper advertisement in the *Cape Times* headed: "Action of Education Departments Denounced." It publicly denounced the

⁵² "Promotions: Motives Exposed," *WECTU newsletter* 4 (March 1986): 1; SAIRR, CW Region, 24. For a presentation of the various options, see "To Pass, or Not to Pass," *WECTU newsletter* 3 (January 1986): 14.

⁵³ *Argus*, 22 October 1985.

⁵⁴ *Argus*, 17 May 1986 and 2 September 1987.

⁵⁵ CTCC, n.p.

⁵⁶ *Argus*, 26 November 1985.

⁵⁷ Gabru, 4.

⁵⁸ Gabru, 4; "Stop Press," *WECTU newsletter* 2 (December 1985): 7; "Education crisis update," *Update* 2 (January 1986): 2.

⁵⁹ Interview with Barbara Houghton, 22 March 1990.

⁶⁰ "Education crisis update," 2.

dismissals, suspensions and transferals of teachers.⁶¹ In early January 1986, WECTU was still publicly calling for the "unconditional reinstatement of all 118 teachers throughout the Western Cape who have been victimized."⁶² In these ways, WECTU kept up its "unprofessional" challenge to the departments of education.

Apart from its political and uncooperative -- in relation to the education departments - stands, WECTU resisted traditional "professionalism" by defining teachers not as "professionals" but as workers. WECTU allied itself with the working class. An editorial in the second newsletter spoke of a "Vital Role for Teachers": "We in WECTU ... have a right to feel that, no matter how small we are numerically, we are part of a larger contingent of oppressed workers, students, and sincere democrats whose active resistance has begun to spell the end of this system of oppression and exploitation."⁶³ A remark in the launch conference paper castigated teachers' middle-class aspirations. "Teachers must not pay lip service of allegiance to the working class," stated the paper, "when by their very actions at school towards the children of the working class, they contradict this allegiance."⁶⁴

Logically, then, WECTU regarded itself as a union, not a professional association. The initial CTCC pamphlet included the workerist slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all."⁶⁵ In 1987, Dale Lautenbach of the *Argus*, after interviewing several WECTU executive members, offered a more definite analysis; he saw WECTU's "dream and goal" as being a national union of teachers seeking to affiliate to COSATU.⁶⁶ For all intents and purposes, WECTU engaged in a kind of "populist unionism",⁶⁷ emphasizing political, as opposed to economic, goals.

This "anti-professional" ideology, rooted in a politics of resistance, articulated itself in "unprofessional" activities within the context of Coloured education. WECTU engaged in stay-aways and, specifically contradicting acceptable teacher activities -- as defined by conventional "professionalism" -- broke the law of the time. WECTU ignored the order forbidding the holding of meetings in schools, for example.

WECTU's "anti-professionalism" brought it into direct conflict with the established teacher association, the CTPA, operating within the same department. Some of WECTU's resistance to "professionalism" was aimed directly at the CTPA, which still sat on DEC (HoR) subject committees, enjoyed stop-order facilities and met regularly with the

⁶¹ *Cape Times*, 21 December 1985.

⁶² *Argus*, 13 January 1986.

⁶³ "Editorial," *WECTU newsletter* 2 (December 1985): 3.

⁶⁴ "The Political Economy of Education in South Africa," 6.

⁶⁵ CTCC, n.p.

⁶⁶ *Argus*, 2 September 1987.

⁶⁷ According to union analysts Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, "populist unionism" implies that "trade unionism and struggles in the factory are downplayed. [Populist unionism] is a tendency that neglects struggles over wages, supervision, managerial controls at the workplace and job evaluation. It places in its stead a political engagement that only serves to dissipate shop floor struggles." Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, "The Re-emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa?," in Eds. Cobbett and Cohen, 21.

department as befitted its recognised status. The first WECTU newsletter stated: "Many teachers have turned to WECTU because certain teachers' organizations have been widely rejected on principle because of their active or implicit promotion of apartheid divisions, and because of their subservient collaboration with state education authorities."⁶⁸

A process of change: tensions within WECTU

Teachers' transition away from traditional "professionalism" was not smooth. Rather, WECTU represented and institutionalized a process of change which was full of tensions and contradictions. Within WECTU, these tensions took several forms.

The first of these tensions arose from WECTU's political position in Coloured schools in the Western Cape, with its peculiarly divided ideological history. To overcome divisions between various internal elements, particularly the Unity Movement and Charterist camps, WECTU adopted a strongly non-sectarian line. As Gabru explained about the organisation's formation: "When there are needs people don't worry about ideologies. They organise."⁶⁹ Whether or not the organisers worried, ideologies were an issue, for much emphasis was placed on non-sectarianism. There was, explained Zubeida Desai, an early WECTU activist, "a hang-over of Unity Movement within people [in WECTU]." Randall van den Heever of the CTPA went so far as to claim that WECTU was principally guided by Unity Movement ideology.⁷⁰ Houghton said, though, that the different ideologies, while "not an issue," were "apparent".⁷¹ Therefore, a WECTU spokesperson could claim before the launch that it was, "Non-sectarian, comprising people from all the political movements fighting for change in South Africa."⁷² And Gabru pragmatically claimed that, "People chose to be non-sectarian because they wanted to maintain the unity of teachers."⁷³ Thus, the following was duly added to the "Aims and Objectives" of WECTU's constitution: "To strive for a non-sectarian approach at all times."⁷⁴ And the January 1986 newsletter proudly touted: "We have illustrated in WECTU that a non-sectarian approach to struggle is our only way forward to victory. All teachers in WECTU, irrespective of their political affiliations, can and must work together as comrades."⁷⁵

Beneath the rhetoric, however, lay a more uneasy truth. Discord existed within WECTU on this ideological front. "Sectarianism has not left WECTU unscathed," wrote the Wynberg chairperson in 1986.⁷⁶ Gabru's first annual report contained a warning: "Divided the state can and will pick us off one by one. In the future we will be called upon to act decisively. We cannot then allow ourselves to be immobilised by our allegiance to

⁶⁸ "2000 Teachers Unite," 1.

⁶⁹ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

⁷⁰ Interview with Randall van den Heever, 8 March 1990.

⁷¹ Interview with Barbara Houghton, 22 March 1990.

⁷² *Cape Times*, 28 September 1985.

⁷³ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

⁷⁴ WECTU, *Constitution*, n.p.

⁷⁵ "A Victory for Unity," *WECTU newsletter* 3 (January 1986): 2.

⁷⁶ Chairperson Wynberg, n.p.

different sections of the liberatory movement."⁷⁷ An Athlone Central member, in writing to the newsletter about "principled unity", was more critical: "... it is precisely because we have become trapped by the sectarian interests and ideological in-fighting and intolerance, that any form of united action is diffused and emasculated from the outset."⁷⁸

One aspect of the sectarianism within WECTU created a second major tension within the organisation, that involving the principle of non-collaboration. Traditional "professionalism" implied a readiness to collaborate with state structures. WECTU, in rejecting "professionalism", also rejected "collaboration". But tensions arose within WECTU about exactly what this non-collaborationist aspect of a new "professionalism" meant.

Non-collaboration had been a major tenet of Unity Movement policy, and was thus espoused by the large Unity Movement contingent within WECTU. During the eighties, with the ascendancy of Charterist philosophy, the term became nebulous within the political context of popular resistance. Township youths, in particular, declared war on "collaborators", harassing and killing people who worked within state local authority structures, the tri-cameral parliament, the police and the army. Teachers, too, were often considered to be "collaborators" by some activists and youth because teachers worked directly for the *apartheid* government. WECTU, deflecting these accusations, wrote in its constitution that it aimed: "To refuse to collaborate with any State department or person who seeks to preserve the status quo."⁷⁹

The tension within WECTU arose over both the nebulous definition of "collaboration", and its practical application. While condemning the CTPA for its ties with the education department, WECTU itself met and negotiated with departmental officials. For example, on 14 January 1986, a three-person WECTU delegation met with the DEC (HoR) executive director, A.J. Arendse, in the Roeland Street DEC offices. Supported by between 250 and 300 colleagues on the street outside, the delegation gave Arendse a petition demanding the unconditional reinstatement of all teachers and students, and the removal of the police and army from the schools. Arendse claimed no security forces were present at schools, and he agreed to the readmission of students. That night on state television, Hendrickse announced the reinstatement of all suspended teachers. WECTU declared it an important victory, although the plight of dismissed temporary teachers had not been resolved.⁸⁰ Was the meeting an act of collaboration? Clearly the populist, democratic style was not that of the CTPA, with crowds waiting and being consulted in the street. But, Gabru admitted that a "few" teachers left WECTU after their first demonstration in Cape Town: "They argued that we were negotiating with the department." Some teachers within WECTU rejected what they considered to be the "collaborationist" tactics of WECTU leadership. Gabru continued: "I imagine others have

⁷⁷ Gabru, 5.

⁷⁸ Athlone Central member, "A Plea for Principled Unity," *WECTU newsletter* 3 (January 1986): 16.

⁷⁹ WECTU, *Constitution*, n.p.

⁸⁰ *Cape Times*, 15 January 1986; *Argus*, 15 January 1986; "A Victory for Unity," 1-2.

left because of our militant position, or because of our talks with the CTPA."⁸¹ A second incident of perceived "collaboration" occurred in which a WECTU executive member responded to a telephone call from Arendse requesting a meeting with him. This second event sparked off heated debate within WECTU about procedure, collaboration, and negotiation.⁸² Clearly, "non-collaboration" meant different things to different people. The dilemma for WECTU concerned how far members should, in fact, go towards rejecting their department and its officials.

In the same vein, boycott tactics, with their ideological implications, remained a tension within WECTU. The strategy of boycotts grew in popularity in the eighties and were closely associated with the burgeoning popularity of the ANC. The Unity Movement historically opposed such a strategy. And although some teachers boycotted classes, and declared their full support for their students' actions, the prolonged boycott sowed tension within WECTU. WECTU, a militantly progressive teachers' union, could come to no clear resolution regarding the students' boycott during the latter part of 1985. After a seven-hour discussion of this issue at the 6 October 1985 WECTU General Meeting, a member of the Athlone East region wrote to the newsletter: "Our inability to take a definite position vis-a-vis the boycott of schools at this stage takes the teacher-members right back to the start of the school boycott in July.... Our inability to take a decision is, in my opinion, a weakness."⁸³ The perceived weakness concerned WECTU's internal tensions about strategy. A newsletter editorial spoke of "... the disenchantment and disillusionment with the organisation which many of its members experience in the face of its apparent inability to arrive at a clear position regarding the matter of the class boycott."⁸⁴

This contentious issue took the specific form of division within WECTU over the year-end examination boycott, described in detail in the preceding chapter. Gabru claimed: "The issue which caused the most headaches, and perhaps lost us many members, was that of the support for WECTU's call to teachers not to administer exams." He wondered whether it was the way in which the decision was taken, or whether it was the non-binding nature of the call that was central to its divisiveness for WECTU.⁸⁵ The January 1986 newsletter spoke of "the division created within the ranks of our membership on the question of the administration of the 1985 final exams."⁸⁶ Though all members of WECTU "unprofessionally" rejected *apartheid* education, the strategies employed to change it created these tensions within the organisation.

Apart from tensions concerning sectarianism and collaboration, WECTU experienced internal contradictions concerning its espoused non-racialism. The movement towards a

⁸¹ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990. Here Gabru is referring to the various meetings involving the CTPA in 1986 (the March NECC meeting), 1987 (the Western Cape NECC), and the unity meetings after 1988.

⁸² "WECTU: Union or Not?," *WECTU newsletter* 5 (May 1986): 2, 15.

⁸³ A member of the Athlone East region, "Letter to WECTU," *WECTU newsletter* 2 (December 1985): 7.

⁸⁴ "Editorial," *WECTU newsletter* 3 (January 1986): 10-11.

⁸⁵ Gabru, 4.

⁸⁶ "Editorial," *WECTU newsletter* 3 (January 1986): 11.

new "professionalism" not reliant on racial divisions, and towards a unified teaching profession, was structurally problematic. WECTU did contain members who were white and Indian, as well as Coloured, since these people worked within DEC schools. Initially, too, it met with some organisational success in African schools. "Quite a few teachers from African schools did join up," said Desai, who went to Guguletu to publicize WECTU. Guguletu teachers fell under the Athlone East region of WECTU; Langa teachers fell under Athlone Central. "It worked for a time," Desai continued, "but you needed that kind of [political] momentum all the time."⁸⁷ There were clear practical difficulties: WECTU meetings occurred in Coloured areas, and were dominated by DEC (HoR) teachers. The first newsletter spoke to this issue: "... WECTU faces the immense challenge of putting its commitment to non-racialism into practice. More specifically, it is already evident that the active interest shown in WECTU by teachers in Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu encounters severe practical problems in making contact with the union - the onus is on WECTU to break down the divisions that apartheid has built up."⁸⁸ Also, it was reported at the December 1985 SPCC conference that, "Because of the State of Emergency, they [the mainly Coloured teachers who comprise WECTU] were unable to meet with African teachers."⁸⁹

The problem of WECTU's ethnic identity was, ironically, exacerbated by the launch of another "non-racial" organisation, DETU. After DETU formed, the African teachers who had participated in WECTU dropped out.⁹⁰ As the Wynberg chairperson wrote, "Apartheid has been so successful in separating people, including teachers, that ghetto-based organizations have emerged....,"⁹¹ once again in the context of education, and popular political resistance espousing non-racial strategies. The crucial issue in confronting its principled non-racialism then became the establishment of a unified teachers' organisation. As an Athlone East member wrote to the newsletter, "WECTU is not a racist body of exclusively white, coloured and Indian teachers.... DETU and WECTU must be united."⁹²

Although interested in joining with DETU, WECTU ignored the other progressive teachers' organisation, EDASA. It denied individual EDASA members the right to sign up by invoking a rule against being members of more than one teacher organisation (initially aimed at CTPA members).⁹³ Then, too, WECTU refused to acknowledge EDASA's existence in any of its published materials. Mainly, WECTU opposed "liberals" teaching in white schools. By rejecting EDASA in this way, WECTU further called into question its non-racialism, and its stated desire to overcome *apartheid's* barriers.

⁸⁷ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

⁸⁸ "Breaking the Barriers," *WECTU newsletter* 1 (November 1985): 3.

⁸⁹ Western Cape Regional Report, "Report," in *People's Education*, 23.

⁹⁰ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

⁹¹ Chairperson Wynberg, n.p.

⁹² Athlone East member, "Letters," *WECTU newsletter* 4 (March 1986): 7.

⁹³ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

A further tension experienced by WECTU in its transition to a new "professionalism" concerned its espousal of working-class allegiance. For example, WECTU rejected funding from the Urban Foundation, which was seen to be working to coopt a black middle class. In an apologetic letter to the newsletter, a certain E.J. Daniels contested this opposition by claiming: "Personally, sir, without trying to be derogatory in any way to any member of WECTU, I must point out that in our midst there are members who qualify for this social position [within the black middle class]."94

Apart from the reality that teachers remained committed in some ways to middle-class values, there was another internal tension which emerge from WECTU's vision of teacher-workers. WECTU, engaged in crisis-management, could not fully undertake the duties of a union. The first newsletter spelled out these duties as follows: "As a union, WECTU must reach out to teachers and design its activities and projects around the day-to-day problems that teachers face; for example, their employment conditions, sex-discrimination, access to teaching resources and new teaching methods, relations with students in the classroom, and salary problems."95 During the crisis of 1985, with relatively small numbers of engaged members, such a vision was impractical.

An article entitled "WECTU: Union or Not?" which appeared in the May 1986 newsletter illustrated this tension. At the time of the launch, constitutional debate on this union-association issue was resolved by pragmatically deciding "... that WECTU would have characteristics of both kinds of structure." Debate flared again after the two meetings with Arendse discussed above, raising inter-linked questions about unions, professional associations, and negotiations with the state.96

WECTU had difficulty resolving the tensions concerning sectarianism, collaboration, racialism and unionism as it rejected conventional teacher "professionalism". The transition to a new "professionalism" was thus fraught with several tensions inherent in teacher politics in South Africa.

WECTU's organisational issues and success

The tensions inherent in the teachers' realm, which emerged during the process of change away from established notions of "professionalism", along with the repressive political climate in schools, affected WECTU's organisation. In his annual report, Gabru wrote:

At the time it seemed that regional structure was the most appropriate but in practice there have been problems.... In the original wave of enthusiasm many people accepted positions on a regional executive but thereafter failed to fulfil their commitments. So some regions never really became established and little or no recruitment or organisation took place. Many teachers who would have joined a progressive teachers' organisation

94 E.J. Daniels, "Letters," *WECTU newsletter* 5 (May 1986): 15.

95 "2000 Teachers Unite," 2.

96 "WECTU: Union or Not?," 2.

were either unaware of the region's existence, or if they were aware of its existence, did not know how to get involved.⁹⁷

The difficulties WECTU experienced in maintaining fully-functioning structures were due in part to state repression. In October 1985, for example, soon after WECTU's launch, Carter Ebrahim banned non-recognised organisations from operating at schools. WECTU ignored the ban.⁹⁸ On 7 November, Gabru was detained after other WECTU executive members had been arrested.⁹⁹ In the words of an executive member in 1987: "We've had so many crises to respond to that we've never really had a true lull during which to build our administration and get on with the ordinary business of working towards the educational system we envisage."¹⁰⁰ Or, as Gabru said after its first year:

Since its launch WECTU has had to do two things: both respond to the State of Emergency and attempt to build a permanent teachers organisation. Many of the problems we have experienced since the inception of our union can be attributed to the difficulty involved in building an organisation while also confronting the demands of the emergency.¹⁰¹

Despite these repressive pressures, however, WECTU met with success in both institutionalizing an "anti-professional" ideology, and in supporting elements of the liberation movement. The Western Cape SAIRR wrote of one example of such support for militant teachers: "... pressure from WECTU brought about the reinstatement of most teachers dismissed at the end of [1985]."¹⁰²

Organisational activities were undertaken to create a more permanent organisational ethos outside of crisis, and to try to live up to its ideological aims regarding education. WECTU committed itself to media, and produced two newsletters in its first three months. The newsletters continued regularly, comprised of editorial comment, letters, reports, poetry and illustrations. They were clearly an organisational strength. Also, apart from the usual fund-raising activities such as films and tee-shirt sales, WECTU organised various talks and workshops on teachers' rights, international education and primary school teaching, amongst other things. Later, one region conducted a winter school.¹⁰³

Clearly, WECTU accomplished a great deal during and after the 1985 schools' crisis. It provided a voice for teachers in opposition to "professional" ideas about their work; it lent support to the liberation movement; it offered valuable input on the shape of a future, liberatory education system. Struggling to maintain a non-sectarian approach and live up to the ideals espoused in its constitution, WECTU defended itself with varying successes

⁹⁷ Gabru, 4.

⁹⁸ *Herald*, 12 October 1985.

⁹⁹ *Argus*, 18 November 1985.

¹⁰⁰ *Argus*, 2 September 1987.

¹⁰¹ Gabru, 3.

¹⁰² SAIRR, CW Region, 23.

¹⁰³ Newsletters; *Argus*, 2 September 1987.

against the state, which sought to silence it and return teachers to their "proper" and "professional" place within the education bureaucracy.

The Democratic Teachers' Union

As WECTU asserted a new "professionalism" within Cape Town's Coloured schools, similar developments occurred within teacher politics in African townships. DETU, like WECTU, rejected the fundamental tenets of traditional "professionalism". Working to re-establish lost credibility within the repressive atmosphere of African schools and communities, DETU adopted an overtly political position within the liberation movement. It remained antagonistic towards the DET as it strove for educational change. DETU also rejected "professional" elitism. In the spirit of a newly-forming "professionalism", DETU aspired to becoming a non-racial union of teachers.

The transition away from traditional "professionalism" was challenging and problematic. An institutionalized part of this process, DETU experienced internal contradictions regarding its non-racialism. Also, DETU suffered during the repressive political climate of 1985-1986, and remained small. However, DETU moved beyond the crisis of those years towards a permanent place within teacher politics, and achieved some successes. It claimed credibility in the eyes of students and communities, and it added an important weight to the shift away from traditional "professionalism".

After "a quiet launch without any fanfare or pomp in May of 1985,"¹⁰⁴ DETU -- originally named the United Democratic Teachers' Union (UDETU) -- claimed between 300 and 450 members out of a total of around 700 high school teachers.¹⁰⁵ Born in crisis, and operating amongst the more politicized high school teachers,¹⁰⁶ DETU shared a few similarities with WECTU. As DETU itself argued, however, Coloured and African township conditions were dissimilar. DETU organised amongst a smaller group of teachers, and confronted the potential for more dangerous antagonism from its communities. Though a founder member, Monde Mbekwa, wrote grandly that, "... by and large the organisation has been felt and recognised by organisations in the country and outside as one of the most important forces for change in South Africa,"¹⁰⁷ DETU's public voice was a quieter one than WECTU's.

¹⁰⁴ Monde Mbekwa, "Organisational Analysis: The Democratic Teachers' Union," paper for Diploma for Educators of Adults, UWC, August 1989, 2. In an interview with Mbekwa, 9 August 1990, he said the launch took place in June or July, before the first State of Emergency.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990; Shepherd Mdladlana, "Welcome Colleagues!" *DETU News* 1.1 (July 1987): 2.

¹⁰⁶ Here it can only be suggested that primary school teachers were mainly women, largely under-qualified and therefore more afraid of "political" involvement which might cost them their jobs, while more men worked in high schools. This might begin to answer the question about why DETU met with success mainly in high schools.

¹⁰⁷ Mbekwa, 7.

DETU's challenge to "professionalism"

DETU challenged "professionalism" in several ways, and its antagonism to this traditional ideology articulated itself in antagonism towards PENATA, the established teacher association operating within Cape Town's African schools. The changing terrain of teacher politics, some teachers believed, required a new organisation. This antagonism to PENATA demonstrated itself in May of 1985 at the first meeting of teachers which led to the formation of DETU. On the day of the first gathering of "progressive" teachers in African townships, a parallel meeting was held in Guguletu. The "progressive" meeting at the NY117 Church comprised mostly high school teachers; the other, at the Uluntu Centre, had been called by PENATA, and was attended mainly by primary school teachers.¹⁰⁸

The NY117 Church meeting, the first of several which led to DETU's formation, was a rebuttal to PENATA. There was a feeling amongst some teachers that PENATA utterly failed to respond to the student and other pressures of the 1985 school crisis.¹⁰⁹ As Andile Jonas said in 1988, "The 1985 crisis in education led to the formation of DETU after it became clear that the teachers' organisation which existed at that time could not adequately tackle problems affecting education."¹¹⁰ Specifically, according to DETU, PENATA failed to confront student complaints, or take them up in any meaningful way. Mdladlana stated: "Concerned teachers had pressured PENATA to take up pupils' demands and grievances with the relevant authorities. When those teachers saw for the umpteenth time that they had failed in their efforts to persuade PENATA officials to respond to the crisis, they decided to form a progressive teachers' union."¹¹¹ A DETU executive member later added, "Teachers appealed to PENATA to go to the students. They were afraid."¹¹²

Later, a PENATA regional organiser would complain that DETU "was always attacking PENATA".¹¹³ In part, DETU needed to justify its existence in this way, for it was a "break-away" or "splinter" group. There was "wrangling" at the time about whether to form a separate union or attempt to re-direct PENATA through, for example, a vote of no confidence. The reason offered by one DETU executive member, that "PENATA was not convening meetings", is clearly only a partial truth.¹¹⁴ In fact, some of the DETU leadership were former PENATA executive members. Mdladlana had been a PENATA secretary, for example, and the DETU ranks boasted a former PENATA president, vice-president, assistant secretary, music convenor and education secretary.¹¹⁵ There were, according to a DETU executive member, "personal conflicts".¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990; interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹¹⁰ *South*, 13 October 1988.

¹¹¹ Mdladlana, 2.

¹¹² Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹¹³ Interview with Basie Nikani, 13 June 1990.

¹¹⁴ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

¹¹⁶ Interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

Although such conflicts may have affected the political decision to form a new teacher organisation, more important motivations lay in both a desire for credibility and a feeling of responsibility towards students and the community at a moment of intense political conflict. DETU Chairperson Shepherd Mdladlana wrote that, "Teachers were at last also realising their responsibility to their pupils and to the community at large."¹¹⁷

This responsibility extended into the realm of the liberation movement, where DETU rejected the apolitical nature of traditional "professionalism". DETU cooperated with student and community organisations. DETU formed some alliances with township organisations, attending civic meetings, for example, and working with both the Joint SRC's and the African township-based Parents' Action Committee.¹¹⁸ It participated in UDF structures,¹¹⁹ finding its political home in the mass democratic movement.

Its political involvement, like WECTU's, involved DETU in work for educational change. It strongly opposed the education being offered -- Mbekwa wrote bluntly that DETU "... had in mind the taking up of cudgels on behalf of pupils..."¹²⁰ While DETU sought short-term concessions in line with student grievances, it, like WECTU, had visions of more fundamental changes in education. A constitutional aim was to gain control of syllabi and curricular content.¹²¹ DETU came into being hoping to establish a single education system, and to facilitate the development of People's Education (or its pre-NECC incarnations).¹²² DETU sent a delegate -- Mdladlana -- to the December 1985 SPCC conference, and to the March 1986 NECC conference in Durban. It also foregrounded work within PTSAs.¹²³

DETU promoted new understandings of education. With hindsight, Mbekwa wrote that, "The organisation, though unaware, has reflected the theoretical positions of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci."¹²⁴ DETU desired to render education democratic and liberatory, in opposition to a "professionalism" inclined towards the educational status quo.

This commitment to educational change led DETU into a further "unprofessional" position. DETU immediately developed antagonistic relations with the DET, adopting an uncooperative stand in relation to its employer. The event which sparked DETU's formation, in fact, involved resistance to a departmental decree. As township students engaged in a full-scale boycott of classes, and schools, in May of 1985, tensions mounted. Disturbed by the free time the boycott afforded teachers, the department called all high

¹¹⁷ Mdladlana, 1.

¹¹⁸ Mbekwa, 3; *South*, 15 October 1988; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹¹⁹ Mbekwa, 4.

¹²⁰ Mbekwa, 3.

¹²¹ Mbekwa, 3.

¹²² Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 118-119; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990; interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

¹²³ Mbekwa, 3; *South*, 15 October 1988; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990; interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

¹²⁴ Mbekwa, 6.

school teachers to St. Francis in Langa during school hours to "sit and prepare lessons for the following year".¹²⁵ Teachers could not be idle.

But the DET instruction, meant to assert authority, backfired. Firstly, teachers at Sizamile High School did not attend, due to some tensions with their students. Secondly, those teachers from other schools that did arrive at St. Francis did not "sit and prepare", as requested. Rather, they gathered together for an "unauthorized" meeting, as the supervising inspectors informed them. This "unauthorized" meeting at St. Francis opted to follow Sizamile's lead. The teachers who had arrived at St. Francis decided that they needed to be at schools; they could not so completely expose pupils.¹²⁶ That evening, after teachers had rejected the DET's St. Francis gathering, "progressive" teachers held the meeting at the NY117 Church in Guguletu which led to DETU's formation.

The St. Francis "rebellion"¹²⁷ foreshadowed DETU's later relations with the DET. DETU never desired to participate in departmental structures. Although negotiations with the DET would have been acceptable to most DETU members, the DET refused to deal with DETU. According to Mbekwa: "Negotiation with the authorities was considered as one way of resolving the problem but unfortunately the department branded the organisation a group of committed trouble-makers and so closed the door on DETU."¹²⁸ A circuit inspector indicated the extent of the antagonism when he warned teachers against DETU by saying, "Be careful of biting the hand that feeds you."¹²⁹

Along with its political, "uncooperative" positions, DETU rejected the elitism inherent in traditional "professionalism". "We [teachers]," stated a founding executive member using a patronizing metaphor, "had to come down to the level of the masses."¹³⁰ DETU's calculated disregard for teachers' "elite" or "professional" status also showed itself in DETU's constitutional membership rules. Members were mostly teachers, but could also work in non-formal education-related service organisations, such as the Career Research and Information Centre (CRIC), or could be non-practicing teachers.¹³¹

DETU members' rejection of an "elite" status also demonstrated itself in their conception of their organisation as a union. According to Mdladlana, "... teachers decided that a union of teachers was needed...."¹³² Though not as significant an issue in 1985 as it was for WECTU, Mdladlana asked in a December 1987 newsletter, "Are teachers' workers?"¹³³

Such "unprofessional" stands helped DETU reclaim teacher credibility in the eyes of students and communities. Mbekwa explained that, "Students were hard on those teachers

¹²⁵ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹²⁶ Mdladlana, 1; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹²⁷ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹²⁸ Mbekwa, 3.

¹²⁹ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹³⁰ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹³¹ Mbekwa, 2.

¹³² Mdladlana, 1-2.

¹³³ Shepherd Mdladlana, "1987 - Teacher Unity!," *DETU News* 1.2 (December 1987): 2.

... they regarded as conservative."¹³⁴ DETU presented a "progressive" picture of teachers. When DETU was formed, claimed Mbekwa, "people were very skeptical. We were put to the test." He continued that later, after experiencing victimization, "We had graduated."¹³⁵ DETU's "graduation" influenced teacher politics in the Western Cape, adding an important impetus for a changed understanding of teacher "professionalism".

DETU and the troubled process of change

DETU's movement away from traditional "professionalism" presented the organisation with some challenges and internal contradictions. In particular, DETU experienced tension around its stated ideal of non-racialism. In practice, DETU opted to work only within DET schools. Township conditions, they argued, were qualitatively different from elsewhere. "The idea of linking up with another organisation of teachers in 'coloured' schools, also in a state of conception, was mooted but shelved for a later stage when both had found their feet," wrote Mbekwa.¹³⁶ Their lack of success in establishing a desired non-racial identity caused Mdladlana to write in December 1987, "... we must move away from talking about non-racialism. We must put non-racialism into practice."¹³⁷

Another illustration of the troubled move towards a new "professionalism" stemmed from the crisis-management nature of DETU. "Professionalism" was being vociferously challenged within a political context. Because commitment to its new ideologies within teacher politics meant harassment by state and educational authorities, DETU's membership remained small. Also DETU operated within more overtly politicized high schools, rather than in primary schools where teachers' employment was less secure and conditions of work more strictly controlled due to a lower level of student militancy than existed in high schools. An antagonist, the chairperson of the rival PENATA, claimed that, "DETU at the time [of its inception] had no majority. They were few."¹³⁸ In 1988, Chairperson Andile Jonas did not answer the direct question posed by *South*: "What is DETU's membership?"¹³⁹ As with WECTU, DETU's active membership was small due to contradictions about "professionalism" and due to the repressive atmosphere in schools. Elements of the liberation movement which actively sought a new definition of "professionalism", however, afforded DETU a significant voice in teacher politics.

DETU's institutionalization of the challenge to "professionalism"

Small membership did not render DETU ineffectual as it institutionalized the process of change towards new teacher perceptions of their work and their place within education.

¹³⁴ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹³⁵ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹³⁶ Mbekwa, 2.

¹³⁷ Mdladlana, "1987 - Teacher unity!," 1.

¹³⁸ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

¹³⁹ *South*, 13 October 1988.

"At first we thought this [formation of DETU] would be a temporary measure," said a founding member, "but we realised there was a need."¹⁴⁰ Analysing "reactionary associations" and "teacher action committees and their limitations,"¹⁴¹ the teachers concerned opted to follow the example set by NEUSA -- formed in 1980 and operating in DET schools mainly in the Transvaal -- by establishing a permanent union.

As an emergent union, many of DETU's political protest actions, such as meetings and its participation in demonstrations, were successful. In July 1987 it produced a first newsletter, and in December 1987 a second, and final, newsletter appeared. The newsletters, aimed at articulating "... the aspirations of oppressed teachers, as well as the views of students and parents on the present crisis in education",¹⁴² contained information about DETU positions, a couple of thoughtful pieces on Brazil and history, reports, poetry, a pupil essay, profiles and a crossword puzzle.

The newsletters serve as a symbol of an organisation too small, too beleaguered, too embattled to produce media during the crisis-ridden year of its birth. DETU matured greatly in 1987, offered life and direction by the gradually unfolding process of teacher unity. This does not mean DETU was bereft of self-contained merit or credibility. An executive member claimed that it helped greatly to restore teachers' credibility: "Teachers were no longer petrol-bombed because of DETU."¹⁴³ Teachers used DETU to influence their reputation, and to fundamentally influence the nature of teacher politics and teacher "professionalism".

Education for an Aware South Africa

During 1985-1986, EDASA challenged entrenched "professional" ideology in white schools. While espousing a new "professionalism" similar to that of WECTU and DETU, EDASA experienced and exacerbated tensions within conservative white schools which were not in a state of unrest. "We knew our constituency was different [from black teacher groups]," said Cheryl Schwikard, an early member.¹⁴⁴

As battles raged in black schools, pressuring teachers to act and react in their "sites of struggle", the organisation and functioning of white schools remained largely unaffected. Certainly no student action flared, no boycotts occurred, and no police invaded campuses. And as the state enforced media restrictions, even the flow of information about the black education crisis was curtailed.

Therefore, EDASA encountered a great deal more resistance from its constituency than WECTU or DETU. EDASA was *not* riding the wave of popular resistance which allowed WECTU and DETU such loud voices and acceptance within their communities. Its constituency's resistance to its ideas, along with EDASA's movement towards acceptance

¹⁴⁰ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹⁴¹ Mdladlana, "Welcome colleagues!" 2.

¹⁴² Mdladlana, "Welcome colleagues!" 1.

¹⁴³ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

by the militant democratic movement, reflected itself in a very small membership. EDASA committee-member Mike Adendorf, speaking of the 200 or so who arrived at the initial Rosebank Methodist Church meeting which led to EDASA's formation, said, "There were never as many again at an actual EDASA meeting." The initial general meetings comprised forty or forty-five people, numbers which "tailed off" dramatically after 1986, he said. While Schwikard put the membership at about eighty, founder-member Pam van Dyk said that fifty members at a meeting was considered a large group, with only twenty sometimes: "Basically, it was the reality of our situation." Adendorf concurred: "We were conscious of the fact that we were doomed never to be a large group."¹⁴⁵

Established ideas of teacher "professionalism" were thus more difficult to challenge in white schools. But EDASA challenged them as it institutionalized the shift away from entrenched notions of proper teacher behaviour and ideology.

EDASA's "professional" transition

Like WECTU and DETU, EDASA's most significant contribution to a new "professionalism" was an overtly political understanding of society and teachers' work. The "unprofessional" political nature of EDASA was apparent from its inception, emerging from the motivations for its formation.

Despite the divisions between white and black education in the Western Cape, a small minority of white students and teachers felt the township traumas impinge on their consciences enough to react in a public, organised way. The SATA's verbal response to the education crisis (see below) did not suffice for some teachers. The teachers' reaction resulted in the formation of EDASA. The signal event for the small group of teachers was the 26 July 1985 State of Emergency. A founding member, Pam van Dyk, claimed that EDASA "was formed in response to the State of Emergency":

I realised that there would be no reaction where I worked. My pupils wouldn't know about the State of Emergency; it would not touch their lives at all. I thought, 'How bizarre. We live in the same city. As educators we must do something about this.'¹⁴⁶

So van Dyk and a few others organised an open meeting at the Rosebank Methodist Church on 9 August under the heading, "Education in a State of Emergency," with various groupings, including the Progressive Federal Party's Jan van Eck, on the platform.¹⁴⁷ This meeting, attended by 150 to 200 people, many of whom taught at white or private schools, adopted several motions calling for the abolition of segregated education and school cadet programmes, and for the establishment of a progressive organisation. Teachers from many schools formed a large committee which hammered out a constitution, and chose the neutral

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990; interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990; interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁴⁷ In an interesting turn of events which presaged future inter-organisational tensions, Yousuf Gabru refused to sit on the same platform as van Eck.

name, to the chagrin of more politicised members.¹⁴⁸ The first general meeting, which ratified the constitution, took place on 5 October 1985.¹⁴⁹

EDASA thus emerged from a broadly political arena, and remained increasingly outspoken about political issues. An editorial in the second issue of its organ, *Update*, stated that, "Remaining silent is a political act: it implies acceptance of the status quo and of the world view of the class that owns the means of economic production."¹⁵⁰ A recruitment advertisement appearing in the June 1986 issue of *Update* suggested EDASA could offer "a sense of meaning, commitment to South Africa's future, and a real understanding of democracy." Further, involvement offered opportunities to "restore faith in your own sense of agency," to "gain support from other teachers who also take a stand on moral principles," and, among other things, to "generally keep abreast of the latest trends, educational and those of a broader nature, in our society...."¹⁵¹

In these ways, EDASA maintained a public commitment to political change. As Coordinator Gareth Rossiter commented in a 1986 AGM keynote address after one year of EDASA: "... more than simply reacting to state pressure in the educational arena, we have a vision of a changed, new South Africa, and it is here that EDASA finds its context...." EDASA worked within white schools "primarily," wrote Rossiter, "as an *activist* organisation concerned with the conscientisation [sic] and organisation of teachers in our constituency."¹⁵²

Politically, EDASA moved further away from established ideas of teacher "professionalism" by engaging with the broader liberation movement. This posed certain dilemmas for the organisation, which had a difficult time winning credibility within a Western Cape context distrustful of white liberalism. An *Update* editorial stated that, "... we ... work on the periphery of the broader struggle for a just and democratic education in South Africa...";¹⁵³ and van Dyk admitted, "I guess we were low-key and small."¹⁵⁴ In particular, explained Schwikard, "We were desperate for credibility with other teachers' organisations."¹⁵⁵ "The struggle to gain credibility for white teachers working in these schools," stated an EDASA member, "and a place [for] these teachers in the democratic movement has been an enormous task. Sometimes I think too big a task for too few people."¹⁵⁶ But, van Dyk argued, "Without credibility, there's no point in organising. We don't want to be an isolated white group."¹⁵⁷ This desire played itself out as EDASA joined with other anti-*apartheid* organisations in a Cape Town "front" in opposition to the

¹⁴⁸ Rossiter, n.p.; interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁴⁹ "One Year of Edasa: A Review of Action," *Update* 4 (December 1986): 4.

¹⁵⁰ "Editorial," *Update* 2 (January 1986): 1.

¹⁵¹ "EDASA, Democracy and You," *Update* 3 (June 1986): 4.

¹⁵² Gareth Rossiter, "AGM keynote address," *Update* 4 (December 1986): 2.

¹⁵³ "Editorial," *Update* 2 (January 1986): 1.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

Emergency,¹⁵⁸ and as EDASA's public rhetoric maintained an increasingly radical tone in line with the broader liberation movement.

Another aspect of EDASA's "unprofessional" ideology linked to its overtly political nature was an articulation of the political nature of education. A front-page editorial in EDASA's second *Update* began, "Education is a political issue."¹⁵⁹

This political understanding of education articulated itself in several ways for EDASA. This emergent white organisation rejected *apartheid* education divisions and undertook specific organisational actions which targeted the crisis in black education. EDASA repeatedly attempted to express a solidarity with black teachers, which was, during 1985-1986, not always reciprocated by WECTU. A 12 September 1985 public forum dealt with "Education: A Deepening Crisis", and EDASA held a picket-protest on 19 September demanding the release of all teachers and pupils from detention.¹⁶⁰ A 27 November "emergency" forum dealt, amongst other things, with the crisis in Coloured schools. EDASA expressed support for the teachers refusing to write or invigilate examinations. A spokesperson is quoted as saying: "As white teachers in secure posts in white schools we feel we need to show our solidarity with teachers in coloured schools."¹⁶¹

EDASA's articulation of the political nature of education further led it to express desire for educational change. With Freire as their ideological touchstone, EDASA propagated the need to overcome the "culture of silence", and the need to liberate students and teachers through alternative approaches to teaching and learning. Educational change was meant, in a way similar to DETU and WECTU, "to win back control of the schooling process...."¹⁶²

A primary means of accomplishing its educational vision, and a primary reason for its formation, lay in EDASA's creation and dissemination of alternative education materials.¹⁶³ EDASA's concern with progressive methodologies led to a workshop held on 17 August 1985 -- only a week after the first large meeting -- entitled "Education Action for Peace" which involved teachers in the creation of resource packages of alternative classroom materials. This was followed on 26 October with another workshop at which resource packages were presented.¹⁶⁴ Members continued to work on these resources, which were then placed in the Language Education Unit at UCT.¹⁶⁵ A methodology workshop took place on 20 November.¹⁶⁶ And a 1986 first term diary of events in *Update* included a 19 February methodology workshop, and a 15 March resource centres exhibition.¹⁶⁷ This

¹⁵⁸ *Cape Times*, n.d., in "EDASA in the News."

¹⁵⁹ "Editorial," *Update* 2 (January 1986): 1.

¹⁶⁰ "One Year of Action," 4.

¹⁶¹ *Argus*, 28 November 1985.

¹⁶² Rossiter, "AGM keynote address," 1-2.

¹⁶³ Rossiter claims that this "focus on the development of alternative methodology" was carried over from SIG (see Chapter 3). "Developing," n.p.

¹⁶⁴ "One Year of EDASA," 4.

¹⁶⁵ "EDASA, Democracy, and You," 4.

¹⁶⁶ "One Year of EDASA," 4.

¹⁶⁷ "Dates to Diarise," *Update* 2 (January 1986): 3.

methodology workshop became, in fact, a lecture on action research, while the exhibition never got off the ground.¹⁶⁸ Another plan that did not bear fruit was the desire to open an awareness resource centre.¹⁶⁹ In line with this commitment to assessment of methodology, Rossiter devoted a section of his 1986 keynote address to "Teaching strategies", in which he suggested, for example, that, "The principle ideological issue we can expose is the issue of education for socialisation."¹⁷⁰

EDASA's engagement with the politics of education allowed it access to national education initiatives linked to the liberation movement. EDASA's ties to the broader educational arena, and to black education specifically, were considerably improved by an invitation to send two delegates to the March 1986 NECC conference in Durban. Further, EDASA actively participated in the national Education Charter Campaign in April, hosting a public meeting on the issue on 29 May.¹⁷¹ This improvement was also assisted by an invitation from NEUSA to send two observers to its national conference in Bloemfontein on 23 May. Later, EDASA would find itself firmly bound to its black counterparts in the progressive unity initiatives of 1987 and in the Harare initiative begun in April 1988.

