WOMEN WORKING FOR THEIR FREEDOM:

FCWU AND AFCWU AND THE WOMAN QUESTION.

By

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the text:

FCWU	- Food and Canning Workers Union
AFCWU	- African Food and Canning Workers Union
FSAW	- Federation of South African Women
WIDF	- Women's International Democratic Federation
CPSA	- Communist Party of South Africa
SATLC	- South African Trades and Labour Council
SACTU	- South African Congress of Trade Unions
ANC	- African National Congress
TUCSA	- Trade Union Council of South Africa
NEUM	- Non-European Unity Movement
CHL	- Cape Housewives League
UDF	- United Democratic Front
COSATU	- Congress of South African Trade Unions
UWCO	- United Women's Congress
TUC	- Trades Union Council (British)
NUTW	- National Union of Textile Workers
PAC	- Pan African Congress
NIC	- Natal Indian Congress

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has two parallel processes of investigation. Firstly, it is an investigation of the extent to which a trade union can successfully participate in the struggle for working women's rights at work and concerning motherhood and childcare, and in the struggle for the realisation of the political aspirations of women workers within a capitalist society. Secondly, the thesis examines the ideological position of the Food and Canning Workers Union in order to refine the theoretical understanding of the woman question in South Africa.

Research methods have relied on use of archival documents, both published and unpublished; oral history; secondary sources on the union being studied and on South African society; as well as classical and contemporary texts on the theory of women's oppression and its interconnection with exploitation. The research has been hindered by the historical repression meted out by the South African state, which has forced people into exile, banned written sources, and removed archival material from South Africa. The recent repression has severely hampered the extent of interviewing and discussion, as well as made the process of research and writing of the thesis a difficult undertaking.

The union's organising strategy is examined in terms of the following three issues:

1. Because of their dual responsibilities as worker and mother, and because of their relatively unorganised position, women workers are ultra-exploited. What role can a union play in fighting against the various aspects of this? The specific aspects of ultra-exploitation found in the food and canning industry are temporary employment and periodic unemployment; child labour; piece-work; excessive overtime.
2. The inclusion of women into wage labour faces them with a task of combining motherhood and wage labour. How can a union win demands to assist these women workers with this task? The two ways in which the union confronted this question were maternity rights and childcare facilities.
3. The assault on working class in terms of the right to work, the right to live where one chooses, the right to family life, and the right to a decent standard of living was a burden to working class women in particular. How did the union participate in the national struggle against various forms of oppression by the Apartheid state? The union not only participated in joint campaigns with other organisations, but trained a body of working class women in the skills and duties of organisation and leadership and encouraged them to lead not only in the union, but in national political organisations as well.

Within the discussion of each of these areas, the long term perspective of the union is highlighted. The questions of the limits of the role of a trade union under capitalism is a theme throughout the thesis, while at the same time, the role of a progressive trade union as an organiser and educator of the workers for broader political action is highlighted. At the same time the limitations of a trade union, by its very nature as a workplace-based organisation, in organising workers as a class force are recognised.

The thesis examines three interconnected aspects of working women's lives - their responsibilities as mothers, the exploitation as workers, and the oppression as part of a nation. The theoretical conclusions that are drawn from this examination flow from three sources - the practices and ideological contribution of the FCWU and AFCWU; the theoretical debates on the woman question ranging from the Classical Marxists of the late 19th and early 20th Century to the current Marxist-Feminist debates and critiques thereof; and finally from my own theoretical position. The thesis poses a debate between theory and practice; between our history and our contemporary theory; between a historical materialist approach to the woman question and feminism.

The thesis concludes that there is a history of working class women's participation in the development of our country that needs to be uncovered, and furthermore that this tradition of organisation and resistance has valuable lessons for the woman question today. Secondly, it argues that the understanding of the interceonnections of exploitation, national and gender oppression inherent in the union's practices has more to offer analysts of the woman question, than contemporary European and American feminist debates. Ultimately, the thesis suggests a direction that further investigation of the woman question should take. Namely that, using the tools of historical materiliasm, with the category of gender integral to the conceptual apparatus of materialism, the PSprecise nature and complexityPS of different familial relations, ~~relations~~ and forms of exploitation, and the manner in which women experience national oppression in South Africa need to be researched. In this way, the policy and demands for women's emancipation are based on the reality of the South African working woman's life.

INTRODUCTION

My objective is to explore at an ideological and at an organisational level, how the Food and Canning Workers Union(1) incorporated the national question, the woman question(2) and class struggle into their strategy to build a "better life". Some explanation of why I have chosen to examine a trade union in order to develop an approach to the woman question is necessary. The presence of a large number of women within the food industry gave rise to the organisation of women workers into the union on a large scale. The Food and Canning Workers Union of this period, (late 40s to early 60s) was a relatively successful union, capable of an effective answer to the daily problems of its members and of confronting directly the question of social transformation. It's unique significance is enhanced by the fact that it is a rare exception to the common practice whereby women are excluded from ongoing organisations. The union has a rich tradition of organised women who led not only the trade union movement but the liberation movement as a whole. The union represents for me a study of women organised around issues and policies which are crucial for an approach to the removal of women's oppression. The history of the FCWU gives us a useful insight into what a trade union can be for women workers.

Through this study, we will catch a glimpse of the over-riding theoretical question that underlies our concern with the woman question: how can race, class and gender, dialectically interconnected, be woven into a strategy for social liberation? And what is the material basis of women's oppression under capitalism and hence what are the material conditions necessary for their emancipation? Unless these three strands are woven into the strategies and tactics of the movement for social transformation, the emancipation of women is impossible. Furthermore, if the struggle for women's emancipation is not a crucial element of our analysis, social transformation towards a society without oppression and exploitation will be incomplete. My theoretical starting point is that gender is a fundamental category within materialist social analysis. If this is acknowledged, implications flow from it for the current strategies and tactics of all organisations in the national liberation movement.

I have chosen to look at the history of organised women, since organisation in one form or another is crucial in order to accomplish anything in life, be it the household chores, production of commodities or governing of a country. I choose to look at working class women who have organised politically and economically, as opposed to women's church, welfare or cultural groups, for specific reasons. These women have made a unique contribution to the struggle for freedom from oppression and exploitation in South Africa. Any organised group of society, articulates demands for other unorganised people. This is particularly important for working class women because of the manner in which their responsibilities at work and at home, and their socialization, make active and ongoing organisational participation very difficult. So it is to the organised women that we must turn to identify what demands have been articulated

for the women of South Africa and why. Struggles in other countries, have shown us that the women active in the struggle were not always active in their own right, but rather took their place simply to struggle for a gender-blind freedom. Algerian, for example, women lost significant gains that they had made during the course of the armed struggle in the post-liberation period. It must be stressed that the organisation of women in the union was not a reflection of an external political analysis or needs, but came from the women themselves. So, my objective is to explore how the politically organised women in the union, incorporated an understanding and organisational sensitivity to the woman question into the organisational work.

The Lessons of History.

I am writing this thesis at a time when the democratic movement in South Africa faces a series of "new" political questions thrown up by the political and economic crises, the reformism introduced by the state, and by the growth of organisation and mobilization of people, particularly by the United Democratic Front in the last few years. Over the last five years, in the Western Cape, the organisation of women has taken place through various organisations ie. United Women's Congress(3), through the civic associations whose membership comprises largely of women and through the work of trade unions such as the FCWU and the NUTW. This has raised a debate over the role of women's organisations in the democratic movement, the importance of organising working class women, and the relationship between the organisation of women around economic issues, in the workplace, the community, and the national liberation struggle.

The Apartheid state of the 1950's was far from being in a crisis. Having taken power in 1948, the Nationalist Party was attempting to consolidate its power and build up the state apparatuses necessary to secure their class rule. The 1980's have widely been analysed as a period of crisis for the South African state and the Nationalist Party (Saul,J and Gelb,S.1983; and articles in the South African Review Volumes One to Three; and contemporary political documents). This is evidenced in the divisions within the ruling class as to the correct strategy to adopt in order to maintain power and the continued accumulation of capital. The attempt by Botha's government to co-opt the so-called Coloured and Indian middle classes into the state structures is another manifestation. The Nationalists have resorted to repression to try to stop the growing democratic movement at a time when trade unions, civic associations, youth organisations, student bodies, women's organisations, church groups and other religious bodies, are fighting their own specific struggles and linking together to support each other and move forward with their common demands. This again is evidence of the crisis.

South Africa in the 1980's is a country undergoing increasing militarization, as seen in the growing debate about conscription, in the role of the South African Defence Force in the State Security Council, in the role of the SADF in the oppressed communities in South Africa, and in the States of Emergency

declared on the 20 July 1985 and again on 12 June 1986. The 1950's led to fundamental changes in the sphere of military struggle. The repression of the late 50's and of 1960, and the lessons from the mass struggles of the 1950's, led to the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, in 1961, and the launching of the armed struggle by the people of South Africa on 16 December 1961. The State in response to the threat posed by the mass action of the Congress Alliance in the 50's and to the taking up of arms by the movement of the oppressed people, underwent significant re-organisation in relation to the repressive state apparatuses in the early 1960's (Bunting,B.1964; Wolpe,H.1980) This is seen in the changed relationship between the army and police force, the role of the revamped security police and the new measures introduced through legislation in the early 1960's. These two changes, from within the ranks of the oppressed and from within the apparatuses of the State, set a new stage for the struggles that followed. The repressive period of the 1960's, and the decade of the 70's when the oppressed once again flexed their muscles in mass struggles against the State, have given rise to a wealth of accumulated knowledge and experience both within the State and within the democratic movement.

Economically, there have been massive changes since the 1950s, giving rise to new forms of accumulation. The rise of monopoly capital in South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s has substantially altered the terrain on which the labour movement has to carry out its work (Fransman,M.1982; Innes,D.1984; Webster,E.1984). Not only this, but the age of monopoly capital has altered the material conditions of the lives of the working people of South Africa, and a new set of relations between state and capital have developed.

It is important that the differences between the period under review in this thesis and the present time are not under-estimated, if the lessons of the earlier period are going to be of benefit to the activists of today. These differences place limitations on the direct comparison of organisational practices then and now; but this limitation is overcome by extracting from the historical study, the theoretical questions and assessing how they were addressed in the 1950's. It is not my intention to prescribe solutions to these theoretical questions for the democratic movement of the 1980's. My aim is to provide a historical account that outlines an approach to the woman question. It is for the men and women active in the democratic movement to provide the answers to these questions through their organisational practice, and to again theorise from this organisational practice. A fundamental tenet of my theoretical position is that both theory and practice are dynamic processes, and that no "correct" line can be determined ahistorically. Yet it is on the experience of a previous era that some of our most fruitful analyses of the present should be based.

The Woman Question - Where To Now?

The questions posed in this thesis are not of concern to women alone. There are 4 fundamental principles of the South African liberation movement - non-racialism, democracy, gender equality

and the ultimate removal of class exploitation, led by the working class. But, the responsibility to ensure that social liberation includes the liberation of society from oppressive gender relations lies ultimately with women who are presently on the receiving end of this oppression. In the same way that the black population must organise to ensure that freedom from national oppression is part of the liberation which the democratic movement is working for, so women must organise to include their demands with the demands of the people as a whole. The working class has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the content of that liberation includes freedom from exploitation. Black working class women therefore have the responsibility to ensure that their demands become the demands of all people, and that liberation also means the end to the subordination of women in all spheres of society. The women who organised into the AFCWU and FCWU were black, working class women. The burning question is how these different aspects of the struggle for a better life mesh together.

The current state of the democratic movement and the growth of organisations in South Africa pose a number of questions. The organisation of women has raised questions of how to mobilize women, how to develop women's consciousness, and how to address the particular problems which women experience. Central to the various answers are:

a. Different understandings of the way in which organisations should relate to women as wives and mothers, of the nature of the family and of the position of women in the family.

b. Diverse approaches to the role of women outside the home, whether in the community , or in the workplace.

c. Debates around how the problems of one section of society can be solved without jeopardizing the unity of the people as a whole.

d. Diverse approaches to the vision of the future society towards which the national liberation movement is working

e. Debates around the most appropriate relationships between the various organisations which operate in different sites of struggle, and how to raise the woman question in all organisations.

f. Debates as to whether women, having been in the forefront of liberation struggles, have failed to put their own issues on the liberation agenda and have been at the forefront, but not "in their own right".

Without trying to provide ahistorical answers to any of these debates, similar questions were being raised in the 50s. (see Gaitskell,D et al;n.d.-a). By recovering these for the present day liberation movement, we may be moving further towards an adequate theorising of the gender content of our struggle.The struggle for the removal of oppression of women is one current question. But alongside it are questions of the role of working class leadership, the significance of class alliances, the question of racial oppression and non-racialism, the relationship between economic and political struggles, and the relationship between national democratic struggle and class struggle. These questions can be separated analytically; but politically , the answers to all these questions must be integrated into the organisational practice of the democratic movement. The task here is to develop a theoretical framework that allows for consistent

approaches to all of these questions.

Particularly in the last 15 years, academics across the world have studied the subordination or oppression of women, and the liberation or emancipation of women, using feminist theory, marxism, marxist-feminism and so on. The growth of "women's studies" during this period has served a useful function in sensitizing the academic world to the importance of gender relations within contemporary capitalist society. However, much of the literature has been built on a "dualist-legacy" (Vogel,L;1983) in search of new concepts that will explain the material basis of women's subordination. Authors have varied greatly about where they locate the source of women's oppression: the family, motherhood and biological reproduction, sexual/patriarchal ideology, women's ultra-exploitation in wage labour, and so on. Furthermore, many academics have used studies of advanced capitalist countries as the basis on which to draw theoretical conclusions. This raises the thorny question: to what extent are questions outlined by European and American feminists, marxists or marxist-feminists relevant to the South African context?

This thesis is written at a time when there is an emerging theoretical debate about "feminism's" relevance to South Africa, (and an implicit critique of existing women's organisations as being anti-feminist). This is evidenced in the work of Gaitskell et al (n.d.-a and b), Bozzoli (1983), and Kimble and Unterhalter (1982). The following quote from Gaitskell et al usefully poses the question of feminism's relevance in our context:

> "The notion of sisterhood does not entirely rest on the concrete personal experiences of women. Feminism cannot be the product of an identity of various women's experiences and interests. It must be an alignment of women within a political movement with political objectives. The FSAW organised women to fight for women's emancipation and for issues of special concern to women within the Congress Alliance. The unity of women within the FSAW was not established on the basis of any 'common personal experiences' but by shared interests and a common political (perspective)..."
> (Gaitskell,D et al.(n.d.-a)p12).

There is also currently a debate as to the nature of South African society in relation to national oppression and class exploitation and a debate around the nature of racial discrimination in South Africa and its centrality to the South African struggle. The major theoretical studies of South Africa have not integrated an understanding of women's lives and demands into their perspective. (Wolpe,H.1980; Gelb,S.1984; Anon.1983) In the organisational practices of the democratic movement, the woman question has begun to be posed as central to various organisation's political programmes. However, the moves in this respect - the maternity struggles within trade unions; the questioning of why men hold leadership positions in trade unions and civics where the majority of members are women; the demand for the end to sexual harrassment by COSAS in the Vaal Triangle unrest in 1984; the moves to form a federation uniting women from a range of different kinds of organisations; the attempts by women's organisations to organise women against the Tricameral Elections and to issue a special call to women to support the

consumer boycott - are embryonic and need to be supported and developed.(4) I offer this thesis as an attempt to highlight the complexity of the woman's question, and to give those concerned with the struggle for women's emancipation some food for thought.

I wish to outline my own position against the background of the tradition into which it fits.(5) Since the development of a historical materialist theory is a dialectical process of interaction between historical analysis, political practice and theory, my own theoretical contribution will only become clear as the thesis unfolds. Through looking at the organisational practice of the AFCWU and FCWU, the historical reality of women workers in this industry and the theoretical guidelines drawn from the AFCWU and FCWU documents, I will try to articulate my own position on the crucial inclusion of gender as a category of analysis within historical materialism - and the political/organisational implications from that. Furthermore, I will explore the material basis of women's oppression, drawing out the implications for our conceptions and policy on women as mothers, workers and citizens. This thesis aims, through a concrete study of organisation around working women's life experiences, to develop a theoretical view of the subordination and emancipation of women. However, the thesis is not approached 'cold', but rather with a background of study of feminism, Marxist feminism and Marxist approaches to the woman question. Different approaches to the woman question have emerged in the context of particular struggles, and as the answer to particular strategic and tactical questions.

The theoretical position adopted in any study has important implications for the way in which the material is approached. Theoretical weaknesses will be reflected in the research itself. The inadequacy of a framework leads to an inadequate analysis of the political, economic and ideological determinants of the events being written about. My own theoretical approach is a historical materialism sensitive to gender relations. This approach informs my study of the AFCWU and FCWU in relation to their women members.

Through my study of South African historiography and theory of the woman question, I have rejected economism and reductionism, and at the same time rejected idealist explanations of history and of women's subordination. Recent South African academic discourse has been dominated by a variant of historical materialism which has tended towards economism and reductionism. In extreme forms, this historical materialism has proved incapable of situating various forms of oppression within its ambit. Not surprisingly, a historical materialism which is narrowly dogmatic in terms of the national oppression of the black people in South Africa, is not able to theorise the interconnection between gender, race and class. However, even the analyses of South Africa that have a far more rounded historical materialism in that they have addressed the theoretical interconnection between national oppression and class exploitation, have not situated the oppression of women as a central tenet or pillar of analysis. (First,R.1978; Anon.1983; Wolpe,H.1980)

The insights gained from the writings and organisational practice of gender sensitive historical materialism need to be more fully theorised. The socialist tradition posits the emancipation of women as crucial for social liberation. These **Classical Marxist** texts, Bebel, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kollontai, and Zetkin, are a significant body of writing that outlined the experiences of working class women and posed the question of the causes of women's subordination and exclusion from social/political life at a theoretical and organisational level. Volbrecht has outlined what for her are the main themes that run through this body of literature (Volbrecht,G.1986;p8-9). Drawing on her outline, and returning to the texts, I have summarised the central contributions that these historical materialists made on the woman question:

1. There are separate woman questions not just within different historical eras and modes of production, but also for the different classes within a given society. From this they argued that there was no basis for a cross-class women's movement.
2. The exclusion of women from socialised production in an era when the productive functions of the family have dwindled away, causes working class women to be economically dependent on their men. From this recognition, flows their prioritising of the inclusion of women within socialised labour on an equal basis with men as one of the prerequisites for the emancipation of women. They argued also for the inclusion of women into the trade union movement to ensure the unity of the working class.
3. The continued responsibilities for housework and childcare alongside the gradual inclusion of women into socialised production under capitalism is a burden of oppression. These theorists argued for the socialisation of housework and childcare to remove the isolation of women into the home and the drudgery of domestic tasks as an important part of the women's struggle.
4. These theorists recognised that the granting of formal rights to women was not in itself a solution to their problems; they recognised that in the process of transforming society, the material conditions necessary for the inclusion of women into the economic, social and political life of the society must be provided. From this, they argued that the socialist state must take full responsibility for the maternity, childcare, educational and welfare needs of the people.
5. The remnants of old "patriarchal" familial relations were recognised as confining women to lives of isolation and domestic slavery. They identified that certain aspects of traditional family relations would die as they were no longer compatible with the social relations in the new society, and argued that those aspects that were suitable for the new society should be retained and would take on a new form under socialism.
6. All of these theorists recognised the aspect of oppression of women which is rooted in the bourgeois property relations of marriage, but also recognised that the priority of the working class movement was to focus not on the interpersonal relationships, but on the system that turned interpersonal relationships into a property relation.
7. These theorists also recognised that there was no blueprint for the emancipation of women, since the social influences

on the woman question are so complex and their interactions so diverse, that it is impossible to foretell what the relationships in the future will be like. What they were able to say, however is that in the maturing of non-oppressive and non-exploitative relations, the institutions and relations which were oppressive to women will be changed. This should be seen in the context of their approach to the unfolding of socialism. It is not a shelving of the woman question to some later date, but rather a recognition that the development of a socialist society is a process of struggle, and the final shape of the society reflects the parts of the struggle that the country has gone through.

This tradition is also embodied in the "Third World" struggles against colonialism and imperialism such as Vietnam and Cuba, where the classical tradition has been built on and taken further, subsequent to the 1920s. In the development of theory that took place with the new political questions faced by Third World anti-imperialist liberation movements in the 50s and 60s, the emancipation of women was seen as a fundamental component of national liberation. This recognition of the liberation of women as a strategic goal of national liberation and the cultural and ideological organisation and struggle around the backward and outdated values of colonial society, was complemented by the organisation of women into the social forces of anti-imperialist struggle. Women's emancipation became seen as inseparable from the struggle against colonialism and imperialism; these movements recognised that in the newly liberated society, the material conditions for women's emancipation had to be built. To this end, the building of strong and militant women's organisations was seen as important not only so that women took their place in the national liberation struggle, but also so that they could secure for themselves these material conditions in the post-liberation society.

The significance of this tradition of a historical materialism that is sensitive to the woman question cannot be overlooked. What is needed however is further refining of the <u>theoretical</u> analysis of the material basis of women's subordination within class relations. What I am arguing therefore is
a) that we already have a powerful tradition prior to the 1920s, based on the Classical texts, which laid the basis for the correct <u>theoretical</u> and <u>practical</u> political development of the woman question;
b) that this tradition has been further developed, theoretically and practically, by the anti-imperialist movements of recent decade;
and c) that through an examination of the practices of the FCWU in the 1940s and 1950s, this thesis hopes to 'recapture' some of the advances and contributions to its further development.

The oppression of women, as any other form of oppression, is not a static given; it is socially constructed and hence socially changeable. The structure of economic relations, the ideological organisation of interpersonal relationships, of national groups or relations between men and women, all interact. The solution to

the removal of discrimination/oppression must therefore be looked at in the context of the transformation of society, the national and the social liberation struggle. Political struggles, be they women's struggles or struggles of the national democratic movement as a whole, are neither entirely autonomous of the accumulation process in a capitalist society, nor are they epiphenomena of the mode of production. Historical materialism identifies the mode of production as the material basis of society. It is this which is the ultimate determinant of the class relations in society. The mode of production is the crucible within which the limits and forms of the political struggle are fought out. A materialist analysis of the subordination of women cannot study women outside of their positions in the class relations of society. Thus "women" is not an analytical category designating a homogenous group in society. Gender relations in a capitalist society have a class pertinency. It is incorrect to extrapolate from the correct analytical fact that the sexual division of labour operates at all levels of capitalist society, to the conclusion that all women have a common structural position. The consciousness of women is determined more fundamentally by their class position than by their gender definition. This class position is experienced differently however from their male class companions.

> "Proletarian women ... do not see men as the enemy and the oppressors; on the contrary, they think of men as their comrades, who share with them the drudgery of the daily round and fight with them for a better future. The women and her male comrades are enslaved by the same social conditions; the same hated chains of capitalism oppress their will and deprive them of the joys and charms of life. It is true that several specific aspects of the contemporary system lie with double weight upon women, as it is also true that the conditions of hired labour sometimes turn working women into competitors and rivals to men. But in these unfavourable situations, the working class knows who is guilty. ..."
> (Kollontai,A.1977;p60)

A similar position is put forward by Angela Davis, discussing the contemporary situation in relation to class, race and gender as possible lines of division:

> "Working class and racially oppressed women confront sexist oppression in a way that reflects the real and objective interconnections between class exploitation, racist oppression and male supremacy. Whereas a white middle class woman's experience of sexism incorporates a relatively isolated form of this oppression, working class women's experiences necessarily place sexism in its context of class exploitation and Black women's experiences further incorporate the social factor of racism. These are by no means subjective experiences; rather there is an objective interrelationship between racism and sexism in that the general context of both forms of oppression in our time is the class struggle unfolding between monopoly capital and the working class." (Davis,A.Y.1984;p15)

Kollontai draws out the implications from this position for the organisation of women on the basis of their womanhood as opposed to their class experience of womanhood:

"Class instinct - whatever the feminists say - always shows itself to be more powerful than the noble enthusiasms of 'above class' politics. So long as the bourgeois women and their 'younger sisters' are equal in their inequality, the former can, with complete sincerity, make great efforts to defend the general interests of women. But once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the 'rights of all women' become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave the younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realise some 'general women's' principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful."
(Kollontai,A.1977;p73)

Kollontai's concern here is reflected in our own political history. Olive Schreiner, for example, resigned from the Women's Enfrachisement League "because she feared the white women of South Africa would fight only for themselves and abandon the unenfranchised native men and women of their land, to the underdogs." (Gregg,L.1957;p13)

Why is the Food and Canning Workers Union a useful case study on the Woman Question?

I have chosen to explore the strategic and tactical aspects of organisation for the emancipation of women through a historical analysis, rather than simply through a review of contemporary and traditional academic texts. In doing this, I have avoided the problem of transposing European studies and theory into a South African context and expecting to find them useful in analysing our daily questions. In addition, I have been able to highlight the fact that the successful resolution of the woman question does not hinge just on a correct theorising of gender relations and the material basis of women's oppression. It must also take into account the practical/organisational dynamics. South African academics have far too often sat outside of practical organisational involvement and criticised organisations for a 'theoretically bankrupt' approach. Far from being the case, it is important to stress that in putting our theory into practice, the dynamics of the organisation, the community or factory being organised, requires us to modify our theory and be creative in its application.

The rich history of women's resistance in the Congress movement is the obvious starting point in examining organisation of women historically. In focusing specifically on the organisation of working class women, I had the option of examining the ANC Women's League or the Food and Canning Workers Union as the two major affiliates of the FSAW. In the process of research, the sheer quantity of material made it necessary to narrow the focus. Precisely because of the non-racial, non-workerist and gender sensitive practices of the union, it seemed to offer the bigger challenge to and contribution to our theory, and so became the focus of research.

I will focus on the organisation of working class women, but it is important to record that the union stressed the importance of class alliances. In focusing on the organisation of working class women, one must avoid a "workerist" position. "Politics is the search for allies" not only at the level of ideological questions, but in terms of class forces as well. The extent to which a class alliance can further the long-term interests of the working class is not a question that can be answered abstractly. It is a question which is contingent upon the organisational strength of the classes entering into the alliance, the hegemony of class interests within the alliance and the balance of class forces in the society as a whole. But, nor do I wish to argue for a populist approach in which classes lose their identity and become absorbed into "the people" with only national symbols, identity and so on. There are times within the historical development of the struggle for social liberation , when it is necessary to appeal to the oppressed and exploited classes as "the people" in order to weld unity between classes and mobilise on a mass basis; but within that context the development of working class leadership is crucial for successful social liberation. The second chapter and the last part of Chapter Three will show how the union's history reflects this.

This is a crucial question: To what extent within a national liberation movement, can the working class assert its own interests with an understanding of where these interests differ from, and where they overlap with, the interests of other classes in the alliance? So, I will argue, the question must be: In what way was the understanding of the position of working class women developed by the union within the Congress Alliance and how was the leadership of working class women asserted? The Congress Alliance organisations did not have the explicit intention of building working class women's leadership or of organising working class women. But by virtue of the fact that they aimed to organise the mass of oppressed women, they became the only legal and mass based progressive organisation(6) which had a significant presence among working class women. Two qualificatory remarks are necessary here. Even during that period, there was a recognition of the tendency towards being too campaign-minded at the expense of building mass organisation (Z.K.Matthews, quoted in Karis,T and Carter,G.1973;p12). Current analyses not withstanding, the mass presence of these organisations was far more extensive than any other tendency. (Davis,D and Fine,B.1985)

The consciousness of working women is not sufficiently examined by looking at the specifically constituted women's sections or women's organisations. The premise of this thesis is that it is crucial that women, and particularly working class women, are fully active at all levels of progressive organisation. I do not presume that all women should be organised into a women's organisation. Such organisations have a significant role in developing women's leadership and in raising the women's voice within the democratic movement, thereby facilitating full participation; but in the final analysis the acid test is the level of organisation of women within the national liberation movement as a whole. The Federation of South African Women (FSAW) was an umbrella body open to all organisations which endorsed the Women's Charter (See Appendix 1) aimed at uniting

women from different organisations across class and colour lines to create a powerful non-racial voice of women within the national liberation movement. The FSAW did not really succeed in drawing non-Congress Alliance organisations in as affiliates, but through its methods of organising, it did draw other non-Congress Alliance organisations into specific campaigns (Schreiner,J.1984; Griessel,A.1981) The Federation adopted an approach to organising which was aimed at building the broadest possible alliance on a particular issue, thereby trying to draw organised women closer to the Congress Movement (Schreiner,J;1984). By examining the union, some additional data emerges as a basis for assessing the level of women's involvement as a whole.

At the time of the 50s, when women's lives were under threat from many directions - pass laws, food shortages, rent increases - these organisations developed a mass movement of women. The organisation of women as a vibrant section of the Congress Alliance came from the women themselves, not as a reflection of the needs of the national liberation movement as perceived by political men. The FSAW, formed to unite all women on a basis of non-racialism and democracy, was part of the Congress Alliance. The AFCWU and FCWU sent delegates to the inaugural conference on 17 April 1954, and resolved to affiliate to the FSAW at a Management Committee meeting in 1955. The thesis focuses on the Food and Canning Workers Union and African Food and Canning Workers Union, within the Western Cape region, where it took its place alongside the ANC Women's League as the two major affiliates.(7)

Before looking in the chapters that follow at the specifics of the union's organisation of women workers around their problems, the Union's overall context and contribution needs to be highlighted. The Congress Alliance's leadership of the national liberation movement is widely recognised (Lodge,T.1984). Its mass support in the 1950's meant that the Congress Alliance was a significant force for democracy in South Africa. The particular context of this investigation is the liberation movement as it emerged in the 1950's, as a mass movement committed to a programme of action which stated:

> "The fundamental principles of the programme of action of the African National Congress are inspired by the desire to achieve National Freedom. By National Freedom we mean freedom from white domination and the attainment of political independence... With this object in view in the light of these principles, we claim and will continue to fight for the political rights...such as : ...
> The appointment of a council of action whose function should be to carry into effect, vigorously and with the utmost determination, a programme of action. It should be competent for the council of action to implement our resolve to work for:
> a)The abolition of all differential political institutions, the boycotting of which we accept, and to undertake a campaign to educate our people on this issue and, in addition, to employ the following weapons : immediate and active boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-co-operation and such other means as may bring about the accomplishment and realization of our aspirations.

b)Preparations and making of plans for a national stoppage of work for one day as a mark of protest against the reactionary policy of the government.
(Quote from the 1949 Programme of Action, Statement of Policy, adopted at the ANC Annual Conference, December 17, 1949; reproduced in full in Karis,T & Carter,G , 1973 , Vol 2, p337/8)

It should be emphasised however that the view of 'national freedom' outlined in the 1949 Programme of Action is somewhat narrower than that articulated by the union. The Programme of Action was not presented as a complete and final programme, watertight in every respect. As with all the Congress Alliance documents, precisely because they were documents of unity and alliances, this left room for organisations to develop an interpretation of them through their practice. Within the union, the emphasis was far more on the link between national and social liberation, than on the end of white domination and attainment of political independence.

The above basic document sets out the frame of reference for the campaigns of the 1950's. This was an era of protest, of mass action and the flexing of the muscles of the South African nation. The document shows a significant break from the pleas and deputations to the government by the ANC leadership in the pre-war period. The ANC Programme of Action and the policy at this time, identified mass protest action against the government as the vehicle for bringing about social change. The ANC recognised the leadership given by the women in this new era of mass resistance. Not only did the women teach the liberation movement "how the people's daily needs can become the kernel of a united protest campaign so that even those not previously active in political affairs, felt compelled to join in."(Karis,T and Carter,G.1967,Vol3;p237) but their hard work in the 1956 anti-pass campaign was used as a lesson in the 1958 ANC Conference.

It must be noted that the ANC was not an ideologically homogeneous movement. In a detailed examination of documents, speeches and of the political practice of the movement in the late 40's and early 50's, one can find the seeds of the more materialist and fundamental analysis that came to predominate in the 1950's. The 1949 Programme of Action was supplemented by the Freedom Charter, drawn up by 2814 delegates at Kliptown on 26 June 1955 (Appendix 5). This document, subsequently adopted by the Congress Alliance organisations, outlined the people's demands for a non-racial, democratic South Africa.(8)

The Congress Alliance organisations were the most significant political and ideological force in relation to the mass incorporation of working class women into the liberation movement.(9) In addition, the ANC and the FCWU women played a leading role in the emergence of national organisation amongst women. It is interesting to note the leading political role of the Western Cape region in relation to the woman question, despite its economic weakness relative to other regions in South Africa. However, we should guard against overplaying the importance of the women of this region, as ultimately the major

force in the Federation lay outside of the Western Cape in the Transvaal and Eastern Cape. For example, in the discussion about the structure of the federation, the position adopted by the Western Cape was over-ruled (Walker,C.1982;p198-199; Schreiner,J.1982a;p77-83). I focus on the Western Cape, even though the Western Cape is not the industrial centre of South Africa, and as such does not have a strong working class movement.

What should be emphasised here is that even though other organisations during this period on occassions made a call to women, they did not embody a tradition of recognising the role of women as a strategic matter. Rather, women were mobilised in the context of a particular issue - for example there were Indian women's groups in the Defiance Campaign, however the issue was not strategically recognised. FCWU however as will be shown, had a solid tradition of centrality of the woman question fully recognising the principle of women's equality from before the emergence of the mass women's organisations of the 1950s.

As will be seen, a study of the Food and Canning Workers Union facilitates an exploration of many aspects of the gender division of labour within the working class in the Western Cape. The food and canning industry, like the clothing and textile industries, have traditionally employed a vast number of women. While it is obvious that for these women, proletarianisation was completed by the early 1940's, there are also specific characteristics of the industry, normally attributed to "women's work". The work was largely unskilled manual labour during the period I am studying, and this facilitated the employment of women at particularly low wages. Prior to the socialization of food production these women would have fulfilled this economic function as housewife and as domestic worker. In addition, the food and canning industry is largely seasonal, thus exhibiting another feature often ascribed to "women's work" - the employment of women on a part-time/temporary basis, with the periods of unemployment ideologically disguised under the category of housewife. The practice of piece-work was a further characteristic of the food and canning industry and a common method of the ultra-exploitation of working class women.

So , the FCWU provides an ideal case study because it is against the background of an industry characterized by the "ghetto-isation of women". The peculiar interconnections between the racial and gender divisions of labour, and the specificity of the Western Cape both in terms of the racial and sexual composition of the population, add another dimension to the woman question.(10) Both the Union and the FSAW were committed to non-racialism and had to address the problems of the different life-experiences and working conditions of Coloured and African women in South Africa. (11)

The ideological contribution of both FSAW and FCWU in terms of presenting a vision of the future which involved the transformation of relations between people, is significant in shifting the national liberation movement away from a more narrowly defined nationalism, which became organisationally

embodied in the split-off of the PAC in the late 50's. I argue that nationalism, in so far as it challenges only the right of equal access to existing social institutions irrespective of race, does not provide the space for a full examination of the women question. Nationalism presupposes the confirmation of existing social relations save only the end of racialism. I do not want to be read as suggesting that a socialist tradition (as alternative to a nationalist approach) necessarily and automically, answers the woman question. However, in so far as it raises for debate the entire arena of social relations, the question of gender relations can be more easily problematised.

R.Goode (1985) recognizes that "women constituted the backbone of the Food and Canning Workers Union". However, he has no explanation for this state of affairs. Through focussing on this union, I hope to draw out the responsibility that a trade union has to its women members, and to explain the strength of women as rank and file members of any organisation in terms of their responsibilities in the household, and hence their basic, gut, social conscience. This examination will hopefully throw some light on the recent contributions to the debate on "a women's place is in her union" (Hunt,J;1982; Bird,A.1985; Ngwenya,L.1983; Mayson,D.1984; FOSATU,1984; Aldred,C.1981).

There are two further contributions that the history of the FCWU makes. The Union's position as closely linked to the Congress Alliance organisations throws light on current debates about the balance between working class leadership and class alliances, and non-racialism (Lewis,D.H.1984; Njikelana,S.1984). One can see from the structure of this thesis that this point is followed up in every chapter. The union generated not only a working class base with a large female membership, but it generated working class leaders, women and men who played their role in the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action of mass (and hence working-class based) action.

As outlined in footnote 1, the union's enforced separation into FCWU and AFCWU was an administrative response to the industrial relations laws. It was the union's primary task to organise all workers, entailing the building of unity between African and Coloured workers. There were ocassions of racial conflict, but the union tried to overcome these problems through political education and practice. From when the union was started on 6 Febraury 1941 until 1943, the battle around registration and the necessary corollary that the union should be for Coloured workers only, raged on. The union was legally forced to separate in 1947, but never separated physically nor ideologically. The policy of the union enables us to consider the lives of Coloured and African women, and to see how the non-racial principles enabled these women to develop a strong common identity not only as workers, but as mothers and as South Africans.

The union also is an exceptionally useful case study because of the quality of its organisation. It will become clear as I highlight these aspects during the thesis that the union leadership showed maturity and dedication in the organising work, the education and training processes within the union, and in the

analysis of events within the trade union and the world in which it organised.

The final aspect of the Food and Canning Workers Union history that recommends it as an object of study is the role of the Union in the building of a federation of trade unions, South African Congress of Trade Union (SACTU). This federation was committed not only to the economic struggles of the working people, but also to the political struggle for the transformation of social relations. Here the role of the Union throws light on the debate over economism, reformism, and the respective roles of the trade union and working class party in the articles of Foster,J.1982; Davies,R and O'Meara,D.1984; Plaut,M.1984 and others.

To summarise briefly why the union case study has proved theoretically useful in studying an approach to the woman question, there are 6 major contributions that the union has made in this regard:

1. the union organised workers around problems experienced in an industry characterised by "women's work";
2. the union organised workers with a clear understanding of the importance of class alliances, and of the leadership of the working class within that alliance;
3. it organised workers within the context of their entire lives - not just at the workplace, and hence organised them within the context of the national liberation movement;
4. it organised with a consciousness of women worker's problems;
5. it organised non-racially in the face of rigidifying Apartheid;
6. the union gave leadership within the trade union federation, which saw its role as part of the national liberation movement, and within the women's federation as well.

These six aspects are crucial to the functioning of a trade union that is serious about fighting for a better life. The understanding of the causes of women's oppression must be, and was in the case of the union, built within the context of all of these aspects. I hope to show this in the chapters that follow.

Methodology.

In writing this thesis, I have had to face up to a number of thorny methodological questions and problems. Some of these are inherent in research on organisations, especially those with political orientations. Others flow from the nature of the investigation as a piece of recovery history in terms of resistance history, women's history and working class history. The extensive use of oral history has raised a further set of considerations. The repressive nature of the South African state, both at the time that this history was being made, and in the present era, have placed probably the most severe constraints on the analysis. There is in addition, the overarching question of any historical investigation: Is the object of conducting the study simply to record the past events and struggles of the working people; or to draw conclusions about the present based on the past; or, rather to extract from an historical account, the

theoretical implications of the organisational practices being examined, an understanding of the tradition on which people are building today, and to provide the raw material and tools for analysts to examine their present. I will explore each of these methodological points in more detail.

The task of recovering the history of black, working class communities in South Africa is a particularly important and taxing task. Official South African history as taught in schools, some university courses and from the mouths of the ruling class is a history which ignores the lives and resistance of the majority of the people who live and work in this country. In this regard, the researcher has to confront the bourgeois ideology of history being a study of great men, dates, industry and armies, and to develop an approach that places the ordinary working class women and men at the centre of the stage. The racist distribution of research skills and the dominant historical approach have combined to also exclude until recently the role of the black people from our recorded history.

As a researcher on the woman question, there is another aspect of recovery involved in this history. Much of written history is not only bourgeois history (a history from the point of view of the ruling class) and racist, but is a history from a male viewpoint, insensitive to the lives and resistance of women.

In studying this organisation's history, I am not trying to write a "women's history" of the 1950s. Following Fox-Genovese, I would guard against an approach that simply tries to insert gender into the gaps in current analyses (Fox-Genovese,E.1982;p12). She makes the additional point that in analysing women's movements, one must guard against minimising the significance of class as a basis for division in society and a basis for organisation (1982,p12/3).

But further to this, the repressive actions of the state in banning organisations, individuals, books and publications has the effect of removing from us a source of our own history. Constantly documents are being lost through raids on homes and offices by security police eager to fill their own archives. One hopes this will be a temporary situation until the "state archives" are liberated. For example, a substantial part of the national FSAW documents are presently (or hopefully, still) lodged in the archives of John Vorster Square. In part then, one embarks on recovery history in order to preserve a documentary of the sacrifice and struggles our forebears have made for the people of this country.

So, the recovery has to be sensitive to three directions - to the fact that history is made by the **producers of the wealth** among whom there are **women and men, black and white,** in a constant struggle with the owners of the means of production and their political representatives. To modify a phrase used by Fox-Genovese in a crucial article on the importance of gender sensitive research, the task confronting us therefore, is to place women's history, working class history and black history in history (Fox-Genovese,E.1982; "Placing Women's History in

History") As has been shown clearly by Molyneux's early writings on Terray's analysis of pre-capitalist socieities, the inclusion of gender, alongside race and class, can have far reaching implications for our conclusions (Molyneux,M.1977).

In writing an historical account such as this, one must avoid the danger of "generalism" (that history repeats itself). At the same time one must veer away from an empiricist and chaotic view of history as so many unconnected events. It is fundamental to the historical materialist method that the objective conditions of the conjuncture are taken into account and given priority. But it is also fundamental that the scientific tools of this analysis are applicable to any historical period and enable us to analyse the similarities and differences between one historical period and the next. It is for that reason that I have set out the differences between the South Africa of the 50s and that of the late 80s in the introduction. In so far as historical materialism directs us to a scientific understanding of society, however, a historical study can benefit us in a) understanding the development of forces within society and b) in refining our theoretical tools. In the 1950s, organisations were faced with a particular economic situation, particular social questions and particular political forces. The correct organisational strategy then is not necessarily the correct organisational strategy now. However, the tools of historical materialism enable us to understand the organisation in its context. In so doing, we are exploring an approach as to how to understand organisation within the present context.

There are a number of traps into which an unsuspecting researcher can fall. The task of <u>assessing an organisation</u> in a previous historical period is fraught with even more potential dangers than an assessment of a contemporary organisation. In assessing an organisation, there are various aspects that must be kept separate. The practice must be weighed up in relation to a) the organisation's own self-perception, the aims and objects and tasks outlined for itself; and b) given the objective conditions of the conjuncture and the goals of the organisation, one can ask if it employed the best possible strategy and tactics. The author's own goals and feelings on the subject matter should be kept separate and articulated clearly as such. Where the historical data supports or negates the author's own theoretical or practical work, the implications can only be drawn out as a comment. In other words, in conducting research into organisational practices, it is imperative to try to let the organisation speak for itself, rather than trying to use a case study as a tool for articulating one's own viewpoint.

An analysis of an organisation does not easily span historical periods. We cannot assume that there are <u>general</u> issues applicable across the epochs. The choice of issues taken up within an organisation cannot be transhistorically specified. What issue is chosen at a given historical time is contingent on the objective conditions prevailing in the society, the strength of the organisations, the political understanding of the leadership and the rank and file, the policy of the body and so on. The organisation's ability to tackle an issue depends on an assessment of internal organisational dynamics, the

organisation's relationship to the people being organised, and the strength and strategy of opposing forces - in this case the employers and the state. The correct strategy and tactics are conjunctural, but history can be a valuable source of lessons in so far as an approach to organsational and ideological questions are concerned.

To summarise, we cannot set out to develop a transhistorical blueprint as to how to organise. What is legitimate is to contrast and compare our currently held theoretical and practical views on the woman question with that of an organisation being studied, provided that these two viewpoints are clearly stated and understood conjuncturally. In assessing the work of that organisation, the context in which it was organising has to be taken as the yardstick for assessment.

In going further than asking why an organisation took up a particular issue and how successfully and with what implications it organised around it, the researcher must pose a clearly separate set of questions. The questions of what issues the organisations missed; whether the union could have taken them up, given the material conditions; the level of consciousness of the membership and the strength of the organisation; are asked on the basis of the author's own theoretical and political position. They are also addressed on the basis that, by having the time and resources to get an overview of <u>that</u> historical period, one has more empirical knowledge about <u>that</u> period in terms of 'overview data' than some of the actors in that period may have had.

The organisational analysis which is undertaken in the following chapters, is thus put forward in terms of a key premise: that political struggle, while linked to the objective material relations prevailing in a society, is not simply an epiphenomenon of the stage of development of the mode of production. But neither is political struggle a pure and separate process of class struggle, or gender struggle, defined in terms of a balance of opposing forces. For in addition, political analysis must be sensitive to organisational dynamics and the interaction of these objective conditions and ideological factors.

This thesis poses an additional problem in that I did not set out to analyse the union in all its respects. I have focused on the union in relation to women workers within the Western Cape, and as such, have definitely skewed the view of the union that one will get. However, this is legitimate given my intentions. I set out to examine how a strategic incorporation of the woman question into the work of a trade union is possible. Furthermore, I aim to show that this approach is crucial for the union adequately to protect its members and for the long term goal of women's emancipation from all forms of oppression and exploitation.

The sources available to an organisational researcher place a series of intellectual hurdles in the path. These sources include the documents of the organisation, (minutes, pamphlets, letters etc), contemporary accounts on the organisation - newspaper articles from both the capitalist press and from the 'people's

papers'; speeches made by leadership figures; interviews with participants in the struggles being recorded and analysed; interviews from observers of these struggles. Finally one has to rely on other secondary sources, trying to assess as one does so, the objectivity of these accounts.

In quoting from organisational documents, the question must be posed: Does that document reflect the total organisation, certain groupings within the organisation or simply the view of the individual who drafted it? There can be no simple or categorical answer to this. It will depend on the democratic processes within the organisation, the extent and nature of the organisation's policy on that issue, the coherence (ideologically and otherwise) within the organisaion, the discipline and ideological persuasion of the individual who finally put pen to paper, and his/her position within the organisation as well as the context the organisation is working in. The value of any document in an analysis is also dependent on the function that it played within the organisation. Minutes of meetings are perhaps more likely to reflect the dynamics of an organisation, than a circular letter aimed at stimulating action on certain issues; and certainly more so than pamphlets and propaganda aimed at speaking directly to organised and unorganised people.

In addition there are documents put out by the organisation under consideration, as well as the documents of organisations working with or against that body. There are for example - the minutes of the union, the minutes of the FSAW, SATLC and SACTU, the records of the Department of Labour and the views of the Canners Council or the commercial press. Through these documents, some reflection of the capital-labour struggle can be gained.

The documentation of these two groups of organisations cannot however be dealt with in the same manner. The attitude of capital and its representatives to administration and paper work, carried out by highly skilled specialists in this field, cannot be compared to the union's approach which at all times was guided by the political tasks confronting the leadership of a largely uneducated working class membership.

The only corrective answer that I have been able to find to this methodological problem has been a sensitivity to the function of the documents, an attempt to balance the views of a range of different kinds of documents and to cross-check them against oral testimony of participants and observers.

Organisational documents in themselves fulfil particular roles with the organisation. They do not always reflect the entire situation, nor do they reflect it without bias. Often reports in an organisation are brief because of the pressure under which the organisation is operating. For example, in 1956, no detailed report of the national tour by Helen Joseph, Leon Levy and Bertha Matshoba was submitted to the National Consultative Committee because Joseph and Matshoba were under immense pressure, organising the 9 August march in Pretoria. The organising work took precedence over the reportback. In other cases, the absence

of a full reportback may be due to the limitations on time in a meeting, the lack of reportback skills etc.

Some of the material considered in this thesis played a directly propagandistic and educative role within the labour and national liberation movements. The articles from the Guardian for example, fall into this category. This role does not make them any less useful or unreliable academically, so long as no attempt is made to treat them as an academic analysis or neutral statement of fact. In assessing an organisation, the manner in which it presents itself to the public is in fact, a crucial question. It is through this material that an organisation aims to mobilise and politicise its potential members. It is for this reason that I have analysed the public statements on the women question in Chapter One. It must also be noted that propaganda is also class specific - the commercial, capitalist press has a very different class effectivity from the Guardian. The interests that lie behind the words of the commercial press are diametrically opposed to those of the "people's press".

The final comment that needs to be made on the use of organisational documents relates to the availability of these documents. It is unfortunate that the archives of working class organisations, involved in the liberation struggle, are often limited. This is a reflection of the priorities within the organisation at the time, but it also on occassion aggravated by security police raids on offices. As a researcher, one can only hope that when the archives of John Vorster Square and other police stations are unlocked to the people of South Africa, there will be researchers to correct our analyses that have been restricted by limited sources. In relation to the FCWU papers, researchers are fortunate in that the union has traditionally kept good records and has had the foresight to house them in a university library.

The problems faced in relation to sources do not stop at the official organisational documents. Secondary sources on organisational resistance history raise a whole set on constraints on their own. In South Africa, many of the historical accounts have been banned, and hence access to them is not always easy. In addition, the quotability of these sources is subject to legislative control. It is also necessary to undertake an assessment of the methodology and theory of the author. I have attempted to pose to all secondary material, the same set of methodological questions that I have asked of myself. The extent to which I have relied on their analysis, data and conclusions has depended on how rigorously they have tested their own methodology.

Oral sources, the personal testimony of organisational members or observers, are invaluable in complementing newspaper, documentary and secondary sources. Since an organisation is a collective of the individuals who join it, shaped by them and their interaction with one another and the society they live in, the role of personal opinions and experiences is crucial in organisational history. In a repressive state, where organisations have been banned and the goals of these organisations declared subversive, oral history takes on more significance.

However, the use of oral history is also not without its limitations. Firstly, many of the key figures of the organisations and period under consideration are in exile. I have where possible tried to gain input through correspondence. However, this has proved to be very inadequate as it has precluded any debate and discussion with these people. Secondly, the understanding, perspective and knowledge of any individual will be dependent on the level of political understanding at the time, their position in the organisation, their memory of the period, and their current perspective. The structure and nature of the democratic processes within the organisation will also affect the extent to which certain knowledge and understanding is commonly shared by the membership. For example, one could expect rank and file members to have a far more detailed understanding of the decisions in a democratic union structure, than in the federal bodies to which the union affiliated.

In addition, I have been faced with questions relating to repression directed against activists. Some of the interviewees are banned or listed. Others are afraid to speak to me, for fear of further harassment. I have tried in conducting oral history interviews to accomodate the particular needs of the interviewee, at times assuring them of complete anonymity.

It is not possible to overcome the problems of oral sources entirely. One must try to minimise the room for inaccuracy and bias by cross-referencing one oral history against another, by returning to clarify points that are in dispute, and by comparing oral sources with already secondary sources and primary material. A further counter to the potential bias of oral history, is to ensure that not all the people interviewed shared the same organisational history. In this way, it is possible to examine one's sources critically.

In the use of oral sources, I have been assisted immeasurably by the collectivity exhibited by two of my colleagues - Cherryl Walker and Richard Goode. Both of these researchers have made copies of interviews they conducted for their own research available to me, and Richard has even included specific questions into interviews at my request. I have benefited here not just from their generosity and discussion and debate, but also from responses to questions posed in a way in which I probably would not have asked them.

There are two aspects in which I have set artificial parameters on this thesis. Firstly, I have undertaken a largely regional study despite the fact that the union was organised on a national basis. Secondly, I have focused on the practice on the union in relation to <u>women</u> workers, despite the fact that the union had men and women members. Both of these two decisions are academically justified.

In relation to the <u>regional specificity</u> of the thesis, there are a number of points. Firstly, the Western Cape has a specificity of

its own. It was the centre of the food and canning industry, and the proletariat within this industry is different from that in any other region in relation to its gender and colour composition. The manner in which the food and canning industry and hence the trade union became the centre of life in the Boland towns is not a pattern found in the Eastern Cape, Natal or Transvaal. In addition, the FCWU/AFCWU papers, stored in UCT archives, are largely the papers of the Western Cape branches, others being housed at Wits. The Western Cape has been chosen partly because of the access I have had to sources. Recently housed in UCT libraries, the FCWU papers have provided a stimulus to looking at local history. In addition, the use of oral history has tended to narrow the scope to areas easily reachable on a frequent basis. Beyond that, having been based in the Western Cape for the last ten years myself, has given an invaluable practical understanding of the context in which the union organised. Had the study been nationally based or focused on a different region, an enormous amount of background, contextual analysis would have been necessary before a senstitive balanced study could be undertaken.

The regional focus is made less problematic in that my object of study is the theoretical approach to the woman question, through the study of its practical implementation and not a complete analysis of the trade union as a whole. I did not set out to examine the strategy and tactics, methods of organising, successes and failures of the trade union as an organisation. Rather I aimed to explore how a trade union can contribute to working class women's active participation in the national liberation struggle, the struggle against exploitation and the struggle for emancipation of people from gender power relations.

Conclusion

It is because I approach the woman question as a social question that all these aspects of the FCWU history need to be mentioned at this stage. It is only in the correct approach to all these analytically separable questions that successful leadership can be given in the struggle to end all forms of oppression and exploitation. What is required ultimately is an approach which synthesises the role of the trade union in the following respects:

* in safeguarding the daily lives of its members (male and female) and in the building of working class unity in economic and political matters through a democratic trade union and a democratic federation.
* in its provision of working class leadership to the movement in the struggle for political power
* in providing working class women's leadership to the liberation movement.

Only then will we begin to develop the theory of social liberation that can remove exploitation, national oppression and gender oppression and build a society with new non-oppressive relationships between people and between people and things.

In this thesis, I have separated out analytically and structurally, various topics for investigation. However, in the last analysis, these topics must be seen as a coherent whole. I

have attempted to draw these various strands together in the concluding chapter, to ply a rope that will bind our understanding of the woman question.

I will concentrate on the aspect of trade union history and organisational analysis most often ignored: the woman question.(12) I begin by analysing the basis of the appeal to women in the documents of the Congress Alliance. This provides the background against which to examine the concrete practices of the AFCWU and FCWU in relation to their women members. In the first chapter, I will show that the Congress Alliance perceived working women as mothers, and thereby placed motherhood at the centre of their appeal to women. This will be done through an anaylsis of some of the published documents and pamphlets of these organisations. As such, it is limited.

In the subsequent chapters, I will examine the organisational practice and concrete struggles which were waged around working women, their workplace experiences and their tasks of childcare. In these chapters, I will explore the interconnections between the various aspects of the organisational strategy. I will look at the challenge implicit in the childcare demands, in the organisation of women as workers, and in the organisation of women into the political struggle to end oppression and exploitation.

Chapter One examines public statements of the Congress Alliance and linked women's organisations, with a view to characterisation of the ideological approach to organising women. The central position given to motherhood by these statements is highlighted, and it is argued that this reflects a correct understanding of the fact that social relations around motherhood are central to women's oppression or emancipation; and reflect the reality of the pressures of motherhood for recently proletarianised black women in South Africa at that time.

Chapter Two examines the structure and internal democracy of the union, and its relations with other Congress Alliance organisations. The union affiliation to the FSAW and SACTU and its close working relations with the ANC and the Coloured People's Congress are outlined.

Chapter 3 explores the organisational practices of the union in three distinguishable areas of union work. They are dealt with within one long chapter for a specific reason. The union incorporated all of these aspects into one organisational strategy, and the interconnection between these different aspects is crucial to a correct understanding of the union. If any one of the parts of Chapter Three is considered on its own, the contribution that the union has made to developing an approach to unionism in South Africa, to political struggle and to the women's struggle would be lost.

Chapter 3 Part 1 explores the specificity of the working conditions faced by women working in the food and canning

industry and the manner in which the union protected the interests of the women members. The co-existence of women's role as mothers and wage workers is shown to be a fundamental aspect of the union's organising strategy in the workplace.

Chapter 3 Part 2 examines how this co-existence of roles was taken up by the union in relation to childbearing and childcaring functions of women. The chapter highlights the space which a trade union has to win women's rights to paid maternity leave and to access to childcare facilities, and shows how the different ways of organising around these demands have different implications for the working women, the state and capital. I have also explored how the union was active in community and non-work organisations around these demands.

Chapter 3 Part 3 examines the role played by women workers in two political campaigns in the period of mass resistance. These campaigns were chosen from the many that the union was involved in because of the centrality of the issues to the lives of the women workers at that time. The extension of pass laws to African women constituted a serious assault not only on African family life, but also on African women's access to jobs. The rising cost of living, an assault on the living standard of the working class as a whole, had special importance for women in two respects: through making their tasks as housewives and administrators of the budget far more difficult, and in placing further stress on their low wages. The chapter highlights the role of the union in developing working class women's leadership and in facilitating the ongoing organisational participation of these women in the national liberatory struggle.

The conclusion summarises the organisational strategy of the union in relation to the women workers, and draws from it, implications for a theory of women's emancipation. The significance of the woman question in the trade union and political struggles, if the goal of transformation to a society based on equality, sharing and democracy is to become an achievable aim, will be highlighted. In doing so, I will be focusing on the theoretical understanding of women's responsibilities as parents, workers and active political members of the nation. I will enter into debate with the implicit anti-motherhood position of much recent feminist theory, and with the over-emphasis on the inclusion of women into socialised wage labour as the key to women's emancipation that is reflected in the early classical Marxist texts on the woman question.

FOOTNOTES

(1) I have not been overly rigorous about the distinction between Food and Canning Workers Union and African Food and Canning Workers Union. I have referred to 'the union', where it is not crucial to distinguish which section of it was involved. Since I have not aimed to analyse the union as a whole, or to look at the relations between the two sections, it has not been necessary to emphasise the distinct structures. This blurring also comes from the union's policy that the division of the original union into two unions should be simply seen as a way around the Industrial relations laws. I have clarified where relevant, the distinct membership of the two unions - for example in Chapter 3. It must be emphasised that the non-racialism built into the union's policy and style of work was not achieved as simply as that. However despite the Apartheid state's intervention, the union prioritised and struggled for non-racialism. The separation of the union, enforced through state intervention (See Botha Commission on industrial relations, 1951), was an administrative separation in relation to minutes and correspondence. The double secretarial tasks that this inflicted on Ray Alexander was such that she lost a baby through a miscarriage due to overwork.

(2) "The woman question" is a term taken from the socialist tradition which recognises the importance of women's emancipation as integral to the development of a democratic and non-exploitative society. I have used the term throughout the thesis as a shorthand for this concern. It is not a feminist term, but rather comes from the tradition that sees the oppression of women as a social question, and a question of gender power relations. It is backed by a developing theory of the material conditions that give rise to women's oppression as we experience it under capitalism, in all aspects of women's lives. The 'woman question' thus encompasses an analysis of women and wage labour, women and generational and daily reproduction, women and social reproduction, i.e. women and the political life of society, the process of class struggle and reproduction of class relations.

(3) The United Women's Congress was formed on 22 March 1986 by the merging of United Women's Organisation and Women's Front Organisation. The work done by these two organisations over the past five years has been embodied in the new organisation.

(4) An indication of this growing understanding can be gained from looking at pamphlets put out by the United Women's Organisation (UWO) in August 1984.

(5) I have not attempted to categorise the vast quantity of writings on women's life experiences. The British women's liberation movement has emphasised the plethora of different positions within their ranks - as is highlighted in the amusing chart included as an appendix to Maconachie,M(1985a). However, more analytically useful is a broad distinction between bourgeois feminism and Marxist approaches to the woman question.

Bourgeois feminists campaign for equality between men and women within the context of bourgeois rule. The demands are reformist and facilitate the equal participation in society within the given class relations. In other words, bourgeois feminism (as witnessed in the South African suffragette movement of the 1930s or in the current Women's Bureau of South Africa) does not speak of equality for all women, but is rather organised around equality of bourgeois women and their men; and of petty bourgeois women and their men.

Radical feminists (distinct from bourgeois feminists although they ultimately protect the same class interests) place theoretical primacy on the division of labour according to sex, and hence identify women as a category, as the primary force for social liberation. Radical feminists have challenged many aspects of bourgeois ideology through slogans like "The personal is political". But flowing from their mis-specificiation of the cause of women's oppression as being men rather than gender relations within a particular mode of production, this challenge has failed to organise the majority of women - i.e. working class women, and has failed to change the fundamental social relations. Ironically, feminism through the slogan "sisterhood is powerful" raises the issue of the extent and nature of the common interests of women.

Within the broadly defined Marxist approach, various different tendencies can be described. I want to focus on one central distinguishing feature between Marxist feminism or socialist feminism, and a Marxist approach to the woman question. (Other reasons for caution concerning feminism are identified in Volbrecht,G.(1986) She has usefully outlined a basis for rejecting the term feminism. Overall I agree with her work on this issue and have gained enormously from discussion with her as she produced that paper.)

Historical materialist theory reflects various distinct trends. Firstly, we can identify Marxist-Leninism, with its subsequent developments through the experiences of the Italian Communist Party in the 20s and 30s and of the Third World socialist struggles post-1945. This theory encompasses the theory of the national question and the woman question as integral to the main body of theory.

The variants of historical materialism that emerged as a critique of Marxist-Leninism reflect an economism and an underdeveloped approach to the national and woman questions. This variant of Marxism is the basis from which the contemporary materialist feminist movement has developed. Marxist feminism and socialist feminism (defined differently by various authors) share a common kick off point - a critique of the dominant variant of historical materialism in Western Europe in the late 60s and 70s. Barrett argues that while Marxist-feminism lacks overall coherence, its object in the most general terms must be to "identify the operation of gender relations as and where they may be distinct from, or connected with, the processes of production and reproduction understood by historical materialism." (Barrett,M.1980;p9).

While accepting Volbrecht's argument that the women's liberation movement of the 60s challenged the Marxism dominant then on the basis of its economistic shortcomings, what these feminists did was to fail to examine the economistic variant of historical materialism and to develop a more balanced historical materialism theoretically and practically. Rather they claimed the need for an addition of a separate feminist theory. The theoretical limitations of this variant of historical materialism continued through into the marxist feminist theory. A close study of this literature over the last ten years has led me to reject it as a starting point for further theorisation of the woman question. (Schreiner,J.1981) It is for this reason that I have not summarised the views of theorists such as Hartman,H.(1981), Barrett,M.(1980), Seccombe,W.(1974), Beechey,V.(1977) and others.

(6) I have restricted my analysis to these organisations, for a number of reasons. The effect of this is that the role of Communist Party members will not be recognised as coming from their membership of that Party. The difficulties experienced in research in South Africa are outlined in the methodological section. The Suppression of Communism Act in 1950 ushered in an era in which the Communist Party operated underground. Rather than rely on inadequate information because of the illegality of many of the sources that would need to be consulted, as well as the lack of information given the underground nature of this organisation, I concentrated on organisations which can be openly assessed. This does not negate the role played by the Communist Party as an organisation or the Party members in building the labour movement or in strengthening the women's movement. It is a statement that these roles cannot be identified in my study of the material available, and the political context in Cape Town at the time of study.

(7) The affiliates of the Federation of South African Women were the ANC Women's League, the Congress of Democrats, South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the Non-European Women's League, the Food and Canning Workers Union, the Cape Housewives League.

(8) Innes.(1986) has argued that "the worker's movement was most dissatisfied with the clause on nationalisation of mines and industries which did not mention worker's control" (p13). Unfortunately he does not quote references to this discontent, or prove that the demand for worker's control had been submitted in that form by the worker's movement and had been rejected. For a very useful reply to the criticisms raised by Innes, see McLean,H.1986.

(9) I have said that the FCWU and ANC Women's League were the main progressive organisations that organised black working class women in the Western Cape. Where else were these women organised? They were also organised through community based organisations such as church groups. The functions of these women's groups were largely as fund-raising committees for the church, with prayer meetings and umjikelos. Politically these organisations have played a conservative role, keeping women busy with endless meetings, and cajoling them to be an apathetic and heaven-fearing lot.

Outside of the food and canning industry, black working class women were also organised at the point of production in the textile and clothing industries. It must be noted however, that the food and canning industry is unique in the Western Cape as being the only industry during that period where African women, recently proletarianised by the collapse of the reserve economy and rise of monopoly capitalism, were employed in large numbers. Outside of this industry, African women were unemployed housewives, domestic workers, or they worked on the farms. The workers in these industries were unionised through industrial unions - the Textile Industrial Workers Union (TIWU), and the Garment Workers Union. The former affiliated to SACTU when it was formed in March 1955 and was part of the Congress Alliance. It disaffiliated from SACTU and joined TUCSA. The Garment Workers Union went along with the South African Trades and Labour Council unions that formed TUCSA and had a significant role in ensuring the conservative and passive nature of a large section of the working class in Cape Town.

Outside of these industries there were no significant female industrial proletariat in the Western Cape. Coloured working class women also worked on the farms as seasonal workers or domestic workers. For African women, the major source of employment was as domestic workers or office cleaners, hotel and resturant workers. These women workers were not organised around their workplace experience in any meaningful way, although there were moves within SACTU to organise domestic workers from 1958 onwards.

The NEUM groupings were the other progressive political force in the Western Cape in the 1950s. Despite an official policy aimed at mass mobilisation, the organisational presence was mainly among teachers, professionals and intellectuals. It failed to build a significant mass base (Gentle,R.1978; Khan,F.1976). The Trotskyist Non-European Unity Movement did not address itself to the woman question, nor did their strategy succeed in mass mobilisation or organisation. The theoretical underpinnings of this position have a long tradition. It is a question addressed by Lenin in the early 1920s:

> "Denial of the indispensable special groups for work among the masses of women is part of the very principled, very radical attitude of our dear friends of the Communist Workers Party. They are of the opinion that only one form of organisation should exist - a worker's union. ... Principles are invoked by many revolutionary-minded but confused people whenever there is a lack of understanding." (Lenin,V.I.1978;p111)

The crucial point is that the economism and mechanistic approach to politics leaves it devoid of a notion of struggle as the motor force of history. Such an approach has no room for gender struggle. Alexander says that the awareness of the importance of organsing women, and organising them in their own right and not as auxillary members, is a <u>recent</u> development (1985;p96). In his talk on "The role of women in our society", he has significantly shifted from the NEUM traditions by recognising a role for women in the national liberation movement, but shows a remarkably ahistorical approach to the woman question in

South Africa, denying us a rich tradition of women's organised participation in the national liberation movement. Tabata, in his work, The Awakening of the People does not mention in any respect the political role of or the importance of organising women.

(10) See Chapter 3 Part 3 where the Coloured Labour Preference Area Policy is discussed briefly.

(11) The usage of the terms African and Coloured throughout this thesis is a reflection of the statutory discrimination on the basis of colour in South Africa, and does not reflect my own ideological position. I have used the terms without apology and without inverted commas since because of Apartheid divisions, there are very real material differences between the lives of South Africans classified by the state into different 'races'. It is a reality that the union acknowledged and at the same time actively worked to change, and one which has no future in this country.

(12) Other sources on the FCWU and AFCWU reflect this absence of recognition of the importance of women workers, as will be seen in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER ONE

MOTHERHOOD - A WAY TO SPEAK ABOUT POLITICS TO WOMEN UNDER CAPITALISM.

In the introduction I outlined why the union was a useful case study to develop an approach to the woman question in that it combined the essential theoretical principles into its daily practices. I will examine the concrete practices of the AFCWU and FCWU in the organisational strategy towards working mothers in Chapter Three. Before that, I want to look at the ideological approach of the Congress organisations in the 1950s. The union was integral to the Congress Alliance in the Western Cape through its overlap of membership with the dominant political organisations, through affiliation to FSAW and SACTU. Ideologically it shared common ground with the Congress movement as a whole. In analysing published documents and statements, I will be reflecting on the movement's perception of one aspect of the material basis of women's oppression. I will illustrate its appeal to women on the basis of their role as mothers. The Congress movement picked up on the most immediate component of women's consciousness - their role in nurturing and raising the future generation. This is the most immediate in the sense that the hard life of working people - low wages, high rents, bad housing, compounded by the Apartheid state's fundamental lack of concern with the welfare of black children - is somehow all brought to bear on the women in the family. In concluding, I will argue that the manner in which "motherhood" is acknowledged and provided for is central to the oppression or emancipation of women in all aspects of their lives. This "private" area of women's lives under capitalism affects and permeates women's involvement in all areas. In bourgeois/capitalist society, motherhood is relegated to the sphere of "the private". This is fundamental to the (relative) exclusion of women from "the public" sphere through their ideological constitution as mothers. I will argue that motherhood is an integral part of the definition of women in all societies, and as such the social organisation around this issue in terms of maternity rights, childcare etc is central to the emancipation of women. The work of Geras on a Marxist approach to the universality of certain basic human needs informs my approach here (Geras,N.1983). But I do not argue that motherhood is a complete definition of women, nor that every individual woman necessarily finds fulfillment through motherhood.

What must be stressed strongly here is that the public/private dichotomy is not simply defined by capital. The precise nature of this social demarcation around the universal aspect of parenthood and procreation is the result of a process of struggle. In all liberation struggles there is an ongoing struggle over the cultural definition of motherhood. It is this struggle that underpins an approach to struggle for women.

In this first chapter, I will show how this is reflected in the direct appeal to women as mothers. In the rest of the thesis I will illustrate the way in which the AFCWU and FCWU, brought these questions out of the private, and made them central issues

to be organised around by all workers, men and women. In this way, it raised the question of the bourgeois public/private dichotomy and facilitated great steps by working class women in relation to the family, to work and to their political participation.

I begin by analysing the content of certain Congress Alliance documents and campaigns from within the Congress tradition, and then examine various contributions to the task of exploring the material basis of women's oppression. I am concerned to argue that motherhood is not only a correct organisational starting point, but it also begins to open the doors for the challenging of oppressive and gender social relations if understood as one part of women's life experience. The South African working women's identity is very closely tied to their definition as mothers, both because of the public/private dichotomy overlap with the gender division of labour in social reproduction, and because of the heritage of pre-capitalist culture and ideology. The literature review in this chapter points to the complexity of the nature of women's oppression. I argue that there is no one source/locus of the oppression of women, but that the gender division of labour (the product of particular forms taken by the class struggle in South Africa) interconnects and reinforces women's subordinate position at home, at work and in the political and ideological life of the community.

Coloured and African women were actively organised into the national liberation struggle from the 1940's and 1950's. Their lives as black working mothers in South Africa affected and influenced their participation in an affiliate of the Federation of South African Women (FSAW), namely the African Food and Canning Workers Union and the Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU). Briefly let me outline why "motherhood" got on to the agenda of these organisations. What was the reality of the women organised during this period? Women had become breadwinners as well as mothers; at the same time many women had the sole responsibility of families. Women faced harsh exploitation due to their incorporation as an unskilled and unorganised labour force in industry that took over their earlier domestic tasks. In other words, women faced a conflict between their roles as workers, mothers and political organisational members, as a result of heightened organisation, the development of the manufacturing industry and the "privatised" nature of motherhood. The question which lies behind all this is " How are women constructed as mothers and why?" In this chapter and in the thesis as a whole, I will be examining how the union contributed to reshaping the way in which organised women conceptualised their rights as working mothers. The union's history is an example of how the problems that arise from race, gender and class can be synthesised into one organisational strategy. The task for analysts today is to examine how far this strategy went in challenging the various aspects of oppression and exploitation of the union members, male and female, and how far this organisation's political influence extended beyond its own membership into the community at large and to other organisations.

It is useful to start with an overview of the ideological appeal

to women on the basis of their roles as wives and mothers and to assess the analytical content of these pamphlets. From what follows, it is clear that motherhood was a central tenet of the Congress Alliance approach to organising women. By this I do not wish to suggest that all the campaigns and issues focussed on solving women's problems as mothers. In fact, the issues ranged from creches to food price increases, Bantu Education, passes, rent increases and the vote (See Schreiner,J.1982a). Rather, what I am suggesting is that the manner in which these organisations spoke to women encouraged them to join the political struggle for the sake of their children. The union's strategy towards its women workers must be situated in the context of the Congress Alliance approach to organising women, since the union was an integral part of the Congress Alliance through its membership of the Federation of South African Women and SACTU , and through its close working relationships with the African National Congress (ANC) , the Coloured People's Congress (CPC) and the African National Congress Women's League. This analysis will be contrasted with my own theoretical perspective, which draws on the tradition of organising women in South African history and on the current and traditional theoretical work on the interconnections between gender, race and class divisions.

Ideological influences on the woman question in the late 40s and 1950s.

Although it was only in the 1950's that the mass organisation of women as women became an organisational priority of the progressive organisations in the Western Cape, there was a growing awareness of the importance of overcoming the problems that held women back from joining organisations. The 40's saw the recruitment and training of women in the ranks of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) on a growing scale (See Walker,C.1982;p97-100). In addition, this was a period of the growth of mass organisation of women in the Food and Canning Workers Union, the Textile Industry Workers Union, the Women's Food Committees and the locally based Women's Democratic Federation.(1) (See Walker,C. 1982; Walker,C.1978; Schreiner,J.1982b; and see Goode,R.1982 and Soudien,D.1982 for a history of the FCWU.)