Apart from its involvement in education issues linked to struggles in black schools, EDASA challenged traditional "professionalism" in white schools by devoting energy to two other school-related issues: the abolition of enforced cadet training; and opening schools to all people. The former aim led ten EDASA teachers and student teachers to join -- for one week beginning on 30 September 1985, on a roster basis -- a fast for peace and justice begun by ECC leader Dr. Ivor Toms. An EDASA spokesperson is reported to have said that the fast was "in line with one of EDASA's specific aims, which is to promote a peaceful and just society by discouraging militarization in our schools and actively supporting the peaceful resolution of conflict."¹⁷² The anti-militarization activities were carried further by an EDASA-organised "emergency" public gathering held in UCT's education building on 27 November 1985. Titled generally "Education - The Present and the Future", this meeting discussed, among other things, alternative activities to replace cadet-training. The headmaster of the Bishops Diocesan College, who spoke at the meeting, announced that boys at his school would be permitted to engage in community service instead of cadets from 1986.¹⁷³ The January 1986 issue of *Update* included an article stating EDASA's position on the cadet programmes, which played "a crucial role in the militarization of our society."¹⁷⁴ The article was written in support of the ECC's "cadets campaign week" from 29 January to 5 February 1986.

¹⁶⁸ "One year of EDASA," 4.

¹⁶⁹ *Cape Times*, 30 October 1985.

¹⁷⁰ Rossiter, "AGM keynote address," 3.

¹⁷¹ "One Year of Action," 4.

¹⁷² *Cape Times*, 2 October 1985.

¹⁷³ *Cape Times*, 27 and 28 November 1985, in "EDASA in the News," *Update 2* (January 1986): 4; *Argus*, 28 November 1985.

¹⁷⁴ "The Reason for the ECC [End Conscription Campaign] Cadets Campaign Week," *Update 2* (January 1986): 5-6.

The second white-school oriented campaign that EDASA undertook concerned "open schools". A 10 February 1986 forum held by EDASA to examine the Education Policy Act also delved into issues concerning non-racial schools.¹⁷⁵ In February 1986 parents at an elite, private school precipitated this issue in Cape Town by deciding to allow entrance to students of all "races". EDASA, in response to what became a "raging" debate, launched an open-schools campaign. The campaign began on 4 March with a general meeting, and the following weeks included the circulation of a petition demanding "open schools in an open society", 10,000 pamphlets distributed to schools and homes highlighting the education crisis, single-person placard demonstrations on 21 March, and a larger public gathering entitled "Responding to the Education Crisis" organised with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), PAAG (discussed in Chapter Four), the UDF, and a progressive lecturer group.¹⁷⁶ An *Update* article explained:

It is not because EDASA wishes to be involved in the government's 'reform initiatives' that we feel that this debate must be raised in all schools, but because we believe that everyone in our community -- especially teachers, parents and pupils -- should think about this issue and take the initiative in demanding change in the educational arena.¹⁷⁷

Troubled transition within white teacher politics

As EDASA propagated a new "professionalism" amongst white teachers, it experienced many tensions within its political arena. EDASA found it difficult to both woo other progressive organisations and cater for its constituency. As EDASA pandered to the demands of the broader democratic movement by adjusting its publicity, van Dyk wondered in 1990 whether "we needed to use more liberal speakers and take a more liberal stand for our constituency. But we didn't for fear of our credibility [within the popular resistance movement]."¹⁷⁸

But even without radical stands, EDASA's change-oriented aims would have pitted it against those it sought to assist. For example, it proved difficult to implement alternative education, as van Dyk attested:

There was a lot of pupil resistance. Pupils were angry at the guilt they felt when they realised the truth. It's hard to take people beyond this. It's a process and guilt is part of the process. Pupils felt frustrated, feeling 'What am I supposed to do?' Also, there was total resentment at the mention of politics. I was quite frequently asked [in class] if it's allowed.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ "One Year of Action," 4.

¹⁷⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 21-27 March 1986; *Argus*, 20 March 1986; "Open Schools in an Open Society," *Update* 3 (June 1986): 5; "One Year of Action," 4.

¹⁷⁷ "Open Schools in an Open Society," 5.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

If students resisted, all the more reason for teachers to resist, which they did by refusing to participate in any significant numbers.¹⁸⁰

A second tension within white education experienced by EDASA involved *apartheid* education divisions. White teachers working in white schools formed an organisation, as Rossiter stated, "... in response to the critical situation in black schools...."¹⁸¹ Therefore, van Dyk articulated a central dilemma: "You're organising people around ideas rather than around things that touch their lives."¹⁸²

Thirdly, the "professionalism" of white teachers was more unassailable than that of teachers in black schools. The unchallenged position of the established white "professional" association, SATA, illustrated this. EDASA could not present a direct threat to SATA, so they did not attempt to. Although Rossiter claimed that EDASA was formed, in part, "... out of a frustration with the lack of response from the established teacher bodies in the 'white' constituency...,"¹⁸³ EDASA presented a marginalized organisation in the face of SATA's acceptability within the ranks of English-speaking white teachers. This was illustrated in a number of ways, including EDASA's abortive walk-out at a 1987 SATA conference.¹⁸⁴

While seemingly unable to successfully influence SATA, EDASA experienced a further restraint on its "unprofessional" influence by the white education department's tactic of denying EDASA any notice. The white department did not feel the need to respond in any way to EDASA, and therefore did not make an issue of EDASA which might have won it sympathy or credibility. According to van Dyk speaking in 1990, "We've been totally ignored by the Department. To this day they pretend not to know who we are. The other day an inspector asked me."¹⁸⁵

EDASA did experience limited repression. Much of its third issue of *Update* was censored, and the issue was published covered in thick black lines. More significantly, Rossiter was detained. Van Dyk claimed that one of EDASA's main purposes was to provide a "support group for Gareth". This support took the form, in part, of a petition calling for his release signed by 430 people sent to the Minister of Law and Order.¹⁸⁶ Even within the realm of repression, however, EDASA experienced contradictions unique to white education which hampered its influence on "professionalism". The lawyers acting for a teacher who was suspended from Pinelands High School for refusing to teach on 16 June asked EDASA *not* to publicly agitate against the suspension. Rossiter himself warned EDASA teachers at their 1986 AGM, in a style markedly different from WECTU or

¹⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that while EDASA's active membership may in fact have been similar in size to DETU's, DETU did not need to worry about public justification of small numbers in the way that EDASA did. DETU existed within the popular resistance movement, and won credibility there. EDASA did not have such support structures in its early years.

¹⁸¹ Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

¹⁸² Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁸³ Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

¹⁸⁴ This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁸⁶ *Argus*, 7 November 1985, in "EDASA in the News," 4.

DETU, "Whatever you do, don't get fired and don't quit.... Be careful, be realistic, take cognizance of the State of Emergency."¹⁸⁷ The political context of white schools remained markedly different from black schools, creating tensions within a white organisation which attempted to engage with the black education crisis.

A final inhibiting factor which produced organisational tension in EDASA's attempts to influence "professionalism" concerned non-racialism. As with DETU and WECTU, in working towards a "just and democratic society",¹⁸⁸ EDASA defined itself as "completely non-racial, not-sectarian, non-sexist...."¹⁸⁹ But the tension that EDASA shared with DETU and WECTU was the nature of being constituted *de facto* a distinctly racial organisation espousing a non-racial philosophy. Rossiter wrote of EDASA's formation:

The argument that the conditions in 'white' and private schools were so fundamentally different from those in other schools because of the nature of apartheid education that they constituted a special case was accepted. But the priority of being part of one non-racial teacher organisation was established.

This contradiction has been at the centre of a tension in the organisation's programmes since its inception.¹⁹⁰

That all three newly-formed progressive organisations desired the same end is clear. But the practical means available were not always acceptable, as WECTU, DETU and EDASA experienced initial difficulties in communications, relations, and mutual-acceptance.

Influencing "Professionalism": A United Emergent Front?

The three new teacher organisations desired teacher unity. Each in its constitution stated the goal of creating a national, non-racial teacher organisation. Unity would strengthen the influence of new ideas about teacher "professionalism" in teacher politics, and enhance the process of transition away from traditional teacher ideologies. The sociopolitical tensions experienced by each emergent teacher group, however, maintained the divisions between them. The tensions which inhibited a smooth transition away from traditional "professionalism" also prevented the formation of a united, "anti-professional" front which would significantly challenge the established teacher organisations -- in this case the CTPA, PENATA (ATASA), and the SATA. Although WECTU, DETU and EDASA attempted to forge unity in various ways during 1985-1986, their continued disunity illustrated continuing contradictions within teacher politics.

¹⁸⁷ Rossiter, "AGM keynote address," 3.

¹⁸⁸ Rossiter, "AGM keynote address," 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Cape Times*, 30 October 1985, in "EDASA in the News," 4.

¹⁹⁰ Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

Continuing Divisions

Why did three teacher organisations which formed in the same town at the same time, espousing nearly identical ideas and sharing a common vision of a non-racial education system, remain separate? The reasons were varied, and reflected the influence of sociopolitical tensions on teacher politics. Primarily, the emergent groups did not unify in 1985-1986 because of the legacy of institutionalized *apartheid*, and because of organisational weakness and sectarianism.

Apartheid affected teacher politics in several ways, most importantly by fostering three separate Western Cape communities by enforcing physical separation. Conditions therefore differed greatly from townships such as Guguletu, to the neatly-planned Mitchell's Plain, to Observatory. Student attitudes towards school and teachers differed with varying school conditions, and with different, class-defined assumptions about education. Employment opportunities for matriculants from different areas, for example, differed markedly, especially as black unemployment rose. Also, levels of violence varied as township students battled police and white-area schools did not experience crisis. DETU Chairperson Shepherd Mdladlana, speaking at the first WECTU AGM, asked whether some teachers were too fearful to "cross the railway" line to experience the townships for themselves.¹⁹¹ Contact on the ground is fostered by ordinary members moving between areas and organising away from home.

Apartheid spawned separate education departments, which were enough to promote separate organisations. With decision-making authority devolved into separate administrations, not only were specific issues and complaints often dissimilar, but negotiations would have to take place on several fronts. Each organisation thus in practice confronted different teacher issues, different community issues and a different crisis born of differing circumstances. Also, practically it is much easier to work with teachers in your school and your neighbourhood. Importantly, students also organised within *apartheid's* communities, offering yet another pragmatic reason why *apartheid* worked to create three separate progressive teacher groups.

Times of crisis exacerbated these differences, for organised teachers needed to respond to departmental actions and school-based situations. Progressive teachers mobilized at such times, but interest waned during lulls: at the moment when organisational activity was crying out for unity, teachers were too distracted; when relative peace and space made such unity possible, many progressive teachers were largely organisationally inactive because the sense of urgency had diminished outside of political crisis.

Apart from the direct heritage of *apartheid*, there were other reasons why the three organisations formed and maintained separate identities despite their many common objectives. These related to organisational structure and style. Practically, the three were

¹⁹¹ "DETU's Comrade Shepherd: 'Teacher Unity is Vital,'" *WECTU newsletter* 6 (June 1986): 12.

too busy and too small to devote their over-stretched human and material resources to recruitment across "railway lines". The groups could barely maintain even limited recruitment initiatives within their own departments, relying more on the force of events and external pressures to prompt teachers to join. Ironically, too, once the three were in place, "turfs" were mapped out which meant unity had to occur at the level of organisational negotiations, rather than practically, on the ground.¹⁹² Gabru commented in his 1986 AGM address: "We have not been able to give meaningful support to the D.E.T. schools because of the existence of two separate teachers' organisations."¹⁹³ There were also often tense inter-organisational dynamics; teachers who forged their progressive groupings out of fraught circumstances -- especially as they battled to survive repression -- became attached to those groupings, and organisational pride developed. An EDASA informant spoke of "a lot of suspicion between DETU and WECTU", and DETU's Mbekwa spoke of "tensions" with WECTU: "... they wanted to swallow us. They were bigger."¹⁹⁴ Attached to such concerns was the difficult-to-quantify realm of leadership personalities. Some leaders, seeking a power-base either for reasons of personal power or in order to protect gains for their specific grouping in the context of UDF politics, were not keen to see that base evaporate.

Finally, differing priorities, at times linked to ideology, kept the barriers up. Rossiter touched upon two such issues in his 1986 AGM speech:

Both DETU and WECTU are, as their names indicate, unions. EDASA is not, and clearly not yet ready to be, a union.... Furthermore, apart from these unionist considerations, each of us operates in our own apartheid-created education system, each with its own problems, and therefore strategies. The cadets issue, for example, of central concern to EDASA teachers, is of less relevance to WECTU and DETU.¹⁹⁵

Ideological priorities also led to WECTU's vehement rejection of what it saw as the CTPA's "collaborationist" tactics, a less-important issue for DETU and EDASA insofar as "their" established organisations were concerned. Further, some WECTU members pointedly rejected EDASA as a collaborationist, white-liberal organisation.

If these, then, are the various reasons for their *separateness*, what real attempts during 1985-86 were made to overcome them?

WECTU and DETU

As indicated above, WECTU's formation involved some African township-based teachers, an initiative which met with limited success, but which demonstrated WECTU's desire for unity with DET teachers. This tendency continued to be demonstrated after DETU emerged. There were meetings about whether the organisations should be distinct,

¹⁹² Here it is interesting to compare the Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum's successful "unity in action" initiative during 1990 (see Chapter 7).

¹⁹³ Gabru, 5.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990; interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

¹⁹⁵ Rossiter, "AGM keynote address," 2.

meetings at which DETU argued that "township issues were separate", according to a WECTU member.¹⁹⁶ Mbekwa claimed that, "WECTU actually expected that we would join them.... Firstly, we needed to organise teachers in the townships, and not go there to be swallowed up. Then we could meet and form one organisation."¹⁹⁷

DETU's concern about WECTU did not, however, promote conflict. "Almost immediately [after forming] we started having a working relationship with WECTU," stated a founding DETU member.¹⁹⁸ WECTU's Desai described relations as "amenable".¹⁹⁹ Both informants concurred, however, and the record shows, that little joint activity took place. "Even when they marched to Wynberg, we were never invited," said the DETU member. "In fact, we just saw that march in the press."²⁰⁰ DETU did attend a WECTU meeting on 20 September 1986, along with the Eastern Cape Teachers' Union (ECTU) and two NEUSA regions, held "to co-ordinate a relief fund for teachers of the Eastern Cape...." Though mainly concerned with the Eastern Cape issue, the meeting did give WECTU cause to report in its newsletter: "This was the first time that such a meeting had occurred, and it represents a step forward for progressive teacher organisation."²⁰¹ Both WECTU and DETU's rhetorical stances remained firmly committed to the principle of a progressive merger. WECTU's March 1986 newsletter editorial looked forward to "The proposed union of WECTU and DETU and later ECTU."²⁰² At WECTU's May 1986 AGM, the chairpersons of both groups voiced commitment to unity. Gabru said: "Up till now we have paid lip service to the idea of one progressive teachers' union. The time has come for WECTU and DETU to form one organisation and to begin to break down 'location' barriers in a meaningful way."²⁰³ Mdladlana, an invited speaker, stated that, "Teacher unity is vital," and also warned that when liberation dawned, "we must not be found wearing the jacket of racialism."²⁰⁴

DETU and EDASA

Similarly amenable relations came about between EDASA and DETU, but their relationship was also devoid of joint actions. There were meetings between the two organisations. As Schwikard said: "We approached the [first] meeting with the greatest humility because we knew nothing and knew that they'd be suspicious."²⁰⁵ If suspicions did exist between the two organisations, they fell away. EDASA joined its progressive counter-parts as it pledged "solidarity with the teachers of WECTU and UDETU [later DETU], and rededicate

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

²⁰⁰ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

²⁰¹ "WECTU makes contact," *WECTU newsletter* 8 (October 1986): 4.

²⁰² "Editorial," *WECTU newsletter* 4 (March 1986): 5.

²⁰³ Gabru, 5.

²⁰⁴ "DETU's Comrade Shepherd," 12.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

ourselves to our goal of a single democratic teachers' organisation."²⁰⁶ In 1987, EDASA and DETU would hold combined workshops and a social evening. DETU, generally, played an important role in bringing EDASA into fold of the Western Cape progressive teacher organisations. "DETU forced it," said Rossiter.²⁰⁷

WECTU and EDASA

The barrier EDASA needed to overcome, that which needed to be "forced", was WECTU's refusal to accept EDASA as a credible group. During 1985 and well into 1986, EDASA did not appear in any of WECTU's literature,²⁰⁸ nor was it mentioned by Gabru in his 1986 AGM speech. WECTU did not include EDASA in any of its progressive-union press statements. "It was very pointed," said van Dyk. "WECTU snubbed us at every given opportunity." For example, WECTU did not reciprocate EDASA's invitations to AGMs. The snub was an ideological one, based on some WECTU members' resistance to liberals and to "collaborators" in white schools. Practically, EDASA took an initially bold step towards a single union. "When WECTU started," stated van Dyk, "I went to see Yousuf [Gabru] and said we'd disband. Could we, as teachers in white schools, join? There was always debate, but no answer."²⁰⁹ This did not prevent the ever-humble EDASA from continuing its support for WECTU. An *Update* advertisement, for example, asked members to contribute to WECTU's fund for victimized teachers during the 1985 examination chaos: "We urge you to support this fund as a sign of solidarity."²¹⁰

Thus the three crisis-born organisations maintained separate identities, each committed to combine, none taking any real initiatives in this regard. In later years it could be claimed that unity efforts helped to revitalize flagging progressive unions. During 1985 and 1986, though, they were all fully occupied with their differing circumstances, despite similar long-term goals.

The Rocky Established Road

Established teacher organisations in 1985-1986 felt the tensions which gave rise to the emergent teacher groups. The new groups institutionalized influences which were fundamentally altering teacher politics and teacher "professionalism". The established organisations, on the other hand, represented traditional "professionalism". The new teacher groups, students, communities and other elements of the liberation movement

²⁰⁶ "Editorial," *Update* 2 (January 1986): 2.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990. Schwikard (interview, 8 May 1990) has a slightly different account, claiming that "WECTU began relying on us for township contacts," and that EDASA played a role "getting WECTU and DETU together." This is not necessarily contradictory, for relations were clearly complex.

²⁰⁸ See, for example *WECTU newsletters* and pamphlets from this early period.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

²¹⁰ "Show your support now!" *Update* 2 (January 1986): 5.

challenged the established teacher organisations to engage in the process of transition away from a conventional "professional" ideology towards a new teacher "professionalism".

Since the established Western Cape organisations -- the CTPA, PENATA, TASA and the SATA -- had been built upon a "professional" ideology, however, they appeared incapable of dealing with this challenge within the context of their new political situation. The tensions created by the challenge manifested themselves in various ways within these organisations. As "professionalism" was being redefined by some teachers and elements of the liberation movement into an overtly-political, anti-state, non-racial, anti-elitist ideology, the established groups' previous actions and inaction became inappropriate. At times under immense pressure, the established organisations underwent some changes. Their underlying "professional" values, however, remained largely intact.

Reasons for change

It was during 1985 that two important developments occurred in the Western Cape: first, organised community involvement heightened; second, permanent, radical organisations sprang up. These were two pressures which, in part, caused the shift in stances that the established groups underwent. "It was only the impact of the popular insurgency of 1984-6 ... which finally caused a really fundamental re-orientation of teachers," writes Hyslop. He continues: "By 1986 every organisation of the profession stood, at least formally, on the side of the popular opposition movements."²¹¹ Hyslop's insertion of "at least formally" into the above equation is important, for some of what has been regarded as "organisational shift" would be more aptly termed "leadership shift". These bodies take direction from the top. TASA's 1989 presidential change from Pat Samuels to Poobie Naicker, for example, brought about pronounced change in TASA's approach to teacher unity. With this important caveat in mind, we now ask the question, why did the established teachers' organisations experience the changes they did in 1985 and 1986?

Primarily, the various pressures which prompted the formations of the progressive unions²¹² also affected the established bodies. Black Sash writer Helen Zille wrote of "considerable student anger" directed at "collaborators" in the form of members of ATASA and the CTPA.²¹³ And Ian Moll, explaining how important student and community struggles were for the shift in ATASA, UTASA and TASA, stated: "... school boycotts, and the mobilisation and politicization of the communities where their members lived, had started to change their political direction."²¹⁴ As a Western Cape NECC activist explained in 1990, "They didn't want to cut themselves off from the people they were serving.... They were also continuously isolated by the MDM."²¹⁵

²¹¹ Hyslop, "Teacher Resistance," 2. 37.

²¹² EDASA and SATA must be excepted from much of the following discussion.

²¹³ Zille, 6.

²¹⁴ Moll, "Towards on South African teachers' union," 64.

²¹⁵ Interview with informant E, 5 March 1990.

Conditions existed which forced the established organisations to critically confront their ideological assumptions. Previously acceptable behaviour became unacceptable as the political discourse changed, as definitions of acceptability altered, as the ground beneath them shifted. A central index of these shifts can be found in each group's relationship with their employing department. The established organisations' *modus operandi* was rendered ineffectual as the education system they worked for split, and their colleagues, charges and neighbours rejected them. They had to question their old methods. There was pressure, also, from within. The progressive unions wanted to undermine and perhaps replace the established associations. But even beyond this, the crises, placing teachers in new situations, changed their needs; as new demands were made of them, they looked to their organisations for new responses. In mid-1986 Hyslop wrote of, "The current political crisis, and the failure of existing 'professional' teachers' organisations to serve the needs of their members...",²¹⁶ and Ken Hartshorne claimed that the established groups "... are under pressure, particularly from their younger members, to take up a more militant stance of the kind adopted by the newer associations."²¹⁷ In the event, it was ATASA's Randal Peteni who summed up the predominant thinking within established organisations in mid-1985: "It is the old brigade like us who are irrelevant if we allow ourselves to become irrelevant."²¹⁸

If the above highlights some motivations for change, what specific forms did the change take? During 1985-1986, the established organisations began to lessen their antagonism towards the emergent groups. They began to seek legitimacy within the popular resistance movement. Did their questioning of conventional "professional" ideology, however, lead to change in style of operation, or organisational behaviour?

The Cape Teachers' Professional Association

Elements of the liberation movement, including some teachers, challenged the traditional "professionalism" of the CTPA in 1985 and 1986. Previously "acceptable" teacher behaviour, based on traditions of race and class-consciousness, became unacceptable. The CTPA's traditions of cooperation with the state became an encumbrance. During 1985-1986 the CTPA was forced to reassess its ethos.

At the heart of this ethos was the CTPA's conservatism. With over 20,000 members in the Western Cape region²¹⁹ coming mainly from rural areas, with large resources and an entrenched leadership, nothing would be done to alienate members or to unseat leaders. The CTPA's activities remained within the law during 1985 and 1986, unlike progressive teacher groups which acted against an oppressive state under an Emergency.

There were, however, both external and internal pressures for change. Generally speaking, as the *Sunday Times* reported without citing evidence in June 1985, "... there is a

²¹⁶ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 91.

²¹⁷ Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 120.

²¹⁸ Peteni, 37.

²¹⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 October 1985.

mounting militancy within the CTPA, increasingly fuelled by younger members who want the organisation to take a more definite political stance on issues that affect the general black community and not only 'coloured' teachers.'²²⁰ The underlying premise was supported by historian Gavin Lewis. Pointing to a post-1948 erosion of the rule of law and a deterioration of the perceived legitimacy of the state, as well as BC and *apartheid's* undermining of the rights and privileges of Coloured elites, Lewis concluded: "... the relevance of specifically Coloured political organisations has steadily declined.... [F]or the most part, mainstream Coloured politics has become subsumed within the broader black political movements."²²¹ These changes took shape in 1985 as dissatisfaction with the CTPA policy grew within its own ranks.

The CTPA recognised that its past "professionalism" needed to be questioned. An editorial in the first half of 1986 stated:

After 1985 South Africa and our schools will never be the same again. In a sense there is no returning to 'normal.' Our schools and our children are different and they will require a new kind of commitment and response from their teachers.²²²

The organisation, however, with its strong "professional" traditions and close ties with the state, experienced this tension in a problematic way. Various tensions within the organisation illustrated that, although pressured to do so, the CTPA would not be able to shed the mantle of "professionalism" easily.

The symptoms of a troubled time

The CTPA posed many questions during 1985-1986, and it attempted to come to terms with the new student authority -- a direct challenge to "professionalism" -- and changed teacher politics. The difficulties the CTPA experienced in the face of changing teacher politics and pressure to redefine its notions of "professionalism" were demonstrated in different ways.

The CTPA called various crisis meetings, at which the contradictory nature of its responses was apparent. The organisation felt the need to pass "confidence motions" to support its leadership. Such motions point to internal challenges and dissatisfaction. On 31 August 1985, for the first time since 1980, the CTPA called an urgent "crisis" meeting in Athlone to discuss the situation in Coloured schools. Meeting one week after the formation of the CTCC, this 500-person meeting "identified" with the struggle against *apartheid*, was "disturbed" by detentions, and condemned the police invasion of school-grounds. The teachers present also pledged one day's salary to a fund for those teachers, students and parents who had suffered because of the unrest. By 14 March 1986, the fund had contributed almost R50,000 towards "legal costs, funeral and other crisis-related incidents,"

²²⁰ *Sunday Times*, 16 June 1985.

²²¹ Lewis, 285.

²²² "Where there is no vision the People Perish," *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1986): 2.

reported the CTPA General Secretary, Paul Jordaan.²²³ At an emergency executive meeting at the beginning of October 1985, a motion of full confidence in Sonn was passed, and an appeal for students to return to classes to prepare for the year-end exams was made.²²⁴

These meetings often reflected a "professional" contradiction within the CTPA. "Professionalism" implied an apolitical position. But how could an organisation working in black schools remain apolitical during 1985? The CTPA adopted a new public posture, which was primarily an attempt to regain lost credibility. The CTPA wanted to reassert itself within teacher politics, and the broader political sphere. There was, however, often disjuncture between its rhetorical stands and behavioural positions. Its public stance remained ambivalent.

The following two extracts illustrate the ambivalence. The first is taken from Sonn's 1984 Conference presidential address:

The CTPA cannot afford to become a political party or a political movement. When the governments proposals [in 1983, such as the White Paper in response to the De Lange Commission's report] became public we immediately and unequivocally *rejected* the perpetuation of the present *apartheid educational system* in the new constitution. However, how the association's individual members interpret and formulate the strategy to follow this principled declaration against apartheid in party political context, remains an individual right.²²⁵

The second is part of a CTPA statement of its aims after 1985:

Although the CTPA is not a political organisation it fully subscribes to the contention that politics and education cannot be separated from each other and is therefore committed to engage in such political matters that directly or indirectly have a bearing on education.²²⁶

Its leaders held steadfastly to the public belief that it could not be a political party, but could engage in political action, a way of clinging to a "professional" idyll while being forced to behave in "unprofessional" ways. The first extract also points to a common CTPA contradiction: afraid to take decisions on boycott-related matters, it hid behind a screen of the autonomy of its members. In an organisation run from the top down, with members looking to their elected leadership for positions and direction, it is odd that these issues should suddenly be relegated back to individual members as an excuse for inaction.

Apart from questioning, crisis meetings, confidence motions and public ambivalence, the symptoms of dissatisfaction within the CTPA took two particularly troublesome forms. First, break-away bodies began to emerge. In May, the Eastern Cape Teachers' Union (ECTU) was formed with about 200 teachers. "They intend operating in opposition to

²²³ Paul M. Jordaan, "The CTPA and the Challenges of the Eighties," address delivered at UWC, 14 March 1986, 6; *Sunday Times*, 1 September 1985.

²²⁴ *Cape Times*, 11 October 1985.

²²⁵ Quoted in *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1984): 5.

²²⁶ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 90-91.

CTPA in the Eastern Cape," reported the *Sunday Times*, "saying they have lost all confidence in the administration."²²⁷ In June, the *Cape Times* reported that eighteen CTPA members had resigned in that area in protest against its handling of the school boycotts.²²⁸ The months of August and September brought WECTU onto the scene, confronting the CTPA with its failure to deal adequately with the crisis in the eyes of a substantial number of teachers. September also saw the birth of the 148-member Paarl Teachers' Union (PTU). Though denying any opposition to the CTPA, its chairperson said: "The CTPA may have a branch in Paarl but it is not very active and teachers felt they had no platform from which to air their views."²²⁹ It should be noted that the CTPA's disagreements with the South African Council of Sports (SACOS), and its opposition to "non-racial" sport, were important issues for these new groups.

The CTPA leadership responded defensively. The *Cape Times* quoted Sonn on the formation of ECTU: "A so-called new teachers' organisation in the Eastern Cape, if it still exists, is not a breakaway body from the CTPA."²³⁰ Randall van den Heever, CTPA deputy president, adopted a similar attitude to the CTCC formation: "It is a matter of concern for us that these opposing teacher groups only mushroom during times of student unrest and then fall into dysfunction during times of relative calm."²³¹ A real concern was the threat to CTPA membership posed by three organisations in Cape Town, the Boland, and the Eastern Cape. This threat went some way towards influencing the internal debate about the CTPA's "professionalism".

The second troublesome form of internal dissent was the widely publicized leadership challenge, led by Vernon Pitt, at the June 1985 conference.²³² Pitt lost his vice-presidency at the 1984 conference in George, and was subsequently approached by a "Committee of 10" to challenge Sonn's presidency, the first challenge since 1978. This nebulous group, the real size and power of which proved to be relatively small, cited its reasons for opposing the leadership: cooperation with the department, Sonn's "flirting" with the LP, the CTPA's opposition to SACOS, and the CTPA's unwillingness to take a public stand on the tri-cameral parliament. The last issue, raised at the 1984 conference, had been left unresolved and had raised wider criticisms of the CTPA leadership. Pitt's confidence was boosted before the 1985 conference after he defeated a CTPA regional vice-president by over 100 votes for the chair of the Mitchell's Plain region. "Mr. Pitt's supporters," reported the *Sunday Times*, "say they have unbridgeable differences with the Sonn administration. If they cannot replace it democratically, they say, they will consider starting a rival Western Cape teachers' association."²³³ Another re-grouping of CTPA

²²⁷ *Sunday Times*, 19 May 1985.

²²⁸ *Cape Times*, 24 June 1985.

²²⁹ *Cape Times*, 28 September 1985; *Argus*, 25 September 1985; *Herald*, 26 September 1985.

²³⁰ *Cape Times*, 18 June 1985.

²³¹ *Cape Times*, 19 August 1985.

²³² What follows is compiled from newspaper accounts. *Sunday Times*, 19 May 1985, 16 June 1985; *Cape Times*, 30 April 1985; *Herald*, 18 May 1985, 15 June 1985; *Argus*, 17 June 1985.

²³³ *Sunday Times*, 19 May 1985.

teachers, which reportedly supported Pitt and his "shadow cabinet," called itself "*Onderwysers in Gesprek*". Convened by a teacher, Dennis Malgas, these 108 teachers discussed strategies to redirect the CTPA back towards teacher unity.

At the 1985 conference, however, support for Pitt and his followers failed to materialise. Instead, in a well-orchestrated and heavy-handed way, the rival-group challenge was quashed. Pitt was outmaneuvered on the first day as van den Heever opened the conference with a lengthy denouncement of the leadership challenge, followed by a motion of full confidence in Sonn and the executive. Though the discussion took place in committee, the vote indicates that things had "gone badly" for Pitt: the motion passed 767 to 14.²³⁴ The underlying theme of van den Heever's speech, and of later discussion, was *loyalty*. Loyalty had to be preserved at all costs. "In 1985 we were bogged-down by internecine strife from within," Sonn would later say. "In 1985 the CTPA Conference in Vredenburg was accordingly devoted to a purge of the organisation." In gathering itself to confront the new political challenges in that year, the CTPA also rejected the tri-cameral parliament, Pitt's central concern.²³⁵ The "purge" was successful, since Sonn and his executive were returned to office after the voting had, for the first time, been barred to the press. The vote count was also not released. The Conference further mandated Sonn to apply a constitutional article against members who violated the organisation's principles.²³⁶ The message was clear: dissent would not be tolerated. But all was not entirely well, as the pre-conference publicity, the leadership's heavy-handed tactics, and an unscheduled conference address by Sonn appealing for calm -- because "the situation had not normalized entirely"²³⁷ -- illustrated. The CTPA needed to cure both the symptoms -- such as the leadership challenge -- and the disease of conflicted teacher politics.

These internal tensions reflect the CTPA's problematic position: embodying traditional "professionalism", and thus rejected by many students and some teachers, the organisation struggled to find a new, more acceptable place for itself within teacher politics. It was often accused of inaction during this time, but the CTPA did engage in some action which illustrated a tentatively shifting understanding of its "professional" position.

Action and inaction

During 1985-1986, the CTPA remained a "professional" body, invested with all the trappings of a traditional teacher association. It underwent two important shifts however: it became outspokenly political, even if this public stance contained contradictions; and, while committed to "professional" cooperation with the state, the CTPA weakened its ties with the DEC (HoR). During 1985-1986, the CTPA moved from its complete commitment

²³⁴ *Cape Times*, 18 June 1985; *Argus*, 18 June 1985 and 3 July 1985.

²³⁵ Sonn, "Address on the Occasion," 2-3.

²³⁶ *Herald*, 29 June 1985; *Cape Times*, 21 June 1985.

²³⁷ *Argus*, 20 June 1985.

to cooperation with the education department to a withdrawal from departmental structures in 1986.

The CTPA, as a "professional" body, had much invested in the system of education as it stood. It could not simply reject it. Therefore, during 1985 it remained committed to working within the education system.

Sonn's re-election at the June 1985 conference was heralded by the *Cape Times* as "a triumph for negotiation politics". They cited advances made in salary issues and in the position of married women teachers.²³⁸ An *Educatio* statement on the conference claimed: "The CTPA and UTASA have rebuilt themselves on the basis that the way to destroy apartheid is by improving the abilities of people, through the educational process, rather than demeaning them through a denial of education. They also firmly resolved to *negotiate*, but *never to collaborate*."²³⁹ This illustrated a changed position as the CTPA began espousing a policy of "non-collaboration", but it still remained committed to negotiations. And Sonn responded to a question at a UCT conference on teacher organisations in July 1985 with the words: "... it is impossible not to negotiate with the authorities."²⁴⁰

The CTPA's negotiations took several forms. The CTPA met with various government officials throughout the 1985 unrest as their main tactic in attempting to solve the school crises. In March 1985, a CTPA delegation met with Hendrickse and Ebrahim about the Eastern Cape boycotts.²⁴¹ On 12 November, Sonn -- not as a mandated representative of the CTPA but as an educator of public stature -- was part of a delegation of educationists which met with P.W. Botha, de Klerk, Hendrickse and Ebrahim, a gathering condemned by the UWC SRC and WECTU.²⁴² The meeting gave Botha the opportunity to announce that, "I have also told them that they have an obligation to combat leftist radicalism together with the government."²⁴³ Regarding the department's treatment of teachers as the school-year came to an end, the CTPA executive were told in a meeting with the DEC Director of Education, Mr. A.J. Arendse, on 28 November that investigations conducted on a "sound professional basis" and "fair hearings" awaited the troublesome teachers.²⁴⁴

The CTPA remained fully "professionally" invested in the state's education system in other ways as well. In a startling move in 1985, Hendrickse announced that Sonn and van den Heever and the CTPA secretary had been informed of the decision to close 465 schools under the DEC (HoR) in the light of continued disruptions, and had agreed to it. A UTASA response -- perhaps UTASA was seen as a greater authority -- confirmed that a CTPA delegation had been "summoned and informed" of the decision on 5 September.

²³⁸ *Cape Times*, 24 June 1985.

²³⁹ "Statement by...", *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1985): 9.

²⁴⁰ Franklin Sonn, "Teachers in Opposition: Strategic Alternatives," in Ed. Ashley, 56.

²⁴¹ *Argus*, 6 March 1985.

²⁴² *Cape Times*, 11 November 1985.

²⁴³ *The Weekly Mail*, 15-21 November 1985: 7.

²⁴⁴ *Cape Times*, 29 November 1985.

The UTASA response went on ambiguously: "Because the police at the time were entering school premises at random and seriously assaulting and injuring teachers and pupils, the CTPA delegation could not deny that the situation had reached a critical stage."²⁴⁵ The CTPA's close ties with the department did at times appear to extend beyond the realm of negotiating. Van den Heever, as principal of Spes Bona High School, was accused by a WECTU informant of giving the department names of teachers who refused to set examinations, and a teacher at Spes Bona was demoted for refusing to invigilate.²⁴⁶ Though the latter was not a CTPA action, it is indicative of a leadership attitude, one reiterated as the CTPA called for students to return to classes. For example, on 11 October, according to CTPA General Secretary Paul Jordaan, "the CTPA warned that a continuation of the school boycott was counter-productive, and urged pupils to return to classes to prepare for the forthcoming examinations."²⁴⁷

Part of the cooperation included the CTPA's continued participation in departmental committees, as well as UTASA's quarterly meetings with the director-general of administration in the HoR. The CTPA's tentative, and then categorical, rejection of the department was its biggest step away from the "professionalism" of the past. Although an acceptable meeting was held with the director-general of administration in May 1985,²⁴⁸ UTASA began "hinting" in August that the quarterly talks would discontinue unless they were taken more seriously by the director-general and his department.²⁴⁹

In another illustration of the growing tension between the CTPA and its employing department, the CTPA used the courts to defend teachers. The first of two actions taken to the courts by the CTPA involved the 1 October regulations introduced by Ebrahim giving principals great powers to expel teachers and students and prohibiting meetings at schools. WECTU, it will be recalled, opted to ignore the new regulations. The CTPA's application was successful, as the court found three of the five contested regulations *ultra vires*.²⁵⁰ The second case, unsuccessfully dismissed with costs by the Cape Town supreme court on 3 January 1986, attempted to force the HoR education minister to allow students the opportunity to write supplementary examinations (a decision taken by the department in February). In its ruling, the court stated: "They [Ebrahim *et al*] were concerned first and foremost with educational considerations and fairness to pupils and their decision was the best one in a difficult situation." The CTPA's decision to pursue the case was taken after an unsuccessful meeting with President Botha.²⁵¹

These various indices of the trouble beneath the CTPA's surface, and its growing dissatisfaction with the department, presaged the organisation's momentous decision to break with its past and withdraw from all departmental committees. Accepted by eighty

²⁴⁵ *Cape Times*, 8 October 1985.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

²⁴⁷ Jordaan, 7.

²⁴⁸ *Sunday Times*, 5 May 1985.

²⁴⁹ *Sunday Times*, 25 August 1985.

²⁵⁰ *Cape Times*, 29 October 1985; *Argus*, 1, 4 and 22 October 1985; *Sunday Times*, 15 December 1985.

²⁵¹ *Argus*, 4 January 1986; *Cape Times*, 3 and 4 January 1986; Jordaan, 7.

percent of the delegates at its June 1986 conference in Kimberly, the "decision to distance ourselves from the Labour Party and the department" was taken, according to van den Heever, "because we realise we have to be in concert with the community."²⁵² Introducing the withdrawal resolution, van den Heever said, in marked contrast to earlier public stands, "All I succeeded in doing [by continuing involvement in departmental committees] was sugar-coating the apartheid pill."²⁵³ The national body UTASA also withdrew from government structures the next day by a margin of three to one.²⁵⁴

In a discussion of the conference, the *Report of CTPA for NECC* -- a document written in 1987 to facilitate discussion about the CTPA's potential membership in the Western Cape NECC -- claimed it "has been seen by CTPA as their signal to broad sections of the democratic movement of their wanting to make a decisive break from the past." The 1986 Conference also reflected other policy shifts, such as a desire for government-ANC negotiations, and an "objective" approach to People's Education. Although the *NECC Report* indicates that "CTPA is not being entirely open and honest about this shift, nor is it being forthcoming about its exact strength and the dynamics within the organisation," and that the CTPA had admitted the "withdrawal has not been as thorough as it should have been,"²⁵⁵ it was clear that there was a shift underway within the organisation. Because of its strength and size, because of its commitment to its own resources and identity, because of its conservatism, the shift could not be an easy nor a quick one. In 1985, expedience played a significant role. June 1986 marked the beginnings of action-specific changes, which would be followed during the years to come.

PENATA's Laborious Effort

"We have been doing something, although it appears we have done nothing."

Mr. Gqaji, PENATA Chairperson²⁵⁶

Elements of the liberation movement working to redefine "professionalism" vehemently criticised PENATA during 1985-1986 for its inactivity. DETU was formed precisely because, its founder members claimed, PENATA proved incapable of responding to the traumatic township events. Thoroughly invested in traditional "professionalism", confronted by the new student authority at schools and by a new teacher union, PENATA remained a passive subscriber to both its underlying "professional" ideology and the tentative shifts away from "professionalism" experienced by ATASA, to which it was affiliated. Although maintaining a low public profile during 1985-1986, PENATA experienced ambivalence born of new tensions in teacher politics. Comprised mainly of

²⁵² *South*, 3 July 1987.

²⁵³ Quoted in *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 6.

²⁵⁴ *Argus*, 21 June 1986.-

²⁵⁵ *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 6, 9.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

principals and primary school teachers, PENATA barely responded to the new challenges to its "professional" posturing, and emerged from these troubled years with a commitment to traditional "professionalism" only slightly tempered by ATASA's public transition.

PENATA's "professionalism"

Historically, PENATA was committed to negotiation with the DET, and avoided "political" involvement. Even in 1990 Gqaji defended the DET: claiming that PENATA was taking a "professional and procedural" approach to student complaints, he implied that students were too hurried in their expectations, for the "Department had a planned system" and was simply "taking time to respond to [ATASA's] resolutions."

PENATA took its "professional" cues from its parent body, ATASA. Gqaji explained how "through ATASA, PENATA forwarded grievances to the department". PENATA, at its own conferences, typically enacted resolutions on pre-primary education, or in-service education, or the Uluntu Centre, for example, before submitting memoranda to the DET. DETU teachers sharply criticized PENATA's style of operation. "PENATA is made up of principals, and led by principals," said a DETU executive member. "They side with the state. Very few principals are progressive."²⁵⁷ Another DETU executive member added in 1990 that the PENATA executive had been the same for a long time, and with the absence of democratic elections was not accountable to its members,²⁵⁸ who numbered around 1575.²⁵⁹

Impetus for change

Various forces during 1985-1986 challenged PENATA to look beyond its traditional "professional" understanding of teachers' position within society and teacher politics. Deteriorating credibility in the eyes of students and the community clearly concerned members and leaders of PENATA, as it did the CTPA. "We were really humiliated [during 1985]," claimed Basie Nikani, PENATA's regional organiser. "We were publicly embarrassed by students." More dangerous threats awaited PENATA members, however, within the violent realm of township politics. In 1985, some PENATA members had their houses burned down. "We risked our lives," continued Nikani, who expressed a fear "of being stoned to death" during those years. Such fears pointed to a great antagonism between students and PENATA, and antagonism heightened with the formation of DETU. PENATA insisted that DETU worked in collusion with students, spurring them on to be ever-more unpleasant to members of PENATA. The launch of DETU was itself another pressure upon PENATA to reject its past "professionalism", just as WECTU, ECTU, and the PTU pressurized the CTPA. Nikani said that immediately after the 1985 "splinter groups" formed, "We saw it was time to focus on the crisis of education generally.... The

²⁵⁷ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

²⁵⁸ Interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

demands of the time, the demands of history and of politics are such that we've got to focus on more than just professional matters."²⁶⁰ What DETU did for PENATA locally, NEUSA, a strong force in the Transvaal, did for ATASA nationally.