This growth of consciousness about the woman question in South Africa, however, must be situated in the context of the growth of a progressive women's federation at an international level. Through contacts in the CPSA, the influence of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) spread widely and had direct bearing on the formation of women's committees and organisations in the late 40's and early 50's. For this reason, and because of the ongoing contact between the WIDF and the Federation of South African Women throughout the 50's, I have started this chapter with a discussion of the activities and ideological position of the Women's International Democratic Federation. There is little documentation of this organisation, although mention is made of it in Walker's book (Walker,C.1982; pp100, 102, 135, 168, 244, 253, 273). As a result, I have perhaps overemphasized its importance by writing up as much about it as is possible.

The Women's International Democratic Federation had links with CPSA women from the time that it started in 1946, but it was only at the second WIDF conference that South African women were actually present. Hilda Watts attended the 1947 Congress of Women, and Jean Bernardt was sent to attend the third Congress. This was postponed, so Asha Dawood (a young factory worker and women's leader from Worcester) attended this World Congress of Women in 1953 (Schreiner,J.1982a;p62-3). Once the Federation of South African Women was launched, the contact between South African women and the WIDF was also administered through FSAW channels. Helen Joseph, Transvaal Regional Secretary, attended the WIDF Council meeting in Geneva in February 1955. (Carter-Karis microfilm, 2:WF1;47/23) This council planned the World Congress of Mothers. Dora Tamana and Lillian Ngoyi were prevented from attending the meeting when it was discovered that their tickets were not in their names. These two women, along with Gladys Smith, represented the South African women at the World Congress of Mothers in 1955 (Guardian 07.07.55 and 14.07.55). The FSAW did not actually affiliate to the WIDF, although reports on the position and organisation of women were sent from time to time, (see Carter-Karis Microfilm, 2:WF3:62) and visitors from WIDF toured the country. (See Walker,C. 1982;p244,p273)

The WIDF was formed by socialist women's organisations from forty countries in December 1945. The conference of these organisations resolved :

> "To fight for a happy future for their children, to wipe out fascism in all its forms so true democracy could be established throughout the world, to defend women's economic, political, legal and social rights, and to fight without respite to assure lasting world peace"
> (Letter from Secretary of FSAW (Tvl) to Friends on ocassion of Tenth Anniversary of WIDF, Jan 1956, AD1137)

The WIDF took its place alongside other socialist international structures formed in the post-war period. The victory over facism in World War Two led not only to a new era of internationalism, but also initiated a period of social transformation in various European coutnries. The growth of socialist democracies in Europe created the conditions for the strong international links between women, trade unions, youth and so on. This was a period of formation of Communist Party initiated international bodies, and of world festivals.

The first campaign the WIDF organised appears to have been the International Children's Week from 8th to 15th March 1946. It is significant that the week began from International Women's Day, celebrated by communist and socialist women from 1911. No detail is available about the week, except that :

> "In a Campaign to Aid Child War Victims the women of many countries collected tons of food and clothing and raised considerable amounts of money."
> (Carter-Karis Microfilm,2:WF4:96/1)

The central concern with children's lives is reflected in the

appeal adopted by the WIDF's Conference for the Defence of Children, held in 1952:

> "MOTHERS AND FATHERS OF THE WHOLE WORLD ! LISTEN TO US!
> Tens of millions of children, the most precious wealth of humanity, are today a prey to hunger, ignorance, fear and death.
> Thousands of parents in Japan and Syria are forced by poverty to sell their children; in countries such as India and Egypt, exceptionally rich in cotton, children have no clothes to wear...throughout Africa, in Latin America and a large part of Asia, countries of immense natural wealth, millions and millions of children are without sufficient bread, shelter and care; more than half of them die before two or three years without becoming aware of what it means to be alive. Others will live in ignorance; in 1952 one half of mankind is unable to read or write..."
> (Quoted in FSAW Tv1 letter on 10th Anniversary of WIDF, Jan 1956, AD1137)

The Food and Canning Workers Union sent a message to the conference:

> "South African Food Workers wish Conference all success. World future lies with our children. Immediate urgent task, save peace, build healthy and happy generation!"
> (FCWU Central Exec Committee Minutes 11 May 1952;BC721)

During 1952, the major campaign that built the unity of Africans and Indians was the Defiance Campaign. A four page edition of "Afrika" motivated for

> "all women, of every class and stratum, of every nationality, and from every profession, workers, students, teachers, office workers, doctors, young and old, must join in this struggle for Freedom and Justice. They must lead their menfolk in the march for Freedom, hold high the banner of Freedom, raise their voices in salute of the Principles they stand for - truth, justice and honour."

Drawing examples of women from England, America, the Soviet Union, China and India, the newsletter of the ANC and NIC in Durban, explained that:

> "Throughout the ages and in every part of the World, women have played their part in the struggle of their people against oppressors. Women have felt that they were part of the fight for which their men have shed their blood. They have thrown in their lot with their men to safeguard their houses, to build a brighter future for their children, and for the respect of their own sex."
> (Afrika Newsletter, No 4,12.11.1952;AD1137)

The WIDF Council in Vienna in December 1952 issued a "Call for the World Congress of Women". The document is reproduced here as Appendix 2, but I quote from it to highlight the importance attached to the children:

> " WOMEN OF THE WHOLE WORLD!
> We who give life and who bring up our children, have always played our part, through our work, in the building of civilization.
> To make our full contribution as <u>mothers, workers and citizens</u> to the creation of a better life, we must possess

complete political, economic and social rights...
They (all women) are determined that their children shall be safeguarded against the horrors of the wars of extermination...
WOMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES...
MOTHERS, who want to bring up your children secure from the hardships intensified by war preparations, who want to see them well-fed, healthy and well-clothed, who are demanding more homes and more schools for them, MOTHERS, who want to rescue your children from suffering and starvation, who have no rights at all, who, along with your children are refused the possibility of education and who, together with your people, are joining the fight against colonial oppression.
THIS CONGRESS IS YOUR CONGRESS !"
(Call for the World Congress of Women , AH 646. Emphasis in original.)

The Vienna Council recommended various paths of action to the national organisations. Amongst these recommendations was the call:

"To continue and intensify activities for the defence of children; consistently to support the activities of national and local children's committees, and help in the creation of new committees, and to give full support to the carrying out of the decisions of the International Conference in Defence of Children."
(Resolution on the convening of the world Congress of Women, adopted at Vienna Council of WIDF, 20.12.52; AH 1092)

The WIDF produced a Special Information Bulletin entitled "Preparing for the World Congress of Women", to report on how women were beginning to organise. The Bulletin covered all aspects of the preparatory work - campaigns around the main themes of the Congress, the election of delegates and organisational and financial questions. The themes for the Conference were:

"FOR THE WINNING AND DEFENCE OF OUR RIGHTS"
"FOR THE PROTECTION OF OUR CHILDREN AND HOMES"
"FOR A PEACEFUL WORLD"
(Preparing for the World Congress of Women Special Information Bulletins no 1, 7 March 1953, no.5 23 April 1953, & no 6 April 1953. AH646)

The WIDF called on women's organisations to make International Women's Day , 8 March, an integral part of a campaign and in the sixth Special Bulletin reported on how women had organised on 8th March, 1953. In Albania an all-out campaign began on that day - the call for a World Congress of Women was circulated through 7000 leaflets and 5000 posters. 6000 pamphlets popularized the Congress slogans. In Algeria, the Union of Algerian Women, popularized the World Congress of Women through small house meetings. They sent a delegation to the authorities demanding the franchise for women, the release of political prisoners, the end to repression, work for their unemployed husbands, schools and homes, bread and peace. They demanded that the Algerian soldiers who had been sent to Vietnam come home, that the war in Korea be ended and that the Five Great Powers conclude a Peace Pact. These were just two of the many countries preparing the

mass of women in their country for the World Congress.

One of the ANC leaders in the Western Cape travelled in various Eastern European countries during 1953. He spoke to a FCWU branch meeting on his return, highlighting and popularising the role women can play in society. What is significant here is the emphasis of women's emancipation in relation to wage labour and motherhood in the socialist societies he visited:

> "Another thing that interested me very much was the role that women played in the building up of the country. Women occupying important positions such as engineers and managing directors of big industries. There are laws protecting the rights of women. For example, no-one is allowed to refuse to give a woman employment on account of her being pregnant. A woman is allowed three months confinement-leave on full pay. Creches are established at every factory to allow a mother to be able to go out and work. Large families are encouraged. A mother of a large family is given the Order of Mother's Glory and the salary of the father is increased whilst his tax is reduced.
>
> These Eastern European countries are called People's Democracies because the countries are governed by the working people. The profits made in the factories are used to improve the living and working conditions of the people. It is the duty of our workers in this country to work in their trade unions for improved wages and conditions of work as well as for their rights as citizens of South Africa."
> (Minutes of General Members Meeting of Cape Town Branch of FCWU,05.12.53;BC721)

In this period in the Western Cape, as well as in other areas of South Africa, women were beginning to form organisations (See Schreiner,J. 1982a). The ideological influence of the WIDF in this period was significant in guiding the leadership of the women's struggle. This reached down to the rank and file members and unorganised women through their speeches, practical work, newspapers and documents. This situation changed during the late 1950's with the banning of many of the more radical women's leaders, and the active participation of women in the mass campaigns. The period of mass action in the Anti-Pass Campaigns (1955-1960) was not one in which ideological questions were thoroughly examined in the women's organisations. The conclusion to the report of the Transvaal Region of the FSAW sent to the WIDF acknowledges the relative lack of theorisation of the women's struggle during 1956:

> "In presenting this report on the Transvaal Region of the Federation of South African Women, we are conscious that it may not accord closely with the programme of the WIDF. We feel nevertheless, that it outlines the framework into which our Federation must fit into South Africa, and the Bureau of the WIDF will appreciate both the limitations and the inspiration of our Federation in the two years of it's existence."
> (Carter-Karis microfilm; 2:WF3:62)

This early ideological approach can be seen in the content of

the Women's Charter (which is included in this thesis as Appendix 1). The Women's Charter was drafted in Cape Town and presented to the Conference by Ray Alexander and Dora Tamana, both of whom had close links to the WIDF and CPSA. The Women's Charter, unlike the Freedom Charter, was drawn up by the organisers in preparation for the conference. It was adopted by the National Conference of Women held in Johannesburg on 17 April 1954. It was this conference which decided to work towards a Federation of South African Women. Delegates returned to all corners of South Africa, to start the process of building organisation.

Walker in her analysis of the Women's Charter, says:

> "The influence of Alexander and Watts and the disbanded CPSA was clearly visible particularly in the strong feminist streak that was woven through the Charter. The call for women's rights was tempered however, by the recognition that the national liberation movement took first priority in the struggle for equality."
> (Walker,C.1982;p156)

In an interview with a woman who was active in the Modern Youth Society and in the Congress of Democrats, this view was strongly contradicted. The interviewee said:

> "Ray Alexander was one of the few people who was really committed to organising women. She was very concerned about the problems that women experienced. She knew which of the women was having problems at home, and who was ill. But she did not have this interest because of feminist views as we have today. She organised workers around the daily problems they experienced, and developed an understanding of what held workers back from joining organisations. She realized that there were many hardships that women experienced that kept them out of organisations and out of the liberation struggle. She was trying to build the unity of all people and saw that women could be a very strong force if these problems could be removed."
> (Interview A.Thornton, 18 March 1985)

As Walker (1982,p157) says, the Women's Charter spoke of the lives of the delegates of the conference and echoed many of the speeches from the floor. But the Women's Charter also developed the women's overall understanding of the interconnections between women's emancipation and the struggle for national liberation. The starting point of the Women's Charter is to talk about the lives of women and to identify the responsibilities women face as wives, mothers and working women. It goes on to show the way forward to the removal of these hardships through active participation in the national liberation struggle, as well as through "a nation-wide programme of education that will bring home to men and women of all national groups, the realization that freedom cannot be won for any one section or for the people as a whole as long as we, women, are kept in bondage." (Women's Charter, adopted 17 April 1954). Here again we can see that the everyday aspects of women's lives and the political direction of the Congress Alliance are integrated into the analysis of how to organise to overcome the oppression of women. It is significant that the education programme was aimed at women and men.

In the demands specified at the end of the Women's Charter, the rights of women to proper childcare, maternity benefits and legal protection are clearly stipulated. These demands are not separated from the demands for full democratic rights; demands for work and security, for the end of the pass laws and migrant labour system; or from the commitment to building the national liberation movement. The clauses that relate specifically to the problems of working mothers are as follows:

> "3.Equal rights with men in relation to property, marriage and children, and for the removal of all laws and customs that deny women such equal rights.
>
> 4.For the development of every child through free and compulsory education for all; for the protection of mother and child through maternity homes, welfare clinics, creches and nursery schools in the countryside and towns; through proper homes for all and through the provision of water, light, transport, sanitation and other amenities of modern civilization."

The Women's Charter paved the way for the initial work to build the Federation of South African Women. It was on the basis of the final clauses about participation in the national liberation movement, that when the ANC called for a campaign to collect the demands of the people, the women in the Federation and it's affiliates put their energy into the Campaign for the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter (Appendix 5).

The Congress of Mothers: Women and Democracy

The Women's International Democratic Federation followed up the World Congress of Women and the Defence of Children Conference by organising a World Congress of Mothers. Lillian Ngoyi spoke briefly about the conference that she, Dora Tamana and Gladys Smith attended, in her 1961 Presidential Address:

> "This is what we decided there: 'We do not want our sons to kill each other. Let us bring up our children to love all peoples, and we will not allow the perversion of their minds by the cult of arrogance and the encouragement of racial hatred. All children, white, yellow or black, have the same rights and must be protected together."
>
> (Women of S.A. No 2 Oct/Nov 1961 AD1173)

In South Africa at that time, the major political campaign was the Congress of the People Campaign. The Campaign began in March 1954 and climaxed when on 26 June 1955, 2814 delegates gathered at Kliptown to discuss the demands of the people of South Africa. The Freedom Charter was adopted by the Congress Alliance organisations as their basic policy. The Federation of South African Women participated in the campaign building up to the Congress of the People. The National Conference of Women in 1954, resolved to pledge it's "support for the Congress of the People. It pledges to work actively to organise women from all walks of life; housewives, domestic workers, factory workers, women from the reserves and on the farms, to ensure that women shall be directly represented at the Congress." (Carter-Karis microfilm, 2:WF1:30/4) The women followed up on the Congress of

the People with regional Congresses of Mothers, as a report back from the Congress of the People. The Federation adopted the Freedom Charter as their vision of the future of South Africa, in 1956. What I wish to do here is to point to the basis of the appeal to women in the Congress of the People. "The Call", (Appendix 3) issued by the Congress of the People Action Council in 1954, at the beginning of the Congress of the People Campaign made a special appeal to mothers of South Africa:

> "WE CALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA BLACK AND WHITE
> LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM!
> WE CALL THE HOUSEWIVES AND THE MOTHERS!
> Let us speak of the fine children that we bear, and of their stunted lives. Let us speak of the many illnesses and deaths, and of the few clinics and schools. Let us speak of high prices and shanty towns."
> (Quoted in Circular Letter No 3 from the FSAW Secretary to the Regional Secretary 25.08.1954. AD1137)

Ray Alexander, the FSAW Secretary, encouraged the women to organise for the Congress of the People, by talking about "the bigger issues that are facing the whole of South Africa, namely the Congress of the People ", when discussing the matters that were worrying the women in their areas (FSAW Circular Letter No 3 25.08.1954).

In the campaign to prepare for the Congress of the People, the Transvaal region called a meeting for 29 May 1955. For this meeting, Helen Joseph, Transvaal FSAW Secretary, drafted a set of demands for discussion as part of the process of drawing up their demands to send in. Unfortunately, there is no copy of the demands as they were finally sent in by the Transvaal Region of the Federation. (The draft document is included as Appendix 4).

Walker quotes extensively from the document (Walker,C, 1982; p182/3) and unfortunately loses sight of the fact that the document was a draft. Helen Joseph, in an interview on Walker's book, indicates the two clauses that were removed: that concerning "more and better land for the reserves" and that about the birth control clinics. In discussing the attitude to the second clause, Walker hinges her argument around the attitudes of the men. Helen Joseph, however, reflects the complexity of the issue of motherhood for black women under Apartheid:

> "I drafted those demands...by this time...I had had discussion with women at various housemeetings and whatnot in the townships, so I was pretty well aware of the way in which their demands would lie ...And then of course we came to the thing about the call for the birth control clinics. I am afraid that was the social worker Helen Joseph talking. It had not been discussed. I put it in because I thought it was something that women might like to discuss, and I did feel pretty strongly about birth control clinics. I suppose I was aware very much of malnutrition and overcrowding and hadn't seen that birth control, an imposed birth control wasn't the answer to those things. The answer of course is better wages and better housing. ... I remember the opposition that this aroused at the Conference. ... I think

the impression that I rather got was that I learnt that the African people were objecting to any sort of form of imposed birth control or even education in birth control because it was felt that this was an underhand attack by the Government to undermine the whole numbers of African people. ... I have an idea that that was raised - 'the Government's trying to destroy the size of our families'- and also the fact that a large number of children was considered to be, and this I remember clearly, was considered to be an insurance against the future, and therefore it was quite wrong to suggest the number of children should be reduced."
(Taped interview with Helen Joseph, 1981)

In the draft document "What Women Demand" , the second demand deals specifically with demands "for all children of all races":

"WE DEMAND:
Compulsory, free and universal education from the primary school to the university.
Adequate school feeding and free milk for all children in day-nurseries, nursery schools, and primary and secondary schools.
Special schools for handicapped children.
Play centres and cultural centres for school children.
Properly equipped playgrounds and sportsfields.
Vocational training and apprenticeship facilities.
WE DEMAND THESE FOR ALL CHILDREN OF ALL RACES."

And in the final concluding demand, the women said:

"TOGETHER WITH OTHER WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD
WE DEMAND the banning of atomic and hydrogen bombs
The use of the atom for peaceful purposes and the betterment of the world
That there shall be NO MORE WAR
That there shall be PEACE AND FREEDOM FOR OUR CHILDREN."
(What Women Demand; AD1137, emphasis in original.)

These two sections fit in amongst demands relating to housing, to the control and subsidization of food prices; the right of people to work on their own land and for the fair distribution of land; the provision of proper care facilities for pensioners, the sick, and the aged; and the rights of women to participate equally in the democratic structures of a society, to employment in all spheres of work and to equal rights in law. The fact that the issue of nuclear warfare is included along with these demands highlights the way in which all the issues affecting working class women were linked to the overall theme of an integrated children's future. By not simply focusing on children per se, but showing how the general demands of the working class and the specific demands of working class women all shaped the future of the children, the women avoided the danger of the centrality of motherhood blinding their organisations to other issues.

In another pamphlet produced to encourage women to attend the Congress of Mothers, the same emphasis on the children's future (ie the future of South Africa as a society) is apparent:

"We are women of South Africa appealing to all women of our country and joining with every country of the world.

We are women who know the joy of having children, and the sorrow of losing them.
We know the happiness of rearing our children, and the sadness of our struggle against poverty, illness, ignorance and racial oppression.
We stand together with the women of all lands in our fight for happiness for all children and peace for all people. ...
...
ORGANISE FOR THE CONGRESS OF MOTHERS!
BUILD AND STRENGTHEN OUR WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS!
FIGHT TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN AND ALL CHILDREN OF THE WORLD."
(FSAW pamphlet, AD1137, emphasis in original)

The Congress of Mothers served the function of a reportback by Helen Joseph on the WIDF Council's preperations for Congress of the People, planning the future direction of FSAW and the adoption of the Freedom Charter. The Transvaal Congress of Mothers supported the proposal from the floor of a deputation to Pretoria. The Conference resolved to work with other women's organisations and church groups to organise:

"A mass deputation of women of all races to Pretoria to protest against the Bantu Eduaction Act and all other oppressive laws, to protest against the site and service scheme and to demand proper housing for all people.
(Carter-Karis Microfilm, 2:DC2:85/1)

Women in Chains - The Anti-Pass Campaign and the Pound a Day Campaign.

In October 1955, The Transvaal Region of the Federation marched to the Union buildings to present their demands to the Prime Minister. The document deals with the major political issues of the day - the right of children to free, compulsory and universal education, freedom of movement, the right to houses, security and comfort, the right to form democratically-controlled trade unions, the right to organise and speak with a united voice, the right to live and work where one chooses. The concluding paragraph states:

"We speak from our hearts as mothers, as women. Life cannot be stopped. We must love and marry and find a home. We must bear children in hope and in pain; we must love them as part of ourselves, we must help them to grow, we must endure all the longings and sufferings of motherhood. Because of this we are made strong, to come here, to speak for our children, to strive for their future."
(Carter-Karis microfilm, 2:WF3:45/4)

The serious concern with the hardships of children is also reflected in the Memorandum prepared by the Federation of South African Women: "The Life of the Child in South Africa" (FSAW document, AD1137). It is a detailed analysis of how Apartheid affects children in South Africa, and stunts the growth of a majority of the country's children. This document gives the background information and contrasts the experiences of White and African children at school, in the home, in relation to creche facilities, health facilities and so on. It does not deal with

the political demands for children's rights at all. This reflects the point made earlier that in the later period, there was far more concern with the practical problems faced in the lives of the women of South Africa, than an articulation of the long term vision of an emancipated future.

The report of the Second FSAW Conference in August 1956 reflects the wide range of issues being organised around. Women had just returned from the 20 000 strong protest march to Pretoria. Bertha Mashaba asked "When the women are arrested, who cares for their children?". This question prompted women to resist in their thousands. In the Western Cape, FSAW was organising for creches. Frances Baard spoke on houses, security and comfort, highlighting the problems caused by rising rent and food prices. Katie White spoke of the struggle to prevent Coloured men and women losing their Municipal Vote, and said:

> "Only when we have political power can we build a country safe for our children to live in. The people shall govern!"

Hilda Watts, banned from the meeting, sent the following message:

> "As a mother, I appreciate the daily personal sacrifices that women, much more than men, must make to be able to play an active part in the struggle for a better life. It is not only the backward customs and reactionary attitudes of many men that hold women down, but the inummerable, never-ending little tasks connected with home and children, that bind and hold women, and make public activity a personal sacrifice. But it must be done, for without the organised activity of women, we can never win justice and happiness..."
> (Carter-Karis Microfilm, 2:WF1:30/11)

Women and the Pound a Day Campaign:

Another major campaign during the late 50s and of particular importance for working women was the Pound a Day Campaign. Within this broad campaign, aimed at mobilising and organising the unorganised workers, SACTU recognised the importance of addressing the problems of women workers. A document was drawn up entitled "Speakers Notes for Women on the Pound a Day Campaign". Similar speakers notes were circulated to branches of the Congress Alliance organisations in many of the campaigns in the 1950s. I quote from this document at length because it reflects a strategical understanding of the mobilisation of working class women within the ambit of a general national campaign. The document starts by explaining the concept of a minimum wage, why a pound a day is necessary as a minimum wage and how organised workers can lead other workers in struggling for a pound a day. The document continues:

> "...WOMEN AND THE POUND A DAY CAMPAIGN
> WHY IS IT ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO US?
> 1. We must not think that it is just a men's campaign. Women are also workers and more and more women are being forced to go out to work because the husband's wages are too low to provide for the family.
> 2. Except in a few industries, such as the clothing, textile, sweet, leather, food and canning and laundry industries, women are not employed in great numbers and have

not therefore formed powerful trade unions. Women workers are usually forced to work for very low wages, for example, domestic servants and washerwomen.

3. Women are very often paid lower wages than men for doing exactly the same job. We must demand the minimum of a pound a day for all workers, women as well as men, and we must organise women to unite against accepting lower wages than men. It ought to be the rate for the job - Equal pay for equal work for white and non-white workers, for MEN AND WOMEN.

WHAT MUST WOMEN DO?

1. We must establish ourselves as workers. The housewife is also a worker, even if she doesn't get paid in cash by her husband.

2. We must see that women, paid workers and housewives, domestic workers and washerwomen also elect delegates to the National Workers Conference on March 15th and 16th, and any other conferences, and we must raise money to send these delegates.

3. We must see that we send women delegates who will speak up at conferences and see that women's demands are recognised,

WHAT ARE WOMEN'S DEMANDS?

a) A minimum pound a day for all women workers.

b) Equal pay for equal work

c) Proper care for the children of working mothers. We must demand creches for our children. In China, in every factory where more than 20 women are employed, the law requires that a creche must be established and maintained by the factory.

d) Improvements in the conditions of the working mother.

At present, the working mother does two jobs. She works all day and when she comes home she must clean the house and prepare the food and see to the children. When the woman shares in the work to earn the income, should not the household tasks also be shared?"

(Speakers Notes for Women on Pound a Day Campaign, AD1137, Emphasis in original.)

Sustaining the Federation

In the period of intensified repression after the Sharpeville massacres, the Federation faced a number of crucial questions. The ANC Women's League, the major affiliate, was banned. The leadership had spent months in prison and continued to be harrassed, arrested, house-arrested and banished on their release. The State response to the political demands voiced by the Congress Alliance in 1961, led to an assessment of the strategy and tactics of the liberation movement and eventually to the formation of Umkhonto We Sizwe (Karis,T and Carter,G.1973;Vol 3;p19; Lodge,T.1984,Chapters 9 and 10). The repression of the period had a serious demobilising effect on many people. But the Federation continued with its task of organising women, recognizing that the full burden of organising African women now fell on its shoulders (Women of S.A. No 2,Oct/Nov 1961,AD1137).

Once more, at the 1961 Conference, the FSAW recognized the reality of working women's concern with childcare and the women's goal of freedom for their children. The NEC Report outlined the tasks:

"Much important work has still to be done amongst working women, particularly in respect of working mothers. There is a totally inadequate provision of creches for non-white children, although many thousands of mothers are compelled to work when their children are still young. We must demand this as a right. .. the needs of the working mother are our direct concern.
(Women of S.A. No 2, Oct/Nov 1961, p6;AD1173)

The report highlights the need for the emancipation of women:

"We have our battle to win, too, for even as we must play our part in the struggle for freedom for all people's in South Africa, so too we must carry on the age-old struggle against prejudice. We are proud to be mothers and housewives, but we demand our rights as people. We must never cease to press our claims, but we must see to it that our women themselves emerge and throw off the past tendency to hide in the home.
(Women in S.A. No 2, Oct/Nov 1961, p7;AD1173)

The report concludes saying that through the Federation the women can unite to go forward to win for their children their fundamental right to freedom, justice and security.

The Material Basis of Women's Oppression.

These organisations mobilized and politicized women through an appeal on the basis of their motherhood. It was not simply because children are an emotive issue for women, and so they can be motivated to respond to other issues through an appeal based on children's experiences and stunted lives. Children were also seen to be the flowers of the future. And the new roles that Black women were taking in the manufacturing and service sectors posed them with a new problem of the relationship between wage labour and motherhood. Children symbolised a new South Africa, based on the will of the people and free from oppression and exploitation. In addition, the children have the responsibility of building a new society which their parents have fought for, and must be given the richest possible childhood to place them in good stead to do this. This is reflected in the way in which the women articulated their long-term political demands. Consistently, the women's individualised concern about their own family was challenged by the impact of the broader issues of South Africa's undemocratic and exploitative society on the lives of children in this country.

Assessment of the value of the Federation's own starting point must be weighed against a theoretical understanding of the material basis of women's oppression. From this point of departure, it will be possible to assess the influence of the Federation in challenging the accepted roles of women within capitalist society. The theoretical analyses of the material basis of women's oppression does not dictate the issues around which women should be organised. Rather, the material basis can inform an organisation as to the ultimate goals necessary for the full emancipation of women. The organisational strategy and

tactics must be determined by the consciousness of the men and women themselves and by the political direction and concrete strategic demands at the time.

As stated in the introduction, classical Marxist approaches to the woman question situated the crux of women's emancipation in the inclusion of women into socialized production (Bebel, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Zetkin and Kollontai). They did not however, pose the inclusion of women into socialised production as being the complete answer to women's emancipation, but rather as a necessary part of it. These analyses opened the way for materialist analysis of the oppression of women and highlighted the fact that gender divisions, as opposed to sex divisions, are not "natural" but are socially constructed divisions within a mode of production. Various authors have recently drawn attention to the distinction between natural and socially constructed relations. Maconachie writes of "a distinction in social sciences between sex and gender; sex referring us to biological or anatomical differences and gender to the social construction and elaboration of these differences. Sex difference is given, but gender roles are acquired." (Maconachie, 1983, p19) (2) Olivia Harris takes this useful intervention further in her discussion of "the household unit". She argues that "nature as a concept is in fact a product of particular cultures, and ideas about what is natural, and the values assigned to it, vary correspondingly (Harris,O.1981;p49). Here again Geras' identification of certain universal and basic human needs in Marx's writings is helpful (Geras,N.1983).

The early materialist analyses of the family did not adequately problematize and theorise the position of women in the domestic sphere. Marx and Engels in the Communist Manisfesto called for the abolition of the bourgeois family, but did not analyse the contradictory nature of the working class family. In this respect, these early analyses focused materialist analysis on an economic analysis of the oppression of women, rather than on the interconnecions between the gender division of labour in all aspects of society, and the ideological and political mechanisms by which this is bolstered up.

Twentieth century history and the development of historical materialist theory has led us on to a more complex analysis and has highlighted the fact that the gender division of labour is not a simple division between privatized housework and socialized production. It permeates every aspect of social organisation and the various aspects of it reinforce one another. This division of labour is one of the divisions that affect the unity of the working class and as such is an important organisational priority. As Macintosh argues, the gender division of labour is not a static line but is constantly being transformed with the development of social relations. As such, she concludes, it is an important site of struggle for women and for the working class in all aspects of organisations (Macintosh,M.1981;p12-13). The oppression of working class women can only be understood within the analysis of the social relations structured by the mode of production. Within the class relations of capitalist society, the gender and racial divisions of labour need to be thoroughly explored. As Angela Davis has shown, much of the feminist

analyses that have emerged from Europe and the United States of America ignores the question of racism and its connection with sexism (See Introduction). I have already argued that in a South African context, the theoretical understanding of these two forms of oppression and the manner in which they have reinforced class relations and divided the working class is a crucial question and one which has been ignored by the reductionist form of South African academic Marxism.

The gender division of labour operates in two main arenas - the household and the workplace. Brenner and Ramas argue that on the one hand, there is a tendency for capital accumulation to pull women into wage labour and thus to lay the material basis for their independence from men; and on the other hand the exigencies of biological reproduction have historically posed a significant barrier to the full development of this tendency (Brenner,J and Ramas,M.1984;p47). They highlight the fact that capital has not been prepared to make the necessary expenditures to overcome the contradictions between the biological facts of reproduction and capitalist reproduction because of the cuts this would make into profits. Whilst adding the proviso that the biological "fact" that they accept here, is itself socially mediated. I would accept overall the two points being made here. Within capitalist society, there is: a) an interconnection between the household division of labour and the division of labour in the workplace; and b) that social handling of biological reproduction has set up contradictory processes in relation to working class women within capitalism.

Recent Marxist writings have tried to argue that women's oppression is an integral part of capitalism and that as such women's emancipation becomes a necessary part of the socialist struggle (Seccombe,W.1974; Adamson,J et al.1976 and others). Much of the current literature has tried to find the material basis of women's oppression in their reproductive function and hence their responsibilities in the home. The domestic labour debate, which focussed on the nature of the extraction of surplus within the domestic sphere, is one such investigation. It has been thoroughly and correctly critiqued for being reductionist and economistic (Molyneux,M.1979; Maconochie,M.1980).

In response to the economism of the domestic labour debate, various authors explored the concept of patriarchy and have argued that marxist analysis must be combined with "feminist concepts" in order to comprehend the oppression of women. This position was identified in the introduction. I will not explore the debate in detail. (See Hartmann,H. 1979; Gowland,P. 1980; Rowbotham,S. 1979; Beechy,V. 1979). Brenner and Ramas discuss briefly the "dual systems" approach which argues that the oppression of women is the product of patriarchy which is allied to the long-term interests of the capitalist class.

More useful though, is the work of various scholars that focuses on the debates around the "family/household" as a socially determined and class-specific unit. These authors explore the interconnections between the gender divisions of labour both within capitalist production and reproduction. Harris' useful

contribution to this debate must be accepted as a caveat. She argues that there are naturalistic assumptions that underlie the way we think of the domestic sphere as the site of reproduction of oppressive gender relations. She criticizes the literature for using concepts of "the family", "the household" and "the sexual division of labour" as though they have some universal significance (Harris,O.1981;p49). Jane Humphries' article on the persistence of the working class family has opened a debate in it's critique of the classical Marxist call for the abolition of the family, and rejection of a functionalist approach to the family/household, as serving the interests of capital.

It should be noted that many feminist contributions on the family have focused on the oppressive nature of the family under capitalism. Conclusions as to the future of 'the family' are drawn directly from this understanding without recognition that the changing social relations fundamentally alter the basis of all interpersonal relations as well as relations between people and things. Barrett and Macintosh (1982) and Maconachie (1983) have put forward vehement critiques of "the family", arguing essentially that:

> "we would put nothing in the place of the family. Anything in its place with the world around it unchanged, could probably be little different from the household patterns and ideology that we know as 'the family' at present."
> (Barrett,M and Macintosh,M.1982;p158)

It is significant that they do not explore how social change can alter the "household patterns and ideology" within the family.

Gita Sen compares the approaches of Humphries and Hartmann and then goes on to suggest a more comprehensive approach. She suggests:

> "Women's responsibility for domestic work under capitalism is mainly a product of other forces that have been empirically acknowledged for some time. Specifically, the division of labour that emerges in early capitalist industrialization is based not only on sex, but on women's marital and childbearing status. The typical pattern (and it is one found in the third world countries as well) is far more complex."
> (Sen,G. 1980,p81)

Sen goes on to analyse how the gender division of labour prior to the advent of capitalism is changed when the household becomes a unit of consumption and no longer of production under capitalism. The reproduction of the labour force becomes an issue of concern to capital in general, but not to the individual capitalist:

> "As a result, the interruptions occasioned by pregnancy, childbirth and infant-care by workers, are only viewed as costs by the individual capitalist"
> (Sen,G 1980,p82)

This situation, she argues , has led to women's participation in wage labour being influenced by their life cycle status and the strata of the household.

Sen stresses that the position of women within the working class family is contradictory - there are beneficial aspects for women, while at the same time, women are subordinate to men within the family. "But" she says,

> "wage labour itself offers few options either, for many members of the working class, male or female. Feminists need to be careful to recognize that most jobs under capitalism are scarcely liberating... Similarly, we need to be extremely sensitive to attitudes to the family among working class women. Attacks on the family are likely to be counter-productive by themselves. Rather, we need to balance the attack on women's subordination with a vision of real and possible alternative institutions for working class solidarity and support." (Sen,G. 1980,p85.)

Edholm, Harris and Young in an early article, usefully define the notion of reproduction by isolating three conceptual aspects of it (Edholm,F et al;1977). Daily reproduction is defined as the process of equipping the individual worker for the tasks he/she faces at work the following day. This involves all the basic household chores, such as buying and cooking food, washing and repairing clothes, cleaning the house and so on.(3) Generational reproduction is seen as the replacement of the labour force. This entails the processes whereby there are constantly more workers at the factory gates to replace those who are too ill to work, or who have died. This aspect of reproduction includes childbirth, childcare and the socialization and education of children. The final aspect of reproduction is the perpetuation of the social relations of production, which determines the existence of classes and the divisions within classes.

Molyneux supporting this analysis, identifies two reproductive activities which are seen as women's responsibility under capitalism. She argues that:

> "Of these two reproductive activities (in their concrete forms of housework and childcare) it is the work of childcare which constitutes the most entrapping material relation for women and which at the same time is of the most benefit to the capitalist state. For a while the burden of housework can potentially be reduced to a minimum and then equalised between the adult members of a household, the solution to childcare requires a social restructuring of a major kind involving at the very least, the socialization of this work through the provision of adequate childcare agencies. Thus unlike housework, the solution to childcare requires a major allocation of resources and the assumption of responsibility for this area by the state or by other organised agencies."
> (Molyneux,M. 1981;p25)

Lenin argues that the capitalisation of industry and the proletarianization of women has been an important factor in women's struggle for independence within the family. He sees childcare facilities under capitalism as

> "first a rarity and second, and what is particularly important, either <u>profit-making</u> enterprizes, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating and fraud, or the 'acrobatics of bourgeois philanthropy', which

the best workers quite rightly hated and despised."
He identifies childcare facilities as a material prerequisite for socialism and argues that they change in character under socialism, from the role they play under capitalism (Lenin,V.I. in Marx,K et al.1977;p56-7).