The SPCC/NECC, as early as the end of 1985, further prompted ATASA to move away from its conventional "professional" stance. The SPCC/NECC decided to include ATASA in its consultations and structure. "We recognise ATASA as the major representative of teachers in South Africa," stated Ihron Rhensburg, "with 54,000 members nationally."²⁶¹ Eric Molobi explained: "The NECC believes that the ordinary membership of ATASA is not hostile and needs to be brought closer to progressive ideas." He further said, "... to cut links completely with ATASA would be tactically incorrect. We can never throw willing allies into the hands of the enemy."²⁶²

Ambivalence and change

These challenges to PENATA's apolitical "professionalism" had some effect. At first, PENATA responded with ambivalence. Gqaji, for example, described a meeting called by PENATA at the Uluntu Centre in 1985 to discuss student grievances. The meeting was unable to resolve on two central complaints: the harassment of students by teachers, and embezzlement of school funds. Particularly, he claimed, the issue of harassment divided those present, with some asking whether harassment really occurred. While the meeting was called to address student grievances within the turbulent political climate, PENATA proved incapable of responding effectively. With this indecision PENATA illustrated a fundamentally ambivalent political position in a time of crisis.²⁶³

With such underlying ambivalence, PENATA and ATASA focussed on their public image rather than on substantial change or action. ATASA President Randall Peteni said in his January 1985 conference address:

Most [political] leaders do realise that a teacher is a professional person and cannot be expected to stone or burn up buses and private cars and school buildings and private homes. But a teacher must be politically conscious and capable of interpreting political trends and public events in a way that will not antagonise his students. A teacher should never be an informer...

Our activities should not seem to be limited to music competitions and beauty contests alone, but should be extended to activities directed to the alleviation of suffering. Such activities will surely contribute to the improvement of the image of the teacher and the teacher's organisation.²⁶⁴

Further, Peteni stressed at the UCT conference on teachers' organisations that Security Branch visits to various officials had "constantly reminded the organisation that we are

²⁶⁰ Interview with Basie Nikani, 13 June 1990.

²⁶¹ Obery, 10.

²⁶² Campbell, 19.

²⁶³ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

²⁶⁴ R.L. Peteni, "One Nation, One Education System," *Educatio* 3rd Quarter (1985): 20-21.

skating on thin ice."²⁶⁵ In a similar vein, Gqaji claimed in 1990 that, "At principal meetings, PENATA principals are always attacking the department."²⁶⁶ Such claims illustrated ATASA and PENATA's desire for public credibility in the eyes of groups antagonistic to the state.

With various pressures acting upon ATASA, and filtering down into PENATA's local issues, shifts began to move these established organisations beyond ambivalent posturing. Members began to agitate from within the organisations. At ATASA's January 1985 conference, claimed Peteni, a few delegates suggested militant action, but this was not accepted. "Nevertheless," he said, "the mood of our members, especially the younger members, was that the teachers' association should adopt militant methods to supplement the usual methods of memoranda and deputations to the Education Department."²⁶⁷

Organisational activity did begin to change. In Cape Town, limited PENATA actions included an August 1985 statement released by Gqaji in the name of PENATA calling on police to stay off school-grounds because of the provocative nature of such acts.²⁶⁸ Then, in October, PENATA publicly supported the decision of matriculants not to sit for their final examinations, saying that preparation had been wholly inadequate due to disruptions.²⁶⁹ In March 1986, PENATA took up another student grievance by decrying "the quality and methods of allocation of free stationery supplied to black schools." The *Argus* reported: "An investigation by PENATA teachers found that the DET's method of allocating and distributing stationery differed from that of coloured, Indian and white education authorities."²⁷⁰

Meanwhile, nationally ATASA had been strengthening its ties with the broader liberation movement, motivated largely from the top in the form of Peteni and Dlamlenze, both of whom worked within the SPCC. The cooperation between ATASA and the SPCC led to the Soweto principals' November 1985 decision not to administer examinations.²⁷¹ Beyond this, as the Transvaal regional report to the December SPCC conference made clear, "ATASA wants to work more closely with other organisations. ATASA was closely involved in consulting with parents and students for drawing up the new SRC constitution. They also played a major role in negotiating with DET to accept the new [SRC] constitution."²⁷²

ATASA's January 1986 conference in Durban was necessarily held at a time of great questioning within the organisation. While the leadership asked the members to stop being "apolitical", there was general agreement with Peteni at the conference: "We must not only dabble in politics as far as the State is concerned, as we have done for a number of years,

²⁶⁵ Peteni, "The Contribution," 35.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

²⁶⁷ Peteni, "The Contribution," 35-36.

²⁶⁸ *Cape Times*, 26 August 1985.

²⁶⁹ *Cape Times*, 28 October 1985.

²⁷⁰ *Argus*, 27 March 1986.

²⁷¹ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 22.

²⁷² "Transvaal Regional Report," in "Report," in *People's Education*, 26.

but we must also concern ourselves with the political struggle of the masses." At the same time, the *City Press* reported in 1991, "The conference also discussed and explored strategies for ATASA's survival as a viable and relevant teachers' association which at the same time will retain its professionalism and independence."²⁷³ Although there was change in policy at the executive level, in 1990 Gqaji was still reiterating these sentiments, expressing views reminiscent of the CTPA's: "PENATA is non-aligned. We must be neutral. As educators we must only be there to educate. The question of ideology must be a personal issue."²⁷⁴

Whether unaligned or independent, and whether or not members were to make their own political stands, ATASA as a whole withdrew from all DET committees and councils on 12 March 1986. It severed its traditional ties with the state "until," its statement read, "there is genuine power-sharing in South Africa."²⁷⁵ It then, according to Hyslop, "began to support political calls to action."²⁷⁶ For example, it supported the 1 May 1986 stay-away call.²⁷⁷

Though the organisation, both nationally and locally, was undergoing a clear shift, "professional" ambivalence remained. Peteni illustrated an aspect of this at the UCT conference:

The teachers' association has to seek out the leaders of students' organisations and talk and negotiate with them and try to understand their viewpoints and help them to attain those demands which the association regards as reasonable and attainable. Perhaps such negotiation and possible co-operation may help to bring about some restraint in the students' action and the methods they adopt.²⁷⁸

Peteni was not discussing a democratic partnership. Rather, he exhibited, as did Gqaji in 1990, the vestiges of a paternalistic "professionalism", one that promoted inactivity. And one, clearly, shared by many or most of ATASA's members. Chisholm wondered in 1986, "whether this shift in ATASA's public position represents a fundamental change of attitude among its membership, or to what extent it is leadership rhetoric."²⁷⁹ In a similar light, Hyslop pointed to the central issue: "... this shift has not been accompanied by any shift toward more participatory and democratic forms of organisation within these [established] bodies. It seems reasonable, therefore, to doubt ATASA's ability to transform itself from within."²⁸⁰ The transformation begun in 1985 remained image-related. Though ATASA, like the CTPA, took several overt steps to declare its opposition to the state's handling of the education crisis, and education generally, the aura of apolitical "professionalism" still hung thickly over the association. It was an aura which contained undemocratic practices --

²⁷³ *City Press*, 12 January 1991.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Mr. Gqaji, 4 December 1990.

²⁷⁵ *Cape Times*, 13 March 1986.

²⁷⁶ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 23.

²⁷⁷ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 96.

²⁷⁸ Peteni, "The Contribution," 36.

²⁷⁹ Chisholm, "From Revolt to a Search for Alternatives," 14.

²⁸⁰ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," 96.

the established organisations operated on patronage systems, and vested much power in their leaderships which were not in the habit of consulting members -- and material self-interest, both of which fundamentally contradicted the ideals of the mass democratic movement it sought to join.

The Teachers' Association of South Africa

TASA, like the CTPA and PENATA, had a history of cooperation with state structures. As President Pat Samuels said at the 1985 UCT conference, "Basically it [TASA] tries to protect the quality of the [school] programmes largely by way of the well considered resolutions it takes on, among others, [sic] pre-service and in-service education." Samuels differed from his colleagues in the other established organisations in that, in mid-1985, he publicly maintained a reactionary stand. For example, at a time when large sections of the democratic movement espoused non-racialism, he spoke of schools as places where people are "initiated into their cultural milieu and into traditional behaviour". He also spoke of "... the Indian teachers' sense of community responsibility...." Further, in an era challenging the state's authority and education structures, he said: "People who talk about a single Ministry of Education are wasting their time because they cannot attain it until the whole political system collapses." Most tellingly, when other leaders' papers focussed on crises, only after five pages on in-service training and service conditions did he begin the final, salutary half-page: "Lastly, I want to make a point or two about the role of the teachers' association in school boycott situations."²⁸¹

Students in Indian schools outside of Cape Town were generally not behaving in militant ways, nor were they burning down TASA members' homes. Also, TASA was successfully upholding its top-down leadership style. Samuels himself said in 1989 that the reversal of TASA's top-down decision-making style was the organisation's "biggest challenge in the next five years".²⁸² What internal pressure there existed from ordinary members was minimal, with no splinter groups apparently pressurizing the organisation during 1985-1986.

But the general education turmoil did not leave TASA unaffected. Elements of the liberation movement concerned with teacher politics elicited some response, though TASA managed to cling more securely than the CTPA and ATASA to its entrenched attitudes and style. As early as January 1984, though, it called for a judicial commission of inquiry into education, a call which involved contact with the state president, a signatures campaign, and a mass meeting. In 1984, also, TASA rejected the tri-cameral parliament.²⁸³

In 1985, TASA began to demonstrate a growing alienation from the department it worked within. TASA, in May, pressed for the abolition of matriculation examinations in

²⁸¹ Samuels, *passim*.

²⁸² *Sunday Tribune*, 2 July 1989.

²⁸³ "Teachers' Association of South Africa," photocopied pamphlet (n.d.) 1.

favour of "accreditation on a continual basis".²⁸⁴ TASA also became involved in a court case against the DEC, HoD, after the Rylands High School episode in Cape Town involving eleven dismissed and fourteen transferred teachers. In 1986, TASA lost the court case for the reinstatement of its Rylands teachers, but continued with its few public stands taken in opposition to the worst of *apartheid* education. With Poobie Naicker as acting president for a short while in 1986, TASA submitted a request to the Indian Ministers' Council to declare 16 June a national holiday for Indian schools. The council denied the request, but TASA still took out advertisements in newspapers across the country a few days before 16 June asking all people to observe 16 June as a "Solemn Day of Prayer and fasting/abstinence."²⁸⁵ It was in October 1986 that it began a lengthy campaign in opposition to education-spending cutbacks and possible retrenchment of teachers. In November a public meeting on this issue included a large number of community organisations.²⁸⁶ TASA also raised R75,000 for victims of trouble-torn Phoenix and Inanda. Then, sparked by the growth of Cape school unrest, TASA held a mass meeting on 19 September in Durban. The meeting, however, examined the rights of teachers rather than student grievances.²⁸⁷

TASA was not enured to the dynamics whirling around it as it also became involved in broader political issues, albeit in acceptable, "professional" ways. Though focussing almost exclusively on matters of self-interest, its 16 June and tri-cameral parliament stands indicated a willingness within the organisation to speak out about inequities, about matters of serious concern to the broader liberation movement. Such stands foreshadowed the more complete organisational turn-around that was to come in 1989 during the national teacher unity initiative.

The South African Teachers' Association

Not surprisingly, SATA did not feel the heat of 1985 to the degree that its counterparts did. In fact, rather than student or community pressure, SATA's marginal "professional" shifts came about as a result of its contacts with black teachers' organisations as well as the thread of liberalism within it. It was in 1983 that SATA first publicly rejected *apartheid*, after cajoling from the CTPA, at its conference: "Recognising that the present dispensation presents insuperable obstacles in working towards equal opportunities for all the children of our land, the S.A.T.A. condemns apartheid as detrimental to education in South Africa."²⁸⁸

This condemnation was part of what past-President John Stonier described as "a steady move of the association ... to the reality of the injustice". However, Stonier pointed out in 1990, "SATA could accommodate conservatives and liberals within it.... It could

²⁸⁴ *Argus*, 8 May 1985.

²⁸⁵ *Cape Times*, 18 April 1986; *Argus*, 22 April 1986 and 13 June 1986.

²⁸⁶ "Teachers' Association of South Africa," 1.

²⁸⁷ "Teachers' Association of South Africa," 1.

²⁸⁸ "S.A.T.A. Mandate Concerning Non-racial Education: Relevant Motions Passed since 1977," photocopy, 3.

never be a political party."²⁸⁹ In concluding a 1985 survey of Natal Teacher Society (NTS) members -- NTS is SATA's Natal counter-part, and similarly inclined ideologically -- *Indicator SA* reported: "The majority position in the English teacher fraternity is one of commitment to reform, but along gradual lines and with safeguards."²⁹⁰ Still, SATA's condemnations kept emerging from its conferences. In 1984 it called for a single ministry of education. In 1985 it called, delicately, for open schools. In 1986 it forthrightly demanded the repeal of the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act.²⁹¹

Of these, it only acted upon the "open schools" issue, setting up a sub-committee which produced a thorough discussion document in 1986.²⁹² Clearly, while desiring a kind of liberal solidarity with black organisations,²⁹³ its activity did not bear this out. During the 1985 boycotts, for example, SATA publicly condemned the closing of DEC (HoR) schools by Ebrahim, and then publicly welcomed their re-opening,²⁹⁴ but it otherwise remained quiet.

With the formation of the statutory Teachers' Federal Council (TFC) in 1986, SATA demonstrated its entrenched commitment to traditional "professionalism" premised on race and class divisions. The TFC was a combination of the constitutional South African Teachers' Council for Whites and a voluntary federation comprising eight white teacher organisations. It had statutory recognition. Its leaders were proud of this white body. Alan Powell, a TFC vice-president, spoke of the TFC's legal status: "we *have* to be consulted when *any* educational matters are discussed." He further stated that the TFC "is a professional body that does not cow-tow to the government".²⁹⁵ SATA's initial position within the TFC remained ambiguous. Though clearly a reactionary *apartheid* body, the TFC provided a national home for SATA. A resolution, adopted at SATA's 1986 conference, adequately expressed the ambiguity:

Conference directs the General Committee to make a public statement at the time of the parliamentary debate on the T.F.C. bill expressing S.A.T.A. policy that the constitution of the 'own affairs' Teachers' Federal Council is unacceptable to this Association but that to meet essential short term needs of its members, the S.A.T.A. will participate in this body.²⁹⁶

The SATA was clearly adrift in its own world, with the turbulent township chaos not impinging on much besides healthy liberal consciences. Its tradition of "professionalism" remained strong.

²⁸⁹ Interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990.

²⁹⁰ Bot and Schlemmer, 46.

²⁹¹ "S.A.T.A. Mandate," 3-4.

²⁹² "Open Schools: A report by a sub-committee of the General Committee of the South African Teachers' Association," *Education Journal* 96.2 (September 1986): 5-15.

²⁹³ Van der Merwe and Murphy, 118.

²⁹⁴ *Cape Times*, 11 and 24 September 1985.

²⁹⁵ Interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

²⁹⁶ "S.A.T.A. Mandate," 4.

*Troubled Relations Between the Emergent
and Established Groups*

The conflictual relationships between established and emergent teacher organisations in the Western Cape clearly illustrated the continuing contradictions within teacher politics as traditional "professionalism" was challenged and redefined.

WECTU and the CTPA

"The difference between the CTPA and WECTU," said the CTPA vice-president, "is not as great as its made out to be." The difference rested, he continued, on two points: collaboration versus non-collaboration (as firmly rooted in the Western Cape's Unity Movement/Congress split); and style of operation.²⁹⁷

The difference, thus, can be seen in the context of ongoing debates around unions as opposed to professional associations. "WECTU would like to see the teacher as a worker," said van den Heever. "We would like to see the teacher as a professional."²⁹⁸ The CTPA, as we have seen, had much invested in its traditions, which were not the traditions of militant politics.

From its inception, WECTU perceived the CTPA as a main antagonist. A WECTU informant explained that there was "a strong reaction, and over-reaction, to CTPA people as collaborators".²⁹⁹ Gabru, in fact, believed that WECTU's actual replacement of the CTPA was "everybody's fear and hope".³⁰⁰ WECTU attempted to get UTASA excluded from the March 1986 NECC conference, and at its Western Cape launch in 1987, the NECC apparently excluded the CTPA on WECTU's prompting.

WECTU could put pressure on the CTPA largely because it had powerful allies in the student-youth movement and within community organisations. But the progressive organisations did not collectively pressurize the established bodies. *Apartheid* had worked. Communication between Coloured areas and African townships and white areas proved difficult. While WECTU waged its campaign against the CTPA, a similar battle was taking place in Cape Town's African townships.

DETU and PENATA

The driving impetus behind PENATA's decision to more fully engage in the education crisis was the launch of DETU. "DETU is a break off of PENATA," explained a DETU executive member. "PENATA could not address the demands of the people, the demands of the students."³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Interview with Randall van den Heever, 8 March 1990.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Randall van den Heever, 8 March 1990.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

³⁰⁰ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

³⁰¹ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

When DETU was fully established, there was much animosity. "There was quite a lot of animosity, uneasiness," said a PENATA informant, "when teachers broke from another teachers' body." He continued: "DETU wanted society to destroy PENATA."³⁰² A DETU informant concurred: "We were quite enemies at that time."³⁰³

Gradually, tolerance prevailed. There was, for example, the joint action taken on behalf of dismissed teachers in 1986, when a combined delegation visited education minister Sam de Beer. There were also executive-level meetings. "It's important," said a DETU executive member, "for Africans to be together."³⁰⁴ In 1988, Jonas would state: "The unity or alliance talks between PENATA and us is the result of common problems we experience with DET.... Initially we had communication problems with PENATA but these have been resolved."³⁰⁵ By 1988, PENATA and DETU could embark on joint campaigns. A DETU executive member said in 1990, "PENATA's rank and file work well with DETU. In fact, I thought by now we'd have one organisation."³⁰⁶ The continued existence of separate organisations illustrated the ongoing conflict over "professionalism" in teacher politics, as well as leadership rivalry.

EDASA and the SATA

While rapprochement seemed to be a possibility in township schools, the same could not be said for the established white teacher body and the newly-formed, progressive EDASA. This relationship differed greatly from the others under discussion in that EDASA claimed never to have set itself up in opposition to SATA. "We clearly couldn't offer the same things," said one EDASA stalwart.³⁰⁷ In fact, some EDASA members were active SATA members. At least one executive member was the SATA representative for her school. Another EDASA member claimed that, "There was no tension between SATA and EDASA."³⁰⁸

EDASA, however, never earned the respect of SATA. A formal break took place at the SATA centennial conference in 1987. "About 20 members of the South African Teachers' Association (SATA) have resigned," reported *The Argus*, "because of dissatisfaction with Sata's decision to remain an affiliate of the Teachers' Federal Council [as opposed to pulling out in protest against *apartheid* education]."³⁰⁹ The twenty members belonged to EDASA. The resignations, it turned out, were a media invention, but the incident pointed to differing strategies: "They thought of us as young Turks," said van Dyk.³¹⁰ Even in 1990, a senior SATA member did not mention EDASA amongst the group

³⁰² Interview with Basie Nikani, 13 June 1990.

³⁰³ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

³⁰⁴ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

³⁰⁵ *South*, 13 October 1988.

³⁰⁶ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

³⁰⁹ *Argus*, 3 July 1987.

³¹⁰ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

of teachers' organisations participating in the Western Cape Teacher Unity Forum initiative.³¹¹

EDASA did not threaten SATA organisationally, in terms of membership. But SATA's failure to overtly recognise EDASA, and its patronizing attitude to the fledgling organisation, indicated discomfort with the "unprofessional" attitude of EDASA.

Teacher Unity

Amidst the turmoil of 1985, with organisational rifts and splits, and acrimonious exchanges between teacher organisations, teacher unity was low on teachers' agendas -- this despite explicit and growing commitment to the ideal of a united teachers' body.

There were, however, movements towards unity. After the establishment of the emergent teacher groups, teacher unity assumed significant proportions within the debate around "professionalism". A unified emergent front would enhance their influence within teacher politics, while federal unity amongst established associations would strengthen the position of traditional "professionalism". Either way, the movement towards a new "professionalism" would be more strongly dictated by whichever grouping could unite. Further, the shape of unity across the emergent-established divide would demonstrate the direction of evolving "professionalism".

As soon as the progressive organisations were born talk of unity began. As we have seen, however, a few organisations recognised that their own best interests lay in maintaining separate identities to maintain "professionalism" premised on race and class divisions. Nevertheless, social and political forces began working, as early as 1985, to bring teachers together.

The emergent organisations' vehemently protested against the presence of established bodies at the initial SPCC and NECC conferences. In December 1985, ATASA, NEUSA, WECTU, DETU and ELPTU attended the SPCC conference, and there were "deep conflicts between the traditional and the progressive teachers' organisations".³¹² At the Durban conference three months later, the progressive bodies threatened to walk out because of ATASA and UTASA's attendance.³¹³ An item in the May 1986 WECTU newsletter explained:

WECTU, together with teachers from the other progressive organisations (DETU, ECTU, ELPTU and NEUSA) protested against the presence of ATASA, UTASA and TASA at the conference.

A meeting was held with the NECC executive to object to the presence of these organisations. The progressive teachers organisations insisted that these reactionary organisations should leave the hall, because of their past record of having been obstructive to the democratic movement in

³¹¹ Interview with Mike Reeler, 2 April 1990.

³¹² Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 64-65.

³¹³ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 67.

education and their collaborationist policies, assisting in the victimisation of teachers and students at schools.

The NECC executive was opposed to this. After deliberation a compromise was reached and it was agreed that a statement should be read condemning the presence of these organisations.³¹⁴

The NECC's role in achieving a compromise illustrated their commitment -- discussed above -- to drawing the established bodies into their fold. As expressed in the resolutions of the March 1986 conference: "... there is an urgent need for a United, Democratic, National teachers' organisation and that no one should handicap the development of unity among teachers."³¹⁵ ATASA representatives, Dlamlenze and Peteni, were invited to participate in the December SPCC conference. "We recognize ATASA as the major representative of teachers in South Africa, with 54,000 members nationally," said Rhensburg. "Our opinion at the March conference was that it would be tactically important to recognize ATASA."³¹⁶

The NECC, a prime mover in fostering teacher unity, took some direction from other groups within the democratic movement. "Until one [teachers'] union somehow subsumes these different bodies *in accordance with COSATU policy*," wrote Muller, "the NECC will have to find ways of achieving some measure of collaboration between the bodies perhaps by means of teacher workshops."³¹⁷ During 1985 and 1986, the UDF was also actively foregrounding teacher unity.³¹⁸

Such political groups were eager to strengthen their own positions by influencing teacher unity. With powerful social forces behind them, their task was easier than it had been before.

Even so, the obstacles would prove insurmountable during 1985-1986. As a Western Cape NECC activist said of established-emergent unity, "In '84-'85 that would have been wishful thinking."³¹⁹ Stonier of SATA articulated an established attitude: "Progressive unions can shout and make the right noises to satisfy a very specific constituency, while traditional organisations fought wage negotiations with the departments."³²⁰ The established bodies clearly considered themselves *legitimate*. On the other hand, relations were rendered even more intractable by a common emergent attitude, expressed by a WECTU executive member: "The CTPA was seen as evil. It was a moral response [from WECTU], not a strategic one."³²¹

³¹⁴ WECTU newsletter 5 (May 1986): 4.

³¹⁵ "Resolutions of the National Consultative Conference on the Crisis in Education, Durban, March 1986," in *People's Education*, 41.

³¹⁶ Obery, 10.

³¹⁷ Muller, 112. Emphasis added.

³¹⁸ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 67.

³¹⁹ Interview with informant E, 5 March 1990.

³²⁰ Interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990.

³²¹ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

Such attitudes became further entrenched by separate unity initiatives attempted within both camps.³²² Progressive unity efforts were described above. Meanwhile, established bodies worked together. On 26 March 1985, for example, UTASA, ATASA, TASA and the TFC met with Botha over civil service austerity measures.³²³ Also in 1985, the white, Afrikaans-speaking teacher body in the Western Cape, the SAOU, called a meeting of the established organisations at the Holiday Inn focussing on subject teaching.³²⁴

Conclusion

Although a united grouping of teacher organisations would have greatly influenced the politics of teacher "professionalism", unity efforts remained tentative during 1985-1986. The emergent groups challenged the established groups' traditional "professionalism", and worked to relocate teachers in relation to their political and educational spheres. The established associations responded tentatively, emphasizing public stands to regain lost credibility. For all groups, however, a significant alteration of teacher politics had begun. Teacher unity would play an important role in institutionalizing and directing this alteration. The organisations and forces which influenced teacher politics, including the emergent groups, would eventually afford the limited success of the Harare initiative described in the next chapter.

³²² It should be noted that the constituencies were not identical, since established groups worked largely in primary schools, whereas the smaller emergent bodies did not. See, for example, "Primary Problems," *WECTU newsletter* 3 (January 1986): 17.

³²³ *Cape Times*, 26 and 27 March 1985.

³²⁴ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

CHAPTER SIX

PLACING UNITY ON THE AGENDA, 1987-1988

Events during 1985-1986 significantly influenced teacher politics in the Western Cape, and in South Africa. The emergent unions, formed at that time, reclaimed legitimacy for teachers in a changed political context. The confrontational resistance movement no longer accepted the "professionalism" of established teacher organisations. The emergent teacher groups, with the support of broad sections of the liberation movement, changed the discourse within teacher politics as they redefined the "professional" locations of teachers in *apartheid* South Africa.

It was a time of heightened tensions and antagonism within teacher politics as the new groups and new ideas confronted the old. It was also a time of intense political conflict in a broader societal context. This conflict lessened in the years which immediately followed, from 1986 to 1988. South Africa entered a period which historian Tom Lodge has termed, "The rebellion disarmed."¹ During this relative lull in political struggle, as the state suppressed much resistance activity, teacher unity appeared as a firm, practical goal within teacher politics.

The years 1987-1988 were thus significant because the goal of teacher unity entered the discourse *and* actions of teacher organisations. Teacher unity was a means to bolster particular teacher voices within teacher politics, as some organisations moved away from traditional "professionalism" and others upheld it. In 1987, two distinct unity initiatives began. Emergent teacher organisations in the Western Cape began unity efforts amongst themselves, and then joined a national, "progressive" unity initiative. This "progressive" unity articulated a new "professional" discourse in line with the liberation movement. Simultaneously, national unity talks began amongst established teacher associations maintaining conventional "professionalism", even if in a slightly revised form.

In 1988, however, historical forces allowed the beginning of unity across the emergent-established divide. Compromise, rather than mutual rejection, began to enter the discourse of teacher politics, largely influenced by elements of the liberation movement. When the ANC, amongst others, called both emergent and established teacher organisations to Harare in April 1988, a process of compromise around a new "professionalism", involving new understandings of teachers' location in society and in schools, began. Sociopolitical forces, and the strength of certain liberation organisations, allowed the new teacher discourse to be influenced primarily by the smaller, emergent teacher unions. Although their newer "professional" language was dominant, they also participated in a remarkable cooperation between the emergent and established groups. This cooperation was, not surprisingly, problematic, and will be fully explored in Chapter Seven. But the

¹ Lodge, 87.

unity born in 1987-1988 broke the template of divisiveness that was characteristic of the preceding two years, and marked substantial change in "professional" discourse amongst teacher organisations.

This chapter will begin by exploring the political context which influenced teacher politics in 1987-1988. The tensions within Western Cape education will then be explored with reference to the emergent and established teacher groups in each education department, before focussing on the teacher unity initiatives begun within these separate groups. Finally, the Harare conference will be contextualised, and its implications for teacher politics will be discussed.

The Political Context

If 1985 was considered by many to be a year of political and educational promise, the years which immediately followed were disappointing to many activists. The 1986 return to school, bolstered by the ANC's message to the SPCC conference, was a tactical retreat. As one student leader said: "It was a mistake to believe we could wage the struggle on our own. We had to adapt our tactics to be sure that our parents would be with us."²

As the State of Emergency began, resistance organisations were forced back into tactics of survival.³ "The official state attitude was perceptibly hardening," wrote Johan Muller.⁴ The Emergency, bannings and detentions continued. In November 1986, for example, an Emergency amendment allowed police bannings of indoor gatherings without a magisterial order.⁵

Since a primary focus of mass resistance continued to be the schools, teachers continued to be affected. Specifically, too, according to Hartshorne, there were "attempts to control and limit teachers' associations".⁶ According to a teacher in Soweto, inspectors continued to blame teachers for the havoc in schools. A Soweto principal claimed, in 1986, "I have turned into something less than a whimpering puppy."⁷ Michael Ashley, while discussing black respondents he had interviewed for his 1989 book *Ideologies and Schooling in South Africa*, wrote that they thought: "Teachers in particular needed to be reminded of the importance of their opinions."⁸ Teachers' credibility had deteriorated as a non-racial, working-class mass resistance movement rejected conventional "professionalism". The so-called "masses" demanded a certain role of teachers; the state applied countervailing pressure by continuing its strategy of cooption into a middle-class.

However, teachers felt a social and political space opening up which allowed explorations of a changing "professionalism". There was, according to Glenda Kruss, "a

² Quoted in Zille, 5.

³ Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 53; Hartshorne, "Education in the Eighties," 25-26.

⁴ Muller, 109.

⁵ Kruss, 1986.

⁶ Hartshorne, "Education in the Eighties," 25-26.

⁷ *The Weekly Mail*, 17-23 October 1986.

⁸ Ashley, 65.

mass rejection of apartheid domination in all spheres of life."⁹ The *Sunday Times* declared that, "An important development in black politics recently is that even the moderate realists like Mr. Sonn are casting serious doubts on the value of negotiating with the government."¹⁰

Political influences on teacher politics

Power relations, defined by social, political and economic forces, changed during 1986-1988. The democratic movement, on the defensive, maintained a presence which maintained pressure on the state and the people. The state maintained an upper hand through "law" and "official violence", but the UDF and underground political activities continued, providing the kindling for the fire of 1989 and beyond.

Of the various forces influencing teacher politics in the years prior to April 1988, the state continued to wield considerable power. Detentions continued, and perhaps even more significantly continued to frighten teachers into an acceptance of the contemporary social order. According to the *Cape Times*, 147 DET teachers could not work between June 1986 and June 1987 because of detentions.¹¹ In 1987, the same newspaper reported that thirty-eight Cape teachers were detained.¹² While these figures were significantly lower than the approximately 8800 children detained from June to November 1986,¹³ teachers felt threatened.

In July 1986, "hard line instructions" were issued to black teachers concerning attendance and behaviour.¹⁴ A new code of conduct for white teachers was gazetted on 31 October: teachers in white schools had to "pledge themselves as teachers and honour and obey the laws of their country."¹⁵ In 1987 the well-known acting principal of Glendale Senior Secondary, Peter Carelse, who had frequently associated himself with WECTU and the popular resistance movement, found himself demoted and transferred by the DEC (HoR).¹⁶ Meanwhile, the same Coloured department had begun pressing misconduct charges against the seventy-two teachers for alleged complicity in the 1985 boycott.¹⁷ Early in 1987, WECTU claimed that blacklisting, denial of housing subsidies, and refusal of leave were all tactics used against many teachers who refused to administer the 1985 examinations.¹⁸ Generally speaking, after 1985 the state introduced "the most stringent

⁹ Kruss, 186.

¹⁰ *Sunday Times*, 22 June 1986.

¹¹ *Cape Times*, 17 June 1987.

¹² *Cape Times*, 4 March 1988.

¹³ *The Weekly Mail*, 28 November-4 December 1986. This figure is according to the Detainees' Parents Support Committee.

¹⁴ Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 120.

¹⁵ *Star*, 14 November 1986.

¹⁶ *Argus*, 19 October 1987.

¹⁷ *Cape Times*, 1 January 1986, and 10, 14, and 18 April 1986, and 13 and 14 May 1986; *Sunday Times*, 13 April 1986.

¹⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 27 February - 5 March 1987.

security measures in South Africa's education history."¹⁹ The second Emergency, imposed in June 1986, particularly, heralded a successful disruption of the activities of resistance movements.²⁰ The disruption began immediately as 119 organisations, including trade unions, had their activities banned. Those affected included WECTU, EDASA and the PTAs.²¹

The heavy-handed education departments, endlessly asserting control over their employees, continued their threats. In an August 1987 budget vote, Piet Clase, the Minister of Education and Culture in the House of Assembly (HoA),²² hinted that graduates of "leftist tertiary institutions" could well be denied teaching posts.²³ That same month, Carter Ebrahim claimed in Parliament that his department was reviewing the recognition it accorded five teachers' organisations.²⁴ Hendrickse had gone further in 1986 when he directly threatened to deny UTASA its vital stop-order facilities.²⁵

A 1987 Act affecting DET teachers gave the minister of education and training the power to suspend activities at schools, and added a new misconduct rule for teachers: teachers could be dismissed if absent for two weeks without the director-general's permission.²⁶

The state's dual strategy involved tactics other than direct repression. It sought to control teachers by invoking fear on the one hand, and providing direct material benefits on the other. The government's reform program, discussed in previous chapters, including the new tri-cameral constitution and the upgrading of some townships, continued. As Jay Naidoo stated at a CTPA conference in 1988: teachers could struggle against repression or "... be ensnared by the material benefits the system offers you in the form of house loans, pensions, promotions, etc."²⁷

It is no coincidence that R45 million was allocated to increase the salaries of 81,000 black teachers in mid-1986. There was also government talk of eliminating the "disparity in the salaries of teachers of different population groups" by 1 December.²⁸ A twelve percent salary increase was effected in July 1987, though some teachers complained of actually receiving *smaller* cheques.²⁹ Female teachers in and above Grade 2 received increases in November 1987 to eliminate gender disparity, although this ignored the eighty

¹⁹ Zille, 3.

²⁰ Fine and Webster, 264.

²¹ *Cape Times*, 23 and 26 June 1986. The bannings were lifted on 30 July 1986. *Cape Times*, 31 July 1986; *The Weekly Mail*, 1-7 August 1986.

²² The HoA is the white chamber of the tri-cameral parliament.

²³ *Cape Times*, 10 August 1987.

²⁴ *Cape Times*, 6 August 1987. This account does not name the organisations in question.

²⁵ *Cape Times*, 19 and 27 August 1986; *Sunday Times*, 17 August 1986.

²⁶ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1987/1988*, 145-146.

²⁷ Jay Naidoo, "Teacher Unity in the Context of the Broader Community Struggle," in *Education for a Democratic South Africa: 21st Annual Conference - June 1988 - Conference Papers* (Bellville: CTPA, 1988) 28, 31.

²⁸ *Cape Times*, 4 August 1986. The salary increases also affected nurses and paramedics.

²⁹ *Sunday Times*, 2 August 1987.

percent of teachers in Grade 1.³⁰ De Klerk was cited as offering typical promises in this regard: "I trust it will soon be possible, within the limits of available funds, to make further headway in eliminating the remaining problems as well."³¹

The state remained committed, as de Klerk said in August 1987, to distinct education departments within the "own affairs" state policy.³² However, the cooption of black educators into the conventional framework of *apartheid* education continued. In July 1987, Gerrit Viljoen, the minister of education and development aid, spoke in Parliament about the importance of revised syllabi which would be a greater relevance to African people: "... the Department of Education and Training is actively promoting a change ... in the direction of a general revision of syllabuses towards greater relevance for all communities and the greater involvement of educationists from all population groups in the process."³³

As the various arms of the state continued to assert control in this dual way, students also kept up pressure to influence teacher politics. In 1986, *The Weekly Mail* published an article entitled, "The student web that spans South Africa," which spoke of "an intricate mesh of strands, some overlapping, some clashing, some loose."³⁴ This "web" continued to exist through 1987. The South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) was launched in March 1987, claiming a membership of more than half a million.³⁵ In May, in the Western Cape, students at one school boycotted their classes, demanding that a teacher who "collaborated" with the police be removed.³⁶ In July, popular Western Cape stayaways were organised by WECSCO and others after the murder of Ashley Kriel.³⁷ WECSCO, in fact, warned of a possible repeat of the disturbances of 1985, citing the misconduct charges levelled against the seventy-two teachers, Ashley Kriel's death, and turmoil at Langa High School over a sports trip to Durban as provocative incidents.³⁸ So students maintained a popular force, asserting a popular power over teachers, influencing teachers' behaviour. Since student-youth rhetoric was more and more socialist in character, a class position was being hammered out for teachers in opposition to the bourgeois trappings proffered by the state. As Hartshorne wrote: "... most of these new messages [emerging from the crises of 1984-1986], *particularly in the voices of younger people*, are rooted in perceptions of socialist principles."³⁹

National resistance organisations also contained indices of this shift. As in 1985 and 1986, the NECC wielded considerable influence over teachers, particularly when viewed in its MDM context. Foregrounding People's Education during 1986 and 1987, the NECC managed to "create unity between students and the wider community, and to give the

³⁰ *Argus*, 28 July 19887; *Cape Times*, 29 July 1987.

³¹ *Argus*, 21 November 1987.

³² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1987/1988*, 144.

³³ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1987/1988*, 157.

³⁴ *The Weekly Mail*, 13-19 June 1986.

³⁵ *The Weekly Mail*, 3-9 April 1987.

³⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 22-28 May 1987.

³⁷ *The Weekly Mail*, 17-23 July 1987, and 24-30 July 1987.

³⁸ *South*, 23 July 1987.

³⁹ Hartshorne, "Post-Apartheid Education," 121. Emphasis added.

students a practical political perspective."⁴⁰ As we have seen in Chapter Four, People's Education, with its elements of a socialist vision, comprised a political, "anti-professional" pressure on teachers. A political space for such "unprofessional" activities was being forged by a coincidence of social and economic forces.

There were pressures which worked against the NECC's influence. Most NECC leaders were detained at the beginning of 1987, for example, events which followed closely on a banning of People's Education discussions held by the NECC.⁴¹ But despite such countervailing pressure, on 6 April 1987 more than 120 delegates formed the Western Cape region of the NECC. Its affiliates immediately included DETU, WECTU and EDASA, but not the CTPA.⁴² This regional NECC created an important space within which inter-organisational contact could take place, thus facilitating communication at the beginning of an extended process to build teacher unity.

Interestingly, the state, both repressed and simultaneously lent credibility to the NECC by asking them to comment on the Education Bill (the Education Laws [Education and Training] Amendment Act of 1987). The only response the NECC could offer was a hasty condemnation.⁴³

Both the students and the NECC operated within the mass resistance movements, and as such they helped to define the contemporary political terrain. This terrain determined to a large degree teachers' willingness to resist the state or to acquiesce. Various political groupings within this terrain sought influence over teacher "professionalism" and the unfolding processes of teacher unity.

Teachers' Experience in the Western Cape

As the above forces continued to influence the political climate, teachers and teacher organisations continued to respond. The two years prior to Harare saw much shifting of ground. Established organisations, especially the CTPA, came more and more firmly into the ranks of resistance movements, if gauged in terms of rhetoric. Emergent organisations mobilized around pressing issues. But as emergent organisations faced the realities of small and flagging memberships, they re-invigorated themselves around progressive unity efforts, which were quite advanced when they were overtaken by the Harare initiative.

Coloured education

This department's two contending teachers organisations continued to feud. Some "Concerned members of Western Cape Teachers' Union" wrote in a 1987 letter to *South* that, "Wectu's existence is effectively denying CTPA progressive respectability." Such

⁴⁰ Hyslop, "School Student Movements," 28.

⁴¹ *The Weekly Mail*, 9-15 January 1987, and 6-12 February 1987.

⁴² Bloch, 119; "VIVA NECC!" NECC pamphlet, May 1987; in *People's Education*, n.p. See also *Report on CTPA for NECC*.

⁴³ *The Weekly Mail*, 18-24 September 1987.

respectability was clearly the order of the day in 1987. Accusing the CTPA leadership of being "corrupt," these WECTU members further claimed: "Wectu must take full credit for the CTPA leadership's shift to the left."⁴⁴

Franklin Sonn, feeling the pressure, said publicly in June 1987: "I really can't see why people label us as conservative. It's a bloody unjust description." He continued, with obvious allusions to WECTU: "We are not a crisis-born organisation -- the type which comes about every time there is a crisis. We are a professional body, with a solid foundation in the community, that responds to situations in a calm and rational way."⁴⁵ Van den Heever at that time also emphasized the "difference" between the CTPA and "crisis-born" organisations from 1985.⁴⁶

The CTPA's "professional" heritage -- premised on cooperation with the state -- remained intact during these years. A UTASA delegation met de Klerk in April 1987, for example, and learned of a pay increase for teachers to be announced in June.⁴⁷ In 1987 Sonn illustrated where his organisation stood in relation to student activism by saying: "We do not condone school boycotts."⁴⁸ Their 1987 Conference indicated a commitment to ethnic divisions by condemning white teachers' appointments in Coloured schools.⁴⁹ And their so-called democratic *modus operandi* remained suspect, as illustrated by General Secretary Paul Jordaan's comment: "Franklin Sonn is a powerful name in the teaching fraternity. Our members will be prepared to follow the advice and direction he gives."⁵⁰

These examples of the CTPA's traditional "professionalism" illustrate an increasingly uncomfortable position within a political context of popular resistance. The CTPA during the two years preceding the Harare conference, could be seen as self-consciously attempting to move into the MDM. Sonn's "bloody unjust" comment hinted at the pressure the CTPA felt. It was a time when "conservative" was a very dirty word.

At the CTPA's June 1986 Conference, it responded to the various pressures it felt as delegates voted in favour of withdrawing from all committees and structures of general and own-affairs education. The motion, proposed by van den Heever and described by Sonn as a "catch 22", won with at least eighty percent of delegates' votes. Sonn, however, offered a teacher-centered -- rather than a struggle-oriented -- reason: "Our decision to withdraw must be seen as a clear signal that things can't go on this way and that teachers take a dim view of the way they are being treated by the education authorities."⁵¹

⁴⁴ Concerned Members of WECTU. According to this letter, WECTU's problems with the CTPA included: 1) its ethnic make-up, and its association with oppressive forces; 2) its leaders' undemocratic decision-making style; 3) its leaders'/members' links with the LP; and 4) CTPA principals did not deliver WECTU literature to their teachers.

⁴⁵ *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1987.

⁴⁶ *Argus*, 24 June 1987.

⁴⁷ *Argus*, 22 April 1987.