For the purposes of this chapter, I have focussed on the Congress Alliance conception of motherhood and childcare. But I do not want to diminish the importance of the interconnections between the gender division of labour in reproduction and production. In the same way that feminists often argue that a focus on motherhood defines women simply as reproducers, the danger of an anti-motherhood position is the denial of women's sexuality and motherhood. I will argue in the thesis as a whole that women's emancipation can only be ensured by the analysis of and organisation around all aspects of the gender division of labour.(4) The gender division of labour within each of the aspects of reproduction identified above, has implications for women in their insertion into socialized production, organisational participation and in fact, in their participation in every aspect of society. But the focus on motherhood has been necessary because, within the socialist feminist and radical feminist traditions, there has been discernible anti-motherhood, anti-family position.(5)

Currently, a debate rages about the role/position of the family in society. Some have argued that the call for the assertion of the privacy and sanctity of the family is a reactionary call, often associated with conservatism and fascism. How does the practice of the Women's International Democratic Federation and the Federation of South African Women relate to this? Explicit in all of the mobilizing calls is the emphasis on the importance of children. But this is never isolated from the calls for thorough going social transformation to answer the other needs of the working people of South Africa. "Children" and "motherhood" were used symbolically to raise the social and political questions. However, this emphasis was on children as the future generation, as the New Men and Women, as the bearers of freedom; rather than on children as a part of the nuclear family, the backbone of capitalist society. Seldom, if ever, is the role of women as wives emphasized. Seldom are women portrayed as the main nuturing figure as the central figure in the family. Rather, the emphasis is on women collectively as the mothers of the next generation. The demand most commonly put forward was the right of children to protection, the responsibility of women to defend children, and the right of children to grow up in peace and friendship.

Croll and Molyneux raise the interesting question in their assessment of a socialist state's policies on women, namely that the common core assumptions are as follows:
1. Women's oppression is socially determined.
2. Women's oppression has objective aspects - law, educational constraints, lack of employment - and subjective aspects.
3. The family is seen as the basic cell of socialist society.
They argue that the subjective aspects can only be overcome by identifying the family as the locus of the subordination of women, and so ending family control and encouraging the

organisational participation of women. Their work entails a misunderstanding of how the family changed under socialism, and a fear of the ongoing struggles and debates within a healthy socialist society over the allocation of resources.

Conculsion

In conclusion, we must re-emphasise the ongoing struggle over the cultural definition of motherhood in every society. This position was spoken about by Lenin in an interview with Clara Zetkin, in the early 1920s:

> "... women everywhere should co-operate methodically with young people. This will be a continuation of motherhood, will elevate this and extend it from the individual to the social sphere. Women's incipient social life and activities must be promoted, so that they can outgrow the narrowness of their philistine, individualistic psychology centred on home and the family." (Lenin,V.I.1975;p104)

For example, in many Third World liberation struggles, the image of women armed with a gun and with a child in her arms is a powerful definition of women as a revolutionary force. The slogan "We fight for our children" has come to embody not just a mother's protection of her children, but an offensive involvement in the national liberation struggle to free the future generation. This dynamic process of the social construction of motherhood does not end with the end of the liberation war, and as Molyneux (1985) correctly identifes, will change with the different needs or emphases of the transformed society. The public/private dichotomy should not be seen as being defined simply by capital or, as Molyneux argues, by the socialist state. It is a dichotomy sustained, modified or removed by the process of struggle. For this reason, the contribution of the Congress Alliance and FSAW linked organisations in creating a positive, forceful definition of motherhood is significant in our country's future. The image of South African women as strong and vociferous mothers and workers, active in leading the national liberation movement, is something that can never be taken away from our nation.

Struggles over the right to family life and the social construction of motherhood underpin our approch to social transformation. It is in the course of struggle that the requirements in law, structure and social relations for a future society are developed. However it must be emphasised that there is a danger in general demands, such as the right to family life, and the right to motherhood, in that they are open to a variety of interpretaions. The documents analysed in this chapter leave the national liberation movement's demands very open and it is towards a specification of these rights and demands that the national liberation is moving as social transformation and the establishment of control over their own lives becomes a more realistic possiblity.

In conclusion, therefore, I would like to clearly distance myself from an anti-motherhood, anti-family approach. While recognizing that motherhood (as ideologically, politically and economically defined in bourgeois society) has been a source of women's

manipulation and oppression, I would guard against throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I would argue instead that the material reality of the oppressive nature of motherhood under capitalist social relations, puts up a good case for the re-organisation of these social functions. Without the restructuring of the relations of daily and generational reproduction, the transformation of society and the emancipation of women cannot be complete.

In conclusion, at a theoretical level, the oppression of women must be understood in terms of the gender division of labour within social relations structured by the capitalist mode of production and its reproduction. I have argued theoretically that the socially-constructed gender division of labour that defines childcare and housework (broadly conceived of) as women's responsibility within the family, is one of the crucial aspects of women's oppression. This process of social construction encompasses in part the struggles of progressive mass organisations around this issue. As such, I have shown how the Congress Alliance organisations appealed to women through the mother-child relationship, but moving beyond the single issue of motherhood, and thereby redefining the conception of motherhood. These organisations translated this ideological concern about the lives of South African children and the hardships endured by working class women into an organisational strategy taken up through on-going organising work and campaigns, as will be seen in subsequent chapters.

Since motherhood and childcare are indeed the most "entrapping material relation for women" under capitalism, in the sense that they affect women's participation in all social relations, these organisations strengthened their appeal to women by articulating their concerns and demands as mothers and at the same time laying the basis for challenging the gender division of labour in a transformed society. It is central to my understanding of the woman question and of social transformation that social changes are the product of struggle and in turn have to be protected by struggle. This is not a short term process, since as a social formation matures, new contradictions develop within the society, entailing a further series of struggles. The woman question has different dimensions in different historical eras, and this statement, true for the history of the civilised world, is also true for the future society too. The following chapters of the thesis explore some of the practical struggles in the Food and Canning Workers Union around these issues. By exploring them, I will explore the breadth of the Food and Canning Workers Union's understanding of and commitment to the fight for the rights of working class women under capitalism and to lay the basis for social transformation. Through this trade union, a significant tradition has been built up relating to the recognition of a broad terrain of working women's problems at home and at work, as integral not just to a trade union struggle, but as a part of the national liberation struggle.

But although we have seen that the Federation of South African Women appealed to women on the basis of their motherhood; in the practical struggles, the varying nature of the family structure shapes the terrain on which these issues can be taken up. It

must be borne in mind that in the South African society, there is a complex weave of cultures and family structures. In South Africa, there is not as yet, one national culture. The Congress Alliance recognized these divergences and the goal of building one non-racial South African nation that will allow cultural traditions to blossom and merge. The Freedom Charter indicates the Congress stand on this matter:

> "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened.
> ....
> All shall be equal before the law."

For women, the structure of the household/family relations has different implications for women of different cultural backgrounds. Maconachie has argued strongly against a normative notion of "the family" (1983;p3-4). She draws our attention to the incorrectness of counter-posing "the modern nuclear family" against "the traditional extended family", and argues that the diversity of family forms must be recognised. She points to how state policy influences family form:

> "Within the South African context, the notion of a stable bounded family unit is a privileged social construct, only mobilised by the state for a small section of the population. Social policy and state practice is differentially applied: securing rights for some, while denying rights to others on the basis of 'race' or 'ethnic group membership'." (Maconachie,M.1983;p6)

To this racism in state policy must be added the diversity of cultural and religious heritages in South Africa. Not only the family forms differ, but the nature of women's oppression within those families also varies. The Muslim women are locked into distinct familial relations which bind those women tightly to a conservatism. Christian African women have synthesised traditional pre-capitalist customs with Christian beliefs. Their position as women in the family will differ from that of Coloured Christian women, whose cultural heritage is very different. The heritages of Afrikaner Calvinist women, English speaking white women, Hindu women, urban and rural women, all differ markedly. What is common to all is that blood and marriage relations are prioritised, heterosexuality is accepted as the basis of life. This does not imply, as argued by Maconachie (1983), that

> "the family appears as the unit founded upon affective and caring relationships; it is co-operative and the resources of the group are held to be shared amongst its members equally, or according to need." (Maconachie,M.1983;p7)

From my experiences of speaking to working class men and women, they consider their partners as caring shockabsorbers necessary because of the alienation of capitalist society, rather than in terms of some bourgeois ideal. The daily life at work and at home of working class people, is a harsh and violent reality, but this does not negate the importance of a partner and of children for the majority of working class men and women.

Kollontai points to the differences between the feminists of her day and proletarian women's attitudes to the family:

> "The crux of the family and marriage problem lies for the proletarian wife and mother not in the question of the sacred or secular external form, but in the attendant social and economic condtions which define the complicated

obligations of the working class omwan. Of course it matters to her too whether her husband has the right to dispose of her earnings, whether he has the right by law to forced her to live with him when she does not want to, whether the husband can forcibly take her children away etc. However, it is not such paragraphs of the civic code that determine the position of women in the family, nor is it these paragraphs which make for the confusion and complexity of the family problem. The question of relationships would cease to be such a painful one for the majority of women only if society relieved women of all those petty household chores which are at present unavoidable (given the existence of individual, scattered domestic economies), took over responsibility for the younger generation, protected maternity and gave the mother to the child for at least the first months after birth. In opposing the legal and sacred church marriage contract, the feminists are fighting a fetish. The proletarian women, on the other hand, are waging a war against the factors that are behind the modern form of marriage and family. In striving to change fundamentally the conditions of life, they know that they are also helping to reform relationships between the sexes. Here we have the main difference between the bourgeoisie and proletarian approach to the difficult problem of the family."
(Kollontai,A.1977;p68)

In conclusion then, the notion of "the family" must be used to accomodate a wide variety of forms - shaped by culture, religion, "race", and class. In arguing for the social recognition of parenthood and familial relations in a non-oppressive sense, historical materialists do not in anyway pose "the harmonious nuclear family" as the norm. The progressive divorce laws and family codes of socialist countries such as Cuba and Angola recognise fully the ongoing gender struggles.

FOOTNOTES.

(1) The Women's Democratic Federation was the Cape Town based organisation of women that began in the late 40s or early 50s. It was started by a largely CPSA linked group of women, and became the organisational base from which a national women's body was formed in 1954. It seems to have ceased to exist as an organisational structure with the launching of the ANC Women's League on a national basis in 1955. (See Schreiner,J.1982a)

(2) The same distinction is made by Macintosh,M.1981.

(3) See also South African Labour Bulletin editorial in the issue on women and work, for a breakdown of the reproductive tasks.

(4) See discussion of point by Macintosh,M.(1981) referred to above.

(5) See quote above from Barrett and Macintosh and discussion of Maconachie and Molyneux in concluding chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO.

THE UNION, INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

In the previous chapter, I outlined the overall approach to organising women as seen in published documents of the WIDF, South African women's organisations and the Congress Alliance in the 1950s. The strong emphasis on the role of women as mothers and hence as political beings was highlighted. In the thesis overall, I will argue that this approach is a correct starting point, but that a broader approach must inform the strategy for women's emancipation. In Chapter 3, I will examine through various case studies, the way in which the union synthesised the struggles around different aspects of women's lives. Before that is possible, it is necessary to look at the union's structure, its conception of its role in the national liberation movement and its working relationships with the Congress Alliance, Federation of South African Women and SACTU.

The Union's Organising Strategy and Organisational Structure.

Let me start with a thumbnail sketch of the union's overall organising strategy and its organisational structure. Richard Goode, in his thesis and articles, gives a good overview of how the union worked. (Goode,R.1983a;1983b;1986b)

The organisation of the union started in 1941 at the Crosse and Blackwell factory in Cape Town, and then spread to the factories in Paarl and Worcester. The first meetings in Paarl were held at night illuminated by the headlights of a car. This slow and clandestine organising work paid off with the eventual formation of a union branch. The branch called mass meetings in the area to popularise the idea of unionism. After its second meeting, a leading worker was sacked. This led to a strike by his fellow workers. The union organised scab labour not to take the strikers jobs, undertook solidarity work among other workers and provided financial support for the workers. The workers won and the firm signed an agreement (Goode,R.1984;p4-6).

From there, the organisation of workers spread like wildfire through the Boland and Western Cape factories. The appalling conditions in these factories made wage increases a fairly easy victory, which assisted in the growth of the union. The union that emerged was organisationally powerful with well functioning branches based on geographical boundaries rather than factory by factory. The branch however organised systematically through one factory before moving to organise at another, setting up factory committees which participated in some limited negotiations, took mandates and reported back to factory meetings, but had no constitutional powers in the union (Goode,R.1986b;p2-3). The strength of the union has always lain in the strong, paid up membership in each factory. In each factory, workers were signed up as union members by the union officials who collected subscriptions and heard the workers' grievances.

As soon as there were 10 members in an area, for example, in Paarl, Wellington, Cape Town and so on, they could apply to the NEC to form a branch. Then the Branch Executive Committee was elected. Three monthly General Members Meetings were called by the Branch Executive Committee (BEC), which carried out the work of the branch in the intervening periods. These Branch Executive Committees handled the administration of membership and subscriptions, dealt with workers complaints directly or through Wage Boards and Conciliation Boards, and facilitated worker education. Goode notes that the 1941 Constitution and a subsequent amended version (probably 1953) differ in respect of provision for shop stewards in the latter. He asserts that the role of the shop stewards was limited to subs collection (Goode,R.1986b;p1/2). The co-operation of workers from different factories in these branches and BECs helped to build worker unity cutting across the artificial divisions in the working class of that town or area.(1) It was through these branches that the factory floor presence of the union was maintained. This entailed consistent organising work by the Branch Secretary and organisers since the high seasonal turnover of workers meant that a consistent all-year-round and ongoing union leadership was difficult to sustain. The existence of branches on an area basis, rather than factory basis was crucial in overcoming this limitation. As in any organisation, the practice of democracy was a lot harder than simply writing it into the constitution. In any organisation, it is the task of leadership to constantly strengthen democratic structures and re-build where the organisation is weak. This was an ongoing part of union work.

Over and above the branches and the BECs, was the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the Management Committee.(2) Each branch had one representative on the NEC. Those branches with more than 500 members had two representatives. In addition to the branch representatives, the NEC consisted of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and General Secretary, who were elected at the annual national conference. The President, General Secretary, Treasurer and 8 members of the NEC constituted the Management Committee to manage the affairs of the union between the six monthly NEC meetings. The tight and democratic structure of the union was crucial in training workers in democracy and accountability, and in building working class leadership within the union and within the communities. It will be shown later in this Chapter and in Chapter Three how this tight organisational structure facilitated the participation in federal structures within the labour movement and within the women's movement,(3) as well as providing a basis for close working relationships between the union and other organisations.

The union branches gave the union officials the power to reach agreements with management in negotiations through Wage Boards and Conciliation Boards. The union collected the grievances from the workers and with the approval of the NEC, took the necessary steps to set the machinery in motion for resolving these problems. The union took the grievances to the employers and as Goode says, these demands were invariably refused by management. The union then declared a dispute and demanded that the Minister of Labour settle the dispute (Goode.R;1983b;p4). As noted

earlier, the union had adopted a parallel union structure divided along racial lines in 1947 due to state legislation restricting the membership of registered trade unions. It has been argued that the separation was a paper one, although obviously the unwieldy manouvering around the law had certain undesirable practical effects in the union. The state and employers could enforce this division.

Conciliation Board negotiations excluded African workers, although the union ensured that the gains won for Coloured workers were extended to African workers. Goode has argued that the decision to form AFCWU in 1947, reflects the "consistent use of Wage Boards and Conciliation Boards from the union's inception." The Conciliation Board is an adhoc body that consists of equal numbers of employer and worker representatives. Where there is not an Industrial Council, a Conciliation Board may be established by the Minister to settle a particular dispute. When a board has completed that particular negotiation, it is disbanded. The Minister of Labour made the Conciliation Board agreements public through the Government Gazette (TUCSA Trade Union Directory, 1978)(4)

In 1956, when the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended, the union debated the issues of non-racial unity and factory floor strength versus the effects of the Industrial Conciliation Act registration. The union decided to retain the structure, thereby maintaining its access to the state industrial machinery.(5) It is important to stress however that the strategy of negotiation and intervention by the Department of Labour did not replace direct worker action or solidarity action. The enormous gains made in this early period of the union were followed by a difficult post war period. But after this difficult period, the union was able to make strides in wage increases, better living conditions and extend its organisation into new areas. While the union did not grow extensively in the early 50s, the 1950s and early 1960s were a crucial period for the unionisation of workers in the food and canning industry. This was a period in which the union was streched by repression against leadership, state attacks on the labour movement in general, difficulty of expanding to cover new areas of the food industry, and by the political and economic assault on the lives of the working people by the state.

The union's structure and its understanding of the function of a union was far broader than just the work place struggles over wages, working conditions, hours and so on, facilitating its integral involvement in the lives of the workers both at work and in the community. The struggle for a better life - a slogan of the union - was seen as broadly as possible. This was particularly true in the rural towns, where the union was the centre of social activity in the community as well as the force within the factories. The existence of branches, as opposed to only factory based structures, was an important manifestation of this approach to unionism. While Branch committees had responsibility to go to the workers to hear their complaints about work and wages, they also operated within the community, working alongside the political and community organisations, and within federal structures. The manner in which the union co-

operated with these organisations, and specifically with the women's organisations will be considered in the third part of the third chapter.

But this close connection with the community in which their members lived was also an important part of the union's organising strategy. Apart from organisers going to factories to hold meetings and discuss with the workers, there was also a lot of organising in the community over the weekends or during the off season. Goode's article on the Wolseley strike provides a glimpse of this strategy:

> "By a decision of the Central Executive the Wolseley branch was revived. Officials ... and Worcester, Wellington and Paarl branch members brought Wolseley workers back to the union in numbers. The methods employed started with correspondence to the workers in Wolseley that head office had contact with, informing them that on a certain date they would be visited and asking them to arrange a meeting place and workers to attend. ... The head office also directly corresponded with any sympathetic members of the community prepared to help the union, particularly with venues for meetings ..."(Goode, R. 1986, p13)

In this way, the head office and the stronger branches took responsibility for assisting in strengthening the union in new or weak areas. Without wanting to go into the union's structures and organising strategy in any detail, I would argue that it was both because of the union's understanding of the function of a trade union in broader terms than just workplace struggles, and the structure of the union that organised workers across the factory divisions that facilitated the very crucial contribution that the union made to the life of the communities and to the development of the labour movement in South Africa.

The democratic nature of the union - by which I mean not only the structural democracy, but also in the sense of the issues taken up reflecting the concerns of membership - meant that the workplace, household and political problems of women workers were "on the agenda". It is this that I am concerned to explore in Chapter 3.

The Union's Conception of its Role in the National Liberation Movement.

The overall approach to the union's function is laid down in the constitution, reports and workings of the union. The constitution outlines the union's function as broader than simply to further the economic struggle in the workplace:

> "3.AIMS AND OBJECTS:...
> c) To consider and advise on legislation and to promote, support or oppose any proposed legislation, and to make such representations to public and other such bodies as may be in the interests of the Union and its members.
> d) To nominate and elect members or officials of the Union as representatives on public or Government bodies, national or international conferences, or any Industrial Council or Conciliation Board established in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act, 1937.

e) To co-operate with and assist other Trade or industrial organisations in the general interest of the working class movement.

f) To do such other lawful things as may appear to be in the interests of members generally."

(FCWU Consistitution,p1; BC721)

This statement of intent is clearly reflected in the practice of the union - the resolutions presented by branches at the annual conference related to a broad range of working class problems; the union's role in the SATLC and in building SACTU; the affiliation of the union to the Federation of South African Women and the various campaigns in which the union represented the interests of their workers.

The Secretarial Report to the Annual Conference of the union in 1948 dealt with the question of the tasks of the union:

"So that our Union should be able to take its right place in the struggle for democracy at home, for a fuller life for workers, and for peace in the world, our Union has to be strong. Therefore our Branches that are weak, namely Saldanha Bay, Paternoster, St Helena Bay, must be strengthened, but not only these branches. We must see that in every branch every worker in that area who is employed in a canning, dried fruit, or fish factory, is a member of our Union. And not just a member but a paid up and active member. Our Branch Committees, and Shop Stewards have to give leadership not only to our members but to the community as a whole. It is common knowledge to us that our Union is regarded with high esteem by the people in the country areas for what it has achieved for the workers in these areas. Therefore, with the confidence that the people have in the leadership of our Union, it should be possible for our Comrades to acquire the necessary knowledge and take an active part in the community life of the people, and for our Shop stewards and branch committee members to be prepared to accept leadership in Village Management Boards, Town Concils, etc. In our struggle for democratic and citizenship rights, we must be prepared to accept responsibility and perform certain duties that citizenship requires."

(General Secretary's Report to 1948 Annual Conference of FCWU, 17 and 18 January 1948, p9; BC721)

Although the union did not play a central role in drafting of the SACTU Constitution, the Preamble of the SACTU Constitution (Appendix 6) is possibly the best summary of the overall outlook of the union. But before quoting it, a couple of comments are in order.

The union had affiliated to the Cape Federation of Labour Unions which became part of the SATLC. Along with other progressive unions, the FCWU had pressurised the SATLC on many issues. The union opposed the dissolution of the SATLC to form a racially exclusive union federation, and so welcomed the formation of SACTU. The union, along with 13 other progressive unions refused to join SATUC because of its racism and formed the Trade Union Co-ordinating Committee to form a base for a new federation, and to unite with CNETU,the Council of Non-European Trade Unions. The union played a key role in building the Cape Town Regional and

Local Committees, and many food and canning workers took their place among the SACTU organisers and leaders - for example, Louise Kellerman, Liz Abrahams, Leon Levy (Soudien,D.1981;p62; Goode,R.1986b;p10). The union clearly understood the gains it could make through membership of a federation, and understood the importance of a federation in taking the workers' struggles beyond purely shopfloor struggle in one industry and into the national arena.

Goode has summarised the union's involvement in SACTU and argues that

> "The SACTU experience did not produce a qualitative shift in the levels of participation in political events or deepening of political consciousness that it may potentially have done." (Goode,R.1986b;p16)

Soudien adds a different dimension, arguing that through affiliation to SACTU and hence to the Congress Alliance, the FCWU was strengthened, being able to claim a membership of 17,617 in April 1961 as opposed to 12,600 in 1955 (Soudien,D.1981;pp 3&58). From the time of SACTU's formation it is certainly true that the union's vehicle for participation in political campaigns shifted away from affiliating to a range of adhoc Action Committees, to participation through the union federation. I would argue that this is a function of the maturing of the national liberation movement as a whole and the changes this brought in organisational linkages.

I quote the SACTU Preamble here as a summary of the conception of the relationship between trade unionism and political organisation, which the FCWU had already been practicing for more than a decade by the time SACTU was formed:

> "History has shown that unorganised workers are unable to improve their wages and conditions of work <u>on a lasting basis.</u> Only where workers have organised in effective trade unions have they been able to improve their lot, raise their standard of living and generally protect themselves and their families against the insecurities of life.
>
> The whole experience of the Trade Union Movement the world over has furthermore established the fact that the Movement can only progress on the basis of unity and in the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity of all workers. Trade Unions must unreservedly reject any attempts to sow disunity among the workers, on the basis of colour or nationality or any other basis.
>
> Just as the individual worker, of any group of workers, are unable to improve their lot without organisation into trade unions, so is the individual trade union powerless unless there is in existence a co-ordinating body of trade unions which unites the efforts of all workers. For such a trade union federation to be successful, it must be able to speak on behalf of all workers, irrespective of race or colour, nationality or sex.

> The future of the people of South Africa is in the hands of its workers. Only the working class in alliance with other progressive minded sections of the community, can build a happy life for all South Africans, a life free from unemployment, insecurity and poverty, free from racial hatred and oppression, a life of vast opportunities for all people.
>
> But the working class can only succeed in this great and noble endeavour if it itself is united and strong, if it is conscious of its inspiring responsibility. The workers of South Africa need a united trade union movement in which all sections of the working class can play their part unhindered by prejudice or racial discrimination. Only such a truly united movement can serve the interests of the workers, both the immediate interests of higher wages and better conditions of life and work as well as the ultimate objective of complete emancipation, for which our forefathers have fought.
>
> We firmly declare that the interests of all workers are alike, whether they be European, African, Coloured, Indian, English, Afrikaans or Jewish. We resolve that this co-ordinating body of trade unions shall strive to unite all workers in its ranks, without discrimination, and without prejudice.' We resolve that this body shall determinedly seek to further and protect the interests of all workers, and that this guiding motto shall be the universal slogan of working class solidarity: 'AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL'
> (Quoted in Soudien, D;1981;Appendix VI)

From the above extracts it is obvious that at this time the union adopted an approach to the national and social questions that rejected both workerism and syndicalism. Cronin in a recent article, delivering a brief but useful critique of workerism has the following to say:

> "Workerism, while correctly calling for the leading role of the working class, fails to see that this leadership must be exercised on all fronts of the struggle, and not just in narrow "pure" working class, shop-floor issues. ... Trade unions are not per se workerist or reformist, ..."
> (Cronin,J.1986;p32)

Innes in discussing the Cronin and Erwin debate, summarises the position of syndicalists as follows:

> "Syndicalism is based on the view that capitalist power relations derive from the economy. Politics, law, culture and ideology are seen as subordinate to economic relations. Syndicalism emphasises direct working class action at an economic level (particularly in the workplace and through the mass strike), in the belief that this will be sufficient to bring about the collapse of the state."
> (Innes,D.1986;p12)

What I have outlined above is an approach to trade unionism that sees the individual trade union as a crucial element of the liberation movement within the society as a whole, a role that is

carried through its membership of a trade union federation and through alliances with other types of organisations.

In his most recent working paper, Goode has criticised the union for failing to develop beyond what he describes as "social welfare unionism" into the full blown "political unionism" along the lines outlined by SACTU. He seems to slip, a bit uneasily, from one concept to the other, saying that the approach the union adopted

> "has been characterised as political unionism or social welfare unionism, the latter term being more appropriate to describe the breadth of the issues identified by the union as its legitimate concern as a vehicle to advance the interests of its members and the broader working class. A political approach which seeks to gain material concession from the capitalists and state and which does not pose the question of state power centrally. This is distinct from the political unionism of the 1950s to be examined below. The FCWU started with this conception of social welfare unionism and while adapting to conditions in the 1950s, this feature remained essentially unchanged, because a strong continuity was evident in this political feature." (Goode,R.1986b:p8)

He later relies on Lambert's definition of political unionism as comprising three interrelated aspects:

> "First, a leadership strategy of interlacing economic and political struggle in such a way that a <u>movement</u> develops whereby workers act against exploitation at the factory, community and state power levels, not in terms of stages but simultaneously; second, the development of forms of organisation that facilitates this integrated politics; and finally, active engagement in an alliance that has the potential to extend working class influence beyond its own boundaries."(Lambert,quoted in Goode,R.1986b;p13)

The body of this thesis in itself provides a critique to Goode's characterisation of the union's practice as social welfare unionism. I have highlighted in Chapter Three that practical manifestations of the progressive ideology of the union. But certain qualificatory remarks need to be made here. Goode criticises the union as not being concerned with the question of seizure of state power. A full assessment of this question is not possible without a detailed analysis of the understanding within the union of the relationship between the CPSA and the labour movement. An analysis of the role of the CPSA in the formation of the FCWU is a difficult and massive research undertaking. The underground nature of the CPSA from 1950 means that academic researchers are cut off from a full understanding of the debates and work within the Party ranks. Research into the role of the Party would involve overseas travel to archive sources and interviews, and entail difficult and sensitive investigations in South Africa. Without extensive primary research, analysts can easily fall into the trap of either assuming the debates did not occur as there is no public record of them, or of speculating as to the content of these debates. I have chosen to exclude any comments on the role of the CPSA in order to avoid this problem.

Goode's rejection of the union's political role as "social welfare" reformism is not adequately situated it in the context

of the period. I would ask if he means to imply that in the 1940s and 1950s, in a period of consolidation for the liberation movement as a whole, and with the union federation in the process of consolidating its political direction, the union, as a new union, had the option of placing the seizing of power by the people centrally on the agenda. The level of organisation and the objective conditions of that period were hardly conducive to a public campaign around the question of state power, even if the long term perspective of the union was that. A researcher should guard against assuming that because an organisation does not have public records as to its approach to such a key (and sensitive) strategic question as state power; or that the public records do not pose the question in words familiar to the academic's own phraseology, that the "absence" reflects the lack of recognition of this as a key question. The question of when particular strategic questions are raised within an organisation is not simply a question of ideology. It is affected by the strength of organisation; the interconnections with other progressive organisations the ideology and repression of the state. In other words, the balance of class forces will be the crucible within which issues or debates are or are not placed on the agenda. Generals who expose their battle plans before they have prepared their forces are inviting a sophisticated and fatal counter offensive from their enemy.

I think a more useful question to pose is: Did the manner in which the union operated build a reformist approach to political action? Or did the union through the winning of concessions from the state and capitalists, develop workers' consciousness of the nature of the capitalist state and the limits of the gains possible and ultimately of the need for an alternative. It is important to stress that short term goals and tactics - for example, participation in Village Management Boards etc - do not mean that the union's long term goals (stated or unstated) were restricted to reformist incorporation. As stated above, the evidence presented in Chapter Three shows quite clearly that the union did have a long term transformation of political, economic and gender relations in mind. The significant change in political direction in the mid 1960s must be seen in a different light. Within any organisation, and particularly within a trade union which aims to organise all workers, irrespective of political views, there is a dialectical interaction of different views. The repression of the liberation movement had special consequences for FCWU and AFCWU because of the overlap of membership and leadership and because the union itself had been a target for state repression. By the mid 60s, layers of union leadership had been banned, banished, detained and jailed, leaving a more conservative grouping within the union (which had been there throughout the union's life) the room to assert themselves.

I have argued that the union's conception of trade unionism was closely linked to its perception of political struggle. What was the union's attitude to the political struggle outside of the factory? The central tenet of the union's politics is perhaps best summarised in the phrase "Politics is the search for allies". The union sought by its involvement in political campaigns to form alliances in terms of class forces, non-racialism and in terms of different kinds of organisations using

their specific power to reinforce each others actions.

This approach was practiced from its inception. The union had close working relationships with other organisations and participated in campaigns led by the CPSA, the ANC and later the Congress Alliance. The union participated in joint campaigns. For example, the FCWU affiliated to the Friends of the Soviet Union in the post war period and made a financial contribution for medical aid for the Soviet people. The union also affiliated to the Franchise Action Council which spearheaded the campaign against the removal of Coloured voters from the voting role. As the liberation movement consolidated itself into a structured alliance during the Congress of the People campaign, the union's relationship with the political organisations became more formalised. Through affiliation to SACTU, the union had a direct link to the National Consultative Committee of the Congress Alliance. During the late 50s, the union participated in many of the Congress Alliance campaigns - the Congress of the People, the Bantu Education Campaign, the Campaign against the Group Areas Act, the Anti-Pass Campaign, the Anti-Election Campaign of 1958, the All-In-Conference in 1960 and in the Anti-Republic Stayaway in 1961. (Soudien,D.1981;pp53,64,67,83,95-9,103,115,118-9; Karon,T.1983; Goode,R.1983a;pp44-54)

Richard Goode has suggested that the rank and file membership was pretty untouched by the political campaigns, being kept informed through reports rather than through active involvement (Goode,R.186b;p11). This needs to be qualified by examination of each branch. Certainly in the bigger branches there was substantial overlap of membership and leadership of the ANC and AFCWU, and of CPC and FCWU. The nature of rank and file participation is a reflection of the focus on mass mobilisation (as opposed to organisation) within the Congress Alliance in the 50s, and the limited organisation established in the rural areas, rather than a reflection of a problem within the union itself. Goode does not seem to recognise mass mobilisation and the public identification of different organisations with struggles led by other organisations as significant. While not wanting to suggest that this can replace solid organisationally based action, it is an important part of mass education and the preparation of a climate for resistance.

There was no fundamental difference in conception of political struggle between the Congress Alliance and the union. In 1961, the union Annual Report recognises this alignment of views between the union, SACTU and the Congress Alliance:

> "We cannot succeed to bring about a better life for our food and canning workers unless and until all workers in our country are also uplifted. We are affiliated to SACTU, the mouthpiece of all exploited and oppressed workers in our country. ..We are proud to be affiliated to SACTU, not only because of its campaign for a Pound a day, campaign for the recognition of African trade unions, but through SACTU we are lined up with the mighty Congress movement that is fighting for freedom in our lifetime."(FCWU Annual Report to Conference, 1961. BC721)(6)

Without going into a detailed chronology of the campaigns which the union was involved in, it is possible to give an overview of different aspects of the struggles that the union participated in, which define the union's conception of political struggle. Four aspects can be isolated:
1) mobilisation and organisation of working people;
2) the search for allies of the working people;
3) the fight for better conditions at work and in the community; and 4) the struggle for political rights and realisation of the political aspirations of the working people and their oppressed allies.
It must be stressed that these four aspects are separated out for purposes of analytical clarity, but in organisational practice, they are often linked together within a particular campaign or strategy.

The political work of the union was facilitated by the organisational structures within it, by its participation in federal structures and by its close working relationships with other organisations operating in the communities where the union had branches. I have already outlined the internal structure of the union and the branches relationships to the community. This structure enabled the union to provide an organisational point not only in the workplace struggle as will be shown in Chapter Three Part One, but also in the community based struggles around removals, housing, pass laws, Group Areas and political struggles for democracy, (as shown in Chapter Three Parts Two and Three). Furthermore, the tight democratic structures within the union facilitated the organisational representation in federal structures. I have looked at how the union's approach coincided with that of SACTU and facilitated the union's active participation in SACTU. I will now look at the union's relationship with FSAW.

The Union and the Federation of South African Women.

The role of food and canning workers in the various women's struggles was not restricted to its participation as an affiliate of the FSAW. From the time of the formation of the small Women's Democratic Federation in the early 50s to the early 60s, workers from this industry assisted in organising women through providing speakers at meetings and by participating as members of other organisations. In the early 50s, when the Women's Democratic Federation was still weak, the organised women of the FCWU and AFCWU were relied on for leadership. For example, the Women's Democratic Federation requested a speaker for International Women's Day. However, due to short notice, no speaker was available (FCWU Management Committee Minutes 7.03.54; BC721). The trade union women played an important role in convening the National Women's Conference in 1954. There was a significant debate about the precise form of organisational structure that was needed (See Schreiner,J.1982;pp77-83 and Walker,C.1982;p198-9 for a summary of this debate). The union affiliated (at a national level) in June 1955. This event raises the interesting question of how the tasks of a trade union and a women's federation are differ. In this thesis, we will be able to see how these tasks were combined through a federal structure

and through alliances. Walker describes the role played by Ray Alexander, at the time General Secretary of FCWU, in raising the idea of a national women's structure: in Cape Town in the Women's Democratic Fedeation; with women in Johannesburg; and with FCWU and AFCWU and ANC women in Port Elizabeth (Wallker,C;1982;pp135-143). These initially adhoc, and informal, discussions were followed up within the union structures, when branches were invited to send delegates to the National Women's Conference on 17 April 1954. (7)

It is indicative of FCWU and AFCWU understanding of democracy and education that Cape Town branch invited Gladys Smith,(a member of the Cape Housewives League,) to speak on women's rights before they elected a delegate to the national conference. The meeting was however postponed, so only the letter of invitation was read and the branch secretary, Becky Lan, led the discussion and answered the questions. The minutes of the meeting show the concerns of the union:

> "Women to day take their place together with men in the factory and business. The status of women however, is inferior to men. For example, wages paid to women is less than that paid to men. The women have responsibility of caring for the home as well as the children. This is an extra burden on the women. No facilities are provided to make life easier for the women. Creches for children, better homes, improved transport etc are things which women in every walk of life should strive for. The fact was however, that the struggle should come from the working woman. Women from the employers class, did no work, and therefore would not be aware of the disabilities of the working woman.
>
> The Secretary quoted from a speech made by Comrade Ngotyana, at the General Members meeting held on 10th February 1954. He had pointed out that in countries where the workers controlled the country, special care was taken to protect women workers. In South Africa, the plight of the african women was a particularly hard one. The migratory labour system meant that the men were forced to leave their wives and children for long periods of about 2 to 4 years. The home was broken and often through outside forces, the family never reunited. The policy of the government was to use the African male labour to the fullest extent and then to make him return to the reserves. Men returning from the mines were often diseased and unable to do any work afterwards. Because of this system of migratory labour, few houses have been provided for the Africans. The result of this was pondokkie towns such as Windemere. Coloured people did not escape these conditions. The struggle of the coloured women today is side by side with the African women. The conference which was to be held in Joburg, is the first of its kind in the history of South Africa and shows that the women today are not prepared to tolerate the conditions under which they are living. They are determined to take their part side by side with the men in the struggle for better living conditions for all people in South Africa."
> (Minutes of Adjourned Members General Meeting held on 14 April 1954; BC721)

The NEC that was elected by the 17 April conference included both FCWU and AFCWU members - Ray Alexander, Elizabeth Mafeking, Freda van Rhede, and Frances Baard. Two months later delegates were elected to represent branches of the union at the Cape Regional Conference of the FSAW, and Becky Lan, secretary of the Cape Town branch of the union, served on the Cape Regional Executive until she was banned in November of that year.(8)

The union was invited to affiliate to the FSAW, and the Management Committee decision of 12 June 1955 was formally reported to and ratified by the Annual Conference (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 12.6.55 and Annual Conference Report on 27 and 28 August 1955,AD1175). The Management Committee had appealed to all branches to co-operate with the federation in whatever way possible.

The working relationship between the FSAW, FCWU amd other FSAW affiliates is shown in the various messages of support to FCWU and AFCWU conferences, as well as in the actual campaign work. For example, a speaker, Miss Naylor, brought a message from the FSAW Cape Region and another speaker brought greetings from the Cape Housewives League to the Annual Conference of the union in 1956 (Minutes of the FCWU Annual National Conference, 8 and 9 September 1956,p4;BC721). It is interesting to note that the FSAW saw it as important to send a representative to speak to the FCWU women even though the same day they held a national demonstration at the Union Buildings as well as regional demonstrations in many centres. In addition, the FCWU Cape Town branch sent a delegate, Louise Kellerman to the Pretoria march and the second FSAW conference (Minutes of Cape Town FCWU Branch Executive Committee Meeting, 30.07.56;BC721). Similarly, the following year, a message from Lily Diedericks, Cape President of the FSAW spoke of the importance of women in the struggle for a lasting world peace, the banning of atomic weapons and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful ends only (Minutes of Annual National Conference of FCWU 14 and 15 September 1957;BC721).

The FSAW wrote to the FCWU and AFCWU inviting them to attend the Port Elizabeth conference in 1961, and reminding them to pay their affiliation fees. The Management Committee elected 3 delegates to attend, Wihelmina Jones, E. Collins and D. Muggels, and encouraged branches to ensure that the women of the area sent representatives (Minutes of FCWU Management Committee Meeting, 02.07.61;BC721). The General Secretary motivated the union participation strongly:

> "...The women workers are having a hard time with unemployment, the constant rise in the cost of living, the vicious Group Areas Act, Pass Laws and Job reservation brings us anxiety of our homes and jobs. It is more than necessary for the women of South Africa to unite their forces and to speak in one united voice for freedom, the right to work and the right to live in peace and harmony."
> (FCWU Circular Letter No13/61,5 July 1961;BC721)

The Paarl branch decided to pay for the busfare, food and accomodation costs of one of these delegates, E Collins, as their contribution to the conference (Paarl Branch Executive Committee Minutes,24.07.61;BC721). One can see that FCWU had permanent

representatives elected to leadership positions in the FSAW regionally and nationally, but in addition, a wide range of women had the chance to participate in FSAW discussions. This practice of changing delegates built up the understanding among many women workers of the importance of being involved in the women's struggle.

The union was aware of the increasing role it had to play in sustaining organisation after the 1960 bannings. The major affiliate of the FSAW, the African National Congress Women's League, was banned in April 1960. The task of organising African women in the Western Cape thus fell on the shoulders of the AFCWU and the FSAW structures directly (Women of South Africa, Vol 2, October/November 9161;AD1137). This is reflected in the urgency for a united voice for South African women expressed in the above quote. When the FSAW asked the Paarl branch of the union if they could use the office for meetings, the Branch Executive Committee and Shop Stewards meeting discussed the problems being faced by the FSAW and agreed that they could used it free of charge until such time as they were in a position to pay. (Paarl Branch FCWU Executive Committee and Shop Stewards Meeting Minutes, 24.05.62;BC721) The assistance offered by the FCWU is consistent with its responsibilities as an affiliate of a body under threat from the repressive arm of the state.

Cherryl Walker has emphasised the contribution of the union in the FSAW in the Western Cape:

> "...in Cape Town it was the trade unions that were more important. Certainly the role of trade unionists was very large in Cape Town FSAW, though the ANC Women's League was not by any means unimportant. The links Ray Alexander had forged with the trade union movement proved strong. The only union formally to affiliate to the FSAW, the Food and Canning Workers Union (including its African 'parallel' counterpart) was based in the Western Cape. It's officials figured prominently in the local Federation leadership - Liz Abrahams, Elizabeth Mafeking, Ruth Gosschalk. Through its branches the FSAW reached out into the small agricultural towns lying beyond Cape Town: Paarl, Wellington, Worcester, Stellenbosch. The Paarl and Worcester branches of the union, in particular, were in close contact with the regional committee of the FSAW.
>
> Yet, outside of the union leadership, it is doubtful that many of the women working in the food processing factories were well-informed about the FSAW. As in the ANCWL, the affiliation of union members to the FSAW was automatic. There were no local FSAW committees in the Western Cape, with the exception Cape Town. In Paarl, the area where the FSAW was probably best known, FSAW meetings were not separate from union ones. Any business of the Federation that needed to be discussed would simply be raised at the end of a union meeting. Contact between the FSAW regional committee in Cape Town and union branches in the Boland towns was extremely informal, depending largely on the overlap of their respective committees. All regional functions of the FSAW appear to have taken place in Cape Town only. According to Abrahams, who lived in Paarl,

whenever there was an important FSAW meeting or demonstration, delegates from Paarl, Stellenbosch and Worcester would travel to the city by bus to participate." (Walker,C;1982;p241)

An interview with Liz Abrahams gives a different account of the structure of the FSAW in the Western Cape:

"Each FSAW branch in the Western Cape had a representative on the FSAW Regional executive (FSAW WC). The Branch Committee consisted of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, elected at a general branch meeting of all women from each affiliated organisation. Affiliated organisations had representatives on the FSAW Western Cape - CPC, SACTU and FCWU represented by Liz Abrahams, ANC Women's League by Mafekeng who was also Secretary of Paarl Branch of FSAW). Most of the FSAW executive was in Cape Town. FSAW (WC) had branches in Worcester, Paarl, Wellington and Cape Town. In Paarl FSAW branch had meeting once a month, in different houses. FSAW branch committee would go on membership drives - go out over the weekend and explain about the FSAW and ask women to join the FSAW - would also talk about affiliate organisations so people would probably join both."
(Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by J. Schreiner September 1981)

In addition, through the FSAW circular letters distributed to the branches of FCWU and AFCWU, and through reportbacks from elected representatives to the various FSAW meetings, union members gained an insight into the working of the FSAW and the importance of organising women. For example, Louise Kellerman read the FSAW circular and reported back on the Second FSAW Conference and on the activities of the Cape Housewives League, of which she was a member. She encouraged the BEC to take a more active role in organsing the women of their area, and the BEC agreed to be notified of Cape Housewives League activities so that they could take part (Cape Town FCWU Branch Executive Committee Minutes, 26.09.56; BC721). The union had previously endorsed Cape Housewives League actions as an organisation.(9) The union also received requests from the Non-European Women's League to help with street collections (Cape Town FCWU Branch Executive Committee Minutes, 20.06.57; BC721). The Non-European Women's League was the Western Cape's response to the final decision taken at the Second FSAW Conference in August 1956 on a federal structure for the FSAW. It was formed specifically to be a political women's organisation for Coloured women since there was no women's section of the Coloured People's Congress. The Non-European Women's League was an affiliate of the FSAW (Interview with Helen Joseph, conducted by Cherryl Walker,19 and 26 August 1976). Liz Abrahams has spoken of the close connections between FCWU members and Coloured Peoples' Congress members in Paarl. In the AFCWU, there was an even closer relationship with the ANC and ANC Women's League, with women like Elizabeth Mafeking serving as National Vice President of the FSAW, Secretary of the Paarl union branch and later as National Vice President of the ANC Women's League from 1958 (Biography of Mafeking, AD1137).

In her work, Walker masks the actual working relationships

between the union and other affiliates and the Federation by a tendency to conflate the structure and workings of a unitary organisation with that of a federal structure. Mary Simons, has recently argued that the FSAW was more of a front than a federation because it allowed for the affiliation of women members of other groups, whether trade union or political organisations, without the prior formation of a women's section within that particular organisation. She has argued that a federation is an ongoing umbrella structure of similar organisations - eg federation of trade unions, federation of women's organisations or women's sections; federation of youth organisations or youth groups (Personal communication, 8 June 1986).

Let me briefly, differentiate between an unitary structure (often referred to by the term "organisation"), a federation and a front. It is important to recognise that organisational structures are not simply constitutional mechanisms. They are the life of an organisation, constantly under stress from the work of the organisation and ever developing. The distinctions are useful, but these structures should be seen as part of a continuum rather than as three fundamentally different structures. Organisational structures can be distinguished on the basis of the following criteria:

the process of decision making in the organisation;
the nature of policy and discipline;
the tasks, aims and objects to be fulfilled;
and the nature of the alliances or unity within that structure.

I will deal with each of these in turn, but it is important to emphasise that the building of an organisation is an organic process shaped by the exigencies of struggle. The dividing lines laid down here are theoretically useful, but in practice are often more blurred. It is important to note however, that these definitions do not mean that every federal structure is formed in the same way. For example, the structure and aims and objectives of the FSAW and the National Council of Women (NCWSA) differ remarkably. The NCW has an essentially federal structure but also allows individual membership at branch level, and has a complex set of bye-laws for each branch formulating the basis of representation of individual members and 'associated' societies' on the Branch Executive. The branches are financially independent, paying annual dues to the Head Office, and to the International Council of Women. The process of decision making within this organisation would not be considered to be democratic by any working class based organisation. In discussing organisational structures, it must be stressed that a federation of bourgeois organisations, such as say the Federated Chambers of Industry, will function differently from a federation of trade unions, such as COSATU (Interview with Else Schreiner, May 1986). The specific complexity of any structure must be determined according to the needs of the constituent organisations and their members and the goals set out.

Firstly, a crucial distinction between a unitary structure on the one hand and a federation or front on the other hinges around how a person becomes a member. A unitary organisation allows individuals who support the aims and objectives, and accept the discipline of the constitution to unite in order to achieve

certain goals laid out. A federation or front represents the coming together of separate organisations to form an umbrella structure, guided by a constitution or working principles outlining the common ground between these organisations. The nature of the structure affects the democratic processes within that body. In a unitary structure - an organisation with branches of individual members - the democratic processes are more immediate and hence more participatory. This structure is more suitable for building working women's skills and understanding and hence more capable of asserting working class leadership within the liberation movement as a whole.

Secondly, different structures have different policy and discipline procedures. The policy of a unitary organisation is binding on all aspects of the branch's work, whereas in a federation or front, there will be aspects of the affiliates work that falls outside of the ambit of the federation or front. For example, the United Democratic Front working principles allow all affiliates to pursue their own autonomous programmes of action so long as they do not contradict the UDF policy resolutions (UDF Working Principles, August 1983). Within a tighter organisational structure, for example, the United Women's Congress, branch activities are ratified by the UWCO Council (UWCO Constitution, 1986). In the FCWU, copies of the minutes of every branch and branch executive meeting were submitted to the General Secretary and the NEC had the power to "establish, re-establish or close down branches in any area or to define the jurisdiction of branches" and "to suspend any branch executive committee for action contrary to the terms of this constitution and to take over the management of the affairs of the branch until another Branch Executive Committee is appointed." The FSAW NEC had the power to establish regional committees in any area and to define the jurisdiction of the regions (FSAW Constitution, clause 5(e);p2;AD1137) and the federation had the right to expel or break off relations with any affiliated organisation which acted in anyway prejudicial to the aims, objects or policies of the organisation. (FSAW Constitution, Clause 10(a);p3,AD1137).(10) The Federation had no power to affect the internal workings of the affiliated organisations, except through political persuasion and guidance. Within the federation, the calls or work of the federation were interpreted within the ambit of the work of the particular affilited organisation. We will see this in the discussion of the union's participation in the anti-pass campaign in Chapter Three. That is to say that the way in which the issue is taken up by the affiliate in the prerogative of that affiliate.

Thirdly, the nature of the aims and objects, i.e. the reason of formation, tend to differ in an unitary structure, federation and front. An unitary structure tends to specify a limited constituency of people to organise - food and canning workers; women who support the demands of the Freedom Charter; or high school students; etc, etc. Their policy/aims/programme lay down specific demands, methods of struggle pertaining to those particular people's lives or an aspect of them, although often within a broader set of social demands. A federal structure's strength and purpose lies in uniting organised people around a shared aspect of oppression and exploitation. A federation, therefore, aims to take forward the struggle of people within a

particular site of struggle - for example in the labour sector, the women's struggle, the education struggle or the civic/community struggle. The aims of a federation therefore are to form a far broader unity, with overarching demands relating to a group of people oppressed and exploited in a specific way - strategic demands - e.g. workers, women students and so on. In some cases this may consist only of similar organisations, e.g. COSATU and the trade unions. In other instances, for example, with the women's struggle, the aim "to bring the women of South Africa together" - a strategic objective - necessarily involves uniting women from a range of organisations around the fight for women's rights.

The tasks most suitable to a federation are to unite an oppressed and/or exploited group on a long term basis to ensure that their interests are fought for and safeguarded through the liberation process and in the growth of a new country. The tasks of a front are more immediate, aimed at uniting the broadest possible range of organisations around a particular issue or object of struggle. This must however be qualified as there are numerous different examples of fronts. For example in Third World struggles such as Vietnam and Nicaragua, the liberation movement has formed a broad front with the goal of the removal of the oppressive state. This is distinguishable from the adhoc, short term "united fronts" of Europe in the 1930s.(11) The action committees formed in the 50s in South Africa to fight against the removal of Coloured voters from the Parliamentary voters roll, the anti-pass committees were fronts formed by organisations, which no matter what other differences they had, could ally themselves with the limited goal identified by that grouping. The United Democratic Front falls more nearly into the category of fronts as seen in Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Finally, organisational structures are chosen in order to build a specific type of unity. It must be pointed out though, that political unity (while defined statically for reasons of clarity of exposition) is a dynamic, dialectical process of struggle and growth. So it is to be expected that a successful tactical alliance may mature into a strategic alliance, or change its organisational form. For example, the Franchise Action Council was formed as a limited-goal front of organisations and gave birth eventually to the recognition of the need for an ongoing political organisation to represent the needs of the Coloured people. Three types of unity can be crudely characterised as follows:-

a) tactical unity, (illustrated in a front or action committee,) formed around limited short term demands, initially with a specified duration. In this kind of unity, the objective is a relatively easily achievable one - e.g. reduction of a rent increase, boycott of bread as resistance to a bread price increase, the boycotting/rejection of the Tricameral Parliament and the Koornhof Bills.

b) A strategic unity is formed around issues central to the liberatory movement as a whole - such as the grievances of working people, the struggle for women's rights etc, but where there is not complete agreement on all principles or on the forms of struggle, methods of organising, that should be adopted.

c) Principled unity represents a unity in which a common long term perspective is shared and an unitary organisational structure is formed in order to effect a programme of action to implement that long term perspective.

Let me qualify the above definitions in the following way: While an organisation is a manifestation of principled unity, it is not the only structural form that such a unity can take. For example, I have argued elsewhere, (1984;p3) that the Congress Alliance of the late 50s was a principled alliance. Similarly, tactical and strategic unity or alliances can take varied structural forms.

In arguing that the strength of a federal structure lies in its ability to cement a strategic unity, I am not contradicting my earlier statement (Schreiner,J.1984;p3), that the FSAW represented a principled alliance. It is a reflection of the difficulty that the FSAW had in drawing in a broad range of organisations, that a structure (suited to strategic unity) in fact failed to draw in organisations that did not share a long term view as embodied in the Freedom Charter. Thus <u>in practice</u> (if not in organisational theory), the FSAW united a narrow range of politically educated women. The FSAW was a structure that was still evolving when its wings were clipped by repression, and was in part a unitary structure, and in part a federation. To go further in discussion of this dialectical process of organisational development would be to enter the realm of speculation, but the point must be acknowledged that the process of struggle has a concrete effect on the organisational structures feasible at any point in time.

This somewhat lengthy discussion of organisational structures has a contemporary relevance. In outlining the differences between the functions and workings of different structures, I am laying a basis for showing in Chapter Three, how the union, consisting of men and women workers, could participate in and give leadership to the women's movement without demanding the impossible from women workers, namely to participate in the union and to build, administer and carry out the organising work of a women's section within the union. Given the double day and the problems women experience in attending meetings because of husband's attitudes, transport and fear, to demand that working class women must form a separate women's section within a union in order to participate in the women's movement is, I fear, to tell working women to choose between the union or the women's movement - a choice that would significantly weaken the liberation movement as a whole, by weakening the necessary working class leadership in <u>all</u> areas. The FCWU and AFCWU through participation in the FSAW, politicised <u>all</u> its members, men and women, as to the importance of women's active involvement in organisation and the liberation struggle, and as to the demands of the progressive movement for women's emancipation.

Conclusion.

I have tried to outline briefly and hence sketchily, the organisational workings of the union and its relationships with other organisations. The union's political understanding of the tasks of the working class in the South African liberation struggle is clearly reflected in the organisational links and in democracy within the union. It is necessary to bear this organisational structure and the context of the mass resistance of the 50s in mind during the rest of this thesis.

The following chapter of the thesis is divided in a particular way. It consists of one chapter with three parts. This has made it a long chapter, but the structure adopted flows from the union's conception of its role. The three questions dealt with in each section cannot be seen as an isolated strategy. They have been artificially separated out for the purposes of clarity in writing and to be able most thoroughly to explore the theoretical implications of the union's contribution. The three areas to be examined are:

1. the struggles over the ultra-exploitation of women in the workplace;
2. the practical demands for maternity rights and childcare that are necessary to protect women's right to motherhood;
3. the struggles against the state's assaults on the working class living standards, family life and non-racial unity.

Both in terms of assessing the union's strategy for organising women and in terms of the theoretical contribution of the union to the woman question, these three areas must be integrated. The structure of Chapter 3 reflects the maturity of the union's conception of the interconnections between class, race and gender struggles in the overall struggle for liberation from exploitation and oppression.

It must be stressed that the campaigns described in Chapter 3 were taken up alongside each other, and alongside the ongoing organisational work of extending the union organisation into new areas, education and administration. The process of building organisational structures cannot be separated from the process of struggle. This is seen in both the union and in SACTU and FSAW. These organisations reflect a correct understanding that structures are built in order to facilitate mass participation in struggle and that there is a dialectical interconnection between strengthening the fabric of an organisation and the undertaking of active work in line with the programme of action. The union, SACTU or Federation did not postpone organising around the burning grievances of the working people because they were not sufficiently well-organised. Rather their approach was to limit the way and the scale on which they took the issue up to suit their strength and capabilities.

Footnotes:

1. The Boland towns were basically two industry towns, thus unity of the working class was more easily sustained. An

interesting parallel can be made between the cross factory branches of the union and the contemporary building of workers' local in the community by COSATU. The aim of these structures seems to be to facilitate worker leadership within the communities and to build unity across union lines.

2. The Central Executive Committee was renamed the Management Committee.

3. I use the term "women's movement" with a certain degree of hesitancy because of its current usage to refer to the feminist movement. However, I do not use it in this sense. I use it to refer to women, organised through a variety of organisational structures, but who share a committment to organising women and a concern to remove the oppression of women, as one part of the struggle to remove all forms of oppression and exploitation. Of the organisations that would have seen themselves as part of the women's struggle during the period I have studied, none would have seen themselves as being part of a feminist movement.

4. See Soudien, D.1981;pp77-78 for more information on the Conciliation Boards.

5. It is interesting to compare some of the content of the debate around the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 and the Registration Debate of the late seventies and early 80s.

6. For an overview of the Congress Alliance policy and method of working in alliances, see Schreiner,J.1984. This paper deals with a women's anti-pass campaign, but it is more of a theoretical exploration of alliance politics than an article on women's struggles.

7. The records indicate that Paarl branch sent 2 delegates, B.Kearns and T.Steenkamp; Elizabeth Mafeking represented Paarl AFCWU, Cape Town branch sent one delegate, Freda van Rhede, Martha Ngxesha represented AFCWU East London branch, Frances Baard went for Port Elizabeth AFCWU and Mabel Jones stood for her branch in Worcester. (From Paarl Branch Executive Committee Minutes, 15.04.54; Report on first National Conference of Women, 17.04.54;and Cape Town Branch Executive Committee Minutes 14.04.54)

8. The National Executive Committee elected on 17 April 1954 was as follows. The names of the FCWU women who were elected to the executive are underlined.
President: Ida Mtwana
Vice Presidents: Gladys Smith; Lilian Ngoyi; Bertha Mkize; Florence Matomela.
Secretary:Ray Alexander
Treasurer: Hetty McLeod
Committee: Elizabeth Mafeking; Dora Tamana; Katie White; Freda van Rhede; Annie Silinga; Louisa Mtwana; Celia Rossier; Winifred Siqwana; K.Eglehoff; Hilda Watts; Hetty du Preez; Albertina Sisulu; Helen Joseph; Frances Baard; Miss Njongwe; Chrissie Jasson; Fatima Meer; Miss M.F.Thompson.

9. See Chapter Three Part 3 for further discussion on the union and its involvement in the cost of living campaigns.

10. Copy of FSAW Constitution obtained from Helen Joseph as adopted at 1956 Conference. Wording is slightly different, but content the same as copy in Carter-Karis Microfilm (2:WF1:11/3)

CHAPTER THREE PART ONE

WORKPLACE STRUGGLES FOR WOMEN WORKERS' RIGHTS.

In this part of this chapter, I will examine some of the union's struggles in the work place. I have not attempted to analyse the entire union strategy towards organising in the factories, but rather, I have selected four areas that have direct bearing on the experiences of women workers, as distinct from men workers. But in doing this, I do not want to create the impression that the union saw these as separate women's issues. As will become clear, the union's approach to these particular issues, was worked out in the context of the overall strategy of the union and the political principles by which the union stood. These case studies will however, throw some light on how a union can handle the problems of women's work in a way that strengthens the union as a whole and takes the interests of women workers into account, but at the same time avoids the danger of polarising the working class along lines of gender.

As indicated in Chapter Two, the democratic practices and structure of the union meant that the workplace problems of women workers were "on the agenda". The food and canning industry employed predominantly women workers who faced a specific set of problems. In much of the recent literature on women and wage labour, certain industries are perceived of as areas of "women's work". These industries have been characterised in a number of ways - labour intensive, badly paid, low skill level, traditionally women's work, or industries in which women can be employed on a part-time/temporary basis. As we will see in this chapter, all these descriptions fit the food and canning industry. There is however the theoretical question as to why it is women, and not men, who are employed in these industries. Some have argued that they are often industries which have superceded traditional female household functions, such as food processing, clothing industry etc. and that as these tasks are socialised, women have been released from some of their household chains and are thus more available for wage labour.

Some authors have argued that men are employed in primary sector jobs (skilled, requiring dependibility, possibility of promotion and good pay) and women in secondary sector jobs (unskilled, low pay and insecure). Barron and Norris, for example, argue that women are employed in the secondary sector because of the dominant capitalist ideology that portrays the male as the breadwinner and the woman as wife. (Barron and Norris, 1976, Quoted in Armstrong,P.1982;p28). Armstrong puts an alternative and more useful view, that it's is ultimately a question of the relative power of different groups of workers because of their different posiions on the shopfloor, and changes in the techniques of control that determine whether it is men or women who are employed. (Armstrong,P.1982;p27-8). She concludes that a reconsideration of the distinction between primary and secondary work is necessary.

This leaves us with the question: What exactly are the aspects on

which women's, as opposed to men's work is defined? As we will see in this chapter, this question cannot be answered ahistorically or at a theoretical level. The nature of the labour process, the racial and gender divisions of labour, the nature of and extent of proletarianisation will all affect the manner in which the struggles over the kind of work men and women are allowed to do are carried out. At the most general level, one can paint a picture of a tendency across the capitalist world for certain types of jobs to be filled by women. The ultimate reason for this lies in the fact that women workers are relatively unorganised, and that capital and capitalist states, through maintaining the dichotomy between private and public, reinforce this weakness through their policy on the family, motherhood and the rights of women workers. Moreover in this particular industry, workers came from a recently proletarianised community, with very close ties to the "semi-feudal" relations of domination that existed on the farms of the Western Cape.(1) These relations of domination played an important role in the shaping of family relations within the urban environment and the gender division of labour within the factories.

I do not intend to theorise in detail the question of <u>why</u> historically Coloured and African women were employed in the food and canning industry in the Western Cape. I would like to emphasise that the extensive employment of women serves as an indicator of peculiar organisational questions in terms of seasonal unemployment and nightwork bans. In this chapter, I will attempt to explore the conditions under which women worked in the food processing industry, and how the union and capital organised. The parameters for organisation were laid down by the nature of the industry - a seasonal, relatively labour intensive industry employing a large number of women (See Goode, R.1985b for figures). But the sexual division of labour is made more complex by its intersection with the technical and racial divisions of labour. In 1941, there were roughly equal numbers of Coloured men and women in the industry. No statistics are available for African workers during this period.

<u>Figures on employment in food and canning industry.</u>

	White F	White M	Coloured F	Coloured M	African F	African M
1950	500	1 000	3 500	2 500	1 000	3 250
1960	500	1 500	2 500	1 500	2 000	4 000
1964	500	1 250	3 000	1 750	5 500	4 750

(Figures are estimates drawn from Goode, R 1985b)

This means that while the actual number of black workers employed increased from 1950 -1960, the proportion of men to women remained relatively constant. However, in the early sixties, this increased from 37% of the workforce to just over 50% being women, the majority of whom were African women. This raises interesting questions about the connection between the gender division of labour and the introduction of machinery to the industry in the early 60s, and in relation to the struggles against the pass laws by African women in the late 50s. These points will be touched on later in this and subsequent sections of Chapter Three.

In terms of the union policy, the racial composition of the workforce was not an issue of division. The FCWU has always been

committed to a policy of non-racialism, and has fought hard against Apartheid being introduced into the labour movement. For example, the FCWU was one of the founding unions that left the South African Trades and Labour Council to form the South African Congress of Trade Unions in 1955 (Luckhart,K and Wall,B.1982,p86; Soudien,D.1981;p80-87). When the FCWU was formed in 1941, it identified as potential members all workers defined by the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1937 as engaged in the food and canning manufacturing industry (Stein,M.n.d.,p2). The distinction between African and Coloured workers was not significant for the union.

However, the State forced the union, which was registered in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act, to exclude African men, since the registration specifically excluded "pass bearing natives" from the definition of employee. This led to the formation of the African Food and Canning Workers Union in 1947. But as is evidenced by all the sources and interviewees consulted, the two unions co-operated closely, sharing conferences and committee meetings until this practice was stopped by the state in the ealy 60s (Stein,M.n.d.,p2). Liz Abrahams discusses how these unions co-operated and how negotiations always covered all workers.

> "Once we make an agreement, there is a paragraph in the agreement that this agreement applies to the African food and canning workers too. We shared offices and the medical benefit fund was also there. We had combined meetings, the AFCWU and the FCWU; the conferences were the same; and the Managment Committee Meetings. And say at Langeberg factory, we would call all the workers, and whatever we discussed, the AFCWU would translate for the African workers. But we always had one meeting, not separate meetings. Workers had a very good spirit, because we never said when we discussed the problems of the workers, that is a problem for the coloured and that is a problem for the African, so we don't need to worry.... So when we went to the employers, it would be FCWU Secretary and AFCWU Secretary. We never went alone, but once there was a law that AFCWU can't go in with the FCWU to negotiate for the workers. That law is still there. ... Its only this registration thing. The AFCWU were not registered, now they make a point not to negotiate with it." (Interview conducted with Liz Abrahams by Cheryl Walker, March 1977)

However, the position of African women was peculiar, and became a site of struggle for the union. A letter from the Department of Labour clarified their position on African women:

> "...I have to advise you that this office has always regarded Native females as employees in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act..."
> (Letter from Department of Labour to General Secretary, AD1175)

The FCWU General Secretary wrote to Oscar Mpetha of the AFCWU quoting this statement and concluding:

> "The ruling given by the Department of Labour that African females are regarded as employees in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act is very importnat. We wish, therefore, to ask all African females of H.Jones, Standard Canners, and Valorange to sign fresh FCWU application forms, or perhaps

> we could just scratch out the word 'African' on the applications they have signed. This will also necessitate new elections being held as the African women should be represented on the FCWU Committee."
> (Letter from FCWU General Secretary to AFCWU Secretary, AD1175.)

Since African women did not carry passes at that stage, they were defined within the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act, while African men were not. Hence African men were to be paid according to wage board determinations and African women were to be paid the same as Coloured women, according to the Concilation Board Agreements (Goode, R.1983a,p54). Since the FCWU used negotiation through Conciliation Boards extensively, they realised that including African women as members of the FCWU would increase their ability to demand Conciliation Board hearings, a right which was determined by their organised strength. It was for this reason that a Special General Members meeting in the Feathermarket Hall in October 1951, unanimously agreed that African women should be included in the FCWU membership, while at the same time rejecting the enforced separation into a registered and unregistered union. (Secretarial Report to a Special General Members Meeting of FCWU and AFCWU, 29.10.51;AD1175). However, application of the Industrial Conciliation Act Amendment in 1956 meant that FCWU applied for registration as a Coloured union, therefore any African women would have been transferred back to AFCWU.

It must be noted that there were significant regional differences within the food industry. As Soudien and Stein point out, the Western Cape and Port Elizabeth, had at least 50% Coloured workers, whilst other regions like East London, Durban and Johannesburg had mainly African workers. The Western Cape workforce in fact was predominantly Coloured workers, although there were many African workers. There were twice as many Coloured women workers as Coloured men (Soudien,D.1981;p13; Stein,M.n.d.;p18. Interviews Liz Abrahams). Stein points out that regions such as East London and Durban, where the workforce consisted mainly of migrant workers, the union faced a different set of organisational parameters than in areas where workers were urbanised (Stein,M.n.d.;p18). In the Western Cape, the area on which I have concentrated, this took a slightly different form. Many of the workers in the small rural towns were seasonal factory workers employed in factories during the canning season. Women workers in the larger towns like Paarl, Wellington or Worcester would seek work as domestic workers or in the textile industry during the off-season. The workers in the fish industry had a different life experience, often living off the sea except for the extremely short season. One finds as well, that workers working in the dried fruit industry had a different set of experiences. What unites all these experiences however, is the seasonal nature of the work, the necessity for nightshift work during that period, the method of extraction of surplus value through piece-rates and the employment of women. These factors defined to a large extent the organisational parameters of the union, and shaped the experiences of the workers in the industry. This point will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

Before going on to discuss how the seasonal nature of the industry, the nighshift, overtime and piece-rates affected women

workers, I must emphasise that while these aspects set parameters for organisation, we must not view the labour process, process of mechanisation, working hours and conditions statically. They are themselves the products of struggle shaped not only be the dictates of capital accumulation, but also by the resistance put up by the workers themselves.

Seasonal Work, alternative employment and workers strength.

One of the issues that the union organised around was the vulnerability of women workers because they were employed largely on a seasonal basis. Soudien points out that due to the seasonal character of the industry only 10% of the workers were employed throughout the year(Soudien,D.1981;p16). The intersection of the technical and gender divisions of labour within the industry were such that women were not employed as machine operators (Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by J.Schreiner, September 1981). The fruit processing industry, the backbone of the food industry in the Western Cape, was extremely labour intensive during the 40s and 50s. In the early 50s, only simple fruit preparing machines were found in the factories. In a jam factory, there were only four machines, and likewise in the canning factories. Apart from the four men employed on these machines, the remainder of the men were employed in the stores department. The men worked on the volumetric filler, cookers and coolers. The women workers were employed to do the cleaning and cutting using basic preparing machines, and packing of the fruit. Since there was very little skilled work in this, there were very few men who worked in the cutting and canning department. It is interesting to note that this is repeating the pattern from the farms where the men did the more skilled work, but this is an insufficient explanation of the gender division of labour. However, in 1958 high speed production lines were introduced, the precursor to increased mechanisation in the 1960s. In notes taken by Cherryl Walker when interviewing Liz Abrahams, we have the following statement that reflects the prevailing attitude to this situation:

> "There is discrimination, men and women do different jobs; no women ever worked machines. In my time, they never complained - used to that system. I thought it unfair. Union's never taken it up." (Cherryl Walker Notes in Interview with Liz Abrahams, 1977)

Because of this division of labour, it was largely the women who were employed on a seasonal basis. As Goode says:

> "This was when all the season workers, the vast majority (of the workers and largely women -JS) were put off, and only the permanent staff remained to clean and prepare the factory for the next season, the majority of whom were men."(Goode,R.1985b,p27)

The workers were divided into permanent workers, semi-seasonal workers who worked for 6-9 months a year, and those seasonal workers who worked for only 3-4 months a year. There are various factors at play here as to why it is women who are seasonal workers. What should be emphasised is that it was the unavailablity of factory work in other industries that prevented women workers from refusing to work in the food and canning industry. The only alternatives of farm labour and domestic work were worse paid than work in the fruit factories, and so were

only considered as stop gaps during the off-season.

The length of the season differs in the various sectors of the industry - the fish industry being the shortest. Soudien describes the employment patterns:

> "From the beginning of December to April, a large percentage of those employed in apricots, peaches and pears concerns worked for the entire busy season. Seasonal workers were not put off altogether, they were laid off for 2 - 3 weeks in April, and return to work for a month, At the end of June, they are paid off but not dismissed. These seasonal workers are not formally unemployed as they return to the industry in the busy season December. Due to the nature of the industry, many of the women are forced into domestic sevice until the busy season starts again. Others forced to seek employment in textiles and tobacco factories to make ends meet, being amongst them sole breadwinners of families." (Soudien,D.1981,16/7)

Liz Abrahams speaks of the desire among workers to get jobs elsewhere during the season since they were better paid and permanent:

> "When laid off, no unemployment drawn by workers because of seasonal industry. .. What do people do? - can't take other employment because still a worker for the factory, still on the books. Only the permanent workers, mostly men, qualify. A <u>few</u> women who work in laboratory, cleaners, tea etc covered. ..Some people only breadwinner - very difficult to make a living. Union tried all these years to get workers covered - "losing battle"."(Notes taken by Cheryl Walker in interview with Liz Abrahams, 16 March 1977. Emphasis in original).