⁴⁸ *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1987.

⁴⁹ *Argus*, 18 June 1987.

⁵⁰ *South*, 14 April 1988. These comments concerned the adoption of the Freedom Charter.

⁵¹ *Sunday Times*, 22 June 1986; *Cape Times*, 20 and 23 June 1986. The withdrawal, agreed to by UTASA the following day, officially took place on 21 July 1986. *Cape Times*, 22 July 1986.

The CTPA's 1986 Conference was important in other ways as well. According to the NECC report on the CTPA, "... 1986 has been seen by CTPA as their signal to broad sections of the democratic movement of their wanting to make a decisive break with the past." Apart from the decision to withdraw from "apartheid structures", other policy changes were reflected in Sonn's speech. He spoke of a need to release political prisoners and of the necessity for negotiations between the government and the ANC. He also spoke of the importance of People's Education. The UTASA conference, held a day later, closed with the singing of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* for the first time.⁵²

In December of that year, the CTPA paid its first official visit to the ANC. Sonn flew to New York for talks which van den Heever would claim were the root of the CTPA's strategic shift after 1985.⁵³ Sonn, who requested the meeting to obtain ANC views on the school boycott, returned stating that the ANC promoted an end to the boycott, and that the ANC delegation had been nationalists rather than communists.⁵⁴ Sonn and van den Heever later joined an IDASA⁵⁵ visit to Dakar in July 1987 for further discussions with the ANC, and returned, according to the NECC report, "... with a publicly sympathetic attitude toward the ANC."⁵⁶

This particular tactic of winning popular credibility found great favour among CTPA delegates to the June 1987 Conference in Port Elizabeth, which tacitly condoned the first visit and set the stage for Dakar. A unanimous resolution was passed urging continued contact with the ANC.⁵⁷ This, among other resolutions, allowed Sonn to later claim that 1987 was the year the CTPA "took its place" within the MDM.⁵⁸ According to the MDM-aligned *South*:

The conference, among other things, supported calls for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of the ANC [etc].... The conference is seen by the CTPA's own members as a 'watershed' and by many others as a 'turnabout' for an organisation accused in the past of serving the self-interests of 'coloured' teachers and being 'collaborationist'.⁵⁹

The various pressures had taken their toll, as the CTPA moved to redefine its "professional" position and fill a space created by a changed political climate.

Other important aspects of the 1987 Conference concerned a stated commitment to developing and distributing alternative education ideas and literature. The CTPA thus decreased its "professional" investment in existing education. The CTPA held seminars on

⁵² *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 6-7.

⁵³ *Argus*, 24 June 1987.

⁵⁴ *Argus*, 27 March 1987.

⁵⁵ The Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA) is a liberal organisation working for political change.

⁵⁶ *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 7.

⁵⁷ *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 7.

⁵⁸ F.A. Sonn, "Presidential Address: Towards a Democratic Future," in *Education for a Democratic South Africa*, 6.

⁵⁹ *South*, 3 July 1987.

alternative education and prepared publications. It began training workshops on SRCs.⁶⁰ Also, at the conference there were allegations made about LP interference in the appointment and promotion of teachers, thus distancing the CTPA ever further from the state.⁶¹

While continuing to distance itself from the state structures it had so recently embraced, the CTPA sought greater acceptance by MDM structures. Sonn claimed in mid-1987 that the CTPA, in fact, had an obligation to have "more concrete" talks with organisations like the UDF, COSATU and the NECC.⁶² A few months later van den Heever reiterated this desire in *The Weekly Mail*: "... the priority at present is to establish solid relations with the UDF, NECC and COSATU."⁶³ Also, while continuing with its activities -- such as its February Careers Month for matriculation students, its Spring School for about 3000 matric students, and its distribution of R120,000 worth of bursaries to 360 pupils and students⁶⁴ -- the CTPA demonstrated its progressive community involvement by hosting a week-long seminar on the role of people's organisations in community and nation-building,⁶⁵ and by donating R1416 to 600 striking Spekenam workers while condemning their sacking.⁶⁶

The CTPA, during these important years between the potent 1985 boycotts and the 1988 Harare meeting, transformed itself in many ways. But, as the NECC report asserted, "... The CTPA is an organisation filled with many contradictions. There are a number of different forces at work within it."⁶⁷ These internal forces were directly influenced by external forces and organisations. As during 1985 and 1986, one important pressure group continued to be WECTU, which was experiencing its own difficulties and transformations during these years preceding Harare.

During these years, WECTU's ideology remained firmly rooted in a perception of teachers as workers, stressing the importance of working class solidarity. Yousuf Gabru reminded WECTU members in his 1988 Chairperson's Report that one of WECTU's "fundamental points" made at its inception was, "... that the best form of teacher organisation was a trade union which would align itself with the working class movement in South Africa."⁶⁸ From this standpoint, WECTU maintained great antagonism towards the CTPA's elitist "professionalism", even though some reports suggest that this attitude was being discussed

⁶⁰ *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 9.

⁶¹ *South*, 3 July 1987; *Argus*, 18 June 1987. The allegations against the LP were not new. In March of 1987, the CTPA called for a commission of inquiry into similar allegations that members of the House of Representatives were interfering with the education department. *Argus*, 28 March 1987.

⁶² *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1987.

⁶³ *The Weekly Mail*, 6 November 1987, quoted in *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 8.

⁶⁴ *Argus*, 27 February 1987, and 11 June 1987 (the bursary money was largely from the private sector); *Cape Times*, 18 September 1987.

⁶⁵ *Sunday Times*, 16 August 1987.

⁶⁶ *Cape Times*, 13 October 1987.

⁶⁷ *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 10.

⁶⁸ "Chairperson's Report," WECTU AGM, 16 July 1988, 1.

and questioned during 1986-1987.⁶⁹ Firmly engaged in political struggle, WECTU continued to resist -- albeit mainly rhetorically -- the South African overlay of race and class divisions. Its rejection of *apartheid* divisions continued to strengthen WECTU because its stance firmly allied WECTU with the popular resistance movement. "We are recognised and respected by the progressive movement," WECTU members wrote to *South*, "so from here we must draw our strength."⁷⁰ Its membership was small and getting progressively smaller during the years following 1985. But its self-definition involved a vehement rejection of traditional "professionalism". Such tensions helped WECTU to retain a well-demarcated place for itself on the Western Cape map. It remained high profile, and maintained a commitment to mass action.

WECTU's flagging membership illustrated a continuing tension concerning teacher involvement in political action during times of repression. At its inception, WECTU was repeatedly referred to as "2000-strong". However, WECTU almost immediately began grappling with the crucial issue of decreasing membership, and decreasing involvement by those who continued to pay their dues. As Gabru admitted in his 1988 Report:

there is no denying the fact that our membership has declined considerably.... This process started at the beginning of 1986, and we have not yet been able to reverse the trend. There is clearly still a large base of support, but this is not reflected in active participation by members.⁷¹

Various other reports submitted to the same AGM contained similar remarks. "Once again," stated the "Recruitment Report", "people were too busy in their own regions and they could not find the time to do justice to recruitment."⁷² A Cape Town regional report for 25 May - 10 September 1986 stated: "Our paper membership stands at 130 but only 25 members are actively working and promoting WECTU. This is our major problem at present...."⁷³ The 1988 Cape Town Regional Report baldly reiterated: "Although our paper membership totals 100, only 7-10 members attend meetings regularly. The Executive has diminished in number and it has been impossible to find replacements."⁷⁴ The Southern Suburbs region contended with the same problem. Its 1988 Report admitted that, "After the intense interest of members waned at the end of 1985, Southern Suburbs, like all the other regions of WECTU, suffered a loss of members. The region was kept going by a handful of concerned and committed members. During the 1986-1987 term of office, no regional meetings were held."⁷⁵ The Athlone Central region's Chairperson, G.G. van Harte, was thought-provoking in his Report when he wrote:

The general problem of dwindling membership is reflected in our own region. We have to pose the question: Why is this lethargy prevalent in

⁶⁹ Interview with Zubeida Desai, 12 August 1990.

⁷⁰ Concerned Members of WECTU.

⁷¹ "Chairperson's Report," 3.

⁷² "Recruitment Report," WECTU, May 1987 - July 1988, 1.

⁷³ "The Cape Town Region of WECTU: Report 1986.05.25. - 1986.09.10," n.d.

⁷⁴ "Cape Town Regional Report," WECTU, n.d.

WECTU? Could it be that the regional structure is not functioning correctly, or is the problem more deeply rooted than this?⁷⁶

As shall be seen, this problem was deeply-rooted in all the emergent organisations at this time. WECTU was able to maintain such a high profile within the context of diminishing membership in part because of generous donations. External organisations deemed WECTU worthy of support, so WECTU cannot be perceived in isolation from other elements of the democratic movement. For the financial year ending on 30 November 1987, WECTU received R25,209.35 from Kagiso Trust, and R16,159.50 from Entraide University.⁷⁷

The diminishing membership problem could not, however, be alleviated by such funding. WECTU asked teachers to perceive of themselves in a way antithetical to the state's perception, and to their historical, "professional" self-perceptions built up over years. The so-called ambiguity of teachers' class locations is not an ambiguity perceived by the teachers' themselves, most of whom are not theorists, but who enjoy cashing their salary checks at the end of each month. WECTU's struggle to influence teachers and their terrain was primarily a struggle to influence teachers' attitudes about themselves.

Repression, and the fear it induced, played a large role in maintaining traditional "professionalism", thus keeping teachers away from "political" organisations like WECTU. In mid-1986, Brigadier C.A. Swart, the Western Cape Divisional Commissioner of Police, banned 119 organisations, including WECTU, from holding meetings in the Western Cape. WECTU and the UDF responded by taking the matter to the Supreme Court.⁷⁸ The regulations were subsequently withdrawn, and WECTU then published an "Emergency Newsletter". "At the time of writing," it stated, "WECTU is legally able to communicate with its members (although still subject to emergency regulations), but we do not know how long this state of affairs will last. We fully anticipate another clampdown, legally more watertight than the former regulations."⁷⁹ Also, detentions continued. Each issue of the *WECTU Newsletter* from this period highlights the detentions of members.

The victimisation which demanded most of WECTU's attention, however, was the continuing plight of the seventy-two teachers charged with misconduct after refusing to administer the 1985 year-end exams (see Chapter Five). The misconduct charges were left hanging by the DEC (HoR) for over a year. Then the department announced that the first hearing, involving the deputy principal of Crestway, Mr. Philip Tobias, would take place on 20 July 1987.⁸⁰ WECTU engaged lawyers to combat the charges on the legal front,⁸¹

⁷⁵ "Western Cape Teachers' Union Southern Suburbs Report 1988," n.d.

⁷⁶ "Chairperson's Report," WECTU Athlone Central Branch, for the period 3.06.87 to 23.05.88.

⁷⁷ "The Western Cape Teachers Union Financial Statements at November 30, 1987," n.d. The statements include the report and balance sheets drawn up by A. K. Khatieh & Company, Chartered Accountants.

⁷⁸ *Argus*, 1 August 1986.

⁷⁹ "WECTU Emergency Newsletter," n.d.

⁸⁰ *Argus*, 20 July 1987.

⁸¹ *Argus*, 17 July 1987; see "A Historic Victory," *WECTU newsletter* 10 (September 1987): 2, for a brief discussion of the legal argument presented. WECTU members themselves agreed to donate R25 each towards the legal costs. *Cape Times*, 24 July 1987.

and worked to mobilise community support. This latter campaign was particularly successful, as about 1500 people gathered at a support meeting held in the Samaj Centre on 16 July, and the UDF, COSATU, SAYCO and the NECC, amongst others, supported the call to drop the charges.⁸²

The show of strength continued on the day of the first hearing, 20 July, when hundreds of teachers gathered outside the Broad Street offices of the DEC in Wynberg where the hearing was to take place. As the numbers swelled to about 1500, the gathering of teachers and students moved to the nearby Luxerama Cinema in Park Road to listen to Gabru, Moosa Kaprey of the NECC, and Neville Alexander.⁸³

A month later when the House of Representatives dropped all the charges, WECTU responded jubilantly. A spokesperson immediately stated: "This is a major victory.... It is a clear indication to teachers that by belonging to a progressive organisation like WECTU their rights will be defended."⁸⁴ A quarter-page advertisement which WECTU took out in *South* contained the following related words: "To the Department of Education and Culture we say -- WECTU is here to stay.... WECTU commits itself to a future in which the people must have control over education."⁸⁵ For WECTU, drawing ever closer to COSATU, this victory was seen as a vindication of its working-class, trade union style. It was an affirmation of a new "professional" discourse in teacher politics.

Part of this discourse involved continued commitment to broader community struggles. For example, in May of 1987, an emergency meeting of WECTU members decided to support the COSATU call for a two-day stay-away. More than 500 teachers stayed away from schools.⁸⁶ As a result, WECTU again found itself in court defending the principal of Glendale, Mr. Carelse, who was demoted and transferred because of his and his staff's participation in the stay-away. This case, however, was lost.⁸⁷

During the years 1987-1988, WECTU, like the CTPA, attempted to remain involved in alternative educational activities, thus challenging traditional "professional" commitment to state education. A mathematics groups was formed, for example, a writing workshop was held, a high-school orientation course was run for Standard 6 students, and there was a teachers' "open day" These events took place alongside low-key or faltering campaigns against sexual harassment and abuse, and against the October 1987 elections (to which a special, confidential newsletter was devoted).⁸⁸ So various WECTU regions continued to work towards the organisation's ideals despite the dwindling numbers.

It was teacher unity, rather than alternative education or political campaigns, which gave WECTU an enhanced sense of purpose in 1987 and 1988. It could not exist in

⁸² *Sunday Times*, 19 July 1987; *Argus*, 17 July 1987.

⁸³ *Argus*, 20 and 21 July 1987; *Cape Times*, 21 July 1987; "A Historic Victory!" 2.

⁸⁴ *Argus*, 20 August 1987.

⁸⁵ *South*, 3 September 1987.

⁸⁶ *South*, 14 May 1987; "Secretarial Report," WECTU, 16 July 1988, 1. This WECTU report also makes mention of a second community call which succeeded in winning the support of over 1000 teachers.

⁸⁷ "Secretarial Report," 1.

⁸⁸ See *WECTU newsletters*; *Northern Echo*, 13 January 1988.

isolation from other elements of the working class, nor from other like-minded teacher organisations. "Strength in unity" loomed larger on the horizon. This strength, in part, involved asserting a new "professional" place for teachers. DETU, one of the organisations with which it sought to unify, shared WECTU's ideas about "professionalism". DETU experienced similar difficulties with repression and membership during 1987-1988, though maintained a different relationship with its established counter-part, PENATA.

African Education

Once the turmoil of 1985 passed into history, DETU, like WECTU, immediately began struggling with declining numbers of active members. PENATA, unlike the CTPA, also had few active members, and continued to rely on CATU and ATASA to lend it direction. Thus, PENATA could not afford to be patronising after the CTPA's fashion, and DETU did not need to defensively posture against huge numbers of the opposition. They struggled along more equally, with DETU maintaining a higher profile. DETU could thus assert its new conception of "professionalism" more easily amongst organised teachers in African schools.

While DETU upheld commitments to non-racial and progressive ideals within the confines of one department of education, PENATA appeared to quietly stew in an untenable situation. It had lost the moral high-ground, and its members often suffered physical intimidation. But it could not move beyond its historically "professional" stance. Only when the re-registration crisis of 1988 hit Cape Town's African schools did PENATA fully emerge in active support of some progressive ideas.

Both ideological and personal tensions remained between the two organisations between 1987 and 1988. Teacher politics in DET schools remained less significant than worker or community struggles (the PTSA, for example, not DETU or PENATA, played the central role in re-opening Langa High School in 1987 -- see below), or than gangsterism in a different arena. PENATA continued to define itself self-consciously and defensively in the style of all "professional" groups; DETU defined itself as part of a broader struggle, but appeared to remain a nominal, repressed force until the process of teacher unity began in 1987.⁸⁹

Students and teachers within DET schools felt great discontent in 1986 (see Chapter Four). This discontent, rather than dissipating as the year progressed, continued to manifest itself. The DET, acting in a heavy-handed way, did little to assuage it. By the beginning of the third term in July, for example, various new regulations were enacted which included mandatory identification cards and the compulsory re-registration of all students. In total, 30,000 students did not re-register, and were then barred access to schools.⁹⁰ The DET

⁸⁹ This may be because their activities did not enter the popular press, but members interviewed also had little to say about these years.

⁹⁰ Muller, 109.

continued to labour under the misconception that the school boycotts were a result of "outside" elements with a disruptive agenda, rather than a spontaneous expression of dissatisfaction.

According to Muller, by the end of 1986, 230 of the DET's 328 secondary schools around the country were seriously disrupted. An estimated 250,000 students who began the year in schools had left or been forced out by the end.⁹¹

The thorny issue of re-registration continued to haunt the DET and its students and teachers through 1987. One Western Cape event in particular highlighted this, and offered teachers an issue around which to mobilise: the closing of Langa High School.

In 1987, the DET added Standard 6 to Langa High School, which resulted in a double-shift system being implemented with Standards 6 and 7. In April, ten new classrooms were provided *without* furniture. The school had 1,762 students, because, according to a teacher, "The community took a decision not to turn anyone away". A visiting UCT student-teacher group described Langa High School in July and August: "The shortage of teachers reduced the timetable to chaos. Teachers tried to rotate their time so that each class got some lessons at least some of the time."⁹² By May, in fact, there had already been a one-day stayaway at two Gugulethu schools because of overcrowding and a shortage of textbooks. At Langa, the problem was compounded in May by an insensitive decision on the part of some staff members and the DET to send some Langa athletes to Durban to participate in an inter-racial, inter-provincial athletics event. Many people at the school were vehemently opposed to such "racially-mixed" events, and were further angered by the cost incurred. It was argued that the money could have been better spent.⁹³

As the discontent spread within the school, the DET began threatening to close the school, a threat condemned by WECTU and EDASA in early June.⁹⁴ The Department ignored all such objections, and ordered the school closed. According to the Joint-PTSAs chairperson, Lungile Daba, the strong PTSA there "overstepped its mark" in the eyes of the DET.⁹⁵

In a strong show of defiance, and with widespread support, the PTSA and the Langa community re-opened Langa High School on Monday, 6 July 1987. Simultaneously, the NECC and its affiliates launched a "Hands off Langa High / Hands off our Schools" campaign with 125,000 pamphlets and stickers.⁹⁶ The campaign attracted the support of Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak, along with a wide range of other dignitaries.⁹⁷ In the meantime, while the school remained officially "closed", students were writing their mid-term examinations, and teachers were ignoring a request by the department to submit the

⁹¹ Muller, 109.

⁹² *The Argus*, 15 August 1987, reproduced in *Update 7* (n.d.): 11-12.

⁹³ *The Weekly Mail*, 8-14 May 1987; *Cape Times*, 14 July 1987.

⁹⁴ *Argus*, 4 June 1987.

⁹⁵ Daba, 32.

⁹⁶ *Cape Times*, 11 July 1987.

⁹⁷ Interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

names and addresses of all students. The PTSA viewed the request with suspicion; the DET had stated that all pupils must re-register before the school could be opened again.⁹⁸

By 16 July, the DET had acceded that the school could remain open, but only if three conditions were met: first, all students had to re-register; second, Standard 10 pupils who had not passed Standard 9 had to be demoted; and third, in a direct rebuff to the PTSA, a statutory school committee had to be elected.⁹⁹ But even then the DET backed down, offering the school a period of grace during which teachers were to explain to parents why re-registration was necessary.¹⁰⁰

The two Cape Town teacher organisations within the DET offered slightly different responses to this crisis, highlighting their differing ideas about proper teacher behaviour. PENATA carefully stated, after a mid-August, silent protest by one hundred mothers outside the DET offices, that parents should be listened to more closely.¹⁰¹ DETU met with the DET about the re-registration issue, and asked that the re-registration be postponed until January 1988, and also asked the Department to meet with the parents.¹⁰² While DETU's response was more adamant, including its participation in the "Hands off Langa High" campaign, neither teacher organisation could claim a central role in the crisis-management conducted largely by parents and the PTSA. Rather, both directed the department's attention to the parents. WECTU would later write, "The struggles at Langa High against reactionary elements within the school helped to consolidate the unity between the vast majority of parents, staff and students." While some sense of victory could be claimed, the crisis certainly continued, and the principal, Duke Ngcukana, declined a transfer order to Stutterheim by resigning.¹⁰³

The responses by DETU and PENATA to the Langa High School crisis, while similar, showed continued tensions within teacher politics. But the two organisations cooperated during the following year's re-registration crisis. Even though the Black Sash's Sue Philcox would claim by September 1988 that the unity between DETU and PENATA "has proved temporary",¹⁰⁴ it marked an important step forward for both groups towards a newly-defined "professionalism".

In the plain words of one DETU executive member, "1988 started badly."¹⁰⁵ According to another, the "big repression" in schools resulted from the state's desire to regain control of the schools which had been lost since 1985.¹⁰⁶ At the beginning of the school year, teachers were told to report to St. Francis for "educational courses", covering such topics as conflict and the budget. DETU teachers criticised the courses for being of

⁹⁸ *Cape Times*, 14 July 1987.

⁹⁹ *The Weekly Mail*, 10-16 July 1987.

¹⁰⁰ *Argus*, 19 August 1987.

¹⁰¹ *Argus*, 19 August 1987.

¹⁰² *Cape Times*, 17 July 1987.

¹⁰³ *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 1.

¹⁰⁴ Philcox, 29.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

"no educational value".¹⁰⁷ On 13 January, with the police and the army in schools, the DET informed students and parents that the contentious process of re-registration would occur at three venues.¹⁰⁸ The new comprehensive high schools were filled first,¹⁰⁹ and the quotas given other schools greatly reduced their enrollment: I.D. Mkhize, for example, was expected to enroll 600 students, exactly half the number for 1987.¹¹⁰ During the two-week delay in opening schools, teachers were expected to produce identification cards when entering schools, and were given tasks such as counting text-books and furniture.¹¹¹ "Teachers," said DETU's Monde Mbekwa, "were very angry."¹¹²

The registration deadline was 22 January. Before that time, students and parents were asked to sign the following document:

Conditions of Registration in DET Schools

1. by the PUPIL

"I hereby declare that I will obey the rules and regulations of the school and that I will subject myself to disciplinary action against me should it be deemed necessary by the authorities concerned."

2. by the PARENT/GUARDIAN

"I hereby agree to disciplinary action against my child if it is deemed necessary, that I will undertake to pay all costs incurred for damages done or losses caused by my child to school property or books, and I undertake to ensure that my child attends school regularly."¹¹³

DET officials, including one Braam Olivier -- who played a role in counter-resistance in Alexandria -- were sent from Pretoria to facilitate the return to schools. Students who did not register by the 22 January deadline were barred from schools.¹¹⁴ According to a *WECTU newsletter*, the state went so far as to ban meetings "promoting the non-registration and non-attendance of pupils" in seven magisterial districts in the Western Cape.¹¹⁵

Teachers' "anger" found an organisational focus in both DETU and PENATA. "The atmosphere was created," said a DETU executive member, "where DETU had to meet PENATA."¹¹⁶ A DETU informant said that meetings were held between the two groups.¹¹⁷ One took place at the Uluntu Centre in Gugulethu on 2 February at a time when at least

¹⁰⁷ Interview with informant C, 18 October 1990; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990; *Argus*, 2 February 1988.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹⁰⁹ This was done, according to *WECTU*, "... to give the department the opportunity to attempt breaking the unity of the organised high schools. Staff and student bodies have been split and relocated at the 'new' schools (comprehensives and others)." *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 2.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹¹¹ *Argus*, 2 February 1988.

¹¹² Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹¹³ Quoted in *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 1.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990; *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 2; *Argus*, 12 February 1988.

¹¹⁵ *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 2. The Joint PTSAs challenged the ban in court.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹¹⁷ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

five Peninsula DET schools were still not functioning.¹¹⁸ Both DETU and PENATA participated in a march of between fifty and 200 teachers on 11 February. Gathering at the DET's Foreshore offices to raise issues surrounding the barring of students who had not yet registered and the transfer of teachers, the group was told to return at the end of the week, for there were too many teachers for a discussion. But when they returned at the end of the week, Braam Olivier was not there as expected.¹¹⁹

DETU and PENATA then mobilised around a three-day stay-away to highlight the issue of re-registration. Between 15 and 17 February, more than 200 teachers were absent from DET schools in the Peninsula.¹²⁰ In the middle of the stay-away, on 16 February, around 150 teachers once again gathered at the DET offices on the Foreshore. The group sat in the building for four hours, and Minister of Education and Training Sam de Beer eventually saw a delegation of executive members from both organisations. De Beer met their demand; he extended the final date for re-registration to Saturday, 20 February.¹²¹ On 17 February, more than 150 teachers met at the Uluntu Centre and decided to resume teaching. Of the stay-away de Beer said: "It is clearly my duty to draw to the attention of teachers concerned that their action is contrary to their conditions of service."¹²² This was a feeble attempt to assert control in the face of shifting teacher conceptions of their "professional" locations within schools, ideas that now appeared to be generally acceptable in this time of crisis to both the emergent and established township organisations.

These events increased the possibility for cooperation between the two organisations. The real crisis forced both to overlook past differences. A DETU executive member said, "It was the first time that we had that joint activity, and we saw there was a need." There was, in fact, talk of a single African teachers' organisation.¹²³

The tensions caused by shifting ideas of teacher "professionalism" continued. DETU decided -- "unprofessionally", according to the DET -- not to participate in a multi-racial DET sporting event held at Green Point Stadium in March 1988. In total, eight teachers from Langa High School who were appointed to officiate did not appear, and only one of four appointed from I.D. Mkhize went. The department suspended three from the former and two from the latter, all executive members of DETU. The others simply had pay deducted from their salaries. Barred from entering schools, the five teachers were initially suspended without pay, a decision later reversed.¹²⁴ The charges were initially unclear, but later appeared to include refusal to attend the sports meeting, refusal to carry out gate-order

¹¹⁸ *Cape Times*, 2 February 1988.

¹¹⁹ *Cape Times*, 12 February 1988; *Argus*, 11 February 1988; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹²⁰ This according to Gerrit Viljeon in Parliament. *Cape Times*, 18 May 1988.

¹²¹ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990; *Argus*, 16 February 1988. This *Argus* report falsely claims that DET officials refused to see the delegation.

¹²² *Cape Times*, 18 February 1988; *Argus*, 18 February 1988. The De Beer quote is from the *Cape Times*.

¹²³ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹²⁴ *South*, 7 April 1988; *Argus*, 15 and 30 April 1988; interview with informant C, 6 March 1990; interview H: Mbekwa. The five were: Monde Mbekwa and Ernest Henda of I.D. Mkhize; and Vuyo Hlaba, Themikile Plaatjie and Zolile Fonya of Langa High School.

duties, and being absent without leave during the three-day stay-away.¹²⁵ Their hearing, initially scheduled for 22 August, was postponed, and postponed again. The teachers were receiving pay, and were not replaced.¹²⁶ Students were angry, with some at I.D. Mkhize refusing to attend classes until the teachers were reinstated.¹²⁷ An abortive teachers' solidarity stay-away on 3 May failed because of intervention by the department: principals were warned, and inspectors visited schools the day before warning of repercussions.¹²⁸

Fifteen months later, in July 1989, the DETU teachers were reinstated and returned to their schools.¹²⁹

These events of 1988, along with DETU's restriction in the same year, impacted DETU's organisation. "Teachers," said a DETU executive member, "ran away even more."¹³⁰ This fear of organisational involvement would be overcome by some former members, as with WECTU, during the long process of teacher unity. Unity efforts would provide the structure for a reassertion of new ideas about "professionalism" amongst organised teachers which waned during the two years following 1985.

*The Cocoon of White Schools*¹³¹

The militant atmosphere in black schools continued to leave white schools largely unaffected, although white schools maintained a politically repressive ethos. While EDASA experienced a declining commitment on the part of its members similar to that of WECTU and DETU, the SATA maintained a strong hold on white English-speaking teachers. The SATA continued to reiterate its verbal stand against such *apartheid* legislation as the Group Areas Act, and to argue for open schools.¹³² But its method remained "professional" in the traditional sense: motions passed at Conferences; and routine meetings with government officials. The SATA still did not perceive education as political, and teachers were held to have a duty to uphold conventional notions of "professional" ideals.

The state, at this time, worked to maintain its firm hold over white teachers and white education. While this hold had never been threatened, the potential loss of control implied by developments in other education departments must have helped shape not only the tighter control asserted over teachers in schools, and the simultaneous "empowering" of white teachers via the creation of the TFC. It was these two typical strands of state policy -- repression and cooption -- and EDASA and SATA's responses to them which we will now examine.

¹²⁵ *Cape Times*, 3 February 1989.

¹²⁶ *Argus*, 30 April 1988, 29 July 1988 and 4 August 1988.

¹²⁷ *Argus*, 15 April 1988.

¹²⁸ *Argus*, 3 May 1988.

¹²⁹ *Argus*, 12 July 1989; interview with Monde Mbekwa, 9 August 1990.

¹³⁰ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹³¹ This image was taken from *Update 7* (p.5): "'White' schools continue in their silken cocoon...."

¹³² "S.A.T.A. Mandate," n.p.

The National Education Policy Amendment Act, No. 103 of 1986, contained two important provisions. First, it consolidated the control of white education in the Ministry of Education and Culture (HoA). Second, in keeping with the new tri-cameral Constitution it created the TFC. The former provision allowed a centralisation of control, while vesting power in the hands of Minister of Education and Culture Piet Clase. He wrote, at the time, that 1986 was "an historic year in education". Starting on 1 April 1986, "policy on education was no longer determined by various second-level authorities (the Provinces) but ... the House of Assembly now had the final political power over own affairs education policy."¹³³

The Act also provided for the merging of the South African Teachers' Council (for whites) and the voluntary Federal Council into the TFC. The TFC became the central registering body for all teachers in white schools: "No person shall be appointed in a teaching post or teach in a school unless he [sic] has been registered or provisionally registered with that body...."¹³⁴ Within the framework of the TFC, the "organised teaching profession" had to be consulted about educational planning.¹³⁵ Further, the TFC, according to the Act, "has the object of promoting the prestige of the white teaching profession".¹³⁶ The classic elements of state cooption were there, including the upholding of "professional" ideologies. In fact, this quasi-state structure, on which the state could count to uphold its *apartheid* policies, worked to suppress dissent from within its ranks. According to the Western Cape Section of the Black Sash:

It defines the rules and conduct of teachers and how they shall be punished if these are contravened. Also, the proceedings of the disciplinary committee will no longer be public, and there will be no right of appeal. The code of conduct is awesome and based squarely on ruling ideology.¹³⁷

Further, both the TFC and Minister Clase acknowledged their opposition to a single, national education department,¹³⁸ a rallying cry for so many of the oppositional teacher bodies.

The formation of the TFC, a perpetuation of *apartheid* divisions, created some tensions within the SATA, which had been adopting an increasingly anti-*apartheid* line. A motion was presented to its June 1987 Conference calling for a withdrawal from the TFC to symbolise a complete rejection of *apartheid* structures. However, clearly defining themselves within the state's umbrella, the delegates voted to remain in the TFC by 145 to seventy.¹³⁹

EDASA had entered the Conference fray not from outside, but from within the SATA. There were a few EDASA members present as voting delegates from the Cape

¹³³ *South African Teachers' Council Bulletin* 28 (September 1986): 6, quoted in "The Black Sash: Cape Western Section, Comment on the Recent Legislation on Education," in *Update* 5 (n.d.): 8.

¹³⁴ Quoted in "The Black Sash," 8; Ashley, 16; interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

¹³⁵ Ashley, 16.

¹³⁶ Quoted in "The Black Sash," 8.

¹³⁷ "The Black Sash," 8.

¹³⁸ "The Black Sash," 8.

¹³⁹ *Argus*, 29 June 1987.

Town branch. In fact, an EDASA member proposed the motion to reject TFC membership. When the vote went against them, as they had expected, an abortive walk-out was staged by those few members, who expected some support. This support did not materialise as expected from the Atlantic branch. The SATA leadership, expecting such a disturbance, had apparently planned the evening to end with that particular vote, after which the meeting was dismissed. In the words of an EDASA participant in the walk-out: "I got to the door just before the mob."¹⁴⁰

The failed walk-out was indicative of EDASA's position during that year. It remained a small group confronted with great opposition. This single attempt to wrest some control from its established counter-part proved impossible. Further, the walk-out was done to "pander to WECTU". Some WECTU members had made the TFC withdrawal into an issue with some EDASA members, so EDASA had gone ahead in part to gain much-sought credibility in the eyes of a progressive ally. "Strategically," said EDASA's Pam van Dyk, who proposed the motion, "the walk-out was an exceptionally bad idea.... We lost members."¹⁴¹

For a very small group, the possibility of losing members was dire indeed. Like its progressive counter-parts, EDASA confronted the bleak reality of a dwindling active membership. According to one member active during 1987: "At one stage we virtually suspended meetings because our numbers had dwindled.... We considered disbanding.... We were only producing *Update*."¹⁴² An issue of *Update* published in the second half of 1987 contained a large advertisement: "The working committee urges members to attend the AGM. Attendance at meetings has been very poor. We cannot organize meetings or invite speakers without your support. EDASA's future depends on you!"¹⁴³

Part of the problem continued to be the government's second policy strand: repression. In February 1987, the Nationalist Party MP for Caledon, Lampie Fick, requested a government investigation into EDASA at schools. In voicing this request, Fick claimed the EDASA promoted "protest politics" in white schools.¹⁴⁴ Though no such investigation took place, this public pressure did little to render EDASA more attractive to its constituency. More generally, too, according to *Update* in 1987: "Principals have recently been instructed to collect and bring to the Cape Education Department offices any flyers, pamphlets, questionnaires or posters that they find in or near their schools."¹⁴⁵ Also, the white education department set an example of political repression by suspending a Pinelands teacher for observing June 16 (see Chapter Five). The department -- in a move similar to that in the DET against the five DETU teachers -- eventually dropped the charges after the teacher's temporary term of employment (until December) had expired, and paid

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁴² Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁴³ *Update* 7 (n.d.): 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Argus*, 24 February 1987.

¹⁴⁵ *Update* 7 (n.d.): 5.

her in full for those months. She was not an EDASA teacher, but her example made people aware of the risks run when engaging in "political" actions. "The implications for EDASA teachers are far-reaching," stated *Update*. "The CED [Cape Education Department] has indicated that it is prepared to go a long way to keep the bubble intact."¹⁴⁶

So part of EDASA's waning membership had to do with state repression. There were other difficulties as well. Rossiter, for example, wrote that, "EDASA has not had the resources or support to operate as a teachers' union."¹⁴⁷ EDASA's ideas about new "professionalism" found little favour within its constituency. In 1987, a year for difficult questions, EDASA asked the following in an *Update* editorial:

Just by forming an organisation, making speeches, issuing statements, having meetings, we can create the illusion that we are having an impact. But in reality, are we just marking time, feeling good that we have added our name to a list of progressive teachers while conservative forces still influence most teachers and pupils in our schools[?]

The same editorial went on to admit that, "Many teachers who were initially mobilized by the events of 1985 have become apathetic and complacent."¹⁴⁸ According to an active member, hours were spent analyzing the waning membership: "We were forever having to contemplate our relevancy."¹⁴⁹

Maintaining an organisational relevance involved two kinds of activity aimed at redefining "professionalism": working within its constituency, and reaching out to other progressive organisations. Engaged in the former, EDASA spoke out against Piet Clase's veiled threats about not hiring teachers from "left-leaning" universities and colleges.¹⁵⁰ EDASA also continued to support conscientious objection.¹⁵¹ They co-operated with PAAG, educated about open schools, and participated in a School's Forum with ECC and PAAG.¹⁵² They also continued to publish thoughtful issues of *Update*, highlighting educational and political issues. EDASA continued to foreground alternative teaching methods.

Secondly, much of EDASA's organisational energy was devoted to being a relevant part of the broader extra-parliamentary opposition movement. EDASA participated in both the 1986 national launch of the NECC, and the 1987 Western Cape regional launch.¹⁵³ This was important, according to one member, because the Western Cape NECC allowed more contact with other organisations, and EDASA became more accepted.¹⁵⁴ It was also active in the Free the Children Alliance.

¹⁴⁶ *Update* 5 (n.d.): 4.

¹⁴⁷ Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

¹⁴⁸ *Update* 7 (n.d.): 1-2.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁵⁰ *Cape Times*, 10 August 1987.

¹⁵¹ "Letter to the editor," *Cape Times*, 1 September 1987.

¹⁵² Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990; *Update* 6 (n.d. [June 1987]): 4.

¹⁵³ Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

These activities were not enough to revive a flagging membership. It was, rather, the process of teacher unity which offered EDASA renewed strength. Like WECTU and DETU, EDASA found inspiration in the process of teacher unity which had essentially lain dormant for two years. Through unity efforts, EDASA participated in the assertion of a new "professional" ideology within teacher politics.

TASA

The final important player in the Western Cape teacher unity initiative, TASA, moved more slowly towards politicization than other teacher organisations. During 1987-1988, TASA maintained its "professional" position within teacher politics. For example, it remained involved with state education structures. It showed important signs, however, of movement away from traditional "professionalism" towards a new conception of teachers' locations.

The Cape Town branch's handling of the dismissals and transferrals at Rylands High School (see Chapter Four), however, illustrated a shifting "professionalism" within that branch. Though TASA handled the Ryland events in a legal and "professional" way, including discussions with the department and a court case, the Cape Town branch was part of the student and community repulsion of the "scab" teachers. According to the branch chairperson in 1990, "The Western Cape branch is the most militant within the organisation. We've been pushing the organisation." For example, in 1987 the branch proposed Desmond Tutu or Alan Boesak for the speaker at TASA's National Conference, a motion soundly defeated.¹⁵⁵

TASA's "professional" hull thus showed progressive chinks. At the time the DEC (HoR) was threatening to end UTASA's stop-order facilities, TASA sent telegrams to both Hendrickse and Minister of National Education de Klerk "expressing concern".¹⁵⁶ In the same year, TASA tried to increase the participation of its teachers in organisational decision-making by paying subsidies to delegates attending branch meetings.¹⁵⁷ Outside of the educational arena, too, TASA was active. For example, in August 1986, TASA began a campaign to raise R100,000 for the refugees from violence in Crossroads.¹⁵⁸ Also, in 1987 it gave R305,000 to the Red Cross from its Natal Flood Disaster Relief Fund.¹⁵⁹

While these moves remained tentative in the sense that they still fell within the realm of acceptable activities, such as charitable actions, for a recognised "professional" organisation, changes in teacher politics were clearly influencing TASA. Formerly an anathema, "political" behaviour was becoming more acceptable. TASA's most pronounced break with state-defined "professionalism" was a growing antagonism towards its

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

¹⁵⁶ *Argus*, 25 August 1986.

¹⁵⁷ "NITS - TITA - SAITA - TASA," n.p.

¹⁵⁸ *Argus*, 13 August 1986. According to a TASA photocopy, the campaign began in 1987, and a cheque for R65,700 was presented to Crossroad Relief Aid on 27 March 1989. "Teachers Association of South Africa," n.p.

¹⁵⁹ "Teachers Association of South Africa," n.p.

department. In the second half of 1986 and into 1987, TASA began organising around an issue of paramount importance: cut-backs in departmental spending on education.

TASA held a mass meeting in Merebank, in Natal, on 17 October 1986 in protest against education spending cutbacks and a proposed retrenchment of teachers. On 9 November 1986, TASA hosted a public meeting in Natal for delegates from many different community organisations to deal with the same issues.¹⁶⁰ On 19 January 1987, the DEC (HoD) publicly asked whether newly-qualified Indian teachers could be utilized in other education departments.¹⁶¹ A meeting of "principals and management staff" was held by TASA on 21 January 1987 for continued discussion of the cutbacks and retrenchments.¹⁶² In April, the Indian HoD agreed to hire thousands of unemployed Indian teachers, overspending its education budget by R22 million in order to "take care" of the teachers.¹⁶³

Another educational issue also pulled TASA into an open feud with its department: a new system of evaluation. In March 1987, TASA organised a mass meeting in Durban to protest against the new system.¹⁶⁴ This campaign would continue over the next couple of years. These various campaigns seemed to come to a head around the beginning of 1988, when TASA gave evidence against HoD control of education before the state-sponsored James Commission of Enquiry into corruption in the HoD. Earlier, in November of the previous year, TASA claimed to have conducted a survey in Tongaat concerning "irregular election practices" during a by-election for the HoD.¹⁶⁵

TASA pitted itself against its department in an increasingly militant way, redefining acceptable teacher behaviour.

Teacher Unity Initiatives, 1986-1987

While tensions continued to manifest themselves within teacher politics defined by separate education departments, there was a growing sense that unity was essential. Emergent teacher groups wanted to strengthen their challenge to traditional "professionalism", while traditionally "professional" associations sought a unified response to this challenge born of a shifting political climate. This brought about both progressive and established unity efforts which, though separate, indicate a growing readiness for unity.

During the two-and-a-half years following the birth of the Western Cape emergent unions, teacher unity moved towards centre stage. Though as an ideal unity was embedded in their constitutions, in practice teacher unity received scant attention before 1987. As we have seen, the established organisations had a long history of attempted federal unity, but the changing terrain and their shifting positions in relation to the anti-*apartheid* struggle made cooperation difficult in 1985 and 1986.

¹⁶⁰ "Teachers' Association of South Africa," n.p.

¹⁶¹ *Argus*, 19 January 1987.

¹⁶² "Teachers' Association of South Africa," n.p.

¹⁶³ *Argus*, 30 April 1987.

¹⁶⁴ "Teachers Association of South Africa," n.p.

¹⁶⁵ "Teachers Association of South Africa," n.p.

By 1987, for reasons discussed below, both the emergent and established groupings were ready for teacher unity talks, albeit separately.

The political context of unity

More energy was put into teacher unity in part due to a more realistic assessment of state power and of what was necessary in order to effectively oppose it. As the government continued to clamp down on individual organisations and people, the vital necessity for employing the combined strength of teachers and others within the liberation movement became clear.

Influential political groups external to the teaching profession sought to create a powerful political ally in a united teachers' body. In consequence, educational bodies sought to gain more firm control over the educational terrain in order to affect change. Teachers in the democratically aligned organisations wanted to assert organisational control over their colleagues to more effectively challenge the established associations.