In a biography of Elizabeth Mafeking, it is stated that when the canning workers were laid off during the off seasons, the only jobs they could get was breaking stones (Biography of Elizabeth Mafeking;AD1137,p2). The nature of the jobs done during the off season depended on the area. For example, in Wolseley, Rachel Zeeman planted trees at the local forest station in this period, while other workers planted onions on the farms. A small number of women were lucky to be employed in the stores at the factory (Zeeman interviewed by Richard Goode, 9 January 1986). Other workers left Wolseley and went to other towns in search of jobs, since there were no other factories in Wolseley (Goode,R.1986;p6). Goode has concluded that the difficulty experienced by these women in getting alternative employment, in fact meant that they constituted a semi-permanent, but fully proletarianised reserve army of labour (Goode,R.1985b.p28). The seasonal nature of their work experience and their vulnerablity because of these periods of unemployment must have held implications for the consciousness of the women workers. The ability to sustain the power of the union fluctuated from a stronger position in peak season to relative powerlessness during the off season between April and December (Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by J.Schreiner, 03.6.85)

In the fruit processing industry any delay in the processing of the fruit due to worker action, had serious implications of wastage and loss of profit to capital. This meant that the

workers had significantly more power over capital at that time, than in a non-seasonal industry. It was during this period - December to April - that the workers could most easily force their demands. However, the seasonal nature of the industry had negative effects for union work as well. Only 60-70% of the workers who had worked in the previous season would return to this same factory (Goode,R.1985b;p28). This turn-over meant that the union had to re-organise each factory at the beginning of the season. This contributed to the strength of the union, overcoming the common organisational problem that members become inactive paper members as time proceeds, but it also caused fluctuations in strength and instability of branches (interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by J.Schreiner, 03.06.85)

Phendlani and other organisers have explained that the African women, living permanently in an urban environment, were the backbone of the trade union. The hardship they experienced because of the seasonal work patterns seems to have strengthened their determination to fight for a better future and for better working conditions. The African men on the other hand were largely migrant workers, and demonstrated all the influences of partial proletarianisation and instability on worker consciousness (Goode,R.1985b;p28). Goode has commented that a similar pattern seemed to exist in relation to Coloured men, who showed a marked reticence to participate in the union when compared to Coloured women. However, it is correct to conclude that in relation to all workers (though in different ways) the seasonal character of the industry gve a particular form to their struggle around class, national and gender issues. (Stein,M.n.d.p4)

After the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, as a result of agitation by the Afrikaner nationalist Blanke Werkers Beskerming Bond, a Commission of Inquiry into the Unemployment Insurance Fund was set up. This Warren Commission reported in March 1949. This issue was of great concern to the union and was dealt with in detail in circular letters for discussion in branches. The recommendations of the majority report was rejected by the union as "not a proper considered report." It was described as biased against the non-European workers in particular, and the trade union movement in general. The report contained the following recommendations:

> "a) that the present Act, i.e. Act 53 of 1946 be repealed;
> b) that a fresh Act be introduced and in the proposed Act Natives should be excluded;
> c) that the contributions to the Funds of the Act should be on a voluntary basis;
> d) that seasonal workers be included in the definition "Labourer" as under Act 25 of 1937,i.e. UBF Act (sic -JS) which means in effect that seasonal workers should be excluded from the Unemployment Insurance Act."
> (FCWU Circular Letter 5/49,22.03.49.p2.BC721;emphasis in original.)

The Report clearly victimised seasonal workers, describing them as "won't works", and argued for the repeal of the 1946 Act in that it encouraged idleness. The union resolved to strengthen their fight against the majority report, but the amendments to

the 46 Act came into force as from 1 January 1950. The amendments were explained to the workers in the Circular Letter 3/1950 - seasonal workers and African workers were excluded from the Act. Seasonal workers were defined as:

> "a person who is employed in an industry on work which by reason of the seasonal variation in the supply of raw material in that industry, is ordinarily available to such a person for a continuous period of not more than 8 months in any one year."
> (FCWU Circular Letter 3/1950;BC721)

In addition, the amendments facilitated applications from UIF for a particular industry. The Circular Letter noted that a Mr van Staden of the Blankewerkers Federasie was collecting signatures for an exemption of the industry from the Act. The union started a counter petition against any exemption.(FCWU Circular Letter 3/50,15.02.50,BC721) The food and canning industry was specifically excluded from the Unemployment Insurance Act as a result of state-connections in Langeberg Ko-operasie Beperk:

> "The Cape Western Province, i.e. Paarl, Groot Drakenstein, Wellington, Worcester, Robertson, Ashton, Montagu, Wolseley and Ceres have been excluded by the Minister of Labour from the Unemployment Insurance Act." (FCWU Papers, Circular Letter No 20/50, 12.08.50;BC721)

The position subsequently changed in 1961 and workers were excluded from eligibility to UIF on the basis of the period they worked per year. Liz Abrahams highlights the conflict as follows:

> "Their argument (state's argument -JS) is that people only work for a couple of months and then apply for UIF and this is unfair. But there are hundreds and thousands of seasonal workers. In the fish industry, a worker must work for 13 weeks to qualify for the UIF, but the fish season is very short and most of the workers do not qualify. In the fruit section, a worker must work for 8 months. How many seasonal workers work for 8 months? UIF is not for seasonal workers." (Interview with Liz Abrahams, conducted by J.Schreiner, August 1985)

In concluding this section, it emerges that UIF was not for seasonal workers. This meant that UIF was not for women workers since the majority of the seasonal workers were women. This not only relegated women to the position of vulnerability and dependency on their wage earning men, but also, as will be shown later, has implications for accessibility to maternity benefits. In looking at the union's attitude to UIF, I have shown how the central aspects of working women's exploitation - i.e. the seasonal nature of their employment - was taken up by the union. Given the way in which the gender division of labour and the technical division of labour correlated, it was women who were seasonal workers. The union thus had placed the issue of the form of women's exploitation (as opposed to the form of men's exploitation) centrally on their agenda.

Child Labour - "The Problem is not one of age but one of exploitation".

The seasonal nature of the industry also lent itself to employment of cheap child labour during the height of the season - school holidays. Child labour is one of the starkest forms of

child abuse in Africa. In recent years, through the United Nations campaigns in declaring 1979 the Year of the Child, this issue has been brought to the fore in political practice and in theoretical works. (See COSAS pamphlet 1984; Mendeleveich, 1979; Anti-Slavery Society.1983). While the theoretical debates are products of recent international campaigns, we find that many concerns in the current literature are highlighted in the struggles against child labour waged by the FCWU and AFCWU during the 40s and 50s. The story of Frank Marquard, later President of the FCWU, shows how occasional child labour prepares working class children for a life of factory work:

> "It is when he is twelve that Frank, for the first time, goes to work at the fruit canning factory during his school holidays. There are only three of them at home now. ... Things begin to pinch a bit. They talk it over. Frank is eager to add his contribution. His mother talks to the foreman, and two days later Frank starts.
>
> The work is not hard, but it is fast. He has to push a trolley from the cutter to the canners. He feeds twenty four canners. They are pieceworkers and their wages depend on the number of tins they fill every day. They must be kept busy.
>
> During the morning, the boss comes down. ... "How old are you, Frank?" "Sixteen, sir." Frank is big for his age, but the boss knows he is not sixteen. ..."he's a good worker" says the foreman afterwards. "No loafer." So Frank stays on ...
>
> At the end of his holidays Frank leaves the factory and goes back to school. But the mark of the factory is upon him. He will come back. He will spend the rest of his childhood in this prison-house of the machine age - his adolescence, his manhood, his old age , if he lives that long ...
>
> Next year he is again working at the factory. This time when school reopens he does not go back. His childhood is over. His education is completed. He had almost finished standard three. From now on for the rest of his life he belongs to the factory - until the factory no longer needs him, or until he dies.
>
> He is thirteen years old."
> (Close, R.1950,p8-10)

Liz Abrahams, aged thirteen or fourteen, started to work because her mother, who had worked in the fruit canning factories for years, had to stop work to look after her seriously ill husband. Liz was forced unwillingly to leave school, although her younger brother and sister managed to continue their education (Interview Liz Abrahams,conducted by J.Schreiner, 3.06.85). She has also spoken of how the union tried to protect children under-age from working in the factories. She explains that many children worked legally in the factories in their holidays. These children were fifteen or sixteen and were paid full wages for

their work. However, from time to time, the union would find under-age children in the factory:

> "We were aware of it sometimes, but when we inquire if she's under-age, why do she work and so on, then some of the parents and relatives would come and say: Look, we know she's underage, but we ask you please to employ her because there's no income. She's got an elderly mother, a sickly mother, a sickly father. It the union stood up and said look we are not going to allow it, then sometimes the workers turned against that. And we would explain to them and they just didn't accept it. " (Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by Cherryl Walker, 25 March 1977)

Both these examples however, reflect what Mendelievich (1979) has argued more recently:

> "Today's meagre incomes, out of which savings are impossible, cannot be sacrificed in the hope that tomorrow's incomes and other benefits might be greater. In such a social setting, whenever a child decides or agrees to work in order to earn his living, he thinks he is taking the decision for himself. .. The decision has in effect already been taken for him through the attitude of his parents and through the influence of the entire social environment in which he lives. .. The parents .. believe that they have a natural right to take advantage of (not to exploit) all the family's resources, which generally amount to little more than the number of hands at its disposal. .. It is society as a whole that is at fault. Like all social problems, child labour is not an isolated phenomenon, nor can it ever be so." (Mendelievich,E.1979, p5)

Ennew adds to this that shifting family structures, illegitimacy, high male unemployment affect children by forcing a high degree of responsiblity on them from an early age. Within this context, the child's own growth and needs take second place to those of the collective family. (Ennew,1982,p559)

The coincidence of the season with the school holidays meant that it was mainly during this period that children under the age of 16 were employed in the factories. However, Rachel Zeeman indicates a slightly different pattern in Wolseley, where from the age of twelve girls and boys worked in the factories alongside their older siblings in the afternoon after school. It is interesting to note the clear gender division of labour among the children:

> "Die seuns help om die bakkies te dra. Die dogters doen die snywerk. Die vrugte word van die bakkies gesny en nou dra hulle (die seuns -JS) dit oor waar die pakkers is."
> (Rachel Zeeman, interviewed by Richard Goode, 9.01.1986)

Rachel Zeeman worked after school for 4 years before she entered the factory for good. The children were paid on an equal piece rate basis to the adult workers, but since they completed less trays of fruit, their wages were in fact less.

As already indicated, FCWU and AFCWU faced enormous organisational difficulties because of this seasonal pattern of employment and the vulnerablitiy of workers to dismissal or to not being re-employed next season. This was heightened by the use of child labour as a substitute for men and women. In the

following passage, I consider why and how the union opposed child labour within the industry. But we must not lose sight of the gains capital can make through employing such labour. Children are a much less organised and militant group of workers, without the tradition or consciousness of trade union organisation that one may expect of adult workers. The authority/power relations over children (perpetuated through the family and school) make children a docile and hence very exploitable workforce.

Ray Alexander replied to a written question as follows:

> "Why did the Food and Canning Workers Union focus attention on child labour? In January 1933, the Unemployed Workers Council in Cape Town asked me to get the unemployed people from Paarl to participate in a mass demonstration of unemployed at the opening of Parliament to obtain an Act granting benefits to unemployed people. I went to Paarl to organise the unemployed and visited H.Jones and Co. I had with me a briefcase. When the foreman saw me with this briefcase, he took me for a Factories Inspector and immediately sent out the children who were working in the factory to play ring-a-ring-o'-roses. When lunch time came, I addressed a meeting on the unemployed situation and asked them to put questions to me and tell me about their conditions of work. One of the workers told me that all the children playing ring-a-ring-o'roses outside the factory had been working in the factory. I explained to them that this was a contravention of the Factories Act.
>
> This made a big impression on me. At a meeting on the Grand Parade, I exposed the conditions in that factory. When in later years I started to organise food and canning workers, I naturally enquired in the first place about any young people under the age of 15 working in the factories and explained to the mothers and fathers the importance of not allowing their children to work in the factories, and of organising for higher wages to enable their children to be at school. Naturally if we found any children working in the factories we promptly demanded that they be not employed and also reported it to the Department of Labour as it was a breach of the Factories Act.
>
> We did this work not with any ulterior motive of gaining membership. We did it as our duty to bring about a better life for working families. At no time has our union been unconcerned with these issues.
>
> We were very successful in eradicating child labour in the canning industry and inspired other unions to do the same in the nearby factories." (Correspondence with Ray Alexander, 7.09.84)

The Factories Act stipulates the legal position as regards the age restrictions for factory employment of children:

> "No employer shall require or permit any employee under the age of fifteen years to work in a factory"(S24(1) of Factories, Machinery and Building Work Act, No 22 of 1941)

exploitation. What the FCWU did in its struggles against child labour was to educate their membership that all children, irrespective of social background, colour or class, had rights to education and recreation. As seen in Chapter 1 and re-emphasised in the following pages, the children were seen as "the flowers of the future" and the quality of their youth was a determinant of their future life.

Let us turn now to look at how the union organised against child labour. Ray Alexander reported to the Central Executive Committee that she had come across children under 15 working in a number of factories she visited. She had discussed the matter with the workers in these factories and prevented the children from continuing to work there. The Central Executive Committee mandated her to ask the Department of Labour Factories Section to investigate three problems during the canning season - the employment of children in factories, the inadequacy of changerooms and cloakrooms, and the lack of first aid attendants in the factories (FCWU Central Executive Committee Minutes 18.02.51;BC721). There is unfortunately no record of the reply or report from the Department of Labour in the FCWU papers.

A great many issues were taken up through inspectors from the Department of Labour. In many instances the union took existing factory laws as the objective standards, and sent complaints to the labour department to deal with. These complaints were generally properly dealt with. Labour Department officials did not neglect to deal with union complaints. But virtually no prosecution arose from transgression. This is certainly the case in the 1950s and 1960s. Only once did a criminal case get brought against a fish canning factory for contraventions of the Factories Act. In the case of child labour complaints, the employers would probably have been warned to stop, and they would have done so for a season at least (Personal communication with R. Goode, April 1986)

Child labour was a recurring problem for the union. Three years later, the Secretary reported that she had submitted a report to the Department of Labour that the Wolseley Fruit Canning Co was employing children. The Department of Labour had informed the union that they were investigating these complaints (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 4.04.54;BC721)

The Paarl Branch Executive Committee had made a similar approach to the Department of Labour concerning the employment of children at H Jones in Paarl. The Branch Executive Committee meeting considered a letter received from the Department of Labour and pointed out that because of the seasonal nature of employment, none of the workers could be traced. Paarl executive noted that similar problems were being experienced in Wolseley. They argued that the bosses "have less expenditure if they employ child labour. The Factories Act prohibits the employment of children under 15 years and we must see that this is carried out." (Paarl FCWU Branch Executive Minutes 17.05.54;BC721)

The first Management Committee meeting of 1956 considered the

problem of child labour in the canning factories in detail. Annie Adams, Wellington Branch Secretary, is reported to have taken up the matter in her branch, " and thus forced the employers to dismiss these children." (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 15.01.56,p5;BC721) A full report of the discussion as to why child labour was not in the interests of the workers is worth examination:

> "The danger of child labour is very great:- 1. the health of the child suffers and he will feel the results in later years.
> 2.Children are used instead of adults. Instead of allowing Africans to come to the Western Province to seek work, the employers accept the pass laws and exploit child labour.
>
> Workers throughout the world have fought against the use of child labour. In South Africa, our union has always been known for the immense work of taking children out of the factories. Our job is to fight for creches, playgrounds and schools for children.
>
> We appeal to our Union leaders to give a lead to the mothers and fathers in the factories:- 1.Don't tolerate a child working with you in the factory.
> 2.Continually educate and speak to mothers not to allow their children to work in the factory."
> (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 15.01.1956;BC721)

A resolution was taken mandating the Acting General Secretary to report employment of children to the Department Labour, to write to employers not to employ children and to write articles to mothers in Morning Star, the union paper (FCWU Management Committee Minutes ,15.01.1956;BC721)

The Food and Canning Workers Union head office kept constant contact with the branches through circular letters from the Secretary. It is useful to show how this discussion filtered through the union from the Management Committee's first meeting to the Annual Conference in September of the same year.

The Circular Letter No 10/56, dated 27 January 1956, drew the branch secretaries attention to page five of the minutes of the Management Committee meeting of 15 January 1956, and to a forthcoming article in Morning Star. The Secretary wrote:

> "A special appeal is made to our mothers to be vigilant. Don't allow children to be employed in the factory. This is against the Factories Act which prohibits children under 15 years to be employed in the factory. A child must play out in the fresh air to enable it to grow strong. We want our children to take their place in the world as strong and healthy men and women."(FCWU Circular Letter No 10/56, 27 January 1956;BC721)

The Paarl Branch Secretary used this to draw his committees attention to the number of children being employed in the factories. The minutes record that:

> "He reminded members of the long battle fought by our union against child labour. Long hours in the factory affects the health of the children. We must struggle for creches and schools for the children; For higher wages to enable us to

give our children a better life. We must not allow employees to use child labour in the factories." (Paarl FCWU Branch Executive Commitee Minutes, 30 January 1956;BC721)

A week later, at the Paarl General Members meeting on 7 February 1956, the Branch Secretary reported on the danger of child labour. The minutes record:

> "Child labour: This year many children under age had been employed by the factories. ... We do not want child labour. We as mothers and fathers are to blame. While a lot of African workers are standing outside the gate looking for work, underaged children are taken in." (Minutes of Paarl FCWU General Members Meeting 7 February 1956;BC721)

It is significant that his statement coincides with the period of action by the managements against African women, and it implies a high level of unemployment amongst the African population. This needs to be further investigated to understand why there was an increase in African unemployment at this time, and how the process of urbanisation links in with this. But it is important to note that the Union's articulated understanding of how child labour undermined working class unity developed as other key political questions were linked to capital's practice of child exploitation.

The same issue was raised by Liz Abrahams, the General Secretary, in her report to the Annual National Conference, held on 8th and 9th September 1956. This case study of child labour in 1956 highlights the way that matters raised in Management Committee meetings were taken back to branch level, and the role of union activists in educating members to stop such exploitative practices. It reflects the democratic practices of the Food and Canning Workers Union. A question that I have not been able to answer is the extent to which there was any opposition amongst the workers and their households to the anti-child labour campaign. There is no discussion or information on this in the FCWU papers.

But also worth noting is the far more detailed analysis of the evils of child labour and the reasons that capitalists employ children, than was prevalent in the early reports of 1951. The years of repetitive appeals to the Department of Labour seem to have led the union leaders to understand that since the practice of employing children served the interests of capital, the only way to effectively oppose it was to educate the parent workers. This was necessary because there was a simultaneous short term gain for the family who had extra 'child' hands. This was reflected in the Mendeleivich quote above (p12). The National Executive Committee, meeting immediately after the Annual Conference, "decided to carry out educational work amongst the membership to explain to them the importance of not allowing their children to work earlier than in terms of the Factories Act." (FCWU Minutes of NEC Meeting held on 9 September 1956,BC721)

Again at the March NEC meeting in 1957, the meeting heard a

letter drafted to the Department of Labour about child labour being employed in the factories in Ashton. The meeting discussed this matter thoroughly. (FCWU NEC Minutes, 24 March 1957,BC721) The reply from the Department of Labour was that in future no children would be allowed to start work in the factory before they produce their birth certificates. (Minutes of FCWU Management Committee held on 5 May 1957,BC721). The matter was again raised and fully explained at the 16th Annual Conference in Paarl on 14 and 15 September 1957. The General Secretary's report states:

> "The young children of our workers families go to work in the factories at an early age, not for fun, but because their parents find it difficult to make ends meet. Therefore the struggle against child labor in the factories corresponds with the struggle for higher wages. ..." (FCWU General Secretary's Report to 16th Annual Conference 14 and 15 September 1957; BC721)

It was in the same year that the FCWU along with SACTU affiliates, launched the Pound-a-day Campaign to educate workers to demand higher wages and to campaign for a minimum living wage (Luckhart,K and Wall,B.1982). This above quote raises an aspect of child labour that is not adequately highlighted in the previous references. It exposes the trend brought out in much of the recent literature, namely that it is where workers are employed in labour intensive and poorly paid industries that child labour is most rife. One should note that it is these industries where women are most frequently found as workers, hence reinforcing the link between employment of women and the greater incidence of child labour either at home or in the factory. Many authors have linked the extent of child labour to the domestic responsibilities of women. Standing argues that

> "perhaps the most effective means of reducing child labour is the relative emancipation of women, through their non-domestic work."(Standing,G.1982, p618)

Goddard and White also contribute on this subject:

> "One important issue touched on by many authors but needing much further research is the link between women's work and status (and the sexual division of labour in general) and specific forms of child labour. In extreme forms of female seclusion in the home, children are more likely to be involved in extra-domestic activities of petty commodity production, trade, etc.(Goddard, 1981; Schildkrout,1978, 1979);female headed households are also likely to require involvement of children in either domestic or income-producing work." (Goddard and White. 1982;p470-1)

In the present study, most of the families had women working in the factories. However, as we can see from Liz Abraham's story, the demands of an ill family member in a society without social welfare services, result in the withdrawal of the mother from wage labour to care for them. The existence of single parent families require an extra person to be placed permanently on the labour market. I would argue tentatively that the seasonal nature of the food and canning industry, its relative labour intensity and the high percentage of women in the industry resulted in higher levels of child labour than one may find in other industries. Another factor possibly affecting the extent of child labour is the availablity of paid maternity leave and childcare. Without these facilities, more women leave work to be replaced in the factories by their oldest child, or more children are tied

up in child labour within the home, looking after the new baby. This latter aspect is perhaps the most hidden form of child labour, one that particularly affects female children and hence shapes their future lives as women. However it has not been explored here in any depth. The exact connections between these aspects of the nature of the industry and of the protection of women's rights as mothers and their causality concerning child labour needs further research.

The ongoing recurrence of child labour, and the absence of any evidence of independent action against it by the Department of Labour reflects the earlier mentioned problem of the ineffectual nature of legislation which makes child labour illegal. However, it probably also reflects the fact that the State, unlike the union, did not have the long term interests of the working people in mind.

In this section, I have highlighted the way the union fought against the ultra-exploitation of children. The union did not deal with this issue simply from the point of view of exploitation of children, their low wages and the lack of jobs for adult workers because of the child labour. In accordance with its understanding of the role of workers as parents, and particularly of women workers as mothers, the union sought to educate their members about the demands for childhood in a progressive and free country.. This practice reflects that the union was concerned not just with workplace problems of the individual workers, but with the entire working class - men, women and children - in their struggle for a better life.

Women, unskilled labour and piece-rates

As noted earlier, men and women were not employed in the same grade of jobs. Men were generally employed in the more skilled jobs and hence also got higher wages. But even in the same grade category, men were paid more than women. For example, a Grade Four male worker got three pounds, ten and nine pence, while a woman worker of the same grade got two pounds, seventeen and sixpence. A Grade Five male worker got three pounds, three and six, while the women who worked in the grade five category received two pounds, sixteen and sixpence (From What Every Canning Worker Should Know, 1959;BC721). This coincidence of the technical division of labour and the gender division of labour was not an issue that the union took up (Interviews with Liz Abrahams, conducted by J.Schreiner, 3.06.85 and with Rachel Zeeman, conducted by R.Goode, 09.01.86). Rather, they fought against piece-work, a particularly exploitative form of extraction of surplus value.

In the early days of the union, there was no guarantee of a basic daily wage. But this was won for the workers through union activity. Liz Abrahams described what the job of a pieceworker was like:

> "...we have to sort the fruit out of the big basins and then grade into grade one, two and three, and you must watch for spots. You take it out of the big basin and split it open in

front of you, then you see that its big, or rotten, then you take that bit out, and then you put it in the tins. Now, there are twelve one-pound tins on a tray and you get one penny and a ha'penny for twelve tins. It took probably 10-15 minutes to fill that tray. We worked piece-work. We didn't have a standard wage. Whatever work you do, for that piece work, that's the money you gets. But if the fruit are more, then you do a days work. ... If you did piece-work and you worked quite well, then you could make more. The standard wages were two or three pounds that time. So we rather preferred piece-work because than you can earn more with piece-work. If you earn less ... then you get your basic wage of two pounds a week. .. But if the fruit is very weak and you can't do a days work, then you get your basic wage."(Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by Cheryl Walker, 17 March 1977)

While this interview highlights the financial gains possible through piece-work in a good season, it does not reflect the more vicious side of piece rate work. The pace at which the piece worker works is self-regulated. It is up to the worker herself to push the pace so as to go beyond the quantity of work equivalent to the standard basic wage. As Lizi Phike explained to Richard Goode:

"We pull so hard, but you earn too much money that time when we were doing it. (Piece work - JS) We were just like machines. I am sure most of us should have been dead already if they didn't bring the system of the machines in, because you were pulling and pushing to get the money. And you can't just imagine starting from half-past seven up to eleven o'clock doing that job. You just see the money that you earn on Friday, forget about your own health."(Goode, R.1985b,p16/7)

For capital this means that less supervision and pace control are necessary to achieve the same productivity. Within the fruit canning industry, this formal subsumption of labour to capital was only fully transformed to real subsumption in the mid-60s.(2) In the early days of the union, the workers were simply paid for the work they carried out. There was no basic wage and workers wages fluctuated according to work done and the amount of fruit available for processing. As Goode points out, these ongoing struggles by the union, succeeded in raising the piecerates, negotiated factory by factory, so that eventually the fastest workers were earning among the highest wages in the factory during the peak season (Goode,R.1985b,p19). In the late 1950s, as a result of these consistent struggles with capital over the piecerates, the union succeeded in negotiating a basic wage for all workers, over and above which workers were paid on a piecerate basis for output above normal. This is the situation which was highlighted in the above quote from Liz Abrahams. Despite the beginning of mechanisation that took place during and after the war, the struggle over piecerates continued through until the mid 60s, when the production lines and automatic fruit preparation machinery was introduced. The struggle against piece rates was ended by the introduction of machines, which was capital's response to increased worker's action and demands for higher wages.

Apart from union negotiation on a factory basis, there were also

many workers struggles over these wages. Despite the strategy of negotiation through Conciliation Boards, and directly with factory management over piece-rates, strike action was never suppressed by the union; in fact, it was encouraged where and whenever it would pressurise intransigent management or strengthen the union's bargaining power in negotiations. The union began to organise in the fruit canning industry and from early days, there were strikes against piecerates. For example, in Dal Josaphat, shortly after the launching of the union in 1941, a short and successful strike took place when workers demanded a 50% increase in piece-rates at the height of the apricot season. Scab labour brought in from Wellington, on seeing exactly how they were to be used, refused to enter the factory, thereby forming a stronger line up against the management. This stand by the workers enabled the union to negotiate successfully for the increase and at the same time, to start a strong branch of the union in that area (Goode,R.1983a,p30-1). Similar action was taken at Morton's factory when African piece-workers were put on short time (Close,R.1950,p35). The introduction of War Measure 142 of 1942 tried to put an end to strike action during the remainder of the war, but in subsequent years, a similar pattern of strike action can be found. In 1952, workers at Doornbaai refused to work piecerates when management tried to decrease the wage being paid to piece-workers. These workers faced the threat of prosecution as their actions constituted a strike (Branch Delegates Conference 06.04.52;BC721). It is not possible to find out exactly what happened in this instance. It must be pointed out that the conditions in the industry in the late 1950s, were not conducive to strike action, and the Wolseley strike of 1954 was the last major successful strike in the Western Cape.

The General Secretary's Report to the 15th Annual Conference in 1956 noted that the union had been unsuccessful in demanding a wage increase for pieceworkers in the previous year. The demands submitted for a wage increase had been refused in September 1955, so a conference of all branches held in November 1955 discussed a campaign for the increase. The General Secretary noted that only Ashton had been successful (General Secretary's Report to 15th Conference, 8and 9 September 1956;BC721). The report the following year noted the success workers at H.Jones and Co had had in winning "wage increases for female workers of the Store Department and special increases on piece-work rates for the tinners." (General Secretary Report to Annal Conference 14 and 25 September 1957;BC721). Stein records that in December 1957, during the peak season, piece-workers at H Jones went on strike for one hour for increase piece-rates after management had refused to see a deputation on this matter. The increase were conceded and no victimisation occurred (Stein,M.n.d.;p8).

The union seems to have held an annual special conference of branch delegates to discuss piece-work rates from 1958. In 1958, each branch submitted their demands and then a decision was taken by the union as a whole as to the wages to demand for each fruit and type of work. In 1959/60, different rates were submitted for each town (Minutes of FCWU Special Conference on piece-rates, 1958 and 1959;BC721). Eventually, piece-work rates were ended for all fruit except for the strawberries and very small fruit. But apart from the direct worker action in support of demands for higher piece-rates, or for greater protection of piece workers

from victimisation, there was a far more subtle form of resistance by piece-workers. This has been documented by Goode (1985b,p17-19), where he argues that workers have used various methods to maintain their usual number of tickets but to decrease the actual amount of work done. The two interviews which he quotes are worth repeating:

> "When they were working piece-rates most of the workers try to made work easier for themselves because they wanted to get more tickets to get more money. Now if you are going to concentrate on one peach because this peach is so dirty you spend a lot of time on it, maybe the person next to you had thrown out twenty peaches as you are still on that dirty one, so just cut and throw out ...But you must cut the right way.
>
> Some times when the men is coming round with the buckets of green and half green and ripe peaches and you have not finished your bucket then you have two buckets to work. If you are standing next to a drain where the fruit and the water goes, then you maybe quickly lift up the iron and throw the whole bucket down and go on with the next because you got your ticket for that one.
>
> Another thing workers do is to say the fruit is bad when it is really good. They put it with the fruit for making jam and don't work it. With pears they can squeeze it with the hands to make a pulp even if the fruit is not too soft. Then they take it to the supervisor and show them and it must go for jam."
> (Quoted in Goode,R;1985b,p17)

The second interview describes how:

> "The men who are carrying the boxes of the fruit to us if they get any way out to the woman who is standing there with the tickets putting the tickets in the box, they will sell you some of the tickets and you work easier. You get the tickets and you know then you got no need for being in a hurry because you got your sum of the day. But otherwise the employers were very wake up because if some one watches them and saw it, they will take you and put you alone and said you must work and see how fast you can work. Because the people were stupid, some of them didn't want to limit the number they could do per day. If I know I get these tickets without working they want to have more than they used to do. Thats where they find out. When they are counting them. This person has more than too much. Maybe you got fifteen extra tickets as you usually do. And sometimes you are a hard worker who used to get a good lot of tickets. Then they take you and put you in a room to one side and if you can't do it, then they just clear you have stolen those tickets because you are not going to say someone gives me the tickets." (Quoted in Goode,R;1985b,p18)

Elsa Joubert has described very clearly the conditions in the fish factories and some of the problems of seasonal and pice-work:

> "There were two kinds of jobs in the fish factory, says

Poppie. Some were cleaners, others packers. The cleaners gutted the fish, scraped them, cut off the fins, head and tail and threw them into wire trays for the men to take away. The men washed them in cement dams filled with water, and threw them on to the packers' tables. The packers put the fish into tins, a machine fixed the lids on, and then the tins were thrown into a big sieve pot on wheels ready for the steamer. The steamer could take four of the big iron trolley sieve pots at a time. ...

The quicker they (the boats - JS) got to the fish, the quicker they turned back and the sooner the factory whistle was blown. Even at three o'clock in the morning. ... There were not electric lights in the location, we walked in the dark. When we were still living nearby in the barracks they called Pampoengat, it wasn't so bad, but when they put us out of the barracks, that is when they moved out the Xhosa people, it was a long way to walk. ...

You got paid according to your tray. You had a ticket pinned to the shoulder of your overall and you got a punch for every tray you filled. Those days it was one shilling a tray, and you could make up to two pounds a day in full season. But the packers earned the most, more than fourteen pounds a week.

...there was no way out of it. I remember one time when everybody got really tired. It was the third day and there was no end to the fish. The boats were so full you could see the heaps showing. The fish got mushy in the boats; there was so much, we couldn't keep ahead at the factory. ...Ag, but it was a fine time, because the shops were waiting and they knew people would have lots of money to spend. Things were cheap then and the money plentiful. We ate very well when the fish was in full season." (Joubert,E.1980;p51-2)

In this section, I have described the working conditions of women workers - employed to do piece-work; and the struggles, both formal and informal, against this form of surplus-value extraction. I have argued that the nature of this form of exploitation is a common feature of women's experience of wage labour, because of their relative vulnerability as workers. This form of exploitation increases rather than decreases women's vulnerability as workers.

Overtime and Nightwork - the Double Day

In this chapter, I have touched on the problems experienced by women when they are forced to combine household, reproductive functions and wage labour without the necessary social reconstruction around these areas. This particular problem of the double day has been highlighted in the recent debates around night work and overtime, and about protective legislation for women. There are a number of variables in this problem and we must consider each of these issues carefully: the interest of capital and the nature of the labour process, the state ideology on the family and women, the short terms needs of the workers and

their vulnerablitity, and finally, the workers long term interests. As will be seen clearly in this section, the ability to organise around the issue of overtime and night work and the kind of demands that the union can put forward are shaped by the specifics of the situation and change with time.

As outlined earlier, the main fruit canning season was a four month period during which the factories worked at full strength, approximately four or five hundred workers. There was in addition, a shorter season of four or five weeks during September and October when the peas were ready to be processed. Since peas are very vulnerable to spoiling through time or rough handling, capital was forced to employ trained workers on overtime to carry out this work. Their ability to do this was shaped by the availablitity of workers, their training in this regard and the protective legislation that prevented women from working excessive overtime and on night shift.

The legislation which prevented women from working extensive overtime and banned any night work, gives an interesting insight into the state's attitude to working women and motherhood. Various authors writing about the question of night work, have pointed out that this protection should in fact be a demand applicable to all workers. But in South Africa, it has never been recognised as a right of all workers to work only during the day. In fact in 1983, the state withdrew this protection even from women workers, arguing that the circumstances that warranted this proection in 1941 had changed by 1983. There is no specification of what has changed so dramatically - women's attitudes to their families, the state's attitude to women as mothers, or whether it is the result of weakening of the women's resistance to encroaches on their rights that has facilitated this move by the state. Certainly there have been no concrete changes in the provision of the services - childcare, household assistance, transport, safety of women at night and so on - that would assist women faced with overtime and night work.

The recent debate about overtime and night work and protection from it for women had been usefully summarised by Klugman in her 1983 article on maternity rights. She stresses that protective legislation for women and the removal of discrimination on the basis of gender are the product of the particular economic and political periods, and as such we cannot draw a hard and fast rule that capital either protects women, or discriminates against them and exploits them more harshly than men. It is this fact that allows contradictory legislation to exist on the statute books. Klugman points out that the ban on night work and restrictions on overtime have "prevented work from interfering too directly in women's reponsibilities" (1983,p37). She goes on to point out that the law is contradictory in that it failed to provide the crucial protection which ultimately determines a woman worker's survival in "the labour market (or the mothering market)" (1983,p37) - a woman's right to return to her job after the birth of her child. She concludes that protective legislation on its own, cannot solve the problems of combining women's working and mothering lives. Such legislation must go hand in had with the adequate provision of health, childcare and socialised housework facilties. This recognition is adequately

borne out in the FCWU and AFCWU strategy as will be seen in the following chapter.

The Factories, Machinery and Building Works Act, No 22 of 1941 made excessive overtime and night work illegal for women.(3) Within the industry, the prevalent form of nightwork during the 50s was through excessive overtime, but in addition, there was an annual struggle over nightshift work for women in the pea season. I have used this as an example of union action concerning women's double responsibilities. The question of night work took on particular characteristics. Since the Factories Act prevented employment of women on night shift, capital had the option of employing men in work that was normally carried out by women, and hence having to train the men, or applying for exemption from the Agreement that enforced the Factory Act. This almost annual application for exemption was a site of struggle between the union and management throughout the 40s and 50s.(4) The terms of the struggle hinged not around whether to allow or not allow night work for women, but rather the terms on which it should be carried out - wage rates, working hours, rest room and first aid conditions, the categories of workers to be employed and food and transport for the workers. The struggle over night work took on a new shape in the late 60s with the mechanisation of the factories. The introduction of machinery required a permanent night shift to keep the machines running most profitably, thereby opening up a new confrontation between management and workers.

It is useful to start with a clear statement by capital as to their needs during the pea season:

> "APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM WAGE CONCILIATION AGREEMENT OF 9.7.54: FRESH GARDEN PEA SEASON.
> Despite every effort on our part and that of our contract farmers to spread the harvest, we have found over the years that there is always a peak picking period during the Fresh Pea Season due to warm weather forcing the crop, and at this time we have to work our plant to full capacity on an additional shift for not more than four weeks.
>
> Each year it has been increasingly difficult to obtain the necessary labour at short notice and for such a short period, as there is no pool of Native Labour in Paarl at that time of the year (October). Last year after great effort, the necessary number of Native males were provided but the quality of this labour was so poor for the rather delicate job of sorting and cleaning of the prepared peas that our product suffered considerably and resulted in adverse comment from both overseas and local buyers. We understand from the Department concerned that we are unlikely to have any better service this year.
>
> During the ordinary single shift run of Peas, we use Non-European Female Labour for the sorting and packing operation, and they do a very good job. We are unable however to consider two such shifts within the permitted hours, although an excess of this Female labour is readily available and need the work, unless we are given exemption.

We consider we could adequately cover all possibilities by working two shifts from 6.0am to 3.0pm and 3.0pm to 12 midnight, for a period of not more than four weeks.

The number of Females per shift is 50, and our request is for an exemtion to permit our using 50 Non-European Females on the second of these shifts for the period 10.0pm to midnight. The working week will be six days and the payment for Females on the second or late shift would be one and half times the normal rate throughout the shift.

Transport would be provided for all Females at the end of each late shift and full Canteen facilities, Medical and Welfare Services will be available throughout both shifts.

There is an excess of trained women who normally work for us in the Main Season readily available and willing to do this work and if it would help you in reaching a decision we could arrange only to engage unmarried women or married women without children on either of these shifts. We could arrange also to alternate the shifts at each weekend so that any one woman would work only twelve late shifts in all."
(Letter from Mr Orger of LKB Daljosaphat to Department of Labour, quoted in Minutes of FCWU Management Committee Meeting held on 18.09.55. AD1175)

The Food and Canning Workers Union strategy in relation to these applications was to oppose night shift work, but to allow excessive overtime. At the same time, the union made certain demands in terms of wages for excessive overtime, working conditions and transport. The union also carefully monitored where factories were not adhering to the Factories Act, or the conditions laid down in the exemptions granted by the Department of Labour.

The Minutes of the First Quarterly Branch Delegates Meeting held on 6 April 1952 states that:

"our union has been pressing that women should not be employed on night shift" (Minutes of FCWU Branch Delegates Meeting 6.04.52,p7;BC721)

Liz Abrahams explained to Cherryl Walker that before the union, women were working two, three or four nights in a row, sometimes Saturday and Sunday too (Notes taken by Cherryl Walker during interview with Liz Abrahams, March 1977). It was part of the union's strategy to prevent this form of super-exploitation of workers and to protect women workers specifically. The union strategy was at all times to work for a better life for all workers within the industry. This meant that questions of the gender, technical and racial divisions of labour had to be looked at in conjunction with one another, to assess the effect of any development on each section of the workforce. While the union was committed in principle to the protection of women through legislation against night work, the issues were far more complex and resulted in the union actually supporting capital's application for exemption from the night work ban.

In this respect, the union relied on the protection afforded to women workers by the Factories Act and tried to ensure that Factory Inspectors were enforcing the existing legislation. This issue is one that appears to have been taken up from early on in the union. In 1948, the FCWU tried to persuade the Department of Labour not to allow women to work beyond 9.00pm when they granted permission to the factories to waive the ban on night work. In 1952, the General Secretary reported that the Secretary of Labour had been approached to ensure tighter inspection. This was in keeping with the unions's attitude to motherhood, wage labour and household responsibilities. However, what will become apparent in the course of this section, is that the political stand that the union took on protection of the right of women to work and to be mothers was, for a variety of reasons, not directly translatable into a refusal to allow women to do night work in the seasons. The low wages and unemployment certainly presented constraints on the union's ability to challenge night work at all.

In 1952, the unions struggles against excessive overtime and night work for women resulted in the beginning of the importation of machinery into the fish canning industry "so that men will be able to do the women's work and work night shift. This will eliminate female labour from the factories." (Minutes of Meeting of FCWU Branch Delegates, 06.04.52;BC721) The union discussed the issue at length and finally decided to write to the SA Food Canners Council to request a meeting:

> "with a view to settling the issue, advising them of the conditions laid down for night shift work, which is 33 and one third percent above the ordinary wages and that workers must have a break for lunch whether they work night shift or day shift. It was decided that the General Secretary issue a circular letter to all branches on conditions of exemptions granted to employers to work excessive overtime, so that branches should check whether workers are being paid correctly."(Minutes of FCWU Branch Delegates Meeting, 06.04.52;BC721)

It is important to point out that the union's strategy on this point changed as mechanisation took hold of the fruit canning industry. For 1950, the main overtime was not night shift work but excessive overtime. Only SA Preserving Co worked nightshift to start with. Other canning companies did not start a two shift day until the late 1960s. This meant that the principal form of longer working hours was not shift work, but rather excessive overtime during the 50s. For fruit at least it would mean work went on until the day's load was cleared, not necessarily up to midnight. Goode had dealt with the process of and reasons for mechanisation in his article and states the following:

> "Nor could these machines be worked for three shifts a day as this was prohibited under the Factories Act in the case of female labour the industry depends upon. The union fought employers seeking to gain exemption to night shift for women. In the early period only a few men worked night shift but from the late 1960s onwards, night shift for the entire factory in season became regular." (Goode,R.1985b,p26)

The mechanisation of the industry during this period however also substantially changed the sexual division of labour since women

were now employed to work on the newly introduced machinery (See Goode,R.1985b,p18-23). So we can see that the union's approach to night work has been shaped by many factors and needs to be periodised carefully.

In the early phase, when night work was a question simply of women being employed to do labour intensive work during peak seasons, the unions strategy was one of demanding certain conditions and wage rates from the employers, but supporting their applications to the Department of Labour for exemption from the night work ban. In 1952, the workers of ACL Daljosaphat factory decided to support that application made by management on the condition that workers were paid time and a half for women workers, that there be full canteen, first aid and rest room facilities, and that women workers be transported to and from home for work. However, management refused to pay time and a half, offering instead to pay the same wage rate to men and women, that of time and a third. The Minutes record:

> "Although this is an important principle for us that employers pay females the rate they pay male labourers, it is nevertheless, less than our demands."
> (Minutes of First Quarterly FCWU Branch Delegates Meeting held on 06.04.52;BC721)

The union had already succeeded in getting Standard Canners and H Jones to pay women workers time and a half, and the union sought to reach an agreement with all employers on a standard rate for night work for women. This matter was taken up with the SA Food Canners Council by the union in 1952, and appears to have been won as a demand. The Secretary reported to the Second Quarterly Branch Delegates Meeting that she had written to the Department of Labour supporting ACL Daljosaphat application for exemption on the following terms:

> "...b) that the minimum rate of pay will be as laid down in the Conciliation Board Agreement for the Fruit and Vegetable Canning Industry for an employee of his or her class - between 4 and 6 pm ordinary rates, and between 6pm and 12pm - time and a half;.." (Minutes of Second Quarterly FCWU Branch Delegates Meeting on 06.07.52;BC721)

Ordinary rates might also have meant one and one third if the hours of a normal working day were completed by 4pm. There were cases of a sliding scale being settled on - that up to a certain time, overtime would be one and one third, and after that it increased to one and a half. That was a compromise agreement that the union accepted when it could not negotiate the full overtime rate of time and a half.

This position was endorsed by the Department of Labour, who informed the ACL that if they wanted to do night work, they would do it on the terms laid down by the union. But the union did not rest content with this situation and in 1956, when LKB and H Jones applied for exemption from the night work ban for the pea season, the workers demanded that women workers be paid double rates for the night shift. The workers met to discuss their demands when the management informed the union that they were once more applying for exemption, and instructed the union to demand double pay. However, due to the high level of unemployment at that time, and hence the possibility of management replacing

workers who refused to work at the normal rate of time and a half, and because of the very short duration of the season, the struggle was unsuccessful (Correspondence between LKB and FCWU General Secretary, 06.08.56;02.10.56;23.10.56;and 26.10.56; between H Jones and FCWU General Secretary 11.09.56 and between Paarl FCWU Branch Secretary and FCWU General Secretary 23.08.56 and 02.10.56, as well as FCWU Management Committee Minutes of 02.06.56; 14.07.56 and 05.08.56 and Paarl FCWU Branch Executive Committee Minutes of 28.05.56;BC721). It seems that in the years after that, the union accepted the rate of time and a half. When they distributed a fact sheet for workers on their conditions of employment, in 1959, the position was laid out as follows. Workers were required to work 46 hours a week, spread out either as 8 working hours for 6 days, or 8 and a half hours for 6 days with the the sixth day being 5 hours, or for 5 days of 9 and a quarter hours each. An hour lunch was compulsory as were two 10 minute tea breaks. No employer was allowed to force workers to work more than ten hours overtime, and there were special restrictions for overtime for women workers:

> "How much overtime can a female work?
> 1.Not more than 10 hours overtime in any week
> 2.Not after 6 o'clock in the evening, until 6 o'clock in the morning
> 3.Not after one o'clock on more than 5 days in any week
> 4.Not more than 2 hours overtime on any day or for more than 3 consecutive days
> 5.Not to work overtime for more than 60days in a year.
> How much must you be paid for overtime?
> Female workers must receive time and a half for overtime or in other words one and a half times her ordinary wage.
> Male workers must receive one and one-third times his ordinary wage for overtime worked.
> Special treatment for women workers
> An employer cannot require a female worker to work overtime after completion of her ordinary work for more then one hour a day unless:
> a) Notice of overtime is given before midday.
> b) a meal before working overtime is given.
> or c) 2/6d is paid as a food allowance and the worker is given enough time to buy a meal."
> (What Every Canning Worker Should Know, put out by FCWU and SACTU in 1959;BC721. Emphasis in original.)

Apart from the struggles over the actual wages to be paid to the workers when they worked at night, it is useful to consider the reasons that capital put forward for employing women at night, and the political discussion that the union had about this issue. As was seen in the above quote from LKB Daljosaphat, part of management's reasons for wanting to employ women on night shift was that there was not enough African men to fill the shifts at that time and that African men were untrained (and hamfisted!) for the job. This point is picked up on by Stein, who argues that:

> "Employers demands for increased overtime (for coloured workers) were sometimes directly caused by the removal of their experienced labour pool of African women by the introduction of influx control. Immediately after its setting up in the mid 50s, the labour bureaux system often failed to supply the factories of the Western Cape with satisfactory standard of African labour."(Stein,M.n.d.;p23-

24)

This point was also directly taken up at union meetings:

> "The position of African Workers in Country Areas: The Secretary reported that recently we have encountered several problems with regard to African workers, caused by the pass laws. The first problem had been at ACL, Dal, (sic - Daljosaphat - JS) when Mr Orger had requested the union to allow women to work night shift as they had not been able to get enough African men as the Native Labour Board had said that the pea season is too short a period for the men to come into the towns. Our union rejected this, but agreed to make joint representations with the Canners Council to the Secretary for Native Affairs on this problem. ... J Mentoor: We must protect our workers. By not allowing the women workers to work night shift, we are strengthening the fight of the African workers." (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 25.09.54;BC721

The interconnections that have been made here indicate that while the union was committed to the woman question, and as can be seen from this and other sections of Chapter Three, examined the problems experienced by women workers, this was done in the context of the broad strategy of building working class unity across racial and gender divisons. The manner in which the union fought against passes for African women will be elaborated on in the third section of this chapter. The issue is raised here to highlight the fact that FCWU and AFCWU has a history of synthesising the taking up of factory floor issues with the broader political issues that the union was concerned about. It is, I would argue, this ability to draw the links between the state's strategy of racial oppression and the importance of working class unity both on the factory floor and in the liberation struggle that made the union such a powerful force in the lives of its members, and in terms of the challenges it issued to management and to the state.

Conclusion

In this part of Chapter Three, I have reflected on various key issues confronting the progressive trade union movement in relation to women workers and issues at the workplace. The existence of certain relatively labour intensive industries in which a majority of the workers are women, the employment of women as a seasonal and temporary workforce; the often concomittant employment of child labour; the lower wages received by women workers in the worst jobs; the vulnerability of women workers because of their difficulty in working overtime or night shift because of the double day - these are objective problems facing any trade union, and particularly one committed to organising women workers.

In concluding, I would like to discuss briefly some articles on women and the trade union struggle. An awareness of the potential division of the working class along gender lines has been part of historical materialist writings on the woman question from the

late Nineteenth Century. Zetkin, writing in Gleichheit had the following warning to the labour movement:

> "In view of the increasing use of female labour and the subsequent results, the labour movement will surely commit suicide if, in the efforts to enrol the broad masses of the proletariat, it does not pay the same amount of attention to female workers as it does to male ones."
> (Zetkin,C in Froner,P.S.(ed).1984;p59)

Zetkin in this seminal article, "Women's Work and the Organising of Trade Unions" shows how the inclusion of women workers into industry to replace men at lower wages could divide the working class unless the trade union movement organised men and women together to put forward the demands for better working conditions on behalf of all workers in that industry. She points also to the fact that the low wages paid to women workers cause both men and women workers to suffer, since:

> "As a consequence of their low wages, the women are transformed from mere competitors into unfair competitors who push down the wages for men."
> (Zetkin,C in Froner,P.S.(ed).1984;p54)

In arguing against the earlier position of organised labour - to prohibit female labour - Zetkin argued for protection of women workers, and their inclusion into trade unions as the correct socialist way forward. Zetkin's contribution on the reasons for women's lower wages and on the factors militating against women's involvement in trade union's are illuminating. I quote at length:

> "The fact that the pay of female labour is so much lower than that of male labour has a variety of causes. Certainly one of the reasons for these poor wages for women is the circumstance that female workers are practically unorganised. They lack the strength which comes with unity. They lack the courage, the feeling of power, the spirit of resistance and the ability to resist which is produced by the strength of an organisation in which the individual fights for everybody and everybody fights for the individual. Furthermore, they lack the enlightenment and the training which an organisation provides.
>
> ...
>
> Thus in the interests of both men and women workers, it is urgently recommended that the latter be included in the trade unions. The larger the number of organised female workers who fight shoulder to shoulder with their comrades from the factory or workshop for better working conditions, the sooner and the greater will women's wages rise so that soon there may be the realisation of the principle: Equal pay for equal work regardless of the difference in sex. The organised female worker who has become the equal of the male worker ceases to be his scab competitor.
>
> ...
>
> We certainly do not fail to recognise the difficulties raised by women workers which are detrimental to the solution of this problem. Stupid resignation, lack of a feeling of solidarity, shyness, prejudices of all kinds and fear of the factory tyrant keep many women from joining unions. Even more than the just mentioned factors, the lack of time on the part of female workers represents a major obstacle against their mass organisation because women are

house as well as factory slaves and are forced to bear a double workload. The economic developments, however, as well as the increasing acuteness of the class struggle, educate both male and female workers and force them to overcome the above mentioned difficlties."
(Zetkin,C in Froner,P.S.(ed).1984;p56-8)

The FCWU practices embody this recognition of the importance of women workers standing alongside their male comrades, and in ensuring that the limitations of women's involvement in the union were overcome. The practice of the union as described in this chapter can be contrasted with the "feminist syndicalist approach" as outlined by Moroney and with the practices of the TUC in Britain.

From the late 1800s, women workers in Scotland have been organised under the banner of the TUC into a variety of women workers organisations. The TUC in England has annually held heated debates over whether to hold women's conferences to discuss specific ways to organise women workers. Since this was first proposed in 1923, the debate has taken up much time. Some arguing agianst the annual women's conference, argued that it would foster divisions between men and women and that it would remove issues of significance to women from the TUC. The first Women's Conference was held in 1931 and the TUC Women's Advisory Committee was set up, their function being to advise the TUC General Council on issues concerning women workers. Although the British and Scottish Advisory Committees differ in some respects, certain debates and areas of work have been raised in both:- the question of the representation of women in the trade union movement; the issues of childcare, health, school meals, taxation, pensions, social security, abortion, domestic violence; the debate about positive discrimination for women. The Women's Conferences have served an important function in building women workers for active participation in trade unions, with some limitations:

"Currently, the women's conferences function as a place where women can discuss major issues confronting them and formulate strategy and tactics. They also develop women's confidence by giving them training and experience. Both functions are valuable and necessary. Yet it must be acknowledged that the advisory status of the women's conferences imposes a severe limitation on the ability of the women's Advisory Committees to take action on conference decisions. Furthermore it is implied that should women's conferences deal with topics not deemed appropriate by their respective General Councils, their very existence might be threatened. ... In the recent past the General Councils have shown themselves more willing to listen to the voice of women trade unionists, but it is galling that in the final analysis progress depends on the good will of the General Councils, and not on any policy making rights accorded to the women's conferences. ... If the General Council rejects a recommendation from the women's Advisory Committees or the Women's conference, the only means of redress is for women to take up the issue within their own unions and to get it debated onthe floor of the Congress."
(Breitenbach,E.1981;p76-77)

This precise and quote reflect an approach not only to the question of women workers problems, but to the nature of trade union democracy as well. The direct comparability of TUC unions with progressive and SACTU unions in the 1950s is very limited. However, it raises one significant question. I argue throughout the thesis that FCWU and AFCWU developed women's leadership, represented the needs of women workers in all respects and hence played a significant role in the women's struggle in South Africa. A further question needs to be posed though - within the union itself, the positive policy of building working class women through active participation resulted in an unusually good representation of women in the trade union. An unanswered question though is how effectively these women could take this approach out of the confines of the trade union into the federal bodies - SATLC and SACTU. The union leadership certainly did raise women workers issues in these forums, but were less effective in a context where the major trade unions came from industries employing largely men. The role of a specific women workers pressure group, conference or education group has been raised currently with firstly the Federation of South African Trade Unions, and now within COSATU.

Moroney critiques "working class feminism" as being economistic and reductionist, and argues that it needs to be linked up with a view of the woman question that encompasses "overall social transformation" (Moroney,H.J.1983;p53-4). She describes working class feminism as a phenomenon that developed due to dramatic increases in employment of women with children from the 1960s:

> "As an organised expression, working class feminism is partially structured by the existing labour movement and its ideology is most coherently expressed in groupings of feminists in trade unions. Diverse in their political origins and experience, these nuclei can be divided into : politically self-conscious "trade union feminists" and women workers whose feminism (and trade union) consciousness has crystalised in the course of specific struggles."
> (Moroney,H.1983;p55)

She argues that trade unions have tended to reproduce prevailing gender structures and that feminist syndicalism - "the project of building independent women's unions"; the creation of "a political base outside the control of the labour movement's male hierarchy to fight for their needs: in short feminism." (Moroney,H.1983;p59) - has emerged as a resulting challenge. She argues that the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s was ideologically limited by its middle class social base and that similarly "working class feminism" of the 1980s is limited by its workplace base. Her conclusion is that the key strategic objective is to develop an expanded feminism which incorporates the strengths of each of the generations of feminism and corrects the one sidedness of each. (Moroney,H.1983;p67)

The union's practices as outlined in this chapter, reflect an alternative approach - one in which the speicific problems that women experience in the workplace - seasonal labour, piecerates, female child labour, excessive overtime on top of the double day - were taken up by the entire union - men and women workers together. This avoided the danger inherent in the feminist

syndicalist approach Moroney discusses, of entrenching divisions within the working class. Moroney places cross-class women's unity before the solid organisations of men and women workers.

The union's history reflects the correctness of the position asserted theoretically in the introduction, that men and women workers have a greater tendency to solidarity with each other than towards division. The ultra-exploitation of women was an issue central to the union's organisational strategy, and at no point was the industry divided into two "worlds, one inhabited by men, the other by women" (Porter,M.1982;p130). Porter in his study on working class housewives and the world of work, states that:

> "women's experience of work is significantly different to that of men, and I want to suggest that the difference rests upon a sexual division of labour rooted, outside work, in the family. Of course, women construct their interpretation of the world and their class consciousness from both these areas of experience, but it is one of the underlying themes of this paper that the divisions between men and women and between home and work crucially fracture working class experience and consequently working class consciousness." (Porter,M.1982;p117)

What Porter does not examine however, is the organisational question. The FCWU is testimony to how a trade union can facilitate the building of working class unity if it consciously organises women and men alongside each other, and consciously organises against those aspects of working class women's ultra-exploitation. The gains won by the union in fighting for better conditions for seasonal workers, in limiting excessive overtime, in preventing child labour and in opposing extraction of surplus value through piece-rates were significant. However, in themselves, these victories were insignificant. All of these aspects of exploitation of women workers are ideologically legitimised by women's role as mothers and housewives. Women seasonal workers are not seen as unemployed during the off-season - they are housewives, dependent on their husbands wages. Children and particularly girl children, are forced into wage labour to replace their mothers who have to leave work to bear children, look after their families and so on. Capital's demands of excessive overtime by women workers become a union issue because of women's responsibilities in the home.

The ultimate question, and one that has not been directly addressed here, remains. What is it that allows women to be forced into seasonal work, piece-work and overtime? I would argue that the answer is not simple but must take into account the material basis of women's oppression, the combining of motherhood and wage labour in the double day, the relatively unorganised nature of this section of the working class, and the concomitant vulnerability of women workers. These processes are bolstered by capitalist ideology which argues that women only supplement men's wages by working in the season and that they are primarily housewives and not workers. It must be emphasised that unless this ideology is actively challenged by the creation of a different consciousness, it remains the collective consciousness of women under capitalism.

The significance of the FCWU struggles around women's ultra-exploitation at work should not be seen in isolation. In the following two sections of Chapter Three, I will outline how the FCWU strategy reflects the interconnections of women worker's vulnerability in the workplace, the lack of social services related to women's reproductive functions and the oppression of women through Apartheid state policy.

CHAPTER THREE PART TWO

OUR NEEDS AND RIGHTS AS MOTHERS, CHILDREARERS, HOUSEWIVES AND WORKERS.

In the previous section of this chapter, I outlined the working experiences of women workers in the food and canning industry. As was shown there, the working conditions these women faced, and the demands put forward by their trade union, have to take cognisance of the "double day" that working class women face in capitalist society. The Union negotiated so that the exemptions from the ban on nightshift took into account women's responsibilities at home and women's vulnerability to rape and violence in the community. The extension of pass laws to African women was taken up by the union because the possibility of arrest made many of these women's work life insecure and made a stable life in an urban environment difficult, particularly in the late 50's.(5) In addition I examined how women's 'eligibility' for seasonal labour was predicated on the ideological constitution of women as housewives, working for pinmoney (despite the unrealistic nature of this construction).

In the first chapter, I discussed how the Congress Alliance organisations appealed to women through the mother-child relationship. These organisations translated this ideological concern about the lives of South Africa's children into practical struggles around the protection of children and the rights of motherhood. These practical struggles should be looked at in the context of the call to "Defend our children" that was discussed in Chapter 1. In this part of Chapter Three, I am exploring the manner in which the state, capital and the trade union organised around women's experience of motherhood, their maternity rights and their responsibility for childcare. I will highlight the extent to which women's vulnerability and exploitability as workers is dependent on how the state, capital and the union prioritise women workers' right to paid maternity leave, the right to return to her job after the baby is born and the right to socialised (whether state provided or community/agency run) childcare facilities. In highlighting these three aspects, let me emphasise that unless all three are catered for, women's vulnerability is not significantly reduced in the long term of a woman's adult life-cycle. Daniel,W (1980) has argued, correctly, that:

> "The relatively unfavourable characteristics of women's jobs have long been attributed chiefly to the general expectation that most women will interrupt careers or jobs to have children "
> (Daniel,W;1980:p 1)

Daniel goes on to highlight three main elements of British maternity legislation - the right to maternity pay; the right to re-instatement in pre-birth jobs; and protection against unfair dismissal because of pregnancy. He summarises the results of his survey by pointing to the conflicting interests between capital and women. In his experience, capital consistently criticised maternity legislation because of the extra cost of maternity pay, and the inconvenience of holding women's jobs for them when they may, in fact, not return. The women's interest groups that he

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interviewed however, criticised the legislation for the way in which the requirements for qualifying tend to limit women's progress and added that the maternity benefits needed to be extended to include improved childcare facilities (Daniel,W.1980;p 1-3). I will show that despite the fact that the AFCWU and FCWU were vigilant in terms of the rights of women workers in this regard, the Union was not in a position to ensure the right "to work and security for all" women workers. Women workers remained "ultra-exploited" in the sense that they were more vulnerable to losing their jobs. And when viewing the working life of a women worker, we will see that a woman worker, in fact, works as a temporary worker - interrupted by seasonal fluctuations, maternity and dismissal due to household responsibilities such as sick children and so on.

Much of the European literature focussing on women workers reflects the increased recognition of these issues by the European labour movement. For example, Aldred,C (1981) in 'Women and Work' devotes a chapter to " Two jobs - the twenty-four hour day " in which she discusses women workers and their responsibilities as housewives, mothers and childrearers. The Trades Union Council in Britain has laid down guidelines on Workplace Nurseries, and has drawn up a Charter on Facilities for the Under Fives. The EEC has statutory rights on maternity and has made provision for nurseries (See APEX;n.d.). In addition, these issues have been discussed at the Trade Union Council Women's Conferences (See Women Workers, Reports of the TUC Women's Conferences 1973-1984). In her article on maternity rights, Barbara Klugman again focusses on the situation in European countries, contrasting this with the present legislation on maternity rights in South Africa. The question of maternity rights is once more gaining prominence in the labour movement in South Africa. The South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), CCAWUSA and various other trade unions have begun to fight for the recognition of maternity rights and the right to return to the job after the birth of the baby (SASPU, March and August 1983; CCAWUSA.1983; and FOSATU.1984). One central question that must be raised is the role of protective legislation by the state, and the responsibility of the state to answer directly to the demands of the women question. Barbara Klugman has argued that the protective legislation, aimed at protecting women's role as mothers and reconciling this with their role as workers, not only sees to the health, family and social needs of mother and baby, but also guarantees womens right to work (1983;p25-26).

The labour movement in Britain recognises more than just a women's right to proper care and security during the pregnancy and birth process. A Trades Union Council resolution states that equal opportunity for women depends on the provision of adequate childcare facilities (TUC Women's Conference Report 1973). This concern is manifest in many different ways, through concern over creches, childminding (See Coulter,A 1981) and pre-school education. This aspect of women's experience as worker and mother is discussed in a South African context in the works of Cock et al (1984) and of Cathy Mathews (1982).

Work that focusses on case studies and organisational responses highlights the theoretical significance of women's reproductive

(biological, daily and generational) activities within capitalism. The solutions proposed by the union were a significant step in that creches, maternity rights etc facilitated women's participation both economically and politically. However, they did not ultimately challenge the public/private dichotomy of bourgeois ideology which condemns working women to playing a public and private role which is, theoretically, the material basis of women's subordination. I stress the public and private role of working class women, who seldom experience the oppression of being restricted to the home, except in periods of chronic unemployment. It is among bourgeois women, that women have historically been defined only in terms of the private realm. However, this is changing significantly with the rise of bourgeois feminism in South Africa at the moment (as seen in the Women's Bureau of South Africa) and the inclusion of many white women into the upper echelons of the business world. However, the public/private dichotomy of capitalism defines women ultimately in terms of their household responsibilities and their participation in the workplace and community is determined from that premise (As argued in chapter 3 part 1).

This section therefore serves two purposes. Firstly, it is a piece of corrective history, reclaiming for us the tradition of how working women's needs and rights as mothers have been fought for. In the work of Soudien, Stein, Cooper and Goode's early work, there is no mention of the specificity of the union's organisation of women workers. In Goode's recent work, this understanding is brought to bear. Secondly, I will highlight the strategic importance for all organisations to include these needs and rights in their organisational agenda, because of the centrality of the public/private dichotomy in the continued oppression of women in transformed social relationships.

Maternity - The Right of all women workers:

Elizabeth Mafeking's experience as a working mother is probably representative of other working women:

> "In 1938 when she was 20 years old, Elizabeth married and her first child, Sophia was born in December of that year. By 1946 when she became a trade union organiser, she has 4 children. While organising, she would continue with her work until she was 8 months pregnant and even after the birth of the child, she would be back at work after a month, with the new baby on her back."
> (Biography of Elizabeth Mafeking, p2,AD1137)

But as an organiser in a union senstitive to the difficulty of combining motherhood and wage labour, she had a degree of freedom not experienced by the women still working in the factories. These women have to find some way to care for the children while they were on the production line.

Liz Abrahams describes how most of the women workers were married with children, highlighting the fact that the issue of childcare and maternity benefits affected the majority of workers directly. Cherryl Walker noted during this interview that:

> "When she worked in the factory, at her factory, mothers

would bring children and a bigger one to look after them - played in a large shed where fruit stored. At 1.00 o'clock break, the mothers would rush out and breastfeed. No private place. That time, the factory didn't mind - but not allowed now."
(Notes taken by Cherryl Walker during interview with Liz Abrahams, 1977)

In an interview, two organisers for the union highlighted how capital's response to motherhood changes with time:

"There was no victimisation of women after giving birth then. (1950s -JS) But now, women experience problems getting their jobs back."
(Interview with Lizi Pikhe and Annie Adams, August 1983)

Let us look at how the Union organised around the issue of maternity rights, so that the employers response was, on the whole, to bow to the strength of the union and to implement the statutory rights that did exist.

Before moving to examine the union's practices in this regard, it is useful to sketch briefly other union struggles on this issue in the decade previous to the establishment of the FCWU. The Chemical Workers Industrial Union had raised the question of confinement allowances within the South African Trades and Labour Council from 1938. The union proposed that the TLC, when making representations about the amendments to the Factories Act, should insist on:

"A radical alteration of the present system of confinement allowance to working mothers (section 18 of the Factories Act) providing for a much more adequate allowance and abolishing the "means test" existing at present."
(Resolution to TLC Conference, quoted in Guardian, 14.04.1938)

Ray Alexander, Secretary of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union at the time, wrote an article for the Guardian motivating for this resolution in preparation for the conference. I have quoted her article at length because it reflects not only the position of capital and the state vis-a-vis women at that period, but also reflects the position of the labour movement on this question. The minutes of the TLC Conference in 1938 echo her words as speakers from the Garment Workers Union, National Union of Distributive Workers Union, along with renounced trade unionists Bolton and Weinberg supported the motion. Her article quoted the existing legislation and then went on to say:

"Everyone will agree that this Section deserves a lot of criticism. It is so vague. It does not say "shall be paid" but "may be paid". It refers to regulations, but these regulations are departmental and officers employed by the Department of Labour and Social Welfare have access to them. Finally it remains with a single individual - the Minister - to decide whether a woman worker is dependent solely on her wages.

Several requests for a copy of the Departmental regulations have been made by various trade union to the Secretary of Labour, Mr Ivan Walker, but these were refused. This makes

But we cannot wait. We, the organised workers in the trade union movement who are affiliated to a central body, must make a serious effort to join hands with the other organised women workes, the shop assistants, waitresses, office employees, bank employees, social servicists, Post Office employees etc, who are at the present time excluded from receiving even the miserable confinement allowance paid to factory workers.

We are now going through an election campaign. The governing Party, the United Party and other parties representing big capital or rich landowners come and appeal for the votes of the working people. They make promises, for instance, Hofmeyr has promised to improve the Factories Act and Smuts and Hertzog have stated at the electioneering meetings that the worker in South Africa is "well protected".

Workers and the election.

But, the workers have to learn that they cannot expect effective legislation in their interest from political parties whose leaders control the means of production, factories, mines, land etc. (Sir Abe Bailey, Stuttaford, Oppenheimer, Sir David Graaf) If we want to secure improvements, to make our life somewhat happier, we have to take our stand in politics as well. We must, for one thing, organise the fight to enfranchise the non-European women, which would mean that these thousands of workers would also be a political power to be reckoned with. And we must seriously undertake our tasks: to do everything possible to return Labour and Socialist candidates to Parliament on 18th May."
(Guardian 14.04.38)

The debate in the TLC conference that year was conducted in strong terms, with one speaker noting that "the legislation for working women in South Africa was the worst of any civilised country." (SATLC Conference Report, 1938,p77)

Even the new legislation governing maternity rights did not and still does not safeguard the working lives of women as it should. The legislation governing maternity rights which was relevant to the food and canning industry was the Factories, Machinery and Building Work Act, no 22 of 1941. This Act was regarded a great victory for the working class, a concession won from Smuts by labour during the war.

The General Secretary summarised the provisions of Section 23 of this Factories Act of 1941 in a Circular letter so that all members of the Union would understand their rights and the practical steps to take in this regard.(6) Despite the overall progressive nature of the draft of the amendments to the Factories Act, the 1941 SATLC Conference recorded serious dissatisfaction with the provisions relating to confinement

allowance. The conference passed the following resolution:

> "Arising from the provisional draft of the proposed new Factories Act, this conference expresses its deep disappointment at the failure of the government in these proposals to provide adequate protection for women workers, particularly in respect of expectant mothers.
>
> Conference therefore asks the Government to make provision, inter alia, for the following items:
>
> a. No expectant working woman may be employed for the period eight weeks before and eight weeks after her confinement.
> b. During this prohibited period an allowance equal to her normal wages must be paid to her by the State, without any means test.
> c. If for reasons of health a woman worker has to leave her employment before the stipulated eight weeks before confinement, additional allowances in terms of Section (b) shall be made.
> d. The State allowance must be paid to any bona fide worker in industry, whether her employment has been continuous or not.
> e. Drastic revision and simplification of the Departmental regulations governing the administration of the Factories Act, in order (1) that workers shall understand provisions and procedure without any difficulty, and (2) the elimination of those regulations which, in practice, tend to work contrary to the interests of workers."
> (SATLC Annual Conference Report 1941,p70)

When the Nationalist Party came to power many of the gains made by the working class under the UP rule, were eroded by the Nationalists consistent anti-working class position. The Factories Act was amended on numerous occassions since then. As Liz Abrahams, Paarl FCWU Branch Secretary in 1986 and past General Secretary of the FCWU from 1956 to 1964 says :

> " Confinement allowances are not part of our agreements. In the Factory Act, there are laws for women workers who are pregnant. In the Food and Canning Workers Union, the seasonal workers have to work for 130 days to qualify and permanent workers have to work for 210 days to qualify. The workers do not have to work that in one period, they can work it in bits and pieces because its a seasonal industry."
> (Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by J.Schreiner,3 June 1985)

It is important to note that the FCWU did not negotiate agreements with employers that went beyond the existing legislation on maternity rights. However, this must be seen in the context of the progressive and successful struggle that the union movement had fought to enshrine women's rights in the legislation. It is interesting to note that the agreements being negotiated today cover a shorter period of maternity leave than the labour movement demanded in the 40s. The current agreements do however demand the women's right to return to her job.

The most important right, the right to return to her job or to

one of equivalent status, wage and promotional opportunity , was not written into the legislation. It is this right, as Klugman argues, that "ultimately determines a women's chances of surviving in the labour market (or in the mothering market)" (Klugman,B.1983;p37). The Factory, Mining and Building Act of 1941 strongly reflects the ideology of women as mothers, affording the protection in a number of respects (nightshift, overtime, paid maternity leave) but it does not afford them the right to job/work security. In fact, the legislation stipulates that women must stop work if she has bad health during her pregnancy, or the work she does is dangerous to her foetus. But the legislation provides no guarantee that a woman who is so affected will get her job back, or that she will be compensated during this period of unemployment.

Klugman goes on to explore how the peculiarities of the 1941 Act in terms of maternity rights was possible :

> "This situation could only arise because of a number of interrelated factors. First the large reserve army of labour in South Africa has made women's labour easily replaceable. Linked to this is the fact that the sectors in which women are concentrated are largely unskilled. So whilst the ideology of femininity and motherhood ought to some extent to protect those women who are already at work, it does not protect them from losing their jobs, when they fall pregnant. In fact they are then seen to be moving into their true vocation: to be mothers. But this perception is a minor reason for the lack of maternity rights. The fact is that it would cost extra money to hold a job for a woman, since this might involve both training, paying a substitute and possible keeping up the pension payments and even perhaps part of the wage payments of the absent worker. This situation is backed up by international experience mentioned earlier, where the concern for maternity rights has always arisen in response to the incorporation of women into the labour market, and a concern for the effects this has on family and social reproduction in general." (Klugman,B.1983;p38-9)

The 1941 Factories Act denied confinement allowances to seasonal workers. FCWU exposed this discrimination against women in the food industry at the 1942 SATLC Conference. By October of that year, after an exhaustive campaign of letters to and from the Minister and Secretary of Labour, backed up by education and organisation around the issue within the union, the union "won the right of our seasonal workers to be granted confinement allowances, which meant one month prior to confinement and two months after confinement. This too was of help to the babies" (Correspondence with Ray Alexander, 24.09.84). Despite the fact that the Factories Act laid down the conditions of payment allowances, and the women's rights to maternity leave, the Union had to fight an ongoing struggle on behalf of the seasonal workers. The Act states that women must have worked for thirty consecutive weeks. However, in 1942 the Department of Labour granted an exemption so that "expectant mothers who have 130 days or more of service during the period of 12 months may apply for confinement allowance and receive the same" (FCWU Circular Letter 3/52,27 Feb 1952, BC721). In the words of Liz Abrahams, "The workers do not have to work that in one period, they can work it

in bits and pieces; its a seasonal industry." (Interview with Liz Abrahams, conducted by J.Schreiner, 3.06.85)

It seems that in the early days of the Act, the payment of confinement allowances was relatively straight-forward and unbureaucratic; but with time problems arose. In Circular Letter No 6/1946 Ray Alexander quotes Miss Casporenthus, in charge of the Confinement Allowance section in the Department of labour in Cape Town:

> " 'That in view of the increasing number of applicants for Confinement Allowance from women, especially in the country areas, who work beyond their eighth month of pregnancy, it is now considered to be necessary in order to obviate submitting applications to the Head Office of the Department of Labour ie. Pretoria, from women who work too long in the factories, to retain the ordinary application in the Local Dept of Labour Office until proof of birth ie. Vaccination Certificate or Birth Certificate has been received, and to refuse all applicants who work too long before the confinement, unless a satisfactory explanation for this contravention is offered, supported by certificates of the District Nurse, Doctor or Midwife. ' "

In the Circular Letter, Alexander went on to appeal:

> "Comrades, please understand the fact that a few of our women workers did not carry out the Factories Act, has now endangered all our women workers, which means that they will not get Confinement Allowance until they have proved the birth of the baby. It will also mean that they will have to wait until longer than they have in the past. I therefore ask all branch secretaries to discuss this matter with our women members."
> (FCWU Circular Letter Number 6, 1946,BC721)

There were in addition other problems of interpretation of the law, and what the workers' rights were. For example, at an Executive and Shopstewards meeting of the Cape Town branch of FCWU in October 1946, a member asked for clarity on her rights to collect Confinement Allowance if her baby had died within a week of birth (Minutes of Executive Committee and Shop Stewards Meeting, of FCWU Cape Town Branch held on 14 October 1947;BC721). No immediate reply was given at the meeting, but this matter would have been dealt with by the Union. The attitude of the Union to the payment of confinement allowances was spelt out by Ray Alexander in her Secretary General's Report to the 17th Annual Conference in January 1949. She called on branches to ensure that applications were made by women workers and to follow this up by making sure that the Confinement Allowances were actually paid out to the workers. As can be seen from above, the relevant section of the Act did not cover this eventuality specifically.