Influential groupings external to the teaching profession included the ANC and the UDF, and it became clear in 1987 that teacher unity was on their agendas. Randall van den Heever, brought this message back from the CTPA's Dakar meeting with ANC officials Thabo Mbeki, Penuel Maduna and Essop Pahad in mid-1987. The *Cape Times* reported on the meeting: "The ANC expressed concern about the division which still existed in the ranks of teacher corps in South Africa and were in favour of a 'much closer co-operation between the various teacher movements' in South Africa...."¹⁶⁶ The UDF, inside the country, called for teacher unity in the resolutions of its National Working Committee in March 1987.¹⁶⁷ These two linked organisations saw the potential for recruiting a powerful political ally, especially if it could at the same time further the movement of conservative teachers away from the state's "professional" camp.

Another powerful body which became increasingly involved was COSATU, especially through the work of its chief teacher unity proponent, General Secretary Jay Naidoo. COSATU, having strongly committed itself to "populist" unionism, engaged with teachers as an **unorganised** section of the working class. COSATU clearly wanted a powerful national teachers' *union* within its fold; locating teachers within the working class and organising them would render a powerful threat to bourgeois professional groups and thus undermine the state's educational strategies which had often been associated with the reform of capitalism, as well as the transformation of the racial order.¹⁶⁸ Naidoo, in a speech delivered to the April 1987 WECTU AGM, chastised teachers for not having learnt the lessons of unity from the factory floor. He explained that all sectors were organising nationally except teachers. According to *South*, he claimed that teachers were "paralyzed" without such a national structure. Importantly, he added that the progressive organisations

¹⁶⁶ *Cape Times*, 6 October 1987.

¹⁶⁷ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 68.

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, Kallaway, "An Introduction"; Kallaway, ed.; Nkomo, ed.; Unterhalter, et al, eds.

needed to build an education relevant to the working class. In its report on the speech, a *WECTU newsletter* stated COSATU's readiness to become more involved: "COSATU strongly urged that WECTU committed [sic] itself to the ideal of a single national teachers' union and that that union situate itself firmly in the heart of the national liberation struggle. COSATU would willingly assist wherever possible with the realization of this goal."¹⁶⁹ This sentiment was reinforced at COSATU's first Education Conference in October 1987, one recommendation of which stated:

COSATU should ... assist or strengthen were they do exist, the formation of democratic Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations.... The goal would be to encourage one single-constituency, national organisation for each sector (e.g.) - a democratic teachers' union.¹⁷⁰

An informant involved with the talks to promote a national progressive organisation later that year explained how COSATU "held out the possibility of a broad movement involving lots of teachers" which would be more powerful than disparate groups.¹⁷¹ COSATU, thus, in 1987 appeared not only to be calling for a powerful, national, working-class teachers' body, but stood willing to lend essential assistance.

Specifically education-related groups also increased pressure on organised teachers to unify. The NECC desired a single body under its auspices, for this would enable a more effective implementation of alternative education. Ian Moll claimed, in fact, that after the SPCC conference "... a call for teacher unity from the mass democratic movement was now on the agenda".¹⁷² In September 1987, the NECC reiterated these earlier calls for teacher unity.¹⁷³

Students, too, influenced the movement towards teacher unity. As student organisations became more aware of a need to operate within a broader context, and not simply on their own, there was, according to activist Graeme Bloch, "... the insistence by students on the need for teacher unity and their encouragement of processes underway".¹⁷⁴ So those organisations closest to teachers in the workplace, and operating within their educational realm, pressured teacher organisations to join and cooperate against a common enemy.

The **above** pressures influenced teacher organisations to channel more energy into teacher unity **processes**. There were other factors within teacher politics which added to the pressure for unity. For the emergent groups, teacher unity had been an ideal since their inception. In a way, this ideal justified their racially-bound groupings, and they struggled to divest themselves of their racial trappings. They recognised, too, that power to fully assert a redefined "professionalism" could only be gained by uniting all the emergent bodies. They could then more effectively confront not only state structures but also their

¹⁶⁹ *South*, 29 April 1987; *WECTU newsletter* 10 (September 1987): 1.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 60, 68.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁷² Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 66.

¹⁷³ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 68.

¹⁷⁴ Bloch, 122.

opponents in the established camp. Rossiter wrote of EDASA members: "General consensus amongst the interviewees is that only once a national non-racial teachers organisation is established will there be any potential to offer an alternative to the established teacher body."¹⁷⁵ EDASA's *Update* claimed that state repression during 1986 rendered unity imperative: "... progressive organisations need to re-evaluate their tactical direction and work more along the lines of building and strengthening their organisations, as well as inter-organisational links." Thus EDASA's 1987 theme was "building for unity".¹⁷⁶ After a year-and-a-half of struggle, the emergent Western Cape unions recognised the increasing importance of "strength in unity".

Importantly, too, the emergent organisations saw teacher unity as one way to prevent their own disintegration. As their numbers dramatically decreased, teacher unity became an important issue around which to organise. "Unity," admitted an EDASA member, "revived EDASA's working committee."¹⁷⁷ This was also true to different degrees for WECTU and DETU.

Established organisations also responded to the external pressures and held teacher unity meetings. They also needed to find strength in unity to oppose the emergent threat, and to present a non-racialistic front as an assertion of legitimacy.

Emergent unity in the Western Cape

Unity between WECTU, DETU and EDASA in the Western Cape remained elusive during 1985 and 1986, largely because of the turbulent struggles in black education -- including repressive state action which generally inhibited their activities -- and because of the difficulty EDASA had in gaining credibility, particularly with WECTU. Elements within WECTU did not trust the "white" union, but WECTU did, according to an EDASA member, need EDASA in order to present a public image of non-racialism.¹⁷⁸ Other difficulties also existed. These represented continuing tensions within emergent teacher politics which led to the birth of these three separate organisations in the first place. As a *WECTU newsletter* stated in 1988: "DETU and EDASA represent attempts to organize constituencies that are in socioeconomic and political terms so different that one struggles, on the surface, to find a common denominator."¹⁷⁹ In 1987, however, due to the pressures described above, these obstacles were overcome and the three emergent unions began to meet and discuss teacher unity.

There was some limited contact prior to April 1987. For example, EDASA was represented at a DETU meeting in February of that year. And all three organisations had attended the March 1986 NECC conference in Durban. But much closer cooperation began after April, with the launch of the Western Cape NECC. The Western Cape NECC

¹⁷⁵ Rossiter, "Developing," n.p.

¹⁷⁶ *Update* 5 (n.d.): 1.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁷⁹ *WECTU newsletter* 2.1 (September 1988): 2.

provided a forum for the three to meet, and also provided pressure by reiterating the national NECC policy which prioritized teacher unity.

In May 1987, DETU and EDASA held a joint workshop on the Education Charter. That same month, DETU and EDASA enjoyed a successful jazz evening at the University of Cape Town. Because of the rift between WECTU and EDASA, it was left to DETU to call and chair a meeting at St. Francis in Langa on the issue of progressive Western Cape unity. At the first meeting, WECTU accused EDASA of being the stumbling block to unity, but DETU defended EDASA, stating that it would not accept unity without EDASA.¹⁸⁰ According to an EDASA participant, "WECTU slowly started to accept us."¹⁸¹

By September 1987, WECTU was fully involved in enacting the resolution of its April 1987 AGM "to spearhead the building of a national teachers' organisation in South African under the guidance of COSATU".¹⁸² Although COSATU was not yet involved in the Western Cape, by September the three emergent organisations had met twice regarding unity, had exchanged constitutions, and had begun work on a joint newsletter.¹⁸³ Although the newsletter was never completed, according to an EDASA informant, "The significance of the thing was greater than the actual merit of the content."¹⁸⁴

Cooperation continued in October with a joint WECTU-DETU-EDASA-UWC conference on People's Education at UWC. According to a WECTU "Secretarial Report" of 16 July 1988, WECTU also "... committed itself to working locally on joint projects with EDASA and DETU to effect unity amongst the progressive teachers' unions".¹⁸⁵ All three local emergent unions espoused such commitment, and their discussions on local unity appeared "quite advanced"¹⁸⁶ when they were overtaken by a national "progressive" teacher unity initiative.

*National unity for "progressive" teacher organisations*¹⁸⁷

A national "progressive" teacher unity initiative got underway in October 1987. The Progressive Teachers' Union (PTU), operating in DEC (HoR) schools in the Transvaal, invited **almost all** of the progressive unions to a National Consultative Conference, hosted by the NECC, at the University of the Witwatersrand from 2-4 October.¹⁸⁸ All three Western Cape organisations attended. This conference aimed at removing obstacles to

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990; interview with informant D, 6 March 1990; interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990; *Update* 6 (n.d. [June 1987]): 4.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁸² *WECTU newsletter* 10 (September 1987): 3; *South*, 29 April 1987.

¹⁸³ *WECTU newsletter* 10 (September 1987): 3.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁸⁵ "Secretarial Report, 16 July 1988," WECTU, 2.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁸⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all of the information in this section is taken from: *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 3-4; *Weekly Mail*, 27 November to 3 December 1987.

¹⁸⁸ The participants were WECTU, DETU, EDASA, NEUSA, PTU, and the Progressive Teachers' League (PTL).

national unity, and accepted that no preconditions should be set for joining the national organisation (for example, one did not need to adopt the Freedom Charter). Also, this conference compiled a list of ten aims and objectives (see Appendix B) to be discussed within organisations and ratified at the next meeting. A steering committee was established to devise a programme of action, and to inform the NECC and COSATU of all decisions. Thus, this initiative was from the outset firmly aligned to the mass democratic movement, committed to the participation of COSATU, and responsive to the various pressures these external groupings brought to bear.

A second meeting was held at the University of the Witwatersrand on 7 November, comprising the same organisations -- though DETU sent apologies. Additional members were the Eastern Cape Teachers' Union (ECTU), the East London Progressive Teachers' Union (ELPTU) and the Mamelodi Teachers' Union (MATU).¹⁸⁹ This meeting was a great success in that the ten aims and objectives were accepted, all the organisations re-committed themselves to national unity, various names for the national body were proposed, and an actual launch date was set for 5 April 1988. The meeting also established a committee to draw up a constitution. A press release announced that a national union "representing 10,000 teachers" would be launched in the new year.¹⁹⁰

Though the draft constitution was indeed presented at the third meeting, held on 5 December, the intended launch was postponed. More importantly, COSATU participated in this meeting and, according to a participant, "made an eloquent plea for including the moderate organisations".¹⁹¹ There were strong objections, particularly from WECTU,¹⁹² but COSATU's proposal that it host talks between the emergent unions and established groups (including the CTPA and ATASA) was accepted, and participants scheduled their next meeting for March 1988. It was a large step indeed for the emergent unions to agree to sit down with their "reactionary" counter-parts, and indicative in part of COSATU's persuasive powers.

This national progressive unity initiative, which was in fact being derailed in favour of a single national body including all black teacher organisations, had achieved some success. **There were**, nevertheless, obstacles. Lack of finance remained a problem, as did the **continued question** of repression and organisational bannings. "Whole channels of communication were crushed," stated one participant from EDASA. "People couldn't contact their membership." Also, a leadership split in NEUSA developed and inhibited that organisation's full engagement.¹⁹³ But such difficulties did not stall the talks. Rather,

¹⁸⁹ *The Weekly Mail* does not include ECTU or MATU in its list of participants. Also, the NEUSA executive decided not to participate, apparently because of internal divisions. Several of the NEUSA regions did attend the meeting, however.

¹⁹⁰ *Argus*, 18 November 1987. According to this account, the body would be founded in May 1988, and only DETU, WECTU, EDASA, PTU, PTL, ELPTU and NEUSA had agreed to join.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁹² Interview with Mike Adendorf, 7 August 1990.

¹⁹³ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

circumstances overtook this initiative, as COSATU's proposals were carried forward to Harare in a much more grand fashion than participants anticipated.

Unity amongst established teacher organisations

Across the emergent-established divide, similar events were occurring as the established groups gathered for discussions about teacher unity. Such talks occurred at a national level, for each Western Cape body, for example, was an affiliate of a national organisation. ATASA convened the meeting at the Victoria Hotel in Johannesburg one week after the second progressive unity meeting in November 1987.

All of the established organisations participated except the Transvaal Onderwysunie.¹⁹⁴ Those present included: ATASA, UTASA, TASA, SATA, NTS, SAOU, the Natal Onderwysunie (NOU), the Onderwysunie van die Oranje Vrystaat (OOV) and the TTA. JOCTASA's 1983 Charter for Teacher Unity (see Appendix A), drawn up during an earlier attempt at teacher unity, was used as a basis for discussion.¹⁹⁵ In the end, participants established thirteen sub-committees -- at the request of the SATA -- which were to "hash out" various issues surrounding teacher unity.¹⁹⁶

In order to better understand the divide between the established and the emergent teacher unity initiatives, and thus better comprehend the task confronting facilitators of an all-inclusive initiative, the JOCTASA Charter provides a useful tool for assessing some differences between the two camps.

The JOCTASA Charter, while upholding many principles respected by the emergent camp, contains ideas anathema to anyone allying themselves with a working-class, socialist struggle. While condemning *apartheid* and requesting "the establishment of a non-racial society", the Charter further upheld class-conscious interests. It aimed at:

A rationally planned educational system adapted to meet the challenges of the scientific-technological age with specific reference to the manpower requirements of our country; and to this end, the provision of educational institutions to promote the acquisition of managerial, entrepreneurial, administrative, professional and technical skills.¹⁹⁷

Such a "scientific" ideology fit in perfectly with the government reform initiatives of the eighties, embodied, for example, in the De Lange Commission report, so aptly described by Bill Nasson.¹⁹⁸ Further, after denouncing racially-based education systems, the Charter presented telling addenda:

Given the essentially separate basis of education policy and practice in South Africa, we realistically recognise and appreciate:

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

¹⁹⁵ *The Weekly Mail*, 27 November to 3 December 1987; *WECTU newsletter* 11 (February 1988): 4.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

¹⁹⁷ *JOCTASA Charter for Teacher Unity* (see Appendix A).

¹⁹⁸ Bill Nasson, "Modernization as Legitimation: Education Reform and the State in the 1980s," in Ed. Nkomo, 147-178.

- * the difficulties inherent in establishing and effectively organising and operating teachers' associations on a practically open basis
- * that a fully open education system in South Africa is a function of an open society.¹⁹⁹

Such caveats were not acceptable to the emergent groups, and highlighted the important differences between established and emergent styles of operation.

Such a broad comparison does not imply homogeneity within each camp. Differences existed between emergent unions in the progressive camp, although their over-arching goals were very similar. Rifts existed within the established grouping as well as the traditional associations confronted challenges to their conceptions of "professionalism". The widest rift existed between the black and white groupings, since the established black organisations had experienced crisis and more intense pressures to change than their white counter-parts.

At the meeting at the Victoria Hotel, very different organisations with very different agendas confronted each other. While joined by a common understanding of their "professional" status, the established organisations differed on a number of points. The black groups were essentially more political than their white counterparts. However "conservative" or "apolitical" ATASA might have been if seen within the context of black liberation politics, its location within the context of *apartheid* education meant that it represented the interests of teachers of the oppressed, as opposed to white teacher groups which represented the more privileged sectors of society. This had the effect of locating ATASA in an increasingly critical location regarding state education.

ATASA had been involved with the NECC since its inception; ATASA's general secretary had been detained. Both ATASA and UTASA had withdrawn from *apartheid* education structures, and antagonisms had grown up between them and the state they served. They were outspokenly antagonistic to *apartheid* and *apartheid* education. ATASA had further reflected its leanings towards the emergent groups which had met one week earlier by inviting NEUSA to the Victoria Hotel meeting, an invitation NEUSA declined.²⁰⁰

The growing disparity between the "professional" ideologies of different established groups was evident in the different forms of unity they suggested. The CTPA (through UTASA) took a public position in opposition to most other established bodies in response to political pressures and a rapidly changing political climate. A UTASA document released at the time of the Victoria Hotel meeting stated: "... UTASA believes that the ideal of teacher unity must be represented in a union structure and not in a federal structure based on racial sub-components."²⁰¹ UTASA further distanced itself from the organisations it had agreed to meet by stating: "It is UTASA's view that (a) to re-open the discussions on Apartheid as embodied by the Afrikaner organizations and (b) to re-discuss the content of

¹⁹⁹ JOCTASA Charter for Teacher Unity.

²⁰⁰ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 69; *The Weekly Mail*, 27 November to 3 December 1987.

²⁰¹ "UTASA and Teacher Unity," UTASA, photocopy, November 1987, 1.

the [JOCTASA charter of teacher unity] would be both retrogressive and divisive." The same UTASA document expressed international teacher bodies' approval of the CTPA talks with the ANC, COSATU and the UDF, and its adoption of the Freedom Charter.²⁰² Such actions were considered anathema to the white organisations, particularly those representing Afrikaans-speaking constituencies.

Contradictions therefore existed between the established bodies, and also within individual organisations. UTASA's public stand on teacher unity, an attempt to gain legitimacy within the liberation movement, was not a fair reflection of its internal ideology. *The Weekly Mail* of 6 November 1987, for example, quoted van den Heever as saying: "... we want to move towards a national union and know COSATU would like this too, but we realise each organisation has built up its bases [membership and resources] and would be wary of risking them unnecessarily."²⁰³ This bears out the contradictions within the CTPA.

COSATU, while undoubtedly aware of such contradictions, continued to attempt to gain support from the black established organisations. The Harare meeting in April 1988 widened the rift between and within the established bodies. The second meeting of the established associations, scheduled for April 1988,²⁰⁴ failed; the CTPA sent a telegram explaining that they were now committed to the Harare initiative which excluded, for the time being, the established white organisations.²⁰⁵

The Harare Conference

The Harare conference facilitated unity across the previously intractable emergent-established divide. The conference organisers, including COSATU and the ANC, took advantage of a historical moment which allowed room for compromise amongst teacher organisations. The discourse of a new "professionalism" had been growing for a number of years, and sociopolitical forces had been challenging the established organisations to distance themselves from their traditional "professionalism". This process was just beginning, and reflected more a public desire for credibility than fundamental shifts in ideology. But the teacher unity initiative begun in Harare took advantage of that process to assert a powerful influence on teacher politics and its "professional" discourse.

The political context in 1988

In 1988, the more than 250,000 teachers in South Africa taught in fourteen different education departments and were grouped separately into over thirty-two teachers' organisations.²⁰⁶ The task of unification appeared little less than monumental. But there

²⁰² "UTASA and Teacher Unity," 3.

²⁰³ Quoted in *Report on CTPA for NECC*, 8.

²⁰⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Report 1987/1988*, 155-156.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

²⁰⁶ *Teacher Unity News* November-December 1989: 1.

continued to be good reason for certain groups to seek influence over a unified teaching corps, and pressures on teachers to unify remained.

It was a year in which turmoil persisted, within schools and outside of them. In the Western Cape, DET high schools in Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga experienced disturbances throughout the year, beginning with a problematic registration procedure. Altogether the DET excluded 1544 students due to late registration. The schools opened over five weeks late, at which time three schools remained just over half full. PTSAs were not permitted to meet to discuss the issue of registration.²⁰⁷

Western Cape DEC schools also continued to experience unrest. In Athlone, Bonteheuwel and Mitchell's Plain, the army and police threatened schools because of student protests.²⁰⁸ According to a WECTU document, teachers and students at Manenberg Senior Secondary School underwent severe harassment as police detained more than twenty-six students and SRC members and six teachers (five of whom were WECTU members). Two WECTU teachers were barred from the school, and four WECTU members' homes were raided.²⁰⁹

Apart from such "political" unrest, gang violence also continued to threaten school attendance.²¹⁰ For whatever reasons, the *Cape Times* of 20 July 1988 reported that DET and DEC schools were operating with about half their usual numbers of students.²¹¹

While militant, school-based action continued, the liberation struggle continued to move away from the "popular revolt" optimism of 1985. The *apartheid* state would not collapse overnight. "While the state remains confronted by a number of serious weaknesses and threats," wrote Duncan Innes of 1988, "... those who would engage it in battle would do well to look much more closely at the immense power it wields."²¹² Such an examination of state power could only lead to a recognition of the immense importance of political unity in opposition to the state. Innes continued:

The sober reality of South Africa in 1988 is of a country in which the popular organisations operate under massive restrictions, black trade unions find themselves under increasing threat, treason trials and hangings proliferate, while some black townships are still under military occupation and other black areas are dominated by lawless vigilantes.²¹³

In light of all this, teacher unity could be seen as one aspect of the liberation movement's much broader solution to the problem of state power. Moll, while claiming that "... teacher unity is taking place *within* the mass democratic movement for the first time ever", stated: "Clearly, the programme of the broad liberation movement to build national unity

²⁰⁷ Philcox, 29; L.G. Daba, letter, *Cape Times*, 2 September 1988.

²⁰⁸ Philcox, 30.

²⁰⁹ "Memorandum: Manenberg Senior Secondary School," WECTU, photocopy, 1-2.

²¹⁰ Philcox, 30.

²¹¹ Quoted in Philcox, 30.

²¹² Innes, 14.

²¹³ Innes, 15-16.

has direct implications for teacher organisations.²¹⁴ As the organisations and their struggles matured, the necessity of fighting on a unified front became clearer.

The *Teacher Unity News*, published by NEUSA, TASA and the Society of Natal Teachers (the UTASA Natal affiliate) in late 1989, spoke of the teachers' plight in 1988 in exactly these terms:

The political interference which teachers presently face is directly related to the lack of cohesion in teacher organisation. Our inability to confront issues jointly, and to establish national positions, has eroded the possibility of teachers having an impact on their working conditions and on education. Salary deals are arranged via highly undemocratic practices, and our responses are diluted by a multiplicity of positions. Syllabi and calendars are handed down from above, and we are not equipped to respond as a single body of educators most concerned with the matter.²¹⁵

Such a reality constituted a perennial pressure on teachers: they knew that unity would enhance their power, but that had to be set off against the knowledge that they were part of a wider world of politics in which other groups wanted to harness that power for their own agendas. The Harare conference was the culmination of this. As one participant stated: "It was all about power. Who was going to get us?"²¹⁶

There were also other pressures drawing teacher organisations to Harare. Firstly, the organisers (see below) comprised most of the heavy-weight list of South African liberation organisations. One participant claimed: "The ANC said, 'Get here.'"²¹⁷ As the teachers wanted to maintain credibility, to be accepted by these liberatory groups, so too did these groups seek to manoeuvre teachers into re-defining their "professionalism". Dullah Omar, a prominent MDM lawyer, illustrated this at the June 1988 CTPA conference. "Let us not become part of an elitist class," he said. "After all, teachers though you are today, the vast majority of you are the sons and daughters of oppressed workers." Jay Naidoo gave a similar message to the conference.²¹⁸ COSATU, as we have seen, had persuaded the emergent groups to include the "moderates", and had met separately with UTASA.

Secondly, there was a good deal of pressure for unification on South African teachers' organisations from international teacher organisations. WCOTP was withholding recognition -- and threatening to stop supporting ATASA if it did not participate in unity efforts -- for a unified body. WCOTP demonstrated its interest by donating R195,000 to the post-Harare teacher unity initiative.²¹⁹ As a participant said, "International money is waiting for a single union."²²⁰

²¹⁴ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 63.

²¹⁵ *Teacher Unity News* November-December 1989, 1.

²¹⁶ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²¹⁷ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990.

²¹⁸ *Education for a Democratic South Africa*, 31, 55.

²¹⁹ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

²²⁰ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990.

The Organisers

One participant explained that WCOTP convened the meeting at Harare, and invited the ANC.²²¹ Another said, "I felt the whole thing was an ANC thing", after initially believed that the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association had convened it.²²² The CTPA, even, proudly took credit for the Harare initiative, pointing to their meetings with the ANC, WCOTP and COSATU.²²³ As one teacher stated: "No one knew who was behind it."²²⁴ Ian Moll, active in NEUSA teacher politics, gave final credit to WCOTP and the All Africa Teachers' Organisation (AATO) for making the "decisive intervention". "Both these organisations were concerned that teacher unity in South Africa was not being realised," he wrote.²²⁵

When the South African delegates arrived, they discovered that the ANC, COSATU and WCOTP would be participating. Other participants included SACTU, AATO, the Zimbabwean Teachers' Association (ZIMTA), the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, the Kenyan National Union of Teachers,²²⁶ and the NECC. Attempting to explain the involvement of non-South African groups, Ambrose Adondgo of the AATO said at the first session: "The anti-apartheid campaign is no longer a concern of the oppressed South African people alone. It is a concern of any democratic and progressive human being who believes in the upholding of the right to democratic freedom and human dignity...."²²⁷ Merry Dewar, writing in *Sash*, pointed out that there were "no representatives of the Pan Africanist or Black Consciousness traditions".²²⁸ This was not surprising, since the contemporary teacher unity efforts were firmly rooted in the MDM, and COSATU was playing a decisive role. As Dullah Omar said at the June 1988 CTPA conference, "We do not wish to interfere in the discussions which have been initiated towards establishing teacher unity *within the context of the national democratic struggle*."²²⁹ Certainly there were many "ANC people" in Harare, during both the social and the formal settings.²³⁰

COSATU and SACTU chaired the conference, presaging the essential facilitating role COSATU would play during the following two-and-a-half years while the initiative begun in Harare took the form of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU). At this point, then, it will be useful to examine why COSATU had begun playing such an active role.

Trade unions in South Africa, as they emerged and grew from the 1970s, fell essentially into two groups: those that believed unions should focus only on worker-

²²¹ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

²²² Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²²³ van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 5. Sonn claimed his meeting with Thabo Mbeki resulted in the Harare conference, and van den Heever supported this claim. *Argus*, 12 July 1988; *Cape Times*, 24 June 1988.

²²⁴ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²²⁵ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 69.

²²⁶ "Harare: Reportback," *WECTU newsletter* 12 (June 1988): 1; *Teacher Unity News*, 1.

²²⁷ Quoted in "Harare: Reportback," 2.

²²⁸ Dewar, 18.

²²⁹ *Education for a Democratic South Africa*, 55. Emphasis added.

²³⁰ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

related, "shop-floor" issues; and those "political" or "social movement" unions which believed that unions should also engage in wider struggles extending out of the factory. According to Lambert and Webster, "The launch of COSATU in December 1985 represented a broad shift of key trade unions towards a more direct concern with non-factory issues."²³¹ Still, COSATU embodied these two trends. This division would gradually be overcome during the next three years.

COSATU believed in the principle of "people's power", and during 1986 began attempting to initiate an alliance between different classes and different spheres of the South African struggle. No one section of "the struggle" could win in isolation.²³² Massive state repression during 1987 and 1988 helped to lessen COSATU's internal division regarding these issues. In particular, the banning of the UDF left a gap for COSATU to partially fill. COSATU therefore adopted the Freedom Charter in 1987 to enhance a sense of "common political direction" with other groups within the national liberation struggle. During 1987 and 1988, according to Fine and Webster, "A strategic compromise was forged on how transition to a post-apartheid society could take place through a broad anti-apartheid alliance based on grassroots organisation."²³³ Teachers clearly constituted an important sphere of the struggle, and an important partner in an anti-*apartheid* alliance across class and sector divides. Thus Jay Naidoo could speak to the CTPA of the importance of teacher unity in June 1988:

We have reached a critical point in our history in which teachers' unity is of paramount importance in our struggle for an education in a social system that meets the needs of our people.... To this end, COSATU and the whole democratic movement will do all in its power to facilitate the establishment of such machinery. Let history judge those who have not contributed towards forging of the unity that is so desperately needed.²³⁴

The strategy COSATU adopted to justify its involvement and to persuade teachers of their common cause focussed on defining the class location of teachers. In Britain, there were close connections between teachers, their organisations and the Labour Party and unions.²³⁵ COSATU sought similar connections, even pushing for the teachers' union, once created, to affiliate to COSATU. This was partly because teachers were seen as connected to the working class, but also because in COSATU's vision all South African workers were intended to control education. In 1986, COSATU wrote that "the division between mental and manual labour" had to be broken down to end elitism. Workers needed to "... play an important part in the planning of education in society and in controlling that

²³¹ Lambert and Webster, 21, 31.

²³² Lambert and Webster, 32.

²³³ Fine and Webster, 265, 272.

²³⁴ Jay Naidoo, "Teacher Unity in the Context of the Broader Community Struggle," in CTPA, *Education for a Democratic South Africa*, 33.

²³⁵ Ozga and Lawn, 86-87.

education".²³⁶ Close cooperation with an organised national teacher union which recognised its working class origins would be a crucial way to orchestrate such control.

The South African teacher organisation participants

A South African teacher who participated in the Harare talks stated plainly: "People were surprised when they saw who was there."²³⁷ This was certainly not true for all the participants, but the sentiment was widespread: teachers with deeply-rooted antagonisms were surprisingly being asked to sit down and talk about unifying. At Jan Smuts Airport, the representatives from the established unions stood to one side, while those from the emergent bodies stood to the other. All were waiting for the same plane.²³⁸

ATASA, UTASA and TASA had been invited from the established camp, while all of the established white groups -- all affiliates of the TFC -- had been excluded. Of the emergent unions, WECTU, DETU, EDASA, NEUSA, PTU and PTL were invited.²³⁹ The TLSA, representing a Unity Movement legacy amongst some teachers, was conspicuously absent. All the groups in attendance felt the pressures to participate described above, but this did not preclude the mutual antagonism between some emergent and some established organisations. An organisation like WECTU had a great deal of trouble engaging in such discussions with organisations it identified as "collaborators". But an index of the changing times, and of the pressures brought to bear, was the fact that all invited bodies did attend, warily or not.

Five days of the conference: 4 to 8 April 1988

Discussion at the conference illustrated two important issues. First, significant differences between emergent and established teacher organisations remained. Second, despite these differences, a new spirit of unity was growing as the established groups shifted towards newer, "emergent" perspectives regarding "professionalism", class and race, and the emergent groups became more accepting of the conventionally "professional" associations.

The conference consisted of open and closed sessions, the latter being the exclusive privilege of South African representatives. The Zimbabwean Secretary of Education formally opened the conference, and the following open sessions included a message of solidarity from the AATO, and papers on the necessity of teachers' organisations, of teacher unity, and on Zimbabwe's experience. SACTU's general secretary delivered the keynote address, and the general secretary of ZIMTA also spoke. After the all-important closed sessions, the conference ended with an evening of singing, and a woman from Natal

²³⁶ COSATU, "June 16 and the Working Class," *LACOM NEWS* 2 (November 1986), in *People's Education*, 138.

²³⁷ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990.

²³⁸ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²³⁹ "Harare: Reportback," 1.

spoke about life in a political context which included Inkatha. The Zimbabwean Minister of Labour formally ended the conference.²⁴⁰

Throughout the conference, the tensions between the emergent and established organisations remained apparent. "It was a very problematic five days," said one participant, essentially because of the historical divides between the organisations. "There were times when it seemed those talks would fall apart, like there was no common ground." The conference room was organised in a big square, and at first all the established organisation representatives sat on one side, with their emergent colleagues on the other and the ANC in the middle. There were various tensions. "A guy from ATASA called me 'Madame'," said an EDASA participant. "They were still struggling with 'comrade'." More seriously, the established organisations treated the EDASA representatives as if they were ignorant, and TASA's Pat Samuels asked the gathering what, in fact, EDASA was doing there.²⁴¹ The more vehement differences between the organisations operating in DEC (HoR) schools also emerged. According to one representative from another organisation, "There were big problems with the CTPA and WECTU. Yousuf [Gabru] and Franklin [Sonn] attacked each other like tigers."²⁴²

Contentious issues were raised to see whether common ground could be reached. According to the WECTU reportback in its newsletter, the conference dealt with several major issues which emphasised the divisions between established and emergent groups, and their differing conceptions of teachers' locations within society. The divisive issue of structure was debated: should the organisation be a professional association or a trade union? This was held over for discussions within constituencies.²⁴³ The representatives also discussed ideology. "The issue," stated WECTU, "remained unresolved. It was agreed that in the quest for unity no preconditions should be laid down." Further, non-collaboration was discussed without resolution.

While these issues -- class location, political affiliation and cooperation with the state -- remained at the heart of differences within teacher politics, and were not overcome at Harare, the conference marked a certain shifting of ground. Participants agreed on the need for a single, national teacher union.²⁴⁴ In Harare, a "worker" was defined as any person receiving a wage.²⁴⁵ Further, the conference appointed COSATU to facilitate the follow-up unity process within South Africa by convening the next meeting.

In the end, the fifteen points of the Harare Accord on Teacher Unity (see Appendix C) were drawn up to guide organisations through the difficult discussions that lay ahead.²⁴⁶ This remarkable document, eventually agreed to by all the organisations which participated

²⁴⁰ "Harare: Reportback," 1-2; interview with informant C, 18 October 1990; interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²⁴¹ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²⁴² Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

²⁴³ "Harare: Reportback," 2.

²⁴⁴ "Harare: Reportback," 2-3.

²⁴⁵ Dewar, 18.

²⁴⁶ "Harare: Reportback," 2-3; Dewar, 18.

at Harare, illustrated significant changes in the realm of teacher politics and in the accepted notion of teacher "professionalism". According to the Harare Accord, the proposed, unified teacher organisation would be "part of the national mass democratic movement", and would "protect and promote the rights of teachers as workers and professionals". The unified organisation "would abide by the principle and practice of non-collaboration with all structures of the Apartheid system". Participating organisations also committed themselves to the goals of People's Education, thus denying the sacrosanctity of state education and the teacher's role within it.

The Harare Accord, illustrating a new spirit of compromise around changing conceptions of "professionalism" despite its purposeful ambiguities, marked a victory for both the conference organisers and the participants. In 1990, Randall van den Heever, who attended the talks, would write: "The Harare talks between the democratic teachers' organisations in South Africa were frank and to the point. The cause of existing differences was direct and to the point. [sic] But through it all the importance of a formula for unity was the one thing which was recognised as being of the greatest importance."²⁴⁷ To this end, the conference, according to a participant, "... was incredibly well-planned, to break down all barriers". Those who had sat on opposite sides of the square began mixing: "The whole dynamics changed." "At the end," this participant continued, "there was an amazing comraderie, an amazing high."²⁴⁸

This "high" came after days of intense tensions and discussions, after which the Harare conference was deemed a great success. "When the Harare Declaration of Teacher Unity was ... finally sealed," wrote van den Heever, "... all delegates rose to their feet spontaneously and emotionally applauded the remarkable breakthrough which had been achieved."²⁴⁹ Another participant, interviewed in 1990, said: "You'd never say that two years later that we wouldn't have a union. I think we thought everybody would get home and sign up."²⁵⁰

Conclusion

Everyone, of course, did not go home and sign up. "Back in South Africa we got into old familiar patterns," said one teacher.²⁵¹ But back in South Africa the long-awaited teacher unity was on the short-term agenda. Harare provided a starting point, a place where disagreements could be aired and discussed, where some pressure could be applied. Harare provided fifteen guidelines, illustrating the growing willingness of some organisations to compromise around contentious issues within teacher politics. And Harare provided a facilitator in the form of COSATU.

²⁴⁷ van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 6.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²⁴⁹ van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 6.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

²⁵¹ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

In exactly two-and-a-half years, SADTU would be launched. The road between Harare and SADTU would be difficult. The Harare Conference got the organisations travelling, so it is to their journey we now turn in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

**FROM HARARE TO SADTU:
TWO YEARS OF TRANSITION, 1988-1990**

The end of the 1980s marked the high point of a new "professional" discourse within teacher politics that decade. The liberation movement, and increased political militancy in many spheres, profoundly influenced both the discourse and activities of teacher organisations. The process of teacher unification moved to the heart of teacher politics, and teacher groups began compromising around new ideas about behaviour, identity and location. Not only did traditional "professionalism" remain largely absent from public discourse, as it had since 1985, but established organisations became more fully committed to newer "professional" ideas. The national teacher unity initiative born in Harare occurred within a rubric defined by the emergent organisations and their political allies within the MDM. Evolving ideas of "professionalism" shaped the unity process; the unity process defined acceptable discourse in teacher politics. In Harare, for the first time, emphasis lay on communalities; divisions were underplayed under the watchful eyes of COSATU, the ANC and WCOTP. Back in South Africa, with its complex nexus of race and class, to what extent could a unity of ideas and behaviour be achieved?

Of course, the movement towards a unity outside the sphere of traditional "professionalism" was marred by the tensions and conflict inherent in teacher politics. And, as events in 1990 and 1991 would show, some established organisations' political posturing within a "progressive" unity process proved temporary. By 1990, several of the participants in the national teacher unity talks opted to revert to an overt acceptance of the status quo, and to maintain the barriers of race and class, of government-proscribed ethnicity and "professionalism". Real momentum away from traditional "professionalism" was built up during 1988-1990, however, and real changes occurred within teacher politics.

This chapter will move from Harare back into South Africa, where the central tensions within the realm of teachers will be explored over the two years leading to the launch of SADTU in October 1990. Many pressures operated on teachers and on schooling to alter teachers' attitudes towards their work. More teachers than in the preceding years utilized the available space to resist imposed ideas of "professionalism", and to work against historical race and class divides. At the same time, the power of conservative teachers, the divided traditions of organisations and the power of the state contradicted the pressures for change.

This chapter, then, will begin with an explication of the various forces working to both change teachers' ideologies and to entrench them. After thus situating teacher organisations within the political context of 1988-1990, the implications for Western Cape teacher organisations will be examined. Both tensions and growing cooperation between

organisations will be dealt with, before turning to a specific analysis of the process of teacher unity. After explicating the historical divisions which surfaced during teacher unity talks, specific tensions within the participating established teacher groups will be discussed. Finally, Western Cape strategies for unity, and their implications for a changing "professional" discourse, will be examined, before the chapter concludes with the launch of SADTU.

SADTU represented a monumental step forward in the struggle for a non-racial teacher organisation and for a re-conceptualisation of teachers' locations in South Africa. But it emerged in reality a far cry from Harare's dream.

Teachers' Evolving Attitudes about "Professionalism"

The Harare conference occurred at a time when many teachers and their organisations were experiencing a shift in self-perceptions. This may in part have been an attempt to resolve what Neville Alexander terms the post-1976 "collective identity crisis" of teachers in black schools.¹ In some senses, organisations simply re-defined their rhetorical image for the sake of credibility and convenience. The CTPA, for example, emerged from the muddy waters of class location by referring to itself as a "professional association with trade union functions". These were times of ambiguity for some teacher organisations under pressure to change.

Some teachers, however, experienced a changing attitude towards their work and their place within their "communities" which illustrated a more profound redefining of place in the race/class/professional nexus. During the late 1980s, teachers were asserting themselves; teachers took greater advantage of a space which is always open to them but which is only utilized when the contradictory balance of forces -- those which seek to discipline and control teachers as docile agents in the reproduction of the dominant ideology, and those which allow and expect teachers to resist or rebel against such docility² -- weighs more heavily on the side of resistance. Teachers also moved away from simply supporting resistance action as part of national liberation initiatives, or even student calls, and began to protest around their own conditions of work, such as worsening school conditions and the presence of inspectors. A wave of teacher militancy swept across the country at the end of the eighties, articulated primarily in terms of unprecedented strike action.

The Harare conference took place during this time of teachers' changing attitudes towards their work. The teacher unity initiative was therefore shaped in part by growing beliefs that the "profession" was not sacrosanct, that schooling was indeed political and was therefore subject to change, that educational "authorities" could be challenged, and that teachers were tied to their communities in opposition to race and class oppression. Many teachers appeared to be gaining a greater sense of their own power to affect change in their

¹ Neville Alexander, "Educational strategies for a new South Africa," in eds. Millar, *et al*, 280.

² See the discussion of Carnoy and Levin in Chapter One.

working environment, thus moving more fully into line with union-worker ideology. Such changing attitudes caused changes in teachers' self-perceptions as regards "professionalism" and class location, and allowed SADTU to launch as a militant trade union.

*Political Influences on
Teacher Politics, 1988-1990*

A variety of forces in South Africa worked to alter teachers' perceptions of their role and locations during 1988-1990. As in the preceding years of the decade, elements of the liberation movement impacted both teachers and their places of work. Student pressures, and heightened community militancy during the Defiance Campaign of 1989, continued to alter the discourse within teacher politics away from acceptance of traditional "professionalism".

Students, youth and the atmosphere within schools

During the end of the 1980s, schools remained in a seemingly perpetual state of turmoil. Historically, as previous chapters have shown, students demanded that teachers reassess their behaviours and complacent participation in a system promoting *apartheid* ideologies. Because of continued student protest, and insensitive state responses, the entire structure of schooling continued to deteriorate. Physical dilapidation, recurrent boycotts and perennially lowering morale continued to plague the actual "sites of struggle".³ Schools were a pressure point in a social system which both alienated and marginalised black youth. In part, the pressure point was a place where antagonisms between teachers and students became entrenched. As sociologist Mamphela Ramphele wrote in 1992:

Once children were thrust 'onto the frontline', it became difficult to sustain traditional social relations between adults and children, and this had serious implications for family life. Children became used to power and control, and refused to yield to the authority of adults whom they despised -- their parents and teachers. Conflict became inevitable.⁴

Steve Mokwena stated more dramatically in the same year: "The youth have been socialised into a political culture of defiance in which all forms of authority have been eroded."⁵ As the attitudes of students shifted, so then did the popular conceptions of schools; the connotations of "school" as a symbol changed.

As a result, teachers' ideas about their place within schools also changed. For some this meant a complete acceptance of powerlessness in a political system now cast in the harsh light of opposition; for others it meant a renewed militancy to engender a spirit of

³ For an interesting insight into the situation in Soweto schools in 1989, see Thandeka Gqubule, "Inside Our Chaotic Schools," *Weekly Mail*, 2-8 June 1989.

⁴ Mamphela Ramphele, "Social Disintegration in the Black Community: Implications for Social Transformation," in eds. David Everatt and Elinor Sisulu, *Black Youth in Crisis: Facing the Future* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1992) 17.

⁵ Steve Mokwena, "Living on the Wrong Side of the Law: Marginalisation, Youth and Violence," in eds. Everatt and Sisulu, 49.

change, to better the gross and seemingly unalterable situation of decay and stagnation. In general, though, the continuing disaffection of students sustained pressure on teachers to develop and maintain an awareness of their structural functions within schools.

Popular conceptions of schools, and thus teachers' self-perceptions within them, shifted partly in response to forces at play in the broader society. In a recent work on black politics in the 1980s, Tom Lodge asserts that two main factors prompted the upsurge of political resistance in that decade: the severe recession, and the government's spate of reform measures. According to Lodge, "The contradictions and tensions flowing from the interaction of these two forces helped to generate the black rebellion of the 1980s."⁶ The state's attempts at reform, and the implications for teachers, will be discussed below. Here it will suffice to say that the state added depth to its usual policy of cooption by promising salary parity across departments, for example, and by beginning to elevate a few black educators to high-ranking administrative posts. The state, too, began coopting the resistance notion of "community control".

Lodge's second key factor fueling resistance politics in the eighties, the recession, has been discussed in previous chapters. By the end of the decade, the slowed economic growth, continuing inflation and decreasing investment, among other factors -- especially the international "credit squeeze" -- had taken an unpleasant societal toll. In particular, for schools, endemic unemployment pinpointed continued pressure on institutions which increasingly became pools of discontented, structurally unemployable youth. The Development Bank of South Africa stated in 1991 that over the preceding five years only 8.4 percent of nearly 400,000 people entering the job market had found work. Over the decade, as unemployment rose, the number of available jobs decreased.⁷ What promises could schools make to its potential graduates, especially as the actual matriculation results remained low?⁸

Colin Bundy argues that this massive unemployment problem, among the various other factors comprising the economic crisis in the eighties, was one of three structural factors which worked to alienate and marginalise black youth. Such alienation contributed greatly to the deterioration of schools. Bundy's second factor was demographic -- the expanding, youthful population would continue to put pressure on educational resources and, therefore, "... schools will continue to be laboratories and strongholds of protest" -- and the third was urbanisation, which leads to increased demands on available resources, along with violence and crime.⁹ Such socioeconomic pressures applied to black youth in

⁶ Lodge, 30.

⁷ Colin Bundy, "Introduction," in eds. Everatt and Sisulu, 2-5.

⁸ According to the SAIRR *Race Relations Surveys*, in 1988 the percentage pass-rate was 57.9% for African students, 66.1% for Coloured students and 95.1% for Indian students. In 1990 the comparable figures were 37% for Africans, 79% for Coloured school-leavers and 95% for Indians. Ken Hartshorne, however, makes the very interesting point that the calculation of results is shrouded in secrecy, which allows room for "the manipulation of results". Also, he affirms, the JMB has not been able to ensure that similar standards are kept across departments, which possibly led to boosted African results in the years 1986-1988. Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 83-84.

⁹ Bundy, "Introduction," 2-5.

South Africa necessarily changed teachers' place of work, since one institution black youth are being alienated from was school.

As the end of the decade approached, the by-now perpetual crisis in schools continued a fundamental alteration of relationships within schools: relations between teachers, students and administrative personnel; and relations between communities, schools and education departments. As these relationships within schools changed, so did teachers' attitudes to their work. Teachers were forced by students to reassess their "professional" position; students did this passively through the process of alienation and marginalisation described above, which put pressure on schools, and also by continuing to protest. On 9 June 1988, for example, seven out of ten African high schools in the peninsula had to suspend teaching because of student participation in a national protest.¹⁰ Later, from 25 to 27 July 1988 up to 120,000 students from ninety schools in the Western Cape participated in a protest action organised, in part, by WECSCO. According to activist Graeme Bloch, this protest action "... brought to a head student grievances over harassment of student and teacher organisations; suspensions of teachers; student detentions; the blue-card system to check students as they entered school grounds in DET schools, following struggles around the non-registration of students; and the February restrictions on organisations including the NECC."¹¹ (See Chapter Five.)

A further example of continued student militancy occurred in January 1989, after the DET announced that the 20,000 or so students who had failed their matriculation examinations would not be re-admitted to DET secondary schools. The SAIRR *Survey of Race Relations* for that year reported that students in Soweto affected by this policy "set cars alight and assaulted a number of teachers",¹² a clear indication of continued student pressure on educators. In June and August 1989 significant "flare-ups" occurred in Western Cape schools, with boycotts at Coloured and African township schools, detentions, security force occupations and protest action. *South* reported a "Schools Siege" and "war in our schools".¹³ When, in 1990, the DET again adopted a policy of excluding students who had failed, along with rules which allowed schools to expel unwanted students, young people in schools again protested. In February 1990 protest rallies and marches continued to disrupt schools.¹⁴ By March, according to Piet Marais, the Deputy Minister of Education and Development Aid, more than 72,000 DET students per day, on average, were involved in stayaways around the country.¹⁵

¹⁰ *Cape Times*, 9 June 1988.

¹¹ Bloch, 120.

¹² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 831.

¹³ *South*, 17-23 August 1989 and 21-27 September 1989; *Cape Times*, 9 August 1989; *New Nation*, 2-8 June 1989.

¹⁴ *South*, 8-14 February 1990.

¹⁵ *Cape Times*, 9 March 1990.

Defiance

Apart from school-related, student protest action, and the broader societal malaise being entrenched among black youth, teachers were influenced by broader political shifts. Lodge asserts that:

In contrast to the mid-1980s, when the insurrectionary movement was being pulled onto uncharted courses by cadres of youth in the streets of townships, the popular protest in the late 1980s was choreographed and coordinated and seemed much more under the command of its leaders.¹⁶

Growing teacher militancy was thus part of a broader shift in the nature of resistance politics by the end of the decade. Teachers were, in a sense, "leaders". As the decade moved to a close, an upsurge of public protest focussed around the 1989 Defiance Campaign. Teachers, as others, felt the massive support of a truly popular protest, and were emboldened. This is not to imply that the state did not remain repressive, for, as will be seen below, retaliatory measures remained intense. In fact, two analysts have claimed that the regime's repressive measures led, by 1989, to a "vast reduction" of school-based struggles, and had changed the nature of the struggle for People's Education.¹⁷ But teachers participated in sweeping defiance and, indeed, held high expectations. By 1990, State President F.W. de Klerk signalled important shifts in state policy by unbanning the ANC and releasing political prisoners, such as Nelson Mandela, acts which signalled victories for the liberation movement. At the end of the decade, the situation was not dictated by state repression and the quelling of popular protest. The UDF and other elements of the liberation movement organised the 1989 Defiance Campaign; there were hunger strikes, which focussed international attention on the regime; and organisations "unbanned" themselves. The Defiance Campaign, according to Randall van den Heever, challenged teachers to participate in protest actions to prove their "sincerity and commitment".¹⁸ In the late 1980s, claimed Jeremy Baskin, an historian of COSATU, "People lost their fear."¹⁹ Teachers at the end of the decade, as in 1985, saw scope within this broad resistance to assert themselves. Their vision of both the possible and acceptable was changing.

A further factor in these changes was the changing composition of the ranks of teachers, who were younger and better qualified than their predecessors. Primary school teachers working in the African department were younger. In 1972, teachers aged thirty-to-thirty-nine comprised 26.4% of the total, while in 1988 this percentage had increased to 38.2%. The number of teachers aged twenty-nine and younger remained relatively stable (dropping slightly from 44.4% to 42.9%), while the number of those aged forty and over

¹⁶ Lodge, 114.

¹⁷ Wolpe and Unterhalter, 2.

¹⁸ Randall van den Heever, "The Role of the Teacher in the 'Struggle,'" in *The People Shall Govern* (Kasselsvlei: CTPA People's Education Publication, December 1989) 12.

¹⁹ Personal notes from: Jeremy Baskin, public lectures, UCT Summer School, Cape Town, 18-22 January 1993.

dropped from 29.2% to 18.9%.²⁰ Better qualified teachers also enhanced confidence. In 1990, fifty-three percent of DET teachers were qualified, as opposed to forty-two percent in 1988.²¹

The unions

The importance of COSATU, and the leadership of the black trade union movement, also worked to shift teachers' attitudes about their work. It will be shown below how crucial COSATU's involvement was to the success of the NTUF, but what of the other ways in which the trade unions shaped a newly emerging political discourse? By the mid-1980s, a class-based understanding of the South African struggle strongly motivated activists.²² At the beginning of the decade, according to Lodge, "... the strongest forces for mobilizing black protest and resistance were more often in the factories than in the townships, in trade unions rather than in political organizations."²³ This affected the texture of the decade's protest, as discussed previously. Baskin suggests that as the decade progressed, and COSATU was launched, this large federation represented a movement rather than simply a group of unions. In light of the state's severe repressive actions, such as bannings of organisations like the UDF, Baskin stated that, "COSATU was so political because it could not have been otherwise." COSATU, he asserted, was left "holding the banner of the MDM". Teachers could also look at the various successes of the trade unions in winning gains for their members and be inspired about the efficacy of unionisation.²⁴

With this primacy of trade unions within the context of the liberation struggle, and the kind of anti-management, anti-professional sentiment espoused by the union movement, teachers within the liberation movement could not help but be effected. We have seen how workers within unions attempted to assert control over teachers, in particular by pressuring them to join the ranks of the working class. With COSATU as a major player within the broader community of liberation groups, teacher organisations which considered teachers as workers had a newly-powerful ally; this occurred alongside the continual public retreat of "professional" associations from their traditionally "professional" posturing. In particular, COSATU's central involvement in the Harare conference, and its mandate to facilitate the new unity initiative, gave it strength in relation to teachers as the Harare initiative subsumed all other unity drives. COSATU was assigned its facilitating role because it had national resources and proven experience in merging disparate unions into one federation. It was, in the words of the *Weekly Mail*, "unity-conscious".²⁵ But it was also chosen

²⁰ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 45.

²¹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1991/1992*.

²² Lodge, 29.

²³ Lodge, 28.

²⁴ Personal notes from: Jeremy Baskin, public lectures, UCT Summer School, Cape Town, 18-22 January 1993. He did make the important point that in the Western Cape COSATU was a "relatively weak partner" in the liberation alliance, and the region was thus unlike the rest of the country.

²⁵ Drew Forrest, "Unity-conscious COSATU Comes of Age," *Weekly Mail*, 2-8 August 1991: 15.

because powerful elements of the liberation movement wanted to ensure a "workerist" texture within the teacher movement.

The central conflicts between teachers' groups remained, and re-emerged strongly in 1990. The tactics of the NTUF, however, between 1988 and 1990 illustrated the strength of the working-class ideology within the ranks of organised teachers, and the way in which teachers were being profoundly affected by a shift in their attitude to their work.

The contradictory influences of state repression

The changing attitude of teachers to their work, their place within "communities", and the scope then felt to engage in more militant activities, also came about in response to state action. Ken Hartshorne wrote in 1989, "If we are to understand what has happened to teachers in South Africa it is crucial that the power of the State over them should not be underestimated."²⁶

State power had contradictory effects. The state continued to oppress teachers through both its security apparatus and education departments. The state also began to threaten and impose retrenchments on teachers towards the end of the eighties as cost-cutting measures. These three forms of repression served to weaken the position of "anti-professional" teachers, but they also, as throughout the decade, exacerbated rebellion at a time when rebellious space was opening up. Hartshorne sets up a dichotomy between "two authorities" operating within schools. The state is one authority, utilizing repressive measures. At the same time, parents, students and teachers hold a "moral authority". Hartshorne believes that these distinct authorities reached a stalemate at the end of the decade.²⁷ While a useful construct for understanding the contradictory nature of teachers' positions, such a dichotomy should not exclude the unintended consequences of repression. Repression can inflame passion, or create a moral dilemma which demands response.

The first form of state repression which both retarded and enhanced the teachers' movement during the period under study involved the state's security forces. The security forces banned a meeting organised by the CTPA in Bellville South on 24 November 1988.²⁸ In late December 1988, thirty-two liberation organisations were banned or restricted. When, on 29 December 1988, Law and Order Minister Vlok announced the restrictions placed on WECTU, DETU, WECSO and the National Detainees Forum, it was clear that the more radical teacher organisations would be unable to continue with their activities. Offering insight into the security forces' view of the more radical teachers' unions Vlok is reported to have said that DETU and WECTU were "... politicising education and discrediting the education system. Both are involved in the broad revolutionary onslaught against South Africa, which could escalate into strikes, boycotts, terror and unrest

²⁶ Ken Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 21.

²⁷ Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 15.

²⁸ *Cape Times*, 25 November 1988.

incidents."²⁹ The following February, police arrested seven executive members of WECTU and their office worker while investigating the possibility of contravention of the December 1988 restrictions.³⁰ Andile Jonas, the chairperson of DETU, was detained on 12 May of the same year.³¹

The second form of state repression that affected teachers had its source in the education departments. The departments continued to threaten teachers. A newspaper report illustrated the cooperation between DEC inspectors and the police at a time of school unrest.³² Nasson asserted at the end of the decade that "so-called radicals" were excluded from teaching posts.³³

The departments used other means to intimidate teachers. In November 1988 *South* claimed that "scores" of teachers had suffered because the education departments had refused to renew their appointments, had denied them promotions, had denied them study leave and had demoted them because of involvement in progressive organisations or having heeded a stay-away call.³⁴ In December 1988, the department, principals or school committees refused to renew the posts of temporary teachers from at least four Cape schools under the DEC (HoR). Most of those affected were members of WECTU. Also in December, Yousuf Gabru received a letter from the department explicitly denying his application for work at a training college and stating that he would not be accepted for any post within the department.³⁵ In November 1988, a DETU executive member, Miss Naomi Lloyd, had been informed that her appointment would not be renewed for the following year, ostensibly because she did not hold a "professional" qualification.³⁶

TASA's leadership even accused its HoD administration of downgrading the status of schools to victimize teachers who had openly opposed the tri-cameral parliament. TASA claimed that Rylands Senior Secondary School had been downgraded to prevent the promotion of its headmaster, Mr. I. Waja. Bellmore Primary, also in the Cape, was downgraded, but restored to its initial category in an out of court settlement.³⁷ The departmental repression continued into 1990 when, for example, participants in the 6 September 1989 stay-away who had not filled in "green forms" -- explaining their absences from schools -- were reportedly to face, *inter alia*, denial of promotions and a curtailment of leave benefits.³⁸

The departments further alienated themselves from teachers in other ways. Franklin Sonn claimed in a June 1989 speech that the party-political interference with teachers continued in the DEC (HoR), and that the CTPA was alone in combatting the Labour

²⁹ *Cape Times*, 30 December 1988; *Argus*, 30 December 1988.

³⁰ *Cape Times*, 25 February 1989.

³¹ *Argus*, 12 May 1989.

³² *Cape Times*, 20 and 25 April 1988.

³³ Nasson, "Modernization as Legitimation," 173.

³⁴ *South*, 17 November 1988.

³⁵ *Plainsman*, 14 December 1988.

³⁶ *Argus*, 18 November 1988.

³⁷ *Argus*, 2 September 1988.

³⁸ *South*, 1 March 1990.

Party's attempts to render teachers an "outgrowth".³⁹ In March 1989, Dr. G. Nair, the Chief Director of the DEC (HoD) was suspended for irregularities regarding, *inter alia*, the appointments of teachers. The Minister of Education and Culture for the same department was found by an external commission of enquiry (the James Commission), to have irregularly seen to his son's promotion.⁴⁰ An athletics coaching programme within HoD schools begun at the start of 1989 was also attacked by sixteen organisations for making use of SADF personnel and bases.⁴¹

State repression, as carried out by the security forces and the education departments, greatly impacted teacher politics. It repressed the activities of "anti-professional" teachers and their organisations, engendered fear within the teachers' realm and, at the same time, contradictorily bred discontent amongst some teachers. Such discontent enhanced the malaise being articulated into rebellion.

The contradictory influences of retrenchment

During 1988-1990, the state began to threaten retrenchment in each of its education departments. This, like the repression described above, had contradictory effects on teacher politics. Retrenchment created fear, and was possibly part of a hidden state strategy of creating a docile teaching force. At the same time, retrenchment divested teachers of historical security, and added to the erosion of traditional "professionalism" within the teachers' realm. If "professionalism" was meant to ensure some form of security, why, suddenly, were teachers losing their jobs, or finding it impossible to get jobs? It is this wave of retrenchments, at a time of increased enrollments at teacher-training institutions, to which we now turn.

Teachers in all three black departments were affected. In 1987, the DET dismissed 4854 teachers -- including 1585 permanent teachers -- accounting for almost ten percent of its total.⁴² In 1988, according to the SAIRR, newly qualified teachers around Johannesburg could not find employment. There was "talk" of teachers losing temporary posts, along with a freezing of posts. In March of that year, Gerrit Viljoen, the Minister of Education and Development Aid, said in Parliament that 465 primary school teachers and 440 secondary school teachers with professional qualifications had been unable to find jobs at schools in that year. He went on to state that "no vacancies exist" in DET schools.⁴³ At the end of that year, eleven DET teachers were retrenched to make room for recently-qualified teachers who were contractually bound to the DET through their bursary schemes.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Argus*, 20 June 1989.

⁴⁰ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 781-782.

⁴¹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 813.

⁴² Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 26.

⁴³ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 273-276. The *Argus*, 14 April 1988, reported that Ken Andrew, MP, PFP Gardens, made this claim.

⁴⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 842.

The situation facing teachers in the DEC (HoR) was also becoming severe. In January 1988, the DEC announced that additional teaching posts were being frozen to offset budget cuts. Allan Hendrickse, the minister of education and culture and chairman of the minister's council in the HoR, said in April that there were 1227 unemployed, qualified Coloured teachers (of which 492 were newly-qualified holders of DEC bursaries).⁴⁵ He went further in August by stating that if the budget was not increased for 1989, 2300 teachers would be dismissed.⁴⁶ In November the threats continued when Hendrickse demanded from the government the full budgetary allocation for Coloured education, or either 2434 teachers would lose their jobs, or thirty-seven high schools or eighty-seven primary schools would be closed.⁴⁷

In January 1989, the *Argus* announced that, "Thousands of teachers at coloured schools could lose their jobs this year in cutbacks and streamlining."⁴⁸ Redundancy of teachers was also threatened by a departmental decree in February that all teachers would have to teach forty-two periods per week.⁴⁹ The unemployment of teachers continued to plague the newly-qualified, and the under-qualified, with accusations levelled at the department in January 1990 by teachers and principals that posts had been frozen to cut costs.⁵⁰ The DEC admitted in February 1990 that 1 000 newly-qualified teachers were unemployed.⁵¹

Teachers at Indian schools under the DEC (HoD) faced a similar crisis. In January 1988, the DEC (HoD) claimed that, in relation to qualified teachers, it was "reaching saturation point". Apparently, only eighty-seven of 287 recent teacher-graduates from the University of Durban-Westville had found work by April. By January 1989, it was claimed by the department, the number of qualified, unemployed Indian teachers could rise to 365.⁵² TASA, and President Pat Samuels, announced their concern about the growing teacher unemployment in January of 1989. According to Samuels, most of the 1500 Indian teachers who qualified over the preceding three or four years were still without posts, or were working as temporary teachers.⁵³

The growing teacher unemployment took place as more and more qualified teachers flooded the job market. Enrollments at teacher-training institutions had been increasing dramatically during the 1980s (except in Indian institutions). Enrollment at African teacher-training institutions rose from 12,908 in 1982 to 32,322 in 1989. The

⁴⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 277-278.

⁴⁶ *Star*, 16 August 1988. The *Athlone News* of 24 August 1988 reported that almost 2500 teachers could be dismissed because of a R38 million teachers' salary shortfall.

⁴⁷ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 244.

⁴⁸ *Argus*, 28 January 1989.

⁴⁹ *Cape Times*, 8 February 1989.

⁵⁰ *South*, 18 January 1990.

⁵¹ *South*, 1-7 March 1990.

⁵² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 277-278.

⁵³ *Argus*, 19 January 1989.

corresponding figures in Coloured institutions were 3525 and 8331.⁵⁴ Many of those students enrolled at teacher-training institutions were contractually bound to their departments, which provided bursaries to be paid back over a number of years of departmental employment. This raises the interesting question, why did departments which were experiencing a surplus of teachers continue to offer bursaries for departmental service? One answer is that the departments were adopting a strategy of decreasing job security in order to assert greater control over teachers. It is a widely-known aspect of labour-market theory: unemployment promotes greater insecurity and a more docile work force. As Carnoy and Levin point out: "If workers are causing problems, the existence of a large number of unemployed and the threat of a 'runaway' shop convince those still holding jobs that they can be replaced quickly."⁵⁵ Was it coincidental that departments began experiencing an over-supply of teachers at a time of increasing teacher rebellion?

Of course the growing insecurity of teaching affected teachers' attitudes to their work. Looking around at crowded classrooms, and looking over at emptying white schools, teachers could not see the sense in departmental policies of exclusion and threatened retrenchment. Fighting the department became a fight for greater job security, a new facet of teachers' struggles.

Redeployment
our critic

Continued state entrenchment of "professionalism"

The state, during the education crises of 1988-1990, exerted repressive force on teachers to uphold traditional "professionalism". "Unprofessional" behaviour was punished, and "unprofessional" teacher organisations suffered a similarly repressive fate. While repressing "unprofessional" teacher politics -- with contradictory effect, as we have seen -- the state continued to engage in the second aspect of its dual-strategy: it continued a strategy of cooption. Hartshorne contends that the state's cooptive tactics involved offering black educators access to limited negotiation, increasing salaries, allowing access to more senior positions, increasing the power of principals and offering more in-service training.⁵⁶ Finance, too, reflected state concerns as education received the largest portion of the 1990 budget allocation, and spending on black education was increased by R510 million.⁵⁷ Behind these increasing "benefits" lurked a hidden agenda.⁵⁸

In May of 1988, Mr. A.B. Fourie, the Director-General of Education and Training for the Cape, wrote a letter to the *Cape Times* outlining his department's attitude to teachers. In the letter he asked whether the more radical teachers, who claimed to be concerned about education, felt themselves to be concerned about, "Their firm belief in ideals which they cannot reconcile with Departmental policies?" If so, "... then one must

⁵⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Surveys*. The figures for African institutions excludes the independent homelands. The corresponding figures for Indian institutions were 2622 and 1235.

⁵⁵ Carnoy and Levin, 181.

⁵⁶ Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 25.

⁵⁷ *Cape Times*, 15 March 1990.

⁵⁸ Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 25.

respect their integrity but ask why they have not either aired their grievances through a recognized professional association to the Minister or, if they felt compelled to do so, resigned."⁵⁹ The departments continued to try to prompt teachers to behave "professionally" within an ideology constructed by the state.

The state, for example, continued to uphold the ethnically-based ideology of own-affairs. Hartshorne claims that the state continued to "constrain" teachers within their separate education departments.⁶⁰ In other words, the state attempted to keep teachers divided into ethnically-defined groups, inhibiting the powerful unity across racial barriers which could challenge the state's education authority. In January 1990, the newly-appointed Minister of Education and Development Aid, Stoffel van der Merwe, is reported to have said that a single education department would not improve the quality of education, and would, in fact, prove "chaotic".⁶¹

State cooption of teachers thus took place within ethnically-defined departments, which continued to attempt to maintain their own standards of "professional" behaviour. The 1988 Education Affairs Act, affecting teachers in white schools, upheld "professionalism" by broadening the terms of teacher misconduct and restricting the political rights of teachers in schools.⁶² In May 1989, the DET found three teachers at Simon Hebe High School guilty of "unprofessional" conduct for refusing to turn their preparation books over to an inspector during a boycott concerning their white principal.⁶³ Two months later, in July, the DEC (HoR) asserted its "professional" authority by issuing a circular outlining the "political and civil rights" of teachers. In terms of these "rights", teachers could not advertise, in printed form, "... support for, or opposition to a political party or relating [sic] to the election of a person as a member of parliament or a provincial council or committee."⁶⁴

Salaries remained a crucial aspect of continued state pacification of the teaching corps. State President P.W. Botha created a lot of unhappiness after a meeting with representatives of the TFC, TASA, UTASA and ATASA, at which he refused to change his hard-line attitude about a pay-freeze for public sector workers. According to the SAIRR, teachers' salaries lagged eleven percent behind those of other public sector employees, and thirty percent behind wages in the private sector. Only two months later, however, F.W. de Klerk, then Minister of National Education, foreshadowed his later political style by offering conciliatory gestures to teachers. He said in April that teachers' salaries were a top government priority, and in June he stated that R420 million would be allocated for adjustments in teachers' wages.⁶⁵ In December 1988, teachers received a seven percent pay

⁵⁹ *Cape Times*, 4 May 1988.

⁶⁰ Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 25.

⁶¹ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 769.

⁶² Hartshorne, "Liberation, Education and the Teacher," 26.

⁶³ *Sunday Times*, 21 May 1989.

⁶⁴ Quoted in the *Argus*, 26 July 1989.

⁶⁵ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 246, 254.

hike. In January 1989, they further reaped the benefits of a fifteen percent increase for all public workers.⁶⁶

Then, on 12 November 1989 Viljoen, as Minister of Constitutional Development and National Education, announced that the disparity between teachers' salaries and those of other public sector workers would be eradicated by March 1990.⁶⁷ A week before the announcement, the *Cape Times* had reported that the TFC had been putting a great deal of pressure on the government around salary issues.⁶⁸ The pay increases in the first quarter of 1990 would affect more than 200,000 teachers "of all race groups", stated the same newspaper.⁶⁹ In due course, on 1 March 1990, teachers received an average increase of twelve percent.⁷⁰ The renewed government emphasis on salaries continued into the following month when an announcement was made that gender disparities in wages would be reduced when 75,600 low-qualified African, Coloured and Indian female teachers received an additional increase.⁷¹ An immediate R184 million was provided by the government for those teachers' salaries, with adjustments being retrospective to 1 April 1990.⁷² In October, the government claimed to have allocated an additional R445 million for the equalization of all female teachers' salaries with those of similarly qualified men.⁷³

An important aside within the context of teachers' salaries is, however, that the DET remained a notoriously bad financial manager, delaying payment of teachers' wages. A 1988/1989 audit of the DET, the SAIRR states in an *Annual Survey*, proved that the DET was not fully controlling its own finances, and that it was seriously delinquent in the payment of some teachers' salaries.⁷⁴ It remains unclear whether this was inefficiency or provocation. One aspect of "concessions" announced by the state in March 1990, aimed at alleviating the education crisis, was a procedure to prevent late salary payments.⁷⁵

A second thrust of the state's persuasive strategy in favour of traditional "professionalism" involved the upgrading of teachers' qualifications and in-service training of teachers. This was essential for any policy aimed at enhancing notions of "professionalism".

The third central element of the state's cooptive measures involved promotion of black educators, and limited "democratic" reforms within black education. In May 1988, Sam de Beer, the Deputy-Minister of Education, said that black educators would be afforded opportunity to shape syllabuses used in black schools; the following day Viljoen spoke of his department's work towards ensuring that syllabuses for African schools were of greater relevance. In November 1988, the DET enhanced the power of parents within

⁶⁶ *Cape Times*, 4 December 1989.

⁶⁷ *Cape Times*, 13 November 1989; *Argus*, 13 November 1989.

⁶⁸ *Cape Times*, 6 November 1989.

⁶⁹ *Cape Times*, 4 December 1989.

⁷⁰ *Argus*, 19 February 1990.

⁷¹ *Cape Times*, 12 April 1990; *Argus*, 12 April 1990.

⁷² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 849.

⁷³ *Cape Times*, 5 October 1990.

⁷⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 781.

⁷⁵ *Cape Times*, 29 March 1990.

school management structures, upgrading existing school committees to the status of management councils after consulting parents and teachers. Parents would have greater influence over education at all levels.⁷⁶ These steps towards the limited democratization of education continued in May 1989 when Viljoen implemented a national council for African education, the National Council for Education and Training. Although only a consultative body, it would comprise twenty-four members: five ministerial appointments; eleven appointments by African teachers' and inspectors' associations and by tertiary institutions; and eight from the new school management councils.⁷⁷

Promotions of "professional" educators took place and by the end of April 1989, four of the DET's eight regional deputy-directors were black; Mr. C. Tlale had become the first African deputy-director at the DET's Pretoria head office in December 1988. In February 1990, the newly appointed chief director of the DET's Natal region, Mr. E. Ndaba, became the highest ranking African civil servant in South Africa.⁷⁸

Entrenched "professionalism" within the realm of teachers

Along with these state attempts to promote the political docility of teachers, there were other formidable pressures working against the growing wave of teacher activism, and against the shift in teachers' perceptions of their "professional" work. These pressures strengthened the bid to render teachers docile state agents. The growing insecurity of the teaching profession was one continuing pressure, particularly in light of the new policy of post-freezing and retrenchments. The large numbers of still-underqualified teachers further lent itself to teacher conservatism, since these teachers were particularly fearful of dismissals. The large number of teachers working in rural areas, outside the mainstream of mass public protest, added another dimension to teacher conservatism. Also, education bureaucracies stifled change in that entrenched, ethnically-defined managers, such as principals and inspectors, sought to maintain their position.

Particularly, too, organisational histories influenced teachers by engendering desire for familiar identities based on style, ideology, assets and ideas. The fragile accord created in Harare met with both support and opposition in South Africa precisely because of the tensions within teachers' positions. Members of the established organisations, the largest teacher groups in the country, remained fundamentally conservative in relation to the popular resistance movement.

It is clear that state pressure, particularly the continuing assertion of a "professional" ideology, helped to perpetuate race and class divisions. The NTUF was, essentially, a product of the growing strength of the movement for greater teacher militancy, a non-racial front and "anti-professional" sentiment. But the opposition to such a movement, in the

⁷⁶ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 236, 256-257.

⁷⁷ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 770-771. Importantly, the Johannesburg area committee would not elect a member to the national council because, in part, it was afraid of being seen as complicitous in unpopular education policies.

⁷⁸ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1989*, 783-784.

form of state cooption, an entrenched teacher conservatism, an entrenched "professional" ideology and an espousal of middle-class values kept some teachers' organisations from fully committing to this new, national unity initiative.

*Tensions and Cooperation in
Western Cape Teacher Politics*

The political context of 1988-1990, explained above, had significant implications for teacher politics in the Western Cape. As elements of the liberation movement and militant teachers pushed for a changed understanding of "professionalism", the state and conservative teachers upheld a more traditional teacher ideology. Conditions in schools, and in the teaching profession, both strengthened and weakened the impetus for change.

These varying pressures affected teacher organisations in the Western Cape, as well as the process of teacher unity there. This section will examine the responses of Western Cape teachers and their organisations outside the process of teacher unity, which will be dealt with below.

Teacher militancy

A central teacher response to the political context of 1988-1990 involved a growing wave of teacher militancy. The various forces described above which fundamentally altered teachers' perceptions of their place within schools had dramatic effect on the nature of teacher protests. These protests, which began to be more teacher-specific, serve as a valuable index to the changing nature of teachers' relationship to their work. Many teachers began adopting a militant style. A brief over-view of the history of teacher militancy from 1988 to 1990 in the Western Cape will serve as a useful back-drop for our discussion of teachers' changing attitudes towards their work and for our later discussion on the shaping of the NTUF

Two months after the Harare conference, approximately 1200 teachers in the Western Cape supported a general stay-away called for Monday, 6 June 1988.⁷⁹ At the end of that year, after the banning of some teacher organisations, African teachers formed a committee to fill the space left by DETU. The committee's initial resolutions included the necessity of getting the charges levelled at five DET teachers dropped (see Chapter Six), a demand for the reinstatement of retrenched teachers and the end of appointing white *verkrampte* principals in black schools.⁸⁰ On 13 October 1989, about 1500 DET teachers continued pressing their educational demands by marching to the department's Foreshore offices to deliver a petition concerning retrenchments and transfers, and such daily teaching concerns as stationary, textbooks and the pupil-teacher ratio.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Philcox, 30.

⁸⁰ *Argus*, 31 December 1988.

⁸¹ *Cape Times*, 14 October 1989.

The year 1989 also saw increased teacher activity within the DEC (HoR) in the form of protest action, much of which took place within the context of the Defiance Campaign. In August, about 120 teachers from Bishop Lavis High School, John Ramsay High and Beauvallon High went to the Western Cape Divisional Commissioner of Police and submitted a petition requesting that students be left alone and that police leave high schools.⁸² There were placards displaying such messages as "We have the Right to Protest", and "We Support Our Students."⁸³ On 5 and 6 September, as part of an MDM call, van den Heever claims that around 5000 teachers stayed away from schools.⁸⁴ A flyer released under the heading, "Teacher Unity Talks: Statement of the National Coordinating Committee of Teachers, 19 & 20 August," claimed that the teacher organisations present at these unity talks -- essentially the participants in the NTUF⁸⁵ -- "... see ourselves as part of the MDM and its struggles for a post-Apartheid South Africa." "We condemn the racist elections to be held on the 6 September [sic]," the flyer continues, "and call on our members and society at large, to boycott these elections." On the reverse side, in poster form, the flyer demands: "STRIKE against the racist election 5th & 6th Sept".⁸⁶ *South* reported: "In the largest support ever shown for a stayaway call, a total stayaway was reported at most schools in the Peninsula, the West Coast, Boland and the Eastern Cape." The DEC (HoR) responded by threatening the teachers who participated with disciplinary action, and asked principals for lists of teachers who had stayed away, as well as "green forms" explaining the absences on the day of the election of each absent teacher. The majority of principals, it appears, decided not to submit the forms in consultation with the MDM-aligned Western Cape Education Front.⁸⁷ About two weeks later, over 500 teachers and students arrived at the DEC (HoR) Mitchell's Plain office with a letter saying that teachers would not fill in the department's "green forms".⁸⁸ Continuing police repression at schools led to teacher militancy. In one case, two teachers from Ravensmead Senior Secondary were arrested while "protecting pupils from police brutality". On 20 October, about 400 teachers and students, representing approximately nineteen schools in the northern areas, marched from the school to the police station with 2000 signatures on a petition demanding the dropping of charges against the two teachers and several students.⁸⁹

In 1990 there was further, more widespread teacher militancy on a national level. Thousands of teachers participated in major strikes and demonstrations, mainly in DET schools and in a few "homelands". The massive teacher protest actions have been described

⁸² *Cape Times*, 11 August 1989.

⁸³ *Argus*, 10 August 1989.

⁸⁴ Van den Heever, "The Role of the Teacher," 13.

⁸⁵ WECTU, TASA, CTPA, EDASA, DETU, PENATA, ECTU, NEUSA, PTL, PTU, MATU and ATASA are listed on the flyer.

⁸⁶ "Strike," The Education Sector of the MDM, flyer, 1989.

⁸⁷ *South*, 28 September 1989.

⁸⁸ *Argus*, 21 September 1989. The group was told that their statement could only be dealt with by the central Cape Town office.

⁸⁹ *Argus*, 21 October 1989; *Cape Times*, 21 October 1989.

in some detail elsewhere.⁹⁰ One of the most notable events of this period was the teachers' strike which began with around 6000 teachers in Soweto and Alexandra on 5 March 1990.⁹¹ The strike -- which eventually included teachers in the Northern Cape, Pretoria, the Vaal Triangle, the Highveld and the east Rand -- lasted for about a month and involved 11,600 teachers.

The teachers' "defiance campaign" in DET schools is significant in that its associated demands forthrightly asserted teachers' desire to control their conditions of work. According to the campaign, inspectors and advisers could not visit schools, principals could not visit classes, and teachers would not attend DET courses. Teachers would work between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., and work only thirty-two periods a week (or, all teachers in one school would teach the same number of periods per week). Also, teachers took a step towards determining the content of schooling by deciding that they would not teach non-examination subjects, like guidance.⁹² While this decision was probably premised on a desire to make up for lost teaching time, it reflects a growing sense of teacher-control over broader aspects of school life -- not just over their presence in schools.

Some Western Cape teachers participated in the teacher protest actions. Five hundred Cape Town teachers went on strike the week before the 6000-strong strike in Soweto and Alexandra in March.⁹³ Towards the end of March, DET teachers in Cape Town tired of their department's tardy salary payments. Twenty-seven of thirty-three teachers at Fezeka Senior Secondary in Guguletu began striking on 20 March because they had not yet been paid that year. Two DET officials flew into Cape Town and hand-wrote checks for two hours at the DET Foreshore office on the night of 21 March.⁹⁴ A victory had been won. The following week, DET teachers "at most primary schools and some high schools," according to DETU's Mdladlana, "downed chalk" on 27 March. A combined DETU and PENATA meeting that evening resolved for teachers to return to work the following day.⁹⁵ On 17 April, teachers demonstrated a commitment to broader societal issues by participating in a march with students and principals in Mitchell's Plain to protest against gangsterism and drugs in that township.⁹⁶

After two Uitsig Senior Secondary teachers were arrested in August, about 200 teachers went to the DEC (HoR) offices in Roeland Street and attempted to stage a sit-in.⁹⁷ On 25 July, one hundred teachers were arrested outside the Cape Town magistrate's court after gathering to support two teachers who had been arrested for "illegally" picketing the previous month.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," Appendix Two, 19-20; SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 847-849.

⁹¹ *Cape Times*, 6 March 1990; *Argus*, 5 March 1990.

⁹² SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 849.

⁹³ *South*, 14 June 1990.

⁹⁴ *Cape Times*, 21 and 28 March 1990; *Argus*, 22 March 1990.

⁹⁵ *Cape Times*, 28 March 1990.

⁹⁶ *Argus*, 18 April 1990.

⁹⁷ *Argus*, 14 August 1990.

⁹⁸ *Cape Times*, 26 July 1990; *Argus*, 25 July 1990.

Thus in Cape Town, as with other parts of the country, teachers found greater strength to protest and to strike.

*A continuing history of disunity:
Western Cape teacher organisations*

In the Western Cape during 1988-1990, much teacher organisational energy focussed on the process of teacher unity. The established organisations had the most to lose by joining a national, unitary organisation, for this would involve dissolution. The established organisations operated from a position of numerical strength within the unity process, and remained wedded to their organisational identities. The minutes of the first round of teacher unity talks, held on 27 August 1988, include a summary of organisational status reports. DETU had 155 paid-up members, eighty percent of whom were teachers; the CTPA had 22,198 members; WECTU had 300 "active members"; and EDASA claimed to have 140 members, 110 being teachers. Nationally, TASA had a membership of around 8600, and ATASA reported 60,000 paid-up members.⁹⁹ Such vast disparity in numbers created an structural tension, one which bolstered the maintenance of separate identities and continued conflict.

The emergent groups, numerically weaker, but accorded a louder voice within the context of a the liberation movement, also sought to unify from a position of strength. WECTU, for example, suggested asserting organisational identity in a 1990 newsletter article: "The reluctance of UTASA (including the CTPA) and ATASA [to accept the need for a single, non-racial teachers' trade union] makes it more imperative for progressive teachers to be organized into WECTU."¹⁰⁰

The tensions within teacher politics which played themselves out in the unity process also affected teacher organisations within separate departments outside of the process of teacher unity.

The established organisations continued with their array of organisational activities. For PENATA this meant little except for joint crisis-management activity with DETU. The CTPA, like the SATA, ran its office as usual, responding to queries from its members, offering bursaries and workshops, holding meetings for members during these turbulent years, and organising its conferences. The TASA leadership in Durban, while gradually becoming more completely immersed in the teacher unity initiative, also continued with business as usual.

The emergent unions, while suffering a great deal more than their established counterparts under state repression, also continued to engage in their separate, organisational activities. DETU's activities included campaigns for the release of members in detention, and action to force the DET to drop the misconduct charges levelled against

⁹⁹ "Minutes of the Planning Meeting for Teacher Unity Held on 27th August 1988."

¹⁰⁰ "Seize the Time!" *WECTU newsletter* 2.3 (n.d. [1990]): 1.

five teachers.¹⁰¹ EDASA held a joint meeting on education with the Cape Democrats on 14 June 1989, at which a gagged dummy on the platform represented teachers.¹⁰² EDASA also ran a workshop on The Education Act, critical education and the contemporary situation in education.¹⁰³ WECTU engaged in such activities as a joint open day with students in Mitchell's Plain,¹⁰⁴ public participation in a number of conferences, and participation in several campaigns. WECTU representatives visited Namibia and Tanzania. WECTU members also held a snack dance and a jazz dance, and, after being restricted, held a series of regional meetings. Also, towards the end of 1988, WECTU employed a full-time organiser.¹⁰⁵

Within each education department tensions continued to exist between teachers' groups. While claiming that DETU and PENATA were beginning to work well together, a DETU executive member explained in 1990 that, "The difficulty is persistent differences -- not ideological -- in leadership." The DETU executive member went on to suggest that PENATA was not entirely serious about the unity process, having arrived at an April 1989 unity meeting claiming to have no mandate and no knowledge of the agenda.¹⁰⁶ Another member of the DETU executive pointed out in 1990 that PENATA's executive had ideological problems with DETU. The PENATA executive, he said was largely comprised of people from a BC or Pan African Congress tradition.¹⁰⁷ This sectarian conflict continued to present obstacles to unity between the two organisations.

The tension between the CTPA and WECTU remained even more pronounced. In August 1988 Franklin Sonn said publicly: "We were disturbed when the Western Cape Teachers' Union was formed, but we did not go on the offensive after individual members of the organisation publicly attacked us."¹⁰⁸ Interviewed in 1990, Randall van den Heever further expressed the on-going tension. "WECTU sees the school as a site of struggle," he said. "They are willing to subvert education needs to political needs."¹⁰⁹ On the other side, Yousuf Gabru, WECTU chairperson, said in 1990: "I do not believe the leadership of the CTPA is sincere."¹¹⁰ A back-page article in a 1990 *WECTU newsletter* comprised a long, indirect attack on the CTPA's position within the NTUF.¹¹¹

In September 1988, WECTU reiterated recurring concerns. "A very real problem many WECTU members are grappling with," stated a newsletter, "is the fear that the

¹⁰¹ *South*, 13 October 1988.

¹⁰² *Cape Times*, 15 June 1989.

¹⁰³ "Diary of Events," *Update* 11 (October 1989): 10.

¹⁰⁴ *Plainsman*, 31 August 1988.

¹⁰⁵ Louis Michael Green (WECTU organiser), "Report of the WECTU Organiser at the WECTU AGM Held at UWC on 29 April '90," April 1990.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with informant C, 18 October 1990.

¹⁰⁸ *Argus*, 12 August 1988.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Randall van den Heever, 8 March 1990.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

¹¹¹ "Teacher Unity Forum Workshop," *WECTU newsletter* 2.3 (n.d. [1990]): 8.

progressive teacher presence [within the unity initiative] will be overwhelmed by the numerically stronger moderate bloc in a national teachers' union."¹¹²

Compromise and cooperation

These historical tensions deterred but did not destroy the teacher unity initiative spawned in Harare. While people within teacher organisations recognised that inter-organisational conflict persisted around the most fundamental issues concerned with unity -- such as strategy, structure, assets, the involvement of COSATU -- this did not inhibit the overarching desire for a strong national organisation. An important element of this mutual desire displayed itself in increasing cooperation across the lines of historic division. A complete description of united activities will be given below. Here it will suffice to briefly discuss the greater cooperation, external to teacher unity, within each of the separate departments.

The rift between WECTU and the CTPA remained strong, but with the CTPA's growing involvement in the MDM, and its greater acceptance by the liberation movement -- for example, it joined the Western Cape Education Front in 1989 -- WECTU's publicly vitriolic stand against the CTPA began to diminish. WECTU began to engage with the CTPA. For example, WECTU representatives agreed to attend a special CTPA meeting on 8 February 1989 concerning party-political involvement in teachers' promotions.¹¹³ Within the DEC (HoD), TASA and the PTL -- a rival "progressive" teacher union in Johannesburg -- experienced a greater degree of mutual acceptance, especially as TASA experienced a major shift in the direction of the progressive teachers' unions. Poobie Naicker, the newly-installed president of TASA, spoke of this enhanced cooperation when he described a joint TASA-PTL unity rally in Lenasia in June 1989. He was also invited to address the 1989 PTL AGM.¹¹⁴

In the African townships of Cape Town, amidst the educational strife, DETU and PENATA worked more closely together. A DETU executive member said in 1990 that, "... by now I thought we'd have one organisation in the townships." While clearly blaming PENATA inefficiency for inhibiting progress, the DETU informant described two successful joint marches held in 1989. The first was dispersed by the police, he said, but the second climaxed with around 1000 teachers from both organisations occupying the DET building in Cape Town. Both executives were present, and participating teachers mandated the two executives to draw up a joint program of action for 1990.¹¹⁵ In October 1989, the *Argus* reported on a joint statement to the DET listing short-term demands, including

¹¹² "The '88 AGM: some reflections." *WECTU newsletter* 2.1 (September 1988): 4. The article states that "moderate" here refers to ATASA and TASA.

¹¹³ *Cape Times*, 9 February 1989.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Poobie Naicker, 17 July 1990.

¹¹⁵ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990. This informant said of the joint program of action that the two organisations had not met, and that the responsibility was PENATA's for it was to chair the meeting.

demands for stationary, timely salary payments, and study-leave for teachers.¹¹⁶ Monde Tulwana, another executive member of DETU, stated in 1990 that DETU was drawing PENATA into action it would never before have undertaken. PENATA was involved in campaigns "... because of the situation in the townships". He spoke very optimistically of a closing of the historical divide: "We are no longer talking of progressive and non-progressive. We are talking of teachers who are all progressive."¹¹⁷

Certainly not all participants agreed with Tulwana about an entirely progressive teaching corps, and for good reason. The history of teacher unity at this point was a history riven with divisions based on historical and ideological fault-lines. We will now turn to a closer analysis of the recurrent and problematic issues within the teacher unity talks.

Yawning Divides: Historical Tensions within the Process of Teacher Unity

Historical tensions within teacher politics, described above in terms of organisational activities outside the process of unity, manifested within the teacher unity initiative begun in Harare. In particular, the process of unifying established and emergent bodies became a multi-faceted debate around "professionalism". Traditional "professionalism", rooted in race and class divisions, was ardently challenged within the teacher unity process. Newer ideas about appropriate teacher behaviour and attitudes emerged more strongly than in the preceding years, as the emergent teacher groups asserted a dominant voice within the process. The contradictions which emerged centred on debates about the structure of the unified organisation, the style of its formation and the involvement of both COSATU and white teacher organisations. The established organisations experienced many internal contradictions as they balked at what was seen as an emergent "ganging up", under pressure from elements of the liberation movement to create an organisation within a new "professional" paradigm.

A united spirit

After the Harare conference in April 1988, the South African representatives were charged with the task of building a new, unified, national teacher organisation. The first point of the Harare Accord on Teacher Unity (see Appendix C) states that:

All representatives of the teachers organisations present agreed on the need for the national unity of teachers and committed themselves to discuss this in their various organisations and to propagate the feasibility of one national teachers organisation.

The discussion and propagation required by this point took on various complicated forms after the organisations had returned to South Africa. While, according to point fourteen of the Accord, "The representatives of organisations committed themselves to urge their

¹¹⁶ *Argus*, 21 October 1989.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Monde Tulwana, 7 March 1990.

organisations to maintain the spirit of comradeship, mutual respect and common purpose which has characterised the Harare seminar on teacher unity as a necessary element in the process of achieving unity," such a spirit proved difficult to carry back onto South African soil where distinct institutional histories and ideologies had foiled previous unity attempts. The organisations cooperated as the unity efforts achieved a degree of success at both regional and national levels. But the "spirit of comradeship" appeared less accessible, less important when truly unifying activity was required. According to Randall van den Heever, "... 1988 turned out to be more of a tentative period of maneuvering than a productive and progressive session of united campaigns."¹¹⁸ Or, as an EDASA delegate to the Harare conference later said, "Being out of the country was an advantage; but in South Africa we got into old familiar patterns. For example, PENATA did not pitch for meetings."¹¹⁹

Clearly, though, more than simple organisational constraints were involved in the "tentative period of maneuvering". Franklin Sonn illustrated the confusion of a rapidly changing teachers' terrain when he said to the PTU in 1989: "We must build a faith in our ability as teachers, workers, professionals and comrades in the struggle for liberation."¹²⁰ He, like other active players in the teacher unity process, was not speaking of a broadly accepted, new definition of "professionalism", but was rather reflecting the various and conflicting pressures at work on teachers. The teacher unity initiative created a pressure of its own as the primary, evolving strategy was to under-emphasise differences rather than wait for all organisations to fundamentally change intractable ideological positions. WECTU's report on the Harare conference reflected this position. "The issue [of ideology]," stated a *WECTU newsletter*, "remained unresolved. It was agreed that in the quest for unity no preconditions should be laid down."¹²¹

This particular style of unification, which emphasised agreement among leadership, consensus decision-making and "unity in action", and which underplayed crucial and divisive ideological distinctions, was further articulated by an EDASA report on the fourth round of national teacher unity talks held in Johannesburg in 1989. "This was a thoroughly well-run meeting," summarised the report, "where much business was done between disagreeing parties who were brought to consensus by skilful chairing and diplomatic lobbying."¹²²

Professional association or union?

The issue at the heart of divisions within the teacher unity process -- in light of the recurring tensions around "professionalism" -- was disagreement about whether the unified body would be a teacher association, or a union. This debate has been thoroughly

¹¹⁸ van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 7.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Cheryl Schwikard, 8 May 1990.

¹²⁰ Sonn, "Address on the Occasion," 9.

¹²¹ "Harare: Reportback," 2.

¹²² An EDASA delegate, "The Fourth Teacher Unity talks," *Update* 11 (October 1989): 7.

described in Chapter One. The issues, during 1988-1990, included the class location of teachers, and acceptable teacher behaviour within the "professional" construct. The more militant emergent unions regarded their members as workers, and were willing to engage in such "industrial actions" as strikes. The established associations, upholding the primary importance of "the child's education", could not condone disruptive actions in schools. Further, the established groups, having built up "professional" identities over many years, were loathe to relinquish such familiar identities rooted in race and class differentials.

COSATU

One contentious issue in terms of the contradictions of "professionalism" and class in the teacher unity process was the facilitating role of COSATU (see Chapter Six), which was mandated by the Harare Accord to convene "a negotiating machinery to pursue the objectives stated in this document". COSATU was "... further requested to consult with other sectors of the democratic movement to facilitate the unity process".¹²³ Ian Moll, in his paper on the unity process leading to SADTU, argues that COSATU was well-suited to the role of organising a sector with established and militant organisations. COSATU was the result of similar organisation. He further argues that COSATU was a more acceptable broker to teacher organisations than the UDF or NECC because each teacher organisation had explored the possibility of becoming a union.¹²⁴

However, Moll's argument neglects the most crucial aspect of COSATU's position. Because of its primary place in the liberation movement, it had enormous credibility within the MDM. Organisations, such as the teacher groups, concerned with credibility could not reject COSATU, an informal ally of the ANC's, and a "flag-bearer" in the liberation struggle. Whatever the reasons for its acceptability, COSATU's facilitation was crucial, causing one EDASA participant to claim, "It would not be working without COSATU."¹²⁵ Also, Bot reports that COSATU "largely financed" the seven rounds of teacher unity talks between the Harare conference and the SADTU launch.¹²⁶

But COSATU's role was problematic in some ways. For example, COSATU's facilitation was rejected by the SATA.¹²⁷ Its presence in the chair at unity meetings demanded a certain style of organisation, one which contradicted the "professional style" of some of the established participants. While there may have been short-term acceptance of COSATU's "unionist" and "militant" stance, its preferred "one industry, one union" goal fell foul of several of the participating established organisations.

¹²³ Point 15 of the Accord. See Appendix C.

¹²⁴ Moll, "The South African Democratic Teachers' Union," 194-195.

¹²⁵ Interview with informant A, 7 March 1990.

¹²⁶ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 5.

¹²⁷ Interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990; interview with Mike Reeler, 2 April 1990.

Assets

Another crucial aspect of the organisational class dichotomy within the teacher unity talks involved organisational assets. In the event of a unified, single, national organisation, what would happen to organisations' infrastructures? Who would get buildings, and bank accounts, and leadership expense accounts? Class is firmly rooted in wealth, for wealth maintains styles and "standards". The established organisations were far wealthier -- in part because they were "recognized" and were thus allowed stop-order facilities -- than the emergent unions, and were thus less eager to share their assets.

This was partly due to organisational responsibilities. Bot writes of ATASA's contractual group schemes and its KaNgwane early learning centre, and the CTPA's bursaries and Saturday Schools. These organisations wanted proof that SADTU would handle their various responsibilities before they parted with their assets.¹²⁸ Van den Heever stated in 1990 that:

The CTPA delegates in the National Teacher Unity Forum (NTUF) must ensure that the CTPA administrative structures and assets remain viable in terms of continuing to provide in [sic] the union needs of at least those teachers who constitute the membership of the CTPA.¹²⁹

Kenny Ernest, of Cape Town's TASA branch, said, "The woman who sweeps and makes tea, a place must be found for her. We are not going to see our staff on the streets."¹³⁰

For TASA this was more an organisational detail than a point of rhetorical class resistance, since at the second round of unity talks it committed its assets to "a new organisation at its formation",¹³¹ and later the NTUF decided to employ all the full-time personnel of affiliating organisations.¹³² But the other established organisations were not so keen. Alan Powell of the SATA, a peripheral organisation in the unity process but one which reflected a deeply-entrenched "professional" ideology, felt that asset-merging was "practically unnecessary".¹³³ The CTPA, apart from concerns expressed by Bot regarding responsibility for its infrastructure's continued existence, could not constitutionally merge its assets with those of other teacher groups. The minutes of the NTUF meeting in June 1990 stated:

It was noted that CTPA's Constitution directed that in the event of dissolution, its assets be transferred to educational institutions. Hence its constitution would have to be amended.... This required six months notice to its membership prior to Conference in 1991.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 6.

¹²⁹ van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 9.

¹³⁰ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

¹³¹ "Minutes of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town."

¹³² "Minutes of a Meeting of the National Teacher Unity Forum Held at the Independent Teacher Enrichment Centre, Park Avenue, North End, East London on 23 and 24 June 1990."

¹³³ Interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

¹³⁴ "Minutes of a Meeting of the National Teacher Unity Forum Held at the Independent Teacher Enrichment Centre, Park Avenue, North End, East London on 23 and 24 June 1990."

Such practical issues were largely dismissed by Yousuf Gabru in an attack on the CTPA. The professional body had "... an entrenched leadership with perks", said Gabru, "like the status of the job, and flying overseas. There is a price to be lost." He concluded: "I quite frankly don't think there's a lot of politics involved."¹³⁵

The question of dissolution: a unitary or federal structure

The debate which reflected tensions around race and ethnicity within the process of teacher unification concerned the structure of the proposed national organisation. Illustrating the established organisations' attachment to their ethnic identities, at the outset of the unity talks none could fully support a unitary structure. UTASA endorsed a unitary structure in principle, but had "... not yet canvassed [this position] within membership." TASA, for the same reason, could not endorse a unitary structure at all. ATASA had not reached a decision about structure. In contrast, all the Western Cape emergent bodies supported a unitary organisation.¹³⁶

So began the unitary-federal debate. The emergent groups did not waver from their position, but the contradictory ethnic location of the established groups showed clearly in their shifting, often ambiguous stands about structure. Bot presents arguments, based largely on interviews with leaders of teacher groups, in favour of a federation. First, some established groups felt regional unity should take precedence over national unity. Second, some groups did not see a single teacher body as necessary. These first two arguments are more to do with an organising focus, and neatly side-step the debate. The third argument in favour of federalism was that some organisations wished to preserve their identities, particularly in recognition of divergent ideological positions. This issue of identity was crucial, since established groups' identities could be clearly articulated in terms of race or ethnicity. Finally, in a separate section of her discussion, Bot states "... that teachers' needs may vary along racial lines, both in respect of professional needs as well as broader sociopolitical aims."¹³⁷ Bot's final point, about differing "racial" needs because of historically different conditions within separate education departments, argues for a perpetuation of these historical divisions. Group identity and an investment in maintaining an accepted, "common-sense" identity are at the heart of federalism, since a unitary structure would require the dissolution of all participating organisations.

Pressures from emergent unions and a powerful liberation movement emphasizing non-racialism caused great public ambiguity within the established camp, as these pressures heightened the racial contradictions within established groups. Fundamentally, the established groups remained wedded to their ethnically-defined identities.

¹³⁵ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

¹³⁶ "Minutes of the Planning Meeting for Teacher Unity Held on the 27th August 1988."

¹³⁷ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 11-12.

This was illustrated in several ways, including their continuing quest for recognition by international teacher groupings. After its conditional acceptance of the principle of a unitary structure at the first talks, UTASA proposed "... an *alliance* of all teacher organisations as a foundation towards the objective [of a unitary structure]" at the second round in November 1988.¹³⁸ In January 1989, UTASA, ATASA and TASA met with WCOTP in Geneva to discuss a federation of the three joining WCOTP.¹³⁹ TASA claims to have attended as an "observer" to avoid the possibility of such international affiliation "fragmenting the teacher unity movement in South Africa".¹⁴⁰ What does this imply about UTASA's desired, and ATASA's continuing, recognition by WCOTP? At the very least, it presents these organisations' interest in maintaining their own identities while striving to enhance their international prestige.

It was in March 1989, at the third round of talks, that TASA and UTASA came out in full support of a federal structure, albeit as an intermediate measure. ATASA still would not make a commitment, not having "canvassed" its members.¹⁴¹ Franklin Sonn asserted the federal option more strongly in a May 1989 speech, going so far as to uphold an established alliance. "The guiding principle," he said, "will always be to keep ones home and those of ones immediate relatives strong and intact while reaching out to broaden the common front." Sonn still gestured toward ambiguity: "... UTASA is keen to retain its own internal strength and unity while seeking oneness with others."¹⁴²

June 1989 was a significant month for the structures debate. The CTPA's annual conference reflected Sonn's position. The conference regarded "... the question of dissolving the organisation as impractical and unacceptable to the CTPA at this point in time."¹⁴³ There could thus be no question of a unitary structure. In the same month, at TASA's annual conference, Poobie Naicker took office as president. He immediately declared his support for the unitary position, and the organisation's National Council followed suit several months later.¹⁴⁴ Ernest reiterated this position in 1990 by affirming the principle, while claiming his organisation was still consulting with their membership: "We say the mechanics can come afterwards."¹⁴⁵

The following year, 1990, in the months leading up to SADTU's launch, TASA moved fully behind the drive for a unitary structure. The minutes of the April 1990 NTUF meeting stated that TASA felt that a unitary structure should not be delayed, and proposed an interim *unitary* structure, marking a departure from Samuels' interim federal structure

¹³⁸ "Minutes of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town." Emphasis added.

¹³⁹ Moll, "Towards one South African teachers' union," 72.

¹⁴⁰ TASA, "Progress Report on Teacher Unity for the period March 1989 to August 1989."

¹⁴¹ TASA, "Report on Third Round of National Teacher Unity Talks Convened by COSATU, Held from 170389 to 180389, at the University of Natal, Durban."

¹⁴² Sonn, "Address on the Occasion," 4.

¹⁴³ CTPA advertisement, "Resolutions of CTPA Conference, Upington 19-22 June 1989," in *South*, 6 July 1989.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Poobie Naicker, 17 July 1990.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

position of the previous year.¹⁴⁶ During this time, the CTPA remained firmly committed to the federal option, while offering a somewhat publicly ambiguous stand. In February, at the fifth national teacher unity talks, van den Heever "... pointed out that it would be difficult for established teacher organisations to dis-integrate and fall in with new structures as mergers are often complex and difficult." He reiterated his organisation's support for an interim federal discussion forum. At the same meeting, according to a SATA participant, Sonn made "an impassioned case" for a federal structure.¹⁴⁷ The minutes of the April 1988 NTUF meeting further illustrated the CTPA's seemingly intractable position: "With the exception of UTASA -- ATASA appeared to be flexible on the issue -- all participating organisations were in favour of an interim unitary structure."¹⁴⁸ Yousuf Gabru's "Chairperson's Report" to a WECTU AGM the following week reiterated the CTPA's seeming isolation: "Only UTASA of all the organizations involved insists on an interim federal structure."¹⁴⁹

But there were ambiguities regarding the CTPA's position. For example, Poobie Naicker claimed that a meeting of the established organisations was held in Johannesburg on 2 June 1990. The entire UTASA executive was present, as well as ten representatives from ATASA and three each from three white organisations. Naicker said that he gave an impromptu speech in favour of a unitary structure after which Sonn said, "I count myself with my brother Poobie Naicker," and committed himself to a unitary structure.¹⁵⁰ Also, the CTPA's annual conference in June 1990, perhaps due to the pressure of isolation, reaffirmed its acceptance of a unitary body in principle (while explaining the necessity of an interim federation), and mandated its executive to investigate dissolution -- while asserting its support for federalism (see Appendix D).¹⁵¹ In an address to that conference, van den Heever reflected the CTPA's ambiguous public position. "It will be important," he said, "for the CTPA to be part of the intended launch of a national teachers' organisation, and to participate in such a national organisation by virtue of a policy of dual membership."¹⁵² After a troubled relationship with SADTU, and an eventual disaffiliation, the 1991 CTPA congress maintained that federal unity should be the interim measure.¹⁵³

The CTPA was not entirely alone on this issue, despite WECTU's assertion to the contrary. The same minutes from the April 1990 NTUF meeting which stated that, "ATASA appeared to be flexible on the issue", included an indication of ATASA's structural preference. The minutes stated:

¹⁴⁶ "Minutes of a Meeting of the NTUF Held at the Peninsula Technikon, Bellville, Cape Town, over 21 and 22 April 1990."

¹⁴⁷ Interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990.

¹⁴⁹ "Chairperson's Report," WECTU AGM, 29 April 1990, n.p.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Poobie Naicker, 17 July 1990.

¹⁵¹ "Conference Resolution: Teacher Unity", CTPA photocopy, June 1990 (see Appendix D); *Cape Times*, 22 June 1990.

¹⁵² van den Heever, "Address on Teacher Unity," 9.

¹⁵³ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 10.

ATASA's position was that while a unitary structure was the desired goal ultimately, it was not immediately practicable. ATASA suggested rather that a federal structure would be a more viable proposition in the intermediate phase, as it would also allow opportunity for the removal of the remaining obstacles to national unity.¹⁵⁴

Certainly TUATA and CATU's withdrawal from SADTU indicated a degree of unhappiness with the unitary structure. So despite Ian Moll's assertion, in his work on the unity process, that "... ATASA, UTASA [and] TASA... all publicly indicated that they would disband once the new national organisation was launched",¹⁵⁵ the internal differences within these groups for the most part prevented support for anything but a structure which would allow for their continued existence.

While the established organisations struggled within their contradictory positions, the emergent groups remained steadfast in their resolve to establish a unitary body. The April 1990 NTUF meeting offered some insight into this. The emergent organisations, the minutes stated, "... maintained that constituted as it was the NTUF could make little or no impact on the process of educational transformation or for that matter in the national liberation struggle."¹⁵⁶ A unitary body would, according to this line of thinking, help to resolve historical tensions between organisations. Also, a unitary structure would help to overcome race divisions.¹⁵⁷

There were clearly more practical issues involved as well. The emergent organisations in the Western Cape which came into being during the crisis of 1985 struggled to maintain membership numbers and organisational activities. Gareth Rossiter said in 1990 that, "Progressive organisations have been working with their hands tied behind their backs." There was no longer any recruitment, he said.¹⁵⁸ This problem, exacerbated by the bannings at the end of 1988, were apparent at the first round of teacher unity talks following from the Harare conference. TASA wrote of the organisational reports presented at that August 1988 meeting: "A significant feature of the report [sic] was that the fledgling organisations were experiencing significant drops in membership."¹⁵⁹ The minutes of the meeting reflected that DETU had dropped from 600 to 155 members, WECTU had 300 members and EDASA had 140.¹⁶⁰ It was announced at EDASA's March 1990 AGM that the organisation had only forty paid-up members.¹⁶¹

Organisational troubles continued during the teacher unity process. A WECTU Cape Town branch executive member said that, in part because of top-heavy involvement in the MDM and the unity talks during 1988 and 1989, "We neglected other parts of what

¹⁵⁴ "Minutes of a Meeting of the NTUF Held at the Peninsula Technikon, Bellville, Cape Town, over 21 and 22 April 1990."

¹⁵⁵ Moll, "The South African Democratic Teachers' Union," 200. This remark is not referenced.

¹⁵⁶ Moll, "The South African Democratic Teachers' Union," 200.

¹⁵⁷ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 11.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990.

¹⁵⁹ TASA, "TASA report on Teacher Unity Planning Meeting (COSATU convened 27/8/88)."

¹⁶⁰ "Minutes of the Planning Meeting for Teacher Unity Held on the 27th August 1988."

¹⁶¹ Personal notes, EDASA AGM, Cape Town, 15 March 1990.

teachers are interested in." By the middle of 1989, the Cape Town branch had three active members and had been reduced to purely administrative functions.¹⁶² Yousuf Gabru said that by February 1990 four WECTU regions had collapsed.¹⁶³ In his April 1990 chairperson's report, Gabru was scathing. "Our regions," he said, "remain weak, poorly organized and badly administered." He spoke of WECTU's "failure to organize primary school teachers"; in terms of curriculum development he claimed that, "... as an organization we have made very little contribution to the development of an alternative curriculum"; and as regards political education he said that, "WECTU came into being as an organization of 'political' teachers, yet there has been a lack of political education and discussion in WECTU."¹⁶⁴ A DETU executive member said that in 1989, the Defend DETU Committee -- an replacement organisation formed after DETU's restriction -- held only three meetings.¹⁶⁵ The emergent unions thus sought unity in order to strengthen their weakening organisations.

Despite such structural reasons for desiring unity, the emergent unions had some initial difficulty accepting the idea of a unitary organisation involving the established groups. This reflected another important tension in the unitary-federal debate. Immediately after the Harare conference, a *WECTU newsletter* asked: "Would participation in a large union not result in WECTU and its principles being marginalised? How does one establish the bona fides of organizations/teachers that have erstwhile been seen to be from the conservative bloc, before going into a national union with them?"¹⁶⁶ The emergent groups had difficulties to overcome in terms of working with their established counterparts. The emergent groups were accorded the same representation as the established associations at the talks and could therefore assert a unionist, progressive position without fear of being marginalised or "swamped". The final form of SADTU bore witness to the dominant nature of the emergent organisations' positions.

The debate on structure was resolved at the June 1990 NTUF meeting, four months prior to SADTU's launch. Affiliated organisations, according to the minutes, would be given one year to dissolve after the launch on 6 October. This allowed one year of dual membership for teachers. The established position was acknowledged in an important addendum: "In the event that affiliates experience difficulties/problems in that regard, the NTUF would then be in a position to give direction in the matter."¹⁶⁷

A complete resolution of the tensions posed by racial divisions in *apartheid* South Africa thus proved impracticable within the context of organisational structure. A more

¹⁶² Interview with Barbara Houghton, 22 March 1990.

¹⁶³ Interview with Yousuf Gabru, 28 February 1990.

¹⁶⁴ "Chairperson's Report," WECTU AGM, 29 April 1990.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹⁶⁶ "Harare: Reportback," 3.

¹⁶⁷ "Minutes of a Meeting of the National Teacher Unity Forum Held at the Independent Teacher Enrichment Centre, Park Avenue, North End, East London on 23 and 24 June 1990."

striking example of the contradictions implied by race in South Africa focuses on the involvement of white organisations in the teacher unity initiative.

The involvement of white organisations

No white teachers' organisation from South Africa, apart from EDASA, was invited to attend the April 1988 conference in Harare. Throughout the following two-and-a-half years of talks, however, there was recognition that the "progressive" white bodies should be involved, and much discussion centred around this issue. The English-speaking Natal Teachers' Society (NTS) became the most involved white group, achieving observer status in the NTUF. The SATA, however, maintained a firmly antagonistic position to the COSATU-convened talks.

The SATA has been a self-proclaimed "professional" organisation. Also, SATA teachers were decidedly removed from the on-going crisis in black education, and never suffered the tremendous state and community pressures which led to the shift in attitude of teachers towards their work. Instead, the SATA attended some of the activities organised by the NTUF, but never considered joining, even if they had been welcome. They could not support the Harare Accord, for a start, and had grave difficulties with COSATU's role and the question of a trade union for teachers.

The SATA, like the statutory federation to which it belonged, the TFC, continued to espouse entrenched "professional" values. The *Annual Report of the Teachers' Federal Council*, for example, contains a section entitled "Protection of the Prestige of the Profession".¹⁶⁸ And the TFC actually refused "... its continued co-operation [with] the Minister of National Education and his Department" after the minister met a delegation from the "non-recognised" NTUF, "... whose express aim is not to co-operate with government structures...."¹⁶⁹ The SATA did, however, exhibit ambiguity in regards to the TFC's ideological and racial position. For example, SATA remained a member of the TFC, yet distanced itself for the *apartheid* construction of the "own affairs" federation. Also, SATA continued to adopt a more political position, in word if not in deed. Its 1989 conference, for example, adopted resolutions rejecting detention-without-trial, requesting an end to the Group Areas Act and the opening of schools to all races, and suggesting the creation of a Bill of Rights and a lifting of the State of Emergency. Further, in a gesture towards DETU and WECTU, it expressed "... its opposition to any attempt by the authorities to restrict teachers' organisations...."¹⁷⁰ Following from a 1988 resolution, a SATA Work Committee produced a document entitled "Educating for a Democratic Non-Racial Society," which intended to describe South African society and suggest ways in

¹⁶⁸ *Annual Report of the Teachers' Federal Council* (1989), 21.

¹⁶⁹ "Media Statement Issued in Pretoria by Prof Hennie Maree, Chairman of the Teachers' Federal Council," 7 June 1990. See also *Cape Times*, 8 and 9 June 1990; *Argus*, 8 June 1990; *Sunday Times*, 10 June 1990; *Business Day*, 14 June 1990.

¹⁷⁰ "S.A.T.A. Mandate," n.p.

which students and teachers could better understand non-racial democracy.¹⁷¹ The pressures, working to overcome race and class divides, which prompted these organisational activities were also at work on the TFC which, at an extraordinary Pretoria meeting in September 1990, agreed in principle to open to all races.¹⁷²

In part because of these "progressive" positions, and because of a continuing commitment to teacher unity, the SATA felt snubbed after the Harare conference.¹⁷³ It did, however, along with the NTS and the Transvaal Teachers' Association (TTA), ask to be included in the unity talks.¹⁷⁴

Participants in the teacher unity initiative felt a need to involve the white bodies. At the first meeting, in August 1988, EDASA spoke on this issue in its report: "[EDASA] expressed the need to organise white teachers in the organisation. [EDASA is] currently talking to individuals within these organisations."¹⁷⁵ Participants also wanted to establish as broad an organisation as possible, to add weight to the pressures contradicting race divisions. In addition, non-involvement of the white groups allowed for the unwanted possibility of parallel unity talks.¹⁷⁶

It was a problematic decision to involve the white organisations. A special meeting was held the day before the second round of unity talks in November 1988 to achieve consensus on the presence of the SATA, NTS and TTA. In the event, these organisations were represented at the unity talks the following day.¹⁷⁷ The TASA report on the meeting stated that the three white groups "... expressed the desire to be invited at the next meeting as they had common goals; they also requested that the Harare recommendations be discussed further with their Executives."¹⁷⁸ The meeting's response, as outlined in the minutes, stipulated that in order to facilitate full involvement, the three white organisations were expected to adopt a publicly anti-*apartheid* position and withdraw from both the TFC and all government structures.¹⁷⁹ These conditions were extended at the fourth round of talks in August 1989. White organisations could participate in the teacher unity talks on the following conditions:

- * Acceptance of the Harare Declaration.
- * Publicly condemn apartheid and CNE [Christian National Education].
- * Commitment to this National Coordinating Committee as the only forum for Teachers' Unity Talks.

¹⁷¹ A report by a Work Committee of the S.A.T.A., "Educating for a Democratic Non-Racial Society," in *Education Journal* 99.1 (1989): 5-23.

¹⁷² *Cape Times*, 3 October 1990; *Argus*, 4 October 1990.

¹⁷³ The "Minutes of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town," report the SATA's "concern" over its exclusion from Harare.

¹⁷⁴ *Update* 11 (October 1989): 6.

¹⁷⁵ "Minutes of the Planning Meeting for Teacher Unity Held on the 27th August 1988."

¹⁷⁶ The minutes of the first meeting indicate that the decision for COSATU to inform the English-speaking white organisations of the unity initiative came after the decision that there should be no parallel unity talks.

"Minutes of the Planning Meeting for Teacher Unity Held on the 27th August 1988."

¹⁷⁷ "Minutes of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town."

¹⁷⁸ TASA, "Report on the Second Teacher Unity Meeting Convened by COSATU on Sunday 6 November 1988."

¹⁷⁹ "Minutes of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town."

- * Voluntary non-participation in government erected structures.
- * Non-racial constitution.¹⁸⁰

This approach did not meet with much success. Therefore, at the fifth round of unity talks in February 1990, after regional structures were being built, it was decided that white organisations could "... be brought in at regional level *without pre-conditions* and, on the recommendations of the regions, this body could be given observer status at National level and thereafter full status on acceptance of the Harare Declaration and other conditions as this forum may decide."¹⁸¹ Even then, only the NTS, which was granted observer status at the same meeting, became officially involved.

The national and regional unity forums did make some effort to involve white groups. A workshop in Cape Town on 18 February 1990 included discussion with white teachers' groups on their participation in the talks. The SATA attended without putting forth a position.¹⁸² Also, the teacher unity forum allowed white organisations' attendance at the early meetings. In the Western Cape, EDASA was asked by the forum to "bring in" SATA. But historical antipathy arose. One EDASA participant said, "I can tell you SATA is not going anywhere following EDASA."¹⁸³ Another EDASA delegate, responding to the directive to involve white organisations, wondered "... how we're going to do this since they won't talk to us?"¹⁸⁴ Certainly SATA responded coldly to EDASA's attempts to meet with SATA to discuss the involvement of the established body. The SATA sent the following letter to EDASA on 23 April 1990:

The S.A.T.A. has participated for many years in a variety of teacher unity discussions and negotiations. During the most recent initiatives, resulting in the establishment of the National Teacher Unity Forum, S.A.T.A. has liaised with COSATU and has been involved in a series of meetings in connection with the Forum and related issues. The S.A.T.A. is prepared to continue to operate in this way or with the Forum itself and does not believe that it would be appropriate to hold discussions with a member association of the Forum.¹⁸⁵

The SATA thus remained aloof from EDASA's attempts.

In the end, entrenched organisational values led to SATA's non-participation. Flirting with the initiative, the SATA illustrated an aspect of its contradictory location between historical racialism and the current trend towards a non-racial ideology. Also, its "professional" ethic disallowed acceptance of COSATU's role. At the second round of talks, SATA raised the question of COSATU's position.¹⁸⁶ SATA, NTS and TTA further questioned COSATU at a Johannesburg meeting about whether it was "an honest broker".

¹⁸⁰ "Summary of Decisions of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on 19-20 August 1989 in Johannesburg."

¹⁸¹ "Minutes of the 5th National Teacher Unity Talks Convened by COSATU on 10-11 February 1990, at the Alabama Hotel, Port Elizabeth."

¹⁸² Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990; interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990; "Minutes of a Meeting of the NTUF at the Peninsula Technikon, Bellville, Cape Town, over 21 and 22 April 1990."

¹⁸³ Interview with Pam van Dyk, 2 August 1990.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with informant A, 7 March 1990.

¹⁸⁵ SATA letter to EDASA, 23 April 1990.

¹⁸⁶ "Minutes of the Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town."

"We got cagey answers," said John Stonier of SATA.¹⁸⁷ In addition, the SATA's entrenched group identity left no room for dissolution into a unitary structure. "We would be most unhappy if the SATA simply disappeared," said Mike Reeler, the SATA organiser, "and simply became part of one massive organisation."¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the Western Cape TUF operated without the involvement of the SATA.

The SATA exemplified an extreme version of the established organisations' position, involving historical contradictions. The participants in the unity talks had vastly differing ideologies, but were brought together at a peculiar moment due to forces which upheld working-class, unionist, non-racial attitudes. The public cooperation which happened atop these contradictions was often ambiguous. Given the deeply-rooted divisions between participating organisations, it was hardly surprising that the teacher unity initiative in the Western Cape adopted a "unity in action" approach to facilitate unification.

The Progressive Bloc and Established Contradictions Within Teacher Unity

The established and emergent teacher groupings often adopted antagonistic positions within the above debates about the structure and style of unity. The smaller emergent groups had the advantage of a political context sympathetic to their position in opposition to traditional "professionalism". In this context, it will be instructive to examine the progressive bloc within the unity initiative and then the reactions of two established bodies in the Western Cape. Such organisational case studies will highlight the tensions within the initiative. The CTPA, in particular, illustrated intense internal contradictions in the face of popular pressure to change. TASA, on the other hand, illustrated a remarkable transition from the established to the emergent camp, and by 1990 disavowed practical allegiance to its former established allies.

A "ganging-up"

There was an on-going sense that the emergent unions behaved as a bloc, which threatened the established organisations. Kenny Ernest, chair of Cape Town's TASA branch, said while discussing hindrances to unity: "Some of the established organisations feel pressurized by the emergent organisations."¹⁸⁹ This also remained a question of tactical import to the emergent groups. WECTU, DETU and EDASA offered a combined report-back of the Harare conference to a meeting at the University of Cape Town,¹⁹⁰ signifying their cooperative stance. At several points during the unity talks, the idea of a union among the "progressive" groups was muted as a strategy to more easily facilitate complete unity.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Interview with John Stonier, 20 August 1990.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Mike Reeler, 2 April 1990.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

¹⁹⁰ "Secretarial Report," WECTU, 16 July 1988, n.p.

¹⁹¹ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990; interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

As Ernest said in an interview in 1990: "It will save the talks if there is *one* progressive organisation. Then people won't feel like there's a ganging up."¹⁹² The established groups thus sought to weaken the emergent voice by according them decreased representation at the talks. This illustrated their defensive positions in relation to the political context of the unity initiative. Such defensiveness led to heightened tension and ambiguity within individual organisations.

The withdrawal of the CTPA

The established organisations were not easily changed or challenged. The CTPA will serve as a case study of the organisational entrenchment of established "professional" values, and the place of such values within the teacher unity initiative. The CTPA rested on a "professional" foundation -- stemming largely from the nature of its rural, Afrikaans-speaking, *petite bourgeois* membership -- which remained firmly in place throughout the teacher unity initiative, up to and beyond the launch of SADTU. The CTPA thus represented a victory for the forces seeking to entrench race and class divisions amongst teachers.¹⁹³ There are several examples of the CTPA's intransigence in this regard coming out of the NTUF, particularly its withdrawal from the talks in April 1990, and culminating with its disaffiliation from SADTU a few months after its launch. There were other indicators of the CTPA's lack of enthusiasm. Franklin Sonn, for example, did not attend a single Western Cape TUF meeting, according to an active participant.¹⁹⁴ More generally, the CTPA's vacillating commitment to this teacher unity process reflected its contradictory place within the liberation movement which was guided by working class interests and a militant ideology. An example of this general ambiguity is, according to WECTU, the CTPA's withdrawal from the Western Cape Education Front "... on more than one occasion".¹⁹⁵

Within the teacher unity initiative, the CTPA described its contradictory position in the following terms. In a "Report to Teacher Unity Forum Workshop", it details "... the constraint against which an established organisation like the CTPA have [sic] to operate within the broader context of the teacher unity initiative." The CTPA under Sonn's leadership clearly sought enhanced credibility within the national struggle for liberation. But, argues the report, the CTPA's main concern was its own membership, and it would have to find credibility through its organisational work. Implying a perceived contradiction between these two areas of work, the report states:

¹⁹² Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

¹⁹³ This is not to suggest that the CTPA did not have valid, organisational reasons for its ultimate non-participation in SADTU. The CTPA's articulated problems with the teacher unity initiative will be described below.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990. Ernest claims that Sonn informed TASA that he would be out of the country during the Cape Town round of NTUF talks, but he was, in fact, at the ANC launch of the ANC at the Peninsula Technikon, where he became a member of the ANC.

¹⁹⁵ "Teacher Unity Talks Update...." *WECTU newsletter* 2.3 (n.d. [1990]): 2.

The CTPA sees the Teacher Unity Forum as a co-ordinatory [sic] structure which seeks to direct the thrust of the organisational programmes to dovetail with the broader political programmes of the liberation movement. The CTPA, however, regards the main basis of the organisation's status in the broader liberation movement as the organisation's union programme of providing in [sic] the daily needs of the teachers who constitute the membership of the organisation. The CTPA's challenge is therefore to continue supporting the initiatives of the Teacher Unity Forum without subverting the organisation's own union programme in the process.¹⁹⁶

The report offers two examples of the CTPA's "challenging" position. First, CTPA executive members were too busy with their own meetings to attend all teacher unity discussions. Second, unity forum (and NECC) meetings were often held on Sundays, which raised "serious concerns" for "most" CTPA executive members who were "deacons and elders in the church".¹⁹⁷ While these concerns present a picture of real organisational concerns, particularly in regards to a reassertion of the CTPA's Christian character, the report does not cut to the heart of the CTPA's difficulties within the unity initiative.

The true difficulties were varied, but each illustrates a crucial contradiction in the realm of teachers, a contradiction in terms of "professionalism", or of class, or of race. Firstly, the CTPA never divested itself of its traditional "professional" trappings, although it chose to gloss over them at times. In June 1989, Franklin Sonn proclaimed that the CTPA would not be hurried towards unity by the other participants, and that his organisation needed a longer period than the emergent groups to decide on teacher unity.¹⁹⁸ Despite the 1988 conference resolution "to examine the possibilities of forming a trade union of teachers",¹⁹⁹ the CTPA never supported so-called militant action. It did not come out in support of the 5 and 6 September 1989 stay-away. And after the SADTU launch, the CTPA's "professional" values moved rapidly to the fore. In March 1991, a *CTPA Focus* offered the common euphemism for non-involvement in action which disrupted school days: "When the interests of the teacher [are] in conflict with those of the child, the latter takes [sic] precedence."²⁰⁰ In May of 1991, the president of the CTPA, Archie Vergotine, claimed that his organisation opposed SADTU's trade union activities, which ran counter to the CTPA's professional principles.²⁰¹

The CTPA's other main difficulties within the teacher unity initiative were clearly defined in a lengthy resolution adopted at its June 1990 annual conference (see Appendix D). One item of concern stated in the resolution dealt with the CTPA's unhappiness at the lack of proportional representation. "... [A] fair and proper system of voting should be based on proportional representation based on membership of NTUF organisations," states the resolution. This was not a new concern for the CTPA. At the unity talks held in August 1989, a consensus decision was made to place two representatives -- one from an

¹⁹⁶ "Report to Teacher Unity Forum Workshop," CTPA, n.d. [1990?], 3-4.

¹⁹⁷ "Report to Teacher Unity Forum Workshop," 3.

¹⁹⁸ *South*, 15 June 1989.

¹⁹⁹ "Resolutions," in *Education for a Democratic South Africa*, 64.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 8.

²⁰¹ *South*, 16 May 1991.

established and one from an emergent organisation -- from each region on a newly-formed Feasibility Committee. The following day, according to a TASA report, UTASA (representing the CTPA at the national talks) "... retracted its consent on the basis of unequal representation. UTASA felt that there should be proportional representation -- proportion depending on the numerical strength of each organisation."²⁰² The CTPA resisted the much smaller emergent groups having the same representation at NTUF talks. According to Bot, it felt there to be a "ganging up" of emergent organisations.²⁰³ This complaint could not feasibly be heard by the NTUF, with the great numerical differences in organisational memberships. WECTU, for example, claimed 600 members to the CTPA's 22,000. There was too much power at stake, which is clearly what the CTPA wanted: a more dominant voice. This was political maneuvering, as well as an assertion of superiority over the emergent unions. Whatever the case, it smacked of professional pride.

A second clear point of contention stated in the resolution revolved around the quickening movement towards a unitary, national organisation. The CTPA wanted a federal organisation. Franklin Sonn had always been a leading proponent of federalism within teacher unity.²⁰⁴ This particular stance may have had organisational ramifications, since the June 1990 change in leadership appeared linked to the unity initiative. When Sonn stepped down before the CTPA's congress, and van den Heever became the next president, *South* declared that, "Sonn's decision is expected to have a significant impact on teacher unity."²⁰⁵ It was this June 1990 congress which most significantly examined the possibility of a unitary structure, while still upholding Sonn's belief in federation.²⁰⁶ In fact, according to Alan Powell of the SATA, after UTASA's April 1990 withdrawal from the NTUF, the CTPA approached the SATA and, raising issues of "professionalism", made gestures towards a national federation involving UTASA, ATASA, TASA and the four English-speaking white organisations.²⁰⁷

At the CTPA's June 1991 annual conference, it came out in full support of a federation of teacher organisations.²⁰⁸ Some insight into this decision, and the organisation's continued desire for a federal structure, can be gleaned from the 1990 conference resolution, and can be understood in terms of race. The 1990 conference resolved "that the CTPA ... remains part of the NTUF on a federal basis". It further resolved "that the dissolution of organisations would be facilitated if the existing departments are scrapped and a single department of education comes about". Here again was the argument in favour of federalism amongst teacher bodies. It is underpinned by an acceptance of racist departments requiring racist organisational behaviour, despite the

²⁰² TASA, "Report on Fourth Round of National Teacher Unity Talks Convened by COSATU, held from 19 to 20 August 1989, at the St. Barnabas College, Bosmont, Johannesburg."

²⁰³ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 7.

²⁰⁴ For example, *South*, 15 June 1989.

²⁰⁵ *South*, 14-20 June 1990.

²⁰⁶ *South*, 21-27 June 1990.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Alan Powell, 8 June 1990.

²⁰⁸ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 10.

CTPA's articulated commitment to non-racialism. Non-racialism would occur gradually, according to the CTPA, after a single education department had been implemented. So while accepting "the principle of the establishment of a unitary teachers' organisation", it was clear that the CTPA had a different, more moderate agenda.²⁰⁹

The CTPA also had specific, practical criticisms of the unity process. For example, it levelled criticism at the way in which the unity initiative was run. It objected to perceived undemocratic practices within the NTUF.²¹⁰ It also objected to the lack of proper organisation of regional structures.²¹¹ This dissatisfaction with the organisational operations of the NTUF were the ostensible reasons for UTASA's temporary withdrawal from the NTUF beginning in April 1990, and its complete withdrawal from the Working Committee as stated in the 1990 conference resolution. In a letter addressed to TASA, as the NTUF interim secretariat, dated 24 April 1990, the UTASA Secretary, J.S.G. Strauss, stated: "... UTASA is compelled to convene a special meeting to review its position. You are accordingly advised that UTASA will not further participate until the emergency meeting has been held...." This letter sprang from discontent around two issues which arose at the national teacher unity discussions held on 21 and 22 April 1990 in Bellville. According to the letter, the "terms of reference" of the NTUF Working Committee "... are directly in conflict with the official and documented position of UTASA and a clear contradiction of all the arguments the UTASA delegation tried to convey at all unity meetings...." Secondly, the letter expressed dissatisfaction about the handling of a memorandum submitted to the minister of national education. "Our affiliates," wrote Mr. Strauss, "asked me to convey to you their concern that their consistent insistence on democratic processes is often not heeded." The mechanisms decided on to ensure that the memorandum "... would contain the representative and democratic viewpoint of the various organisations ..." were simply not followed, stated the letter.²¹²

This latter reason for its withdrawal is weakened when compared to UTASA's earlier behaviour within the NTUF. The minutes of the March 1989 unity talks reflect a certain hypocrisy. "Western Cape registered their objections" to a meeting between the CTPA and the Minister of Education, stated the minutes, "as the decision of the previous meeting was that consultation should take place between organisations in the Western Cape before such a meeting took place." The CTPA deferred: "The CTPA acknowledged that it had made an omission in not first having that meeting."²¹³

²⁰⁹ All resolution quotations come from "Conference Resolution: Teacher Unity." See Appendix D.

²¹⁰ "Conference Resolution: Teacher Unity"; Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 7.

²¹¹ "Conference Resolution: Teacher Unity."

²¹² UTASA communication to the TUF interim secretariat, 24 April 1990. Interestingly, minutes of the unity talks held in June 1990 enigmatically do not make direct reference to the withdrawal: "UTASA's absence at the meeting of the IWC on the basis that it did not have mandates at that stage to participate in deliberation on such issues, was noted." "Minutes of a Meeting of the National Teacher Unity Forum Held at the Independent Teacher Enrichment Centre, Park Avenue, North End, East London on 23 and 24 June 1990."

²¹³ "[Minutes of the] Teacher Unity Talks Held on the 17/18th March 1989 at the Natal University."

UTASA's -- and thus the CTPA's -- withdrawal, and its 15 May 1990 request that "... the name of UTASA and/or its affiliates are not to be used on any other letter, pamphlet or propaganda material..." related to the NTUF,²¹⁴ overtly reflect organisational concerns. The withdrawal, however, speaks to the much bigger issue of the CTPA's contradictory placement within a "professional", classist and racist realm, and illustrates an acceptance of entrenched "professional", class and race divides.

The about-face of TASA

TASA presents a different picture within teacher unity than the CTPA. Like the CTPA, TASA entered the unity process from a traditionally "professional" background, as an ethnically-defined, status-oriented organisation. TASA, however, unlike the CTPA eventually rhetorically rejected its traditional location and agreed to dissolve into a new, national union of teachers.

TASA had shown signs of such a remarkable transition in the years before 1988. The change in TASA's established, "professional" outlook and behaviour began in the second half of the eighties (see Chapter Six). This change continued to be reflected in 1988 when, in September, TASA rejected municipal elections as an "extension of the tri-cameral system of government".²¹⁵ This bore witness to the increased "political" aspect of professionalism within the context of South African teachers, and the shift this implied for the established groups. The TASA president also visited the ANC in Lusaka in the same year.²¹⁶ In March 1989, TASA's National Council made the decision to withdraw from government structures such as SACE and departmental subject committees.²¹⁷ It began a "Don't Vote" campaign against the August 1989 tri-cameral parliament elections, and argued against schools being used for polling stations. Further, according to a TASA document, it "Participated in MDM organised protest/peace marches throughout the country." And, in a practical demonstration of its "alliance" with the working class, TASA successfully campaigned -- using a march to Malgate Building in Durban, for example -- against the retrenchment of school cleaning staff.²¹⁸ For TASA, education was a more highly politicized terrain than it had been a few years previously, and it began shifting ideological ground.

During this time, TASA also underwent a significant shift in its involvement in the teacher unity process. Its own report on the third round of teacher unity talks convened by COSATU in March 1989 stated that, "TASA saw a complete political, economic and social restructuring as a precondition for a unitary organisation. TASA's view was that it was

²¹⁴ UTASA communication to the TUF interim secretariat, 15 May 1990.

²¹⁵ *Argus*, 11 September 1988.

²¹⁶ "Teachers' Association of South Africa." n.p.

²¹⁷ TASA, "Progress Report on Teacher Unity for the Period October 1988 to 160389, Presented to a National Teacher Unity Meeting Held on 17/18 March 1989."

²¹⁸ "Teachers' Association of South Africa."

unlikely that a unitary organisation could be operative before the turn of the century."²¹⁹ It was effectively arguing for a federation and a maintenance of its "professional" identity. By the fifth round of talks in February 1990, TASA was appointed to be the interim secretariat for the NTUF,²²⁰ demonstrating a commitment to the process towards unionism that was unfolding. In May 1990, Kenny Ernest would claim of TASA's shifting attitudes and behaviours: "Our role has been such that we have shed the mantle of conservatism and are now seen by the so-called 'progressive' grouping as part of them."²²¹ In April 1992, Monica Bot reported that TASA "... took the formal decision to disband in favour of SADTU at its 1990 annual congress. Since then, it has given attention to various aspects needing consideration for dissolution (assets, legal commitments, investments such as medical aid, implications for its staff, etc), and determined how these could be carried over into SADTU."²²² The transition was not entirely easy, nor could it be absolute. As late as September 1990, *South* reported a "crisis of confidence" in TASA's national executive. The issue, which caused the Cape Town branch to withdraw from the NTUF, concerned decreased Cape Town branch representation at SADTU's launch. The decision came from TASA's National Council, and disregarded an NTUF decision on regional representation.²²³

There were several factors which prompted this behavioural and -- to a degree -- ideological shift. While it would be fallacious to assume that TASA and its entire membership underwent a change in classist and racist values over the period of two years, the changed nature of their engagement with other organisations and their commitment to a teachers' union worked against race and class divisions, and lent more weight to the resistant aspect of teachers' contradictory locations.

The first reason for TASA's shift concerned continuing dissatisfaction with its department. Three relevant points of dissatisfaction were articulated at TASA's National Council meeting in March 1988. First, TASA felt there to be a lack of consultation between it and the department. Second, the organisation felt the evaluation of teachers within the department was inadequate. Finally, TASA once again spoke out against party-political interference in education.²²⁴

Other reasons for TASA's dissatisfaction with the DEC (HoD) became clear during 1988-1990. At the beginning of 1989, TASA reiterated its growing concern about the qualified teachers who were unable to find work.²²⁵ Then, in that same year, the department snubbed TASA when the HoD Minister of Education and Culture, Dr. Kristen Rajoo, created a new "think-tank" for grappling with educational concerns. Although

²¹⁹ TASA, "Report on Third Round of National Teacher Unity Talks Convened by Cosatu, Held from 170389 to 180389, at the University of Natal, Durban."

²²⁰ "Minutes of the 5th National Teacher Unity Talks Convened by COSATU on 10-11 February 1990, at the Alabama Hotel, Port Elizabeth."

²²¹ Ernest, 2.

²²² Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity," 9.

²²³ *South*, 13 September 1990. The article quotes Kenny Ernest.

²²⁴ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1988/1989*, 254.

²²⁵ *Argus*, 19 January 1989.

TASA represented approximately eighty percent of teachers in Indian schools, the minister excluded it from representation on the new advisory body.²²⁶ When it subsequently was invited to serve on the new Ministerial Advisory Council, TASA refused.²²⁷ The changing political climate, which was vociferously against the tri-cameral system of government, further prompted TASA into an antagonistic position in relation to its "own affairs" department.

The political climate affected TASA's ideological stands in other ways as well, adding to the pressures for change within the organisation. The Cape Town branch chairperson, Kenny Ernest, believed that TASA's shift was due in large part to the political movements in South Africa. "There is more political awareness," he said. "People are realizing you cannot live in a vacuum."²²⁸ An organiser in the Durban head office concurred. "Teachers as an educated elite saw that the writing was on the wall for the Nationalist government," said the organiser. "Since Harare, teachers realized that they had a role to play." The TASA informant went on to explain that younger teachers were playing a bigger role in branch and regional structures, which helped to accelerate change within the organisation since these teachers had been more politicized than their parents.²²⁹

Most importantly for our case study of TASA within the professional-unionist dichotomy -- with class as a central tenet -- was the coincidence of TASA's organisational and leadership change. Poobie Naicker replaced Pat Samuels as president in June 1989. Samuels believed that a unified organisation would be possible only by the turn of the century. Naicker, a participant in the Harare talks, had a more short-term vision. Naicker was a TASA stalwart, having served on its National Council for twenty years. A primary school headmaster, he had been chairperson of TASA's English Society, a vice-president of the organisation and a deputy president.²³⁰ Thus he was not a dark-horse candidate, nor did he have a history of militancy. Importantly, Naicker had spent his early years as a sugar cane worker, said Ernest, who concluded this statement with, "We are workers first." Ernest admitted that part of the organisation's shift was due to Naicker: "... Part of it was top-down."²³¹ Another TASA informant was less direct, implying that Naicker's ascendancy was part of a larger process. "The change in leadership," said the informant, "made the transition easier."²³² Naicker himself admits the crucial role of leaders during that time of transition: "The pace at which events have moved [within TASA] has been somewhat decided by the stance of the leadership."²³³

The fundamentally undemocratic heritage of the established organisations, in the sense that large numbers within each organisation existed as "paper members" only, helped to

²²⁶ SAIRR, *Annual Survey 1989/1990*, 781-782.

²²⁷ *Cape Times*, 2 November 1989.

²²⁸ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

²²⁹ Interview with informant B, 16 July 1990.

²³⁰ *Argus*, 20 June 1989.

²³¹ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

²³² Interview with informant B, 16 July 1990.

²³³ Interview with Poobie Naicker, 17 July 1990.

concretise TASA's shift under a more progressive leadership. Ernest spoke honestly of this when he said of the shift: "I will not say that all our membership agrees, but it is the vast majority." And, within a discussion of organisational assets and dissolution, he further admitted that, "We are not confusing our membership by talking about these things now."²³⁴ While such admissions are easily criticized, the importance of leadership positions within organisations cannot be underestimated. Do organisations choose appropriate leaders to reflect a certain historical mood among their members, or do the leaders adopt policies which influence organisational mood? Certainly the hierarchical nature of the established organisations and their members' deference to authority cannot be denied, and the change in TASA's position under Naicker was reflected to a lesser extent in the CTPA which saw Franklin Sonn withdrawing from the presidency in favour of Randall van den Heever at a time when the CTPA's ambiguity regarding the NTUF needed resolution.

TASA's movement away from a traditional "professional" stance had repercussions for the teacher unity initiative. TASA's shift not only put greater pressure on its established former allies, but its movement towards the progressive camp allowed it to take up a public position in the middle of the class dichotomy within the initiative. TASA became the interim secretariat for the initiative -- a power-grabbing exercise, according to an EDASA participant²³⁵ -- and it was TASA that drew up an important draft-structure document for the national talks.²³⁶ Naicker also claims to have been "assigned the role of meeting with Sonn by the NTUF and COSATU" to facilitate greater commitment by Sonn to the kind of organisation envisaged by the Harare Accord.²³⁷ A report from the vice-president for external matters to the 1990 Annual Conference proclaimed that, "It is now common knowledge that the Association enjoys great popularity among many of the participants of the teacher unity movement in national circles."²³⁸ Ernest, in a self-congratulatory way, announced at the May 1990 AGM of TASA's Cape Regional Council that, "It is an open secret that our Association is proving the catalyst at this most crucial period in the unity process. Well done, Comrade Poobie!"²³⁹ Ernest, in fact, claimed that, "TASA went for the role of an honest broker because we could see the impasse, ... [and] we wanted to keep things going."²⁴⁰ Naicker also believes that, "We have helped to resolve differences."²⁴¹ The progressive group within the initiative had its own ideas about TASA. "We are

²³⁴ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

²³⁵ Interview with informant A, 7 March 1990.

²³⁶ "National Teacher Unity Initiatives: Structure of the National Organisation," TASA. In this document, TASA outlines three possible national structures, and suggests that a "... 'Parallel-road' structure has the most to offer". In terms of this structure: "Various teacher associations would exist side-by-side with the national unitary structure.... Each teacher would hold dual membership. Once the national unitary structure is firmly established, the existing teacher organisations would disband." (p. 4)

²³⁷ Interview with Poobie Naicker, 17 July 1990.

²³⁸ H.E.S. Samuel, "Report of the Vice President for External Matters," in *Teachers' Journal: 1990 Annual Conference* 20.2 (June 1990): 27.

²³⁹ Ernest, 1.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Kenny Ernest, 8 May 1990.

²⁴¹ Interview with Poobie Naicker, 17 July 1990.

hoping," said Monde Tulwana of DETU, "to use TASA to challenge the other established organisations."²⁴²

TASA, thus, illustrated the changing dynamics of teacher politics towards the end of the eighties within the context of teacher unity. While TASA's transition was based on leadership decisions, and while its members remained within ethnically-defined locations, this established organisation demonstrated the possibility inherent in the process of teacher unity for a fundamental redefining of "professionalism", and TASA also demonstrated just how far-reaching the changes in teacher politics had become.

Western Cape Strategies for Unity: Unity in Action

Given the variety of tensions described in this chapter, Western Cape teacher groups found unity through joint action, rather than through resolution of debates concerning structure and style. The unity process, actually, swept major, divisive issues under the carpet in favour of unity built on united action against a common enemy.

In reporting on the teacher unity talks after the fifth round in February 1990 in Port Elizabeth, WECTU observed: "A resolution that has been formulated at each National Teacher Unity Forum (NTUF) over the last two years is that teacher organizations must begin to forge unity in action and that the obvious starting place is in the regions."²⁴³ The efficacy of this premise was asserted by Randall van den Heever just prior to the CTPA's June 1990 congress. "The CTPA's involvement in the campaigns of the NTUF," he said to *South*, "has been based on the premise that unity between teachers organisations will only be cemented through political action and solidarity initiatives."²⁴⁴ A commonly-asserted strategy within the liberation movement, unity-in-action was lauded by COSATU's Chris Seoposengwe at a mass meeting of the Western Cape regional teacher unity forum in April 1990. "Unity," he said, "is born of the struggles waged on the ground."²⁴⁵

What most participants in the teacher unity process seemed to understand was that active cooperation around mutual concerns was the way to cut across the contradictions of teachers' positions, and to work against the forces which kept race, class and "professional" divisions in place. Therefore, teachers' organisations in the Western Cape opted to focus their attention on the general crisis in education, and the unhappy plight of teachers in their region.

This tactic was illustrated by a 12 September 1988 meeting of "all" Western Cape teacher organisations at which threatened retrenchments, victimization, school closures and the suspension of five DETU teachers were discussed.²⁴⁶ A month later a mass meeting of Western Cape teachers' organisations -- TASA, CTPA, DETU, EDASA, PENATA and WECTU -- resolved to reject municipal elections, fight against the closure of two teacher

²⁴² Interview with Monde Tulwana, 7 March 1990.

²⁴³ "Teacher Unity Talks Update...." 2.

²⁴⁴ *South*, 14-20 June 1990.

²⁴⁵ Personal notes, TUF Mass Meeting, Hanover Park, 10 April 1990.

²⁴⁶ "Minutes of Teachers' Unity Talks Held on the 6th November 1988, in Cape Town."

training colleges, work for the establishment of a unitary teachers' organisation and work for the release of detainees and the reinstatement of the DETU teachers.²⁴⁷

In 1989, the formation of the Western Cape Education Front (WCEF) served to promote greater cooperation between teacher organisations. While suspicion about the established groups still existed within this MDM education front, it was agreed on 20 June that the CTPA had to be drawn in as an affiliate due to its participation in the unity talks and its "present progressive actions", and that PENATA would need to practically involve itself in educational struggle before affiliating.²⁴⁸ Ultimately, according to WECTU, the CTPA, DETU, EDASA and WECTU affiliated, while PENATA and TASA participated in WCEF campaigns.²⁴⁹ The Western Cape regional report at the fourth national teacher unity talks in August 1989 indicated that while teachers' groups had been involved in WCEF activities, such as meetings and demonstrations, the regional teacher unity forum had not yet evolved.²⁵⁰

It was in November 1989 that a regional teacher unity forum began operating. Like the national initiative, it was convened by COSATU, and two meetings were held in that month. Guided in part by a COSATU program of action for teacher organisations for 1990, the new forum directed itself towards a campaign against the looming 1990 education crisis. From this meeting, an advertisement threatening action against departments which retrenched or victimised teachers was placed in *South* and the *Cape Times*. Following a 5 February 1990 meeting of all the participating organisations' executives, a pamphlet about teacher unemployment and retrenchment was released, and another advertisement was produced which called for unemployed teachers to identify themselves. A further activity of the regional forum was an 18 February workshop, attended by more than one hundred delegates, dealing with central aspects of the unity process.²⁵¹

The activities of the regional teacher unity forum continued to center on specific educational grievances, particularly those concerning teachers. In March 1990, the *Sunday Times* reported the launching of a campaign "... against the retrenchment, unemployment and alleged victimisation" of members of Western Cape teacher organisations.²⁵² The following month, on 10 April, an important mass meeting was held in Hanover Park by the regional forum. The meeting passed a resolution on "Organizing teachers in action" which stressed the need for "common purpose" to override organisational differences. Other resolutions concerned the plight of temporary teachers, service conditions, the future education system and policy against the potential victimization of teachers who would

²⁴⁷ TASA, "Progress Report on Teacher Unity for the Period October 1988 to 160389."

²⁴⁸ Personal notes; meeting of WCEF, UWC, 23 June 1989. This was not a trouble-free alliance for teachers, since antagonisms between teachers' groups still remained. At this meeting, for example, van den Heever complained that WECTU had not reciprocated the CTPA's invitation to its AGM.

²⁴⁹ "Teacher Unity Talks Update...", 2.

²⁵⁰ TASA, "Report on Fourth Round of National Teacher Unity Talks Convened by COSATU, Held from 19 to 20 August 1989, At the St. Barnabas College, Bosmont, Johannesburg."

²⁵¹ "Teacher Unity Talks Update...", 2.

²⁵² *Sunday Times*, 11 March 1990.

participate in the stayaway on 5 and 6 September 1990. The meeting was significant in that it also reflected various pressures at work on teachers. Dullah Omar, representing the ANC, said, "The view of the ANC is that teacher unity is absolutely essential and nothing must stand in its way." His message to teachers from "headquarters" was that teachers must "unify quickly". A COSATU speaker, Chris Seoposengwe, claimed that, "This is a very difficult sector to organise." "Take your rightful political place and lead the nation," he said, "but please, in a unified way."²⁵³ Such pressures, according to the tone of the meeting, sought to help *build* unity through combined action.

Another Western Cape teacher mass meeting, held under the auspices of the regional teacher unity forum on 18 May 1990 in the Cape Town City Hall, called teachers together by publishing a question which reflected the unity forum's strategy: "What do teachers want?" Those of teachers rallied around that question and attended the meeting. Speakers from the floor highlighted teachers' continuing concerns about salaries and harassment.²⁵⁴

A further, significant example of continuing, combined action took place on 5 June 1990 when representatives of the NTUF spoke with the new Minister of National Education, Gene Louw, at a watershed meeting in Cape Town. Originally scheduled for 28 May, Louw refused to see the delegation because of a march scheduled by the regional forum to coincide with the meeting. In a media release, Louw offered an explanation for his refusal:

The NTUF is not a recognized education body to which an interview has ever been granted before. Nevertheless, I granted the Forum a two-hour appointment to discuss education problems and not to indulge in premeditated politicking as things eventually turned out.²⁵⁵

The march itself was very successful, involving approximately 5000 people. Western Cape teachers were united before a common enemy: the state. Speaking in front of the City Hall at the culmination of the demonstration, Shepherd Mdladlana recognized the importance of teacher unity. "The eighteen departments in this country will not dissolve on its [sic] own," he said. "It will have to be removed by the combined force of all our teachers." A teacher, Celeste Louw, demanded a minimum wage and improved facilities. The NECC's Ihron Rensburg proclaimed: "Not once in the last three decades have teachers been as unified as they are today. We stand at the beginning of a new era for teachers' organisations." And Jay Naidoo reaffirmed COSATU's support for teachers and teacher unity.²⁵⁶

The "unconditional" meeting between Louw and the NTUF delegation was deemed "historic" by the *Cape Times* and the *Argus*, and went ahead despite simultaneous placard demonstrations around the peninsula. A joint statement committed the participants to finding a solution to the education crisis. Among other things, Louw agreed to "look into"

²⁵³ Personal notes, TUF mass meeting, Hanover Park, 10 April 1990.

²⁵⁴ Personal notes, TUF mass meeting, City Hall, Cape Town, 18 May 1990.

²⁵⁵ "Media Release Issued by Mr Gene Louw, MP, Minister of National Education," 28 May 1990.

²⁵⁶ Personal notes, TUF mass meeting, City Hall, Cape Town, 28 May 1990. See the *Weekly Mail*, 25-31 May 1990, 4; and *Cape Times*, 29 May 1990.

recognition for the NTUF, to "look into" a minimum wage for teachers, and work for the elimination of wage disparities between men and women. Further, the principle of job security for qualified teachers was agreed upon, and Louw said that he would try to find the required money to alleviate the crisis conditions in schools.²⁵⁷ Primarily, however, it asserted the role of the NTUF in the education struggle, and suggested that such a group, unified through constructive action, could indeed assume a position of primacy in the ongoing education debates.

Specific issues affecting teachers continued to attract teachers to unified activities. Prior to the launch of SADTU, on 24 July, the NTUF called for a "national day of teachers' action against victimisation and harassment". Over 400 teachers attended a meeting in Guguletu that day.²⁵⁸ On 27 July, seventeen members of the Western Cape TUF met with DET officials to present grievances concerning victimization, transferals, salary deductions and teachers who had been arrested.²⁵⁹

Randall van den Heever put the combined action in bold perspective in the middle of 1990. "... [T]he fundamental challenge now facing the whole teacher unity movement," he wrote in *Educatio*, "is to progress from joint initiatives between teachers' organisations to a unitary organisational structure representing all teachers in the Western Cape."²⁶⁰ This challenge, in the end, could not be successfully met.

Conclusion

The strategy of "unity in action" adopted by the national and regional teacher unity forums was successful in the short term. Teachers from different organisations rallied together around issues concerning all teachers as the militant spirit which brought certain changes in teachers' attitudes to their work moved through South Africa. That such unity was temporary, and could not hope to immediately overcome deeply entrenched divisions or to solve the structural contradictions of teachers' work, became apparent as SADTU was finally launched in October.

When looking at the history of Western Cape teachers' organisations during the last years of the eighties, it would be incorrect to assume that teacher unity efforts ultimately failed. The history presented here, rather, hopes to document how remarkable changes in teachers' ideas about their work came about as a result of varied pressures from the state and the liberation movement. Contradictory pressures concerning race and class also continued to influence teachers' behaviour and thinking. The history of teacher unity during this period is thus a reflection of these inherent contradictions, and of a changing teacher "professionalism".

²⁵⁷ *Cape Times*, 5 and 6 June 1990; *Argus*, 5 and 6 June 1990.

²⁵⁸ *Cape Times*, 25 July 1990.

²⁵⁹ *Cape Times*, 28 July 1990.

²⁶⁰ Randall van den Heever, "Teacher Unity in the Western Cape," *Educatio* 2nd Quarter (1990): 20.

CONCLUSION

The year 1990, in which SADTU was launched, marked the end of a remarkable decade for teacher politics in South Africa's history. It was a period of significant changes in the teachers' realm as many teachers found a political home within the popular resistance movement. The changes were clearly illustrated by shifting understandings of teacher "professionalism". ✓

"Professionalism" remains at the heart of teacher politics. "Professionalism" reflects the ways in which teachers understand their position in relation to schooling and society. In South Africa, an acceptance of conventional "professionalism" has meant a tacit acceptance of *apartheid* divisions. "Professional" teachers have grouped into ethnically-defined associations. "Professional" teachers have thus enjoyed status within ethnic communities. The status of teachers, partially premised on myths about teacher autonomy, has been built within a framework of class distinctions. "Professionalism" implies an elitist understanding of teachers' class location, placing teachers in a social stratum "above" the working class.

Conventional "professionalism" with its "racist" and "classist" foundation was fundamentally challenged during the 1980s. At the beginning of the decade, students asserted a rebellious authority within schools. The social order within which teachers worked was altered. Many teachers felt caught between the new student authority and the authority of the state. Many teachers remained fundamentally conservative, distancing themselves from "political" involvement. "Professionalism", as defined by the state, had been accepted by many within the teaching corps. The student rebellion, however, problematised "professional" attitudes and behaviour by rejecting them. The morale of many teachers dropped as they found themselves between a familiar world of *apartheid* education, and a world of resistance. ✓

The challenge to teachers' acceptance of their familiar locations and identities continued as the decade matured. Student rebellion flared once again in the middle of the 1980s. This time, however, the challenge from students was strengthened through the growth of alliance politics. The trade union movement, adding a socialist tenet to resistance politics, and community organisations rejected teacher quiescence during a time of optimistic rebellion. The liberation movement grew in strength as the end of the decade approached. Many specific groups within the movement, such as the ANC and COSATU, focussed on teacher politics, increasing pressure and enhancing the tensions inherent in teachers' realm.

During this time, both in response to external pressures and through a desire to act as agents in their own world, organised teachers manifested change. The established

associations manifested tensions within teacher politics by distancing themselves from education departments, overtly rejecting *apartheid*, and engaging in limited "political" activity. As Randall Petini said in 1985, "Teachers have been at pains to leave political issues alone, but as Franklin Sonn often says, politics will not leave them alone."¹

Other teachers organised outside of the established groups. The emergent unions manifested the changes within teacher politics by espousing non-racialism, by militantly engaging in political acts as part of the broader resistance movement, and by declaring themselves to be unions, as opposed to associations. The emergent teacher groups thus embodied fundamental challenges to conventional "professionalism" premised on race and class divides.

After three years of political in-fighting between the emergent and established organisations, teacher unity appeared as a priority on the agendas of these organisations and of powerful components of the national liberation struggle. The ANC, the NECC and COSATU demonstrated this priority by beginning a process of coopting the established groups into the emergent camp. Teacher groups and others adopted a spirit of compromise during and after the Harare conference in April 1988. As Oppenheimer has written: "To achieve a goal we need unity [within a group] but to achieve unity it is sometimes necessary to compromise, to gloss over some important issues... which shall it be?"² The compromise amongst teacher organisations, within the context of political defiance, took the form of "unity in action". Teacher militancy burgeoned as the decade ended. Many teachers more completely rejected traditional "professionalism", thus heightening tensions within teacher politics.

These tensions were articulated during the two years between the Harare conference and the launch of SADTU as continued debates about organisational structure and style. There was much ambiguity during the years of the NTUF within the established groups as they attempted to come to terms with a political climate which found their conventional ideologies unacceptable.

The changed climate, the heightened militancy, the desires of many teachers to redefine their conventional roles within schools and societies facilitated the launching of SADTU. It was a union of teachers. It was grateful to COSATU for facilitating the unity talks. A TUF spokesperson said in May 1990, for example, that COSATU had "really kept us together in the past two years."³ SADTU immediately foregrounded wage issues.⁴

The launch occurred, however, at a time of quietening popular resistance. Many of the pressures from organisations during the period of popular resistance diminished. This allowed a public re-emergence of conventional "professionalism" within teacher politics. Many teacher organisations -- CATU, NATU, TUATA, and the NTS, for example -- did not participate in SADTU's launch. The SATA, marginal to the process, went so far as to

¹ Petini, "The contribution," 34.

² Quoted in Matiwana, Walters and Groener, 19.

³ *South*, 30 May to 6 June 1990.

⁴ *New Nation*, 12-18 October 1990.

purchase a half-page advertisement in the *Cape Times* on the eve of SADTU's formation declaring its decision not to participate.⁵ Established associations perceived SADTU to be overly "political", and thus "unprofessional".

This conservative retrenchment created space for the launch of a rival "professional" federation comprised of ethnically-defined teacher groups. NAPTOSA represented a victory for those teacher organisations wedded to their ethnic and "professional" identities.. It also represented the serious nature of continuing divisions within teacher politics. In July 1991, just prior to NAPTOSA's launch, the federation accused SADTU of "moving away from a professional stance".⁶

Such divisions have historically bred discontent. Unity affords empowerment. Teachers in South Africa have needed such empowerment as they lived and worked in difficult circumstances. In an article entitled "In the undervaluing of teachers lies the undoing of society", Peter Vale, a senior lecturer in international relations, wrote of teachers in 1989:

The state-run education system has been unable to cope with the demands placed upon it and has simply capitulated (some would say even encourages) a deterioration in standards. This has demoralised and embittered the teaching community. Resentment and frustration, coupled with steadily declining incomes as more and more schools have had to be staffed and run on less and less money per pupil, have done the rest.⁷

Growing teacher militancy and the process of teacher unity were two examples of teachers' responses to such circumstances. Teachers have remained active, not simply reactive.

It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the way in which the contradictory nature of teachers' terrain continued to influence the two newly-formed national bodies. The difficulties faced by SADTU have been examined elsewhere.⁸ Here it will suffice to say that the historical contradictions within the complicated realm of race, class and "professionalism" have continued to plague SADTU, particularly regarding its militant, "trade union" behaviour.

This dissertation has attempted to explore the highly complex realm of teacher politics in the 1980s. It has suggested a variety of reasons why teacher disunity has been so resilient. Certainly, not all of the reasons could be adequately dealt with. The TLSA, for example, an important group within the Western Cape, and an organisation which provided the soil on which WECTU grew, has been slighted since it did not play a role in the teacher unity initiatives of the eighties. Also, the important story of international organisations' role in the teacher unity initiative at the end of the decade has been left untold.⁹ Further,

⁵ *Cape Times*, 5 October 1990.

⁶ *The Weekly Mail*, 28 June - 4 July 1991.

⁷ *Business Day*, 7 December 1989.

⁸ Bot, "The Politics of Teacher Unity"; Portia Maurice, "Debate rages over teacher unionism," *Weekly Mail*, 28 June - 4 July 1991: 13.

⁹ One extremely significant aspect of international involvement in the NTUF was related by EDASA-member Lynette Farager at a special general meeting of EDASA held after SADTU's launch. She reported that tension existed between WCOTF and the International Federation of Teachers' Unions (IFTU). The IFTU had been

this dissertation has dealt with organised teachers, thus excluding the majority of teachers outside of teacher groups.

This dissertation has highlighted the power of teachers, and the urgent tasks which confront them. "What role," asked Gareth Rossiter in 1990, "are teachers going to play in establishing unity and in breaking down *apartheid* structures?"¹⁰ A DETU executive member involved in the unity process partially answered Rossiter's question: "In Coloured areas, like Heideveld, there are people who still call me a Bantu. When they see you, they call you 'boy'. Teachers can change that. That is our belief."¹¹

The process of teacher unity was concerned with political change in opposition to the *apartheid* state. But it was also concerned with the empowerment of an embattled teaching corps. Wilson and Ramphele wrote at the end of the decade:

There can be few more urgent and immediate political tasks in South Africa than rethinking the role of teachers in an oppressive structure so that they may play their full part, with integrity and perseverance in the long march to liberation.¹²

Teachers had indeed begun this political task in earnest during the 1980s. The history of teacher politics in that decade demonstrates the complexity and difficulty faced in accomplishing such a goal. The history also illustrates the potential for teachers to engage with changing social and political circumstances and empower themselves.

kept out of the South African unity initiative for fear of alienating the established associations. EDASA, special general meeting, Rondebosch, 18 October 1990.

¹⁰ Interview with Gareth Rossiter, 5 March 1990.

¹¹ Interview with informant D, 6 March 1990.

¹² Wilson and Ramphele, 144.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The JOCTASA Charter for Teacher Unity

We believe that the following aspects are vital and relevant elements to be incorporated in a charter to form the basis of teacher unity in South Africa. UTASA furthermore believes that all associations who are prepared to pledge themselves to these principles may be joined together in one union.

- * the eradication of race as a criterion for the appointment of teachers to teaching posts, and to membership of a single national teachers' body
- * the establishment of a single central educational authority
- * equal salaries for equal qualifications and service regardless of sex
- * the equalisation of service benefits
- * the raising of educational standards in general and the improvement of teachers' qualifications in particular.

We consider the following broader principles to be vital for the upliftment of children and will therefore actively seek ways and means to attain them:

- * the condemnation of Apartheid as detrimental to education and society at large
- * the establishment of a non-racial society based on respect for human dignity and repugnance for measures intrinsic in the policy of Apartheid, which serve to offend the basic humanity of our children, our members and our parent community.

We deem the following educational aims and principles to be an integral part of our concept of a democratic educational system:

1. The welfare of all South Africa's people.
2. Equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of race, religion, social or economic status, creed or sex.
3. Equal standards of education for all, under a single education system, administered by a single, national department of education.
4. A democratic system of education in which all people have the right to share in determining the purposes and policies of education. This right cannot be separated from the inalienable right of all people to share in the central decision-making process in our country.
5. Respect for civil liberties.
6. A rationally planned educational system adapted to meet the challenges of the scientific-technological age with specific reference to the manpower requirements of our country; and to this end, the provision of educational institutions to promote the acquisition of managerial, entrepreneurial, administrative, professional and technical skills.
7. Free and compulsory education for all children to the age of sixteen years.
8. A system of differentiated education to direct pupils to their choice of subjects and educational institutions according to their ability, aptitude and interest.

With these objectives in mind, we undertake to enter into discussions with the existing educational authorities on matters requiring immediate and urgent attention:

- * the establishment of a single educational authority
- * equal monetary grants to all state schools
- * adequate teacher-training facilities
- * realistic salaries to prevent the present drain to commerce and industry
- * non-discriminatory admission to all educational institutions based on a policy of non-interference by the state.

APPENDIX A (continued)

Given the essentially separate basis of education policy and practice in South Africa, we realistically recognise and appreciate:

- * the difficulties inherent in establishing and effectively organising and operating teachers' associations on a practically open basis
- * that a fully open education system in South Africa is a function of an open society.

We nevertheless:

PLEDGE OURSELVES TO MOVE WITH URGENCY FROM THE BASIS OF EXISTING TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS TOWARDS ONE, NATIONAL AND NON-RACIAL ASSOCIATION FOR TEACHERS, THAT WE MAY THEREBY MAKE MANIFEST, AND GIVE PRACTICAL EFFECT TO THE PRINCIPLES TO WHICH WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED.

(Source: CTPA photocopy.)

APPENDIX B***Ten Aims and Objectives Accepted at National Progressive Teacher Unity Meeting,
7 November 1987***

1. To unite, mobilise and organise all teachers.
2. To struggle for a unitary, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, compulsory and free education system on all levels, as part of our struggle for a non-racial and democratic South Africa free from oppression and exploitation.
3. To clarify, implement and promote people's education.
4. To work jointly with parents and students for the democratic control of education.
5. to educate teachers about their rights and to fight for the rights and interests of all teachers in the schools.
6. To work towards eradicating all sexist practices in schools.
7. To involve ourselves as teachers in the progressive struggles of our people.
8. To reject participation in reactionary structures which have been created by the state to perpetuate the status quo.
9. To develop and promote a national, people's culture.
10. To work towards the principles and practices of non-racial sport.

(Source: *WECTU newsletter* 11 [February 1988]: 3.)

APPENDIX C

The Harare Accord on Teacher Unity

1. All representatives of the teachers organisations present agreed on the need for the national unity of teachers and committed themselves to discuss this in their various organisations and to propagate the feasibility of one national teachers organisation.
2. The representatives of teachers organisations agreed that they should get together to negotiate and decide on the form which the envisaged organisation should take.
3. Such an organisation should be committed to a unitary, non-racial, democratic South Africa.
4. The organisation should commit itself to be part of the national mass democratic movement.
5. The organisation should commit itself to a free, non-racial, non-sexist, compulsory democratic education in a single education system.
6. The organisation should protect and promote the rights of teachers as workers and professionals.
7. The organisation should implement as a matter of urgency a programme of political and professional education of teachers for them to play an effective role within the community.
8. Ideology should not be a precondition for unity.
9. The representatives of organisations agreed to urge their organisations that they, as well as the envisaged organisation, would abide by the principle and practice of non-collaboration with all structures of the Apartheid system.
10. Negotiations with respective authorities should only be conducted with the mandate of the constituencies concerned.
11. The organisation will commit itself to the realisation of the ideals of people's education in our country.
12. In the interim, the representatives of organisations will urge their organisations to consult on ways to co-ordinate the various attempts and work together in formulating and implementing people's education projects.
13. Organisations are encouraged to organise joint projects which will facilitate national unity.
14. The representatives of organisations committed themselves to urge their organisations to maintain the spirit of comradeship, mutual respect and common purpose which has characterised the Harare seminar on teacher unity as a necessary element in the process of achieving unity.
15. The representatives of organisations agreed to urge their organisations to establish a negotiating machinery to pursue the objectives stated in this document. They request that as a matter of urgency, COSATU should convene such a machinery having consulted and agreed with the organisations about the composition and powers of such machinery. COSATU is further requested to consult with other sectors of the democratic movement to facilitate the unity process.

Agreed to by: UTASA, ATASA, TASA, NECC, NEUSA, WECTU, PTU, DETU,
EDASA, PTL

Harare: 7 April 1988

APPENDIX D

*Cape Teachers' Professional Association**1990 Conference Resolution on Teacher Unity***This 23rd Annual Conference of the CTPA noting:**

- (a) that the CTPA is committed to the process of teacher unity, particularly by virtue of its acceptance of the Harare Teacher Unity Accord;
- (b) that a proposal is to be tabled by the Working Committee of the National Teacher Unity Forum (NTUF) for the launch of a national teachers' organisation in September 1990;
- (c) that UTASA withdrew its representatives from this NTUF Working Committee due to the principle of consensus decision-making not being consistently applied within the NTUF;
- (d) that a fair and proper system of voting should be based on proportional representation based on membership of NTUF membership organisations;
- (e) that many regions of the NTUF have not yet been properly organised;
- (f) that the CTPA cannot forsake its obligations to its members in terms of the union facilities it provides to teachers, until an effective alternative can be established.
- (g) that the pace of political events in the country is fast overtaking the teacher unity initiative;
- (h) that the escalating crisis in education need to be urgently facilitated by a recognised non-racial, national teachers' organisation;

hereby resolves:

- 1. that the conference accepts the principle of the establishment of a unitary teachers' organisation;
- 2. that the CTPA for the interim remains part of the NTUF on a federal basis.
- 3. that the CTPA regional structures should, together with other teachers' organisations in the region and under the convenorship of COSATU, organise TUF regional structures as a matter of the utmost urgency;
- 4. that the NTUF should strictly abide by the principles of democracy in all aspects of decision-making;
- 5. that the launch of a national teachers' structure takes place once all democratic requirements have been met;
- 6. that the time-table towards the launch of a national teachers' organisation be determined by the following factors:
 - 6.1 that such a launch takes place after all NTUF regions have been organised, and progressive-thinking white teachers' organisations have all been incorporated in the unity process;

APPENDIX D (continued)

- 6.2 that a launch can only take place when all constitutional requirements dealing with dissolutions within the various organisations have been met;
7. that the dissolution of organisations would be facilitated if the existing departments are scrapped and a single department of education comes about.
8. that the CTPA Executive be mandated to investigate and report to the Representative Council on the following:
 - 8.1 Dissolution Procedures
 - 8.2 Retention of Employees
 - 8.3 A Deed of Trust with regard to Assets
 - 8.4 Changes to the CTPA Constitution.

21 June 1990

(Source: CTPA photocopy)

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Philippine Daily Globe (November-December 1991)
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The Weekly Mail

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The *Argus* Library
 Black Education Press Cutting Service

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- CTPA members meeting, Bellville, 31 August 1989.
 DETU, AGM, Guguletu, 16 March 1990.
 EDASA, AGM, Athlone, 15 March 1990.
 EDASA, special general meeting, Rondebosch, 18 October 1990.
 Jeremy Baskin, public lectures, UCT Summer School, Cape Town, 18-22 January 1993.
 Public meeting, Lawyers for Human Rights, University of Stellenbosch, 4 August 1989.
 WECTU members' meeting, University of the Western Cape, 14 August 1989.
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 Western Cape TUF, teachers' mass meeting, Cape Town, 28 May 1990.
 Western Cape TUF, teachers' mass meeting, Hanover Park, 10 April 1990.

Interviews

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date</u>
Mike Adendorf	EDASA	Past Committee	7 August 1990
Zubeida Desai	WECTU	-----	12 August 1990
Kenny Ernest	TASA	Cape Town chair	8 May 1990
Yousuf Gabru	WECTU	Chairperson	28 February 1990
Mr. Gqaji	PENATA	Chairperson	4 December 1990
Barbara Houghton	WECTU	-----	22 March 1990
Monde Mbekwa	DETU	-----	9 August 1990
Poobie Naicker	TASA	President	17 July 1990
Basie Nikani	PENATA	Regional org.	13 June 1990
Alan Powell	TFC	Vice-chair	8 June 1990
Mike Reeler	SATA	Organiser	2 April 1990
Gareth Rossiter	EDASA	Coordinator	5 March 1990
John Stonier	SATA	Past president	20 August 1990
Cheryl Schwikard	EDASA	Member	8 May 1990
Monde Tulwana	DETU	General Sec.	7 March 1990
Randall van den Heever	CTPA	Vice-president	8 March 1990
Pam van Dyk	EDASA	Past committee	2 August 1990
Informant A *	EDASA	-----	7 March 1990
Informant B	TASA	-----	16 July 1990
Informant C	DETU	Executive	18 October 1990
Informant D	DETU	Executive	6 March 1990
Informant E	NECC (Western Cape)		5 March 1990
Informant F	-----	-----	18 March 1988
Informant G	DEC principal	-----	10 February 1993
7 former hunger-strikers +	ACT (Manila)	-----	5 January 1992

* *Certain informants, who are cited by letter, agreed to be interviewed on condition that their names would not be cited.*

+ *Vangie Ricasio, Jimmy Dayao, Nerza Rivera, Lolita Antazo, Elena Dilag, and two others.*

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UTASA

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