The issue of confinement allowances was taken up within both FCWU and AFCWU. At the second AFCWU conference, the General Secretary raised the demand in a way that highlights how the union could assist women workers. It was the responsibility of the branch secretary:

"to keep a check on every expectant mother and see to it that she applies for confinement allowance and notes when the woman worker leaves the factory, reporting this to H.O. immediately giving the date of leaving the factory, the date she expects to have the baby as well as the name of the factory in which employed and the wages received. When this information is received we will as a matter of routine report the case to the Department of Labour asking them to check up on whether the application has been made."
(AFCWU General Secretary Report to Conference, 15&16.01.49;BC721)

In 1952 however, further clarification on confinement allowances for seasonal workers was necessary, since women had in fact left work four or five months prior to having their baby. The Union had received complaints from workers that they were not being paid their allowances. On investigation with the Department of Labour, it was discovered that these women were in fact not complying with the regulation of leaving <u>because</u> of pregnancy. Once more, the Circular Letter was used to clarify the law, the exemption for seasonal workers and to emphasize that applicants were only eligible if they had worked 130 days in the previous 12 months <u>and</u> had left work <u>because</u> of pregnancy,ie. a month before the child was due (FCWU Circular Letter 3/52 BC 721).

This in fact meant that if a woman worker was unemployed at the time of her confinement because of the seasonal nature of her employment, she was not elligible for assistance from the state. Only if she was lucky enough (or had planned it to be so) for her confinement to coincide with the season in which she was assured of work could she be sure of financial assistance for her baby. So, it seems that despite the fact that the Union had won an exemption from the Dept of Labour over the nature of the time period that seasonal workers had to work in order to qualify, the seasonal workers still were vulnerable in that if their baby was born in the off-season, (the time when extra money was needed anyway), there was no confinement allowance. There was no assistance for women who had been laid off due to the seasonal nature of the work.

The Factories Act was amended in 1954 to remove the loophole whereby some women could apply for confinement allowances and then claim maternity benefits from UIF as well. A letter from the Dept of Labour stated that:

"I have to advise you that as from the 1st August, 1954, applicants should apply for maternity benefits in place of confinement allowance. Applicants must apply immediately after ceasing to work , and bring with them their U.F.74 cards." (Minutes of FCWU BEC of Cape Town branch 18.10.54.BC721)

At the Cape Town branch meeting where this letter was read, members of the committee pointed out that: a) this would use up the employment money to which workers were entitled, and b) that the Confinement Allowance had been paid by the government and that it should not be taken from the unemployment fund to which the workers had to contribute. The secretary was mandated to investigate the extent to which this would limit the unemployment monies available to women workers for unemployment through other

causes, and to find out how much the payment through UIF would be. This matter was clarified in a letter from the Dept of Labour which stated that only women actually unemployed and in possession of a UF74 card could draw maternity benefits:

> "I have to advise you that in terms of Section 39(11) of the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1946, as amended, a female contributor who is unemployed and pregnant may apply for maternity benefits, which may be paid during her pregnancy for a period not exceeding 18 weeks prior to the expected date of confinement, and during a further period not exceeding 8 weeks after the birth of a live child, or 4 weeks after the birth of a still-born child.
>
> From the above it should be noted that unless the contributor is unemployed, ie. her employment has been terminated either by her employer or through resignation, she will not be elligible for maternity benefits in terms of the Unemployment Insurance Act. A person who is not elligible for such benefits may howeyer, provided she qualifies, apply for a confinement allowance under the provisions of the Factories Act...
>
> No payment will be made unless the applicant produces her contributors record card, U.F.74, duly completed by herself and her previous employer."
> (FCWU Management Committee Minutes 31.10.54 BC721)

As the meeting went on to point out, this applied only to the workers in the fish industry since the majority of workers in the food and canning industry do not contribute to the UIF. The Food and Canning Workers Union raised this matter with other local trade unions to see how they felt about this law, but the responses are not available.

Few of the workers in the food and canning industry were eligible for maternity benefits since seasonal workers are excluded from the UIF. Their only access to maternity benefits was through the provisions of the Factories Act, over which I have explained there was a struggle. Liz Abrahams expresses very clearly how the Union and the workers feel about UIF:

> "You can get sick benefits through UIF if you are put off. In our industry, workers get 10 days sick pay a year, but they can apply for UIF to get another 3 months. But then they must contribute to the UIF and seasonal workers are not allowed to. The Union sent a deputation to the Minister of Manpower about seasonal workers. Their argument is that people only work for a couple of months and then apply for UIF and this is unfair. But there are hundreds of thousands of seasonal workers. In the fish industry, a worker must work for thirteen weeks to qualify for UIF, but the fish season is very short and most of the workers do not qualify. In the fruit section, a worker must work for eight months. How many of the seasonal workers work for eight months? UIF is not for seasonal workers." (Interview with Liz Abrahams, conducted by J.Schreiner,3 June 1985)

Despite this view, in August 1964, Liz Abrahams, as General Secretary of FCWU, wrote a Circular letter explaining the details

of the Unemployment Insurance Amendment Act to the workers. The Amended Act only applied to "contributors" and thus did not help seasonal workers. An article in Workers Unity, the SACTU newsletter, highlighted the fact that the Bill made it more difficult for married women workers to draw maternity benefits (Workers Unity Vol 7 No 1, Feb/October 1962). The summary of the provisions of the Act outlines the conditions for payment of maternity benefits:

> "Maternity benefits to female contributors, who are unemployed, or who though still in employment, receive from their employers less than one-third of their normal earnings, during the period not exceeding eighteen weeks prior to the expected date of their confinement, and eight weeks after the birth of a live child, or four weeks after the birth of a still-born child...
>
> To qualify for maternity benefits a contributor should be in employment as a contributor for at least eighteen weeks during the fifty-two weeks immediately preceeding the expected date of her confinement.
>
> Application for maternity benefits should be made by the applicant in person to the nearest office of the Dept of Labour. It should be noted that maternity benefits are intended to provide benefits for the unemployed women who have become pregnant whilst in active employment." (FCWU Circular Letter 15/64, 13 August 1964, BC721)

So far I have discussed the workers rights and problems vis-a-vis the state and maternity rights. But the union also had to deal with the problems women workers experienced from the side of the employers. What this highlights is the fact that while the state had laid down strict rules controlling the eligibility of women for confinement allowances and maternity benefits, the actions of the employers in victimising pregnant women, often precluded women from fulfilling those requirements. For example, in late 1954, the Port Elizabeth branch of the Food and Canning Workers Union reported that women who were only four months preganant were being given notice at H.Jones & Co factory. The branch had gone to see one of the management of the H.Jones & Co factory, but had been given no satisfactory explanation. So the branch raised it with Head Office and asked the Secretary General to take it further. The letter from the nurse involved, in reply to the FCWU Head Office investigation, stated the position as follows:

> "I wish to state that I personally am in agreement with the policy of terminating the services of any girl who claims to be four months pregnant. From personal experience I have proved times out of a number that girls who state that they are four months pregnant are invariably seven or eight months.
>
> I do not think that any woman who is advanced in pregnancy should be allowed to work in the factory. The conditions which they work under, eg. water slippery floors etc, are not the best conditions for pregnant women.
>
> No two women are alike, one girl may be perfectly fit up to the end of pregnancy, other girls are constantly receiving attention at First Aid or being sent home. They work one

day and are sick for two days. We have definite records available to this effect.

Since starting at H.Jones & Co, I have had a number of threatened miscarriages and mishaps to pregnant women, and in my honest and candid opinion the only solution to this very difficult problem is to use my own knowledge and judgement which is quite considerable in this sphere. Other than sending every women who claims to be four months pregnant to a doctor to get an accurate statement we have no alternative to pay them off when we consider them to be more than four months pregnant.

I have proved to the Union members on a number of occassions that a girl has been telling me untruths by producing the certificates from doctors stating that they are as far advanced as eight months pregnant."
(Letter from D.Bage,Nurse First Aid at H.Jones & Co , Port Elizabeth, dated 30 December 1954, AD1175)

This letter highlights very clearly the contradiction between the interests of the employers and the workers at an economic/financial level; as well as the extent to which the health of women who are pregnant is not seriously considered in the drawing up of maternity-leave laws. Capital is not interested in investing money in women who are going to break their service and hence is prepared arbitrarily to fire women after only four months. There is no concern from the side of capital that this dismissal will prevent these women from being eligible for confinement allowances. It is a reflection of the desperate situation of women workers; that some of them may be forced to lie about when their baby is due in order to get the meagre wages paid in the industry. One needs to ask what it is that forces women ('girls' according to Bage), to put the health of their babies and of themselves at risk in order to stay the extra time at the factory. It seems from the fact that the branch of the union raised the matter with the Head Office that the majority of women who were laid off were in fact four months pregnant, and not 7-8 months, as Bage alleges is so often the case. The union's thoroughness in checking its facts with workers before taking an issue up can be seen clearly in other cases (e.g. Lamberts Bay petitions which are discussed in chapter 3 Part 3). There is no clear statement in the records to back my feeling that the women were being victimised, nor is there any evidence that the union was wrong. So, what is seen here is capital's readiness to lay off women workers due to pregnancy, which highlights the fact that women's vulnerability as workers is premised on the manner in which the capital, the state and the workers themselves organise around and struggle over the right for women to have protection as workers, wives and mothers.

The fact that employers were on the whole not co-operative in ensuring that women workers received the best possible protection and assistance during pregnancy and childbirth, is reflected in the Amendment to the Factories Act in 1960. It was seen to be necessary to make it statutory for employers to furnish the necessary details to a woman worker and to the inspector if the

woman worker requested him to do so for her application for confinement allowance. This amendment reflects a hint of the ongoing (if often silent) struggle between the state, capital and workers over the allocation of resources for the protection of working mothers.

But the Food and Canning Workers Union did not only address themselves to the State and capital on the issue of women's maternity rights. The Annual Conference of the FCWU each year passed a number of resolutions around the issues of concern in the communities where the workers lived. This reflects the Union's attitude that there is a close connection between the problems workers experience at home and at work, and that the Union's task is to struggle for a better life in all respects - economic, social and political - not just for better working conditions. In 1959 the Worcester Branch of the FCWU submitted the following resolution to the conference:

> "We request that the Provincial Council Administration should build a maternity home, so that our mothers can have their babies under more hygenic conditions and medical attention." (From Secretary General's report, Sept 1959 to 19th Annual Conference of FCWU, BC721)

It is not clear how this resolution was taken up, nor what effect the campaign/request had in Worcester.

It is important to re-emphasise the point made above. The union did not include maternity rights in negotiations with any of the employers. The union accepted the terms of the legislation and struggled to get these rights recognised in practice. The union did not wage any campaign to extend the terms of the legislation, for example to include the recognition of the right to return, and nor did the union place this demand in front of individual employers. The union did however, through the SATLC and in its own right, oppose the limits of the legislation each time it was amended, trying to improve the paid maternity leave to which women workers were entitled.

It has not been possible to give a comprehensive account of each of the struggles over the maternity rights of the workers in the food and canning industry. However, from the documentary evidence available and from interviews, I have given an idea of how the Union organised to fight for this right, and some indication of contradictory interests - workers, the state and capital. Another crucial area not explored is the extent to which the Medical Benefit Fund assisted in the union's struggles over maternity rights - vis-a-vis the handing in of applications, as well as in pre- and post-natal care. The links between health struggles, the campaigns around maternity leave and the demands for creches should be interwoven as part of the rights of women workers. However, this would have involved an extensive coverage of records to present a full analysis of the role of the Medical Benefit Fund in this regard. This has not been possible.

Childcare - the other side of motherhood.

But the problems that working mothers faced because of their

children did not stop eight weeks after their birth. Women workers faced ongoing tensions at work due to their responsibility for caring for sick children, looking after children in the early years before they were of school-going age and the further problems of post-school care for the afternoons. The women had to find some way to care for their children while they were at work. This issue of childcare was one which was recognised by the Food and Canning Workers Union as well as other women's organisations such as the Federation of South African Women. In the following section of this chapter, I have explored how the Union took up this issue, and contrasted this with the story of two creches organised by women working in their communities. My choice of these two community creches organised by Dora Tamana and Gladys Smith has not been completely arbitrary. Dora Tamana and Ray Alexander were both members of the Communist Party which from the late 1940's paid significant attention to the right of working women to adequate childcare facilities. These two women worked very closely together to start the organisation of women in the Western Cape through an organisation called the Women's Democratic Federation or Women's Federation, as it was also known. (See Schreiner,J.1982,p63-69). The fact that these two women, working in different organisational structures, the African National Congress and the Food and Canning Workers Union respectively, both prioritised this issue is perhaps not sheer coincidence. It reflects the understanding of the women question that was prevalent within the Communist Party and the recognition that unless these aspects of the oppression of women were challenged in the course of the struggle for a better future, the new society which would be constructed would be unable to succeed in it's task of emancipating women. Gladys Smith, although working in a later decade, was also closely connected to these two women , although this time through the Federation of South African Women, where Ray Alexander, Dora Tamana, and Gladys Smith all held executive positions during the early days (Walker,C.1982;p155). The issue of childcare, furthermore, was widely recognised by the women of the Congress Movement in the 1950's.

The Federation of South African Women memorandum " The Life of the Child in South Africa" highlights the almost complete absence of childcare facilities for African children in this period:

> "The need for creches, kindergartens and nursery schools is particularly great among the urban African population, where a very high percentage of mothers are at work. Because only a small number of children can be accomodated in the very few existing nursery schools and creches, a large number of African children in the towns are left without proper care or supervision almost from birth..."
> (The Life of the Child in south africa, AD1137)

The memorandum goes on to explain the conditions that give rise to this lack of care - the long working hours of both parents, the long distances to be travelled from location to workplace, and the numbers of women who can only find work as live-in domestic workers.

At the time the memorandum was compiled in 1955, there were however a couple of creches in Cape Town. The previous ten years had seen women organising around this demand. These had been established by working-class women in their own communities

rather than by the local Town Council, the State or other agencies. Yet considerably earlier, around the same time that Dora Tamana was organising around the problems of childcare in Blaauvlei/Retreat in the mid-40s, the Food and Clothing Workers Union decided to campaign for the creches and nursing homes in the areas where they had branches. A circular from the General Secretary, dated 6 February 1945, asked branches to furnish her with information so that she would be prepared when she spoke to the Minister of Social Welfare. She asked for answers to the following questions:

" a) Are there any creches or nursing homes in the area?
b) How many children are accomodated?
c) Are there working mothers who require more creches and nursing homes?
d) How many children are there in your area who need to be accomodated?"

The Annual National Conference in December 1946 adopted a resolution to enlist the support of other organisations to campaign for creches for all the FCWU branches. The conference called on the Ministers of Social Welfare and Health to use their influence to get the necessary funds made available for the establishment of creche (FCWU Circular no 30/46, 13 December 1946. BC721).

Dora Tamana, a revered leader from the 1940s told the story of the Blaauvlei Creche as follows. Her story, from an interview with her in 1982, highlights the problems working-class women experience, and the organisational gains made by establishing a creche in her community:

> "In 1930 I came to Cape Town when my husband came to Cape Town to work. As I was going about I used to listen to ANC speakers on the Parade telling the people how they must fight for freedom and how they must free themselves. In 1942 I was in Blaauvlei/Retreat when the government told the people of Blaauvlei to break their pondokkies down. We went to a certain organisation because we didn't know what to do. We also went to the councillors. We organised a meeting to tell the people of these organisations what they could do.
>
> Cissy Gool, the councillor's representative for the Coloured people, was glad that people of Blaauvlei had called her. She told the people to fight not only for pondokkies, but better housing rights, better wages, better facilities. That was wonderful to me.
>
> Another speaker, a women I don't know, said you women of Blaauvlei must also fight for creches, so your children can be cared for when you go to work. That was the first time I heard that. That women told us that in Russia they have creches where mothers leave their children from three months up. That struck me.
>
> Then after that I picked up a newspaper - this newspaper was was written by a doctor, I am not sure , but written by Dr Levy. This paper said the government must do something about the women. These women who are pregnant and the boyfriend/husband runs away and leaves the woman in sorrow.

This also struck me.

After that I heard of Mrs Mabooi in Nyanga running a creche. I went to look. I wanted to do the same. This women told me she was helped by white women and the NCW (National Council of Women - JS).

And CAFDA (Cape Flats Distress Association - JS)as well. I saw the CAFDA creche. I saw Dr Malherbe, before Dr Wolheim. He said " Do it yourself,Dora, and after that the government will give it to you." Then I went to Sam Kahn, a councillor at that time. He said " Do it yourself. The government is not prepared to do this even for the white women."

So I called a meeting of women in Blaauvlei. I said: "Women, let us build ourselves a creche. We heard of the women in Russia having creches for kids for three months." After a couple of months the women agreed to do it. They elected me to look after the children and Rose Ntloko to help me. Paying fees 2/6. So we carried on.

The women was the first time to see this and they didnt bring the children. So I went house to house bringing the children. In my house. Then we hired a hall twice the size of this house in which we had church. Then we needed money. 2/6 was not enough. Our creche started from 8:30-3:00 then the mothers came to fetch the children. The children were very happy.

I remember one of the women ran away and left the children with the grandmother. I had to take the district nurse to the grandmother to take the child to the creche. CAFDA helped with food at cost price and donations from individuals. And we started a little shop. With the money we fed the children with mielie meal and milk. On Mondays we bathed them and for lunch I made vegetable soup, and the children so fat and happy - they even wanted to come on Saturday and Sunday.

When we started we took seventeen children, there were thirty four on the list but we didn't have things or people to look after them. Until our creche was granted. To get our creche granted we were helped by Mrs Bernadt and Mrs Dick who also helped with donations.

We kept the creche two and a half years. The creche was stopped like this. The creche was started 7 April 1948. The creche was stopped because money was too little. The mothers must pay 5/- a week. They couldn't afford that. We also had money growing from the shop - used only for the children. I was not paid and the house was not paid for. When I put up the money to 5/- (in answer to the financial problems and so it could restart - JS) then the women would not pay.

Then CAFDA told me. " Dora, the students at University have made 1000 pounds for your creche." Sometimes the students came in two buses to see my creche. Sometimes they came in cars. Thats how it was granted and its called "Blaauvlei Nursery School".
(Interview with Dora Tamana, conducted by J.Schreiner,June 1982)

The Blaawvlei creche already existed when a group of women started a creche in Wynberg. This creche stands today as Wynberg Creche in St John's road. Gladys Smith, one of the women who started the creche told me the story of her creche in 1983:

"It was started through one woman, a granny. I used to go around collecting on her for these Christmas hampers, I think, and she said, " Mrs Smith, can't we get the Council to build a creche?". Her grandson had a fight with a child. And the child had a stick and poked him in the eye. And that time, he was in hospital, so his mother had to go and work.

And who did I speak to ? I said " We'll see" and then just five women got together, women from the area, like friends. We got together. Now I spoke to Nancy Dick, and then Nancy did all the spade work. She went to the council and went around looking at the plots in Wynberg. Then eventually , there was a bigger plot, but Council wouldn't give it to us. So they gave us this little plot. Now that was 1955. Then I tried to get more people to help. They came into the group. Then it was the spadework, raising funds, have a few street collections. Not a week went by without a sale. We'd bring a 20c slab of chocolate, a big one, or bring a cake to raffle in the houses. Then we started street cake sales, street collections. Then we managed to get going.

But when we had the plans drawn we only had 500 pounds. Then we had to try and persuade more people to come on the committee. But we worked! People were getting tired of donations. Then Jack Barnett did the plans for us. In seven years, we raised 5000 pounds. Then when the plans were drawn, Jackie got in touch with a few contractors to give a price. He took three quotes and this gentleman was the lowest - 7500 pounds. So we had about 5000 pounds by then.

Then the Council said we have to build by a certain time. But we made it. The contractor didn't know we didn't have enough money. But then he donated some part of the building.

There was a qualified nursery-school teacher, Muriel Fortuin. She was the only one employed. Then someone to do cooking. Most of it voluntary. The children paid 50c, and then it went up to 75c. On Sunday morning, three or four mothers would have to scrub the floor. But the spirit it was done in was excellent. I don't know today whether you'd

get someone to scrub, but it was no problem at that time." (Interview with Gladys Smith, conducted by J.Schreiner, August 1983)

The revenue sources for the creche are specified as donations, cake sales, and public entertainment (Helm,B.1959;p50). But there is more to this story than meets the eye. In 1955, a group of women founded the Non-European Women's League. Brunhilde Helm states the group's objectives as : "To establish a nursery school/creche for the children of working mothers". The creche was to serve boys and girls from ages three to seven, and would cater for all racial groups (except whites). At least three of the women on this committee - the Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, had been signatories to the letter inviting women to the National Conference of Women on 17 April 1954 at which the decision to launch the Federation was taken (Carter-Karis Microfilm;2:WF1:47/2,3). It is not at this stage clear whether this Non-European Women's League is the same as that which was publicly launched in June 1956. A letter, which unfortunately does not bear the signatories names, invites women to a meeting on 7 June 1956, to consider forming a women's organisation in Cape Town.

"There are so many matters which are affecting our mothers and children - shortage of beds in maternity homes, lack of playgrounds, creches and schools for non-European children, the Ordinance to remove Coloured women from the Voters Roll, and the Ordinance to withdraw free hospital services: there is also the proposed increase in the salaries of the M.P.'s while the costs of foodstuffs continue to rise.

We feel that if we could come together and form an organisation for women, we could mobilise enough public opinion to defend our children and mother's interests. " (Letter in AD1137)

In 1957 New Age carried a report of a street collection which was being organised by the Non-European Women's League. This was to raise funds for a nursery school for children of working mothers of Wynberg (New Age 20.6.57). The Non-European Women's League had approached the FCWU Cape Town Branch Executive in May to help with this collection (FCWU CT Branch Exec Minutes, 20 June 1957;BC721).

These two examples from Cape Town do not have direct bearing on the union's strategy. However, the stories are included for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are stories which reflect the general political initiatives of the time and that can easily be lost to us, since the two women on whose initiative the two creches were started have both since died.

Secondly, this method of starting a creche as a community project, involving parents, friends and political organisations is a useful contrast to the union's approach of demanding facilities from the Minister of Social Welfare.

The information contained in the Food and Canning Workers Union papers indicates that a number of unsuccessful attempts were made to get creches established in areas where the Union had branches. For example, in October 1947, Rahima Ally reported that the General Secretary, Ray Alexander, had discussed the question of creches for the working mothers at the Union Smokeries and at Irwin and Johnson. It seemed possible to get a creche in the near future, and at the December General Members Meeting , the shopstewards at these two factories had been asked to provide the Union with information as to how many children would need creche facilities at these two factories (Minutes of FCWU Cape Town General Members meetings held on 14 October and 13 December 1947;BC721). The minutes of the General Members meetings held by the Cape Town branch on 9 February 1948, 12 April 1948 and 18 October 1948 reflect the difficulty experienced by the shopstewards in collecting this information from the women workers. By the end of 1948, no progress appears to have been made in this regard. Annie Adams, Branch Secretary in Wellington said that:

> "Creches was something we usually discussed at our Union meetings. We would decide on a creche for mothers who work. We sent in a resolution for the Annual Conference, and discussed the matter at the conference...Head Office sent out letters and then we would discuss it again...During the time of Ray Alexander, she wanted us to interview the bosses for creches at the factory, but it never works out." (Interview with Annie Adams, conducted by J.Schreiner,August 1983)

In March 1953, the General Secretary of the Union wrote to Eva Carollisen, Paarl Branch Secretary, to inform her that :

> " A creche has been built in Zuider Paarl at one of the houses, for H.Jones, from Monday 2 March, and there is accomodation for 40 children. Another creche is being established in Noorder Paarl for A.C.L., and A.C.L. have agreed to give a grant of R100 per year for the up-keep of this creche. I have communicated with the Social Welfare Society and I am expecting a letter with more details from them shortly. In the meantime, I wish you to urge as many mothers as possible to see that they get as many of their children in the creche."
> (Letter from General Secretary FCWU, dated 3 March 1953. BC721)

Carollisen, in her next two replies, reported that the creche was not yet operative. She had begun to speak to the women workers, but since the workers were working late at that time, they had not been able to call a general meeting yet. She reports that a small bazaar and raffle had been organised to assist financing the creche, and 50 women had volunteered to work an extra 1/2 hour during their lunchtime to assist with the creche funds. At the Paarl Branch Executive Meeting on May 1953, the chairman raised the question of creches for children. The Secretary, Eva Carollisen, reported that she was serving on the creche committee, and that the creche could not be completed until the baths had been put in (Minutes of Paarl FCWU Branch Executive Meeting 7 May 1953;BC721).

It appears from Minutes of an adjourned General Meeting of the

Paarl Branch on 17 June 1954, that the creche in Zuider Paarl did finally get off the gound. The Secretary reported that she had attended a meeting about setting up a creche as a member of her church. The aim of this meeting had been to elect a group of people who would take responsibility for establishing a creche in Central Paarl. The members of the Union expressed concern that this was being done without consultation with the Zuider Paarl creche committee. The chairman clarified that these were two entirely separate projects. It has not been possible to follow up what eventually became of these efforts since the recent repression has made further interviewing impossible.

This practical work to try to answer the everyday problems of women workers was not the only way in which the FCWU discussed the issue of childcare. In 1953, the General Memebers meeting of the Cape Town Branch was addressed by Comrade Greenwood Ngotyana who had just returned from a "trip to the People's Democracies." In his account of the living and working conditions of the people in those countries, he spoke of the trade unions and workers' control. He went on to say:

> " Another thing that interested me very much was the role that women played in the building up of the country. Women occupying important positions such as engineers and managing directors of big industries. There are laws protecting the rights of women. For example, no-one is allowed to refuse to give woman employment on account of her being pregnant. A woman is allowed three months confinement-leave on full pay. Creches are established at every factory to allow a mother to be able to go out and work. Large families are encouraged. A mother of a large family is given the Order of Mother's Glory and the salary of the father is increased whilst his tax is reduced.
>
> These Eastern European countries are called People's Democracies because the countries are governed by the working people. The profits made in the factories are used to improve the living and working conditions of the people. It is the duty of our workers in this country to work in their trade unions for improved wages and conditions of work as well as for their rights as citizens of South Africa."
> (Minutes of General Members Meeting of Cape Town Branch of FCWU held on 5 December 1953 BC721)

In August 1955, the General Secretary received a reply from the Society for Protection of Child Life about the proposed establishment of a creche at Hout Bay. She explained that the Society was still investigating "the possibility of a creche for Coloured children at Hout Bay." She asked the Union to provide figures of their members who would benefit from such a service, but explained that if the society did set up a creche, "we would cater for children of working mothers generally, irrespective of the mother's employment." (Letter dated 18.08.1955. BC721)

Although the Zuider Paarl creche referred to above seems to have been connected to a specific factory, H.Jones & Co, the Union did not approach the provision of childcare facilities as a privilege for union members, but as a right of working mothers. So there

would have been no conflict with the proposal from the Society for the Protection of Children.

It seems by the late 50's that the Union's emphasis of who should provide creches had again shifted from demands to the company to demands to the Town Council. The following resolutions were submitted to the Annual Conference in 1957 by the Wellington, Worcester and Paarl branches respectively:

> "We demand that the Town Council build a creche for our babies, as our mothers have to go to work to supplement the poor wages of our men." (Wellington Branch)
>
> "Conference herewith requests that City Council : ..build a creche for the Ikhwezi location and to have an African doctor..." (Worcester Branch)
>
> "We call on the Paarl Muncipality to...build creches for our children." (Paarl Branch)
> (Resolutions FCWU annual National Conference 15.08.1957, p2;BC721)

The Wellington Branch proposed the same motion at the 1958 Annual National Conference. (Minutes of FCWU Meeting dated 13 & 14 September, 1958, p9. BC721)

In August 1959, the Secretary of the Paarl Branch reported to the General Members meeting that:

> "A new creche is to be opened in Langvlei, where the workers could leave their children during the day and even when they are working late during the season. He urged members to support the creche."
> (Minutes of Paarl FCWU Branch General Members Meeting, dated 19 August 1959. BC721)

The creche hours had obviously been chosen to suit the interests of working mothers and particularly women working in the canning factories in Paarl.

A further problem faced by these organisations in relation to childcare is highlighted by the story of the Child Welfare creche in Paarl in 1961. The minutes of the Paarl Branch Executive Meeting on 28 August 1961 record that the branch had received a letter from the Paarl and District Child Welfare, asking for a donation. The Executive decided to donate R2-00 and to ask the Branch Secretary to visit the creche once a month to see how things were going. In October, a follow up report was given that the creche catered for Coloured children only. The Executive decided to write to the Child Welfare:

> "Telling them that we were not aware of the fact that they were practising Apartheid in the creche. It was also said that the Child Welfare should let the committee of the FCWU know when they are having their next meeting so that the committee could attend."
> (Minutes of Paarl FCWU Branch, dated 24 October 1961;BC721)

By March 1962, no reply had been received and members of the Executive expressed their disappointment that our African children were not allowed at the creche. They decided to write another letter (Minutes of the Adjourned Branch Executive

Committee and Shopstewards Meeting in Paarl, dated 26 March 1962; BC721). There was a change in the Secretary of the Paarl and District Child Welfare, and the Paarl FCWU Branch Executive spent the next few months trying to locate who the letter should go to. There is no record of this issue being resolved. (Minutes dated 24 May 8 August, 7 November 1962 and 17 January 1963, BC721, all reflect this same state of affairs.)

The Food and Canning Workers Union, despite its enforced racial segregation, was firmly committed to a policy of non-racialism. Having to work with the Child Welfare in order to have access to childcare facilities for its members, posed a serious problem for the Union. In terms of the socialisation of the children, a non-racial creche was important in that children would then grow up with less of the racial attitudes fostered so hard by the Apartheid state. In this regard, the Union faced a compromise between supporting the creche and thereby releasing women for work and ensuring the children were well cared for, physically if not ideologically; and rejecting the facilities the creche did offer on the grounds of a conflict of ideologies. Issues of this nature are bound to arise where organisational demands have to be transformed into a reality with the assistance of external and autonomous organisations and agencies.

In the examples given above, we can identify a number of different approaches to the provision of childcare facilities. The Food and Canning Workers Union initially saw the demand as one to be answered by the central State. They campaigned for creches by demanding that the Ministers of Health and Social Welfare take responsibility for these facilities. This contrasts with the approach of Dora Tamana and Gladys Smith. Subsequent to this, there was a period in which branches of the Union were encouraged to place these demands on the factory owners. The demand that factory owners provide childcare facilities recognises that the capitalist has an interest in this. Not only is it necessary for capital that the next generation of workers are fairly carefully brought up, but capital also has an interest in relieving women of certain of their household and reproductive functions, so that they can provide a relatively cheap, unskilled labour force. This is a particularly crucial need in a labour-intensive industry such as the fruit canning and food industry in the 1950s.

Subsequently the union shifted their demands to the local Town Councils, as is seen in the 1957 and 1958 resolutions. This went along with housing demands, and demands for maintenance of township facilities which were handled by the Local Town Council. The reasons for this change will be discussed below.

The final phase of the Food and Canning Workers Union's campaigns to get creche facilities, hinged around co-operation with Child Welfare organisations. The union strategy has been summarised as follows:

> "On creches: we did not consider establishing creches on our own. Our first task was to get proper cloakrooms where the working mothers could have their meals and feed their children in the lunch hour and not in the road outside the

factories. Grandmothers and older children would bring the babies to the factory to be fed by their mothers.

We made representations to the Town Councils of Paarl, Wellington and Worcester to establish creches and nursery schools. We did not meet with success, so we pressurised employers for creches. The first company to establish a creche was the Rhodes Fruit Farms Ltd in Groot Drakenstein. I should also mention now the fact the Hilda Mirvish and others approached by our union to help us with a nursery school and creche, and the Union of Jewish Women helped to establish the Windemere creche with SHAWCO's assistance." (Correspondence with Ray Alexander,07.09.84)

In contrast with all these approaches, we looked at the successful setting up of two creches in Blaauvlei and Wynberg, by the women of these communities. These women obviously drew on support and assistance from outside individuals or organisations, but in the course of providing a community service, they organised other women into the organisations and sought to raise the women's consciousness. This was particularly the case in the Blaauvlei creche where the interconnections between housing shortages and creches were drawn and where the mass organisations were directly and actively involved.

Although the initiative came from the women in the community, the authorities did play a role in the development of these projects: in Wynberg, by providing a plot of land ; in Blaawvlei, in the taking over of the creche after Group Area Removals in 1960. This action prompted Dora Tamana to comment when she left for Nyanga Emergency Camp, now Guguletu, that

"I did not mind, the creche is for the people's children, whether they are African or Coloured is not the question. I was glad to leave something behind for those who had to stay in Blaauvlei" (Interview with Dora Tamana, conducted by J.Schreiner, August 1982)

It is not possible on the basis of the information at my disposal to give the full reasons why such different strategies were adopted. There were no major ideological differences between these groups of women. In fact, Dora Tamana and Ray Alexander were both members of the CPSA and they, together with Gladys Smith, worked closely together to form and build the Women's Democratic Federation, so the answer is more likely to lie in the greater organisational power of the FCWU to win demands from the State and capital. The two differing strategies need to be carefully assessed. The creche in Blaauvlei and Wynberg stand today, having served many generations of children and their working mothers. The concrete results of the FCWU strategy are difficult to ascertain. The strategy must also be assessed in terms of how such facilities are to be achieved for women in a transformed society - does the responsibility for childcare facilities lie with the central state, or is it the task of each community to organise such services? I do not want to suggest that either of these positions flow automatically from the two different strategies above. Whether childcare is the responsibility of the central State or the local community, the organised power of women is necessary to ensure that resources

are not re-allocated to what are often identified as "more important areas" and that when resources are tight, childcare is not the first area for the cuts (Urdang,S.1984).

Cathy Mathews raises an interesting point in her discussion of Marxist Feminism in relation to childcare. Having rejected Wally Seccombe and other protagonists of the domestic labour debate as being "too mechanistic and economically reductionistic", she goes on to assess Jane Humphries contribution:

> "She conceives of childcare and domestic labour as one of the supportive functions of the non-working members of the family network. We may deduce that she sees the working-class family provision of childcare as a more humane system than the State provision, and therefore in the interests of all members of the working-class family. Childcare is one of the activities of the non-working members and is in exchange for financial support from the wage earners. Family and community-based childcare arrangements according to Humphries, would play a vital role in maintaining working-class integrity and autonomy. Furthermore, she sees the possibility for the working-class family, through childcare and child socialisation and by 'maternal indoctrination' to instil in working-class children a hatred of the capitalist system and so indirectly promote working-class resistance and struggle." (Mathews,C.1982;p9)

This raises the question of the structure of the household/family units that the women working in the food and canning industry come from. We must bear in mind that this includes African and Coloured women , Christian and Muslim women and that the cultural and religious differences had a bearing on the structure and the interresponsibilities of household/family members. Because of a difficulty with sources, it is not possible to explore this question. However, some of the aspects that should be examined here are the variety in household structures, the different forms of childcare adopted within these households - family members, non-family member childminders, creches etc, and the parameters laid down by religion and cultural traditions.

None of the approaches highlighted in these examples questioned the fundamental sexual division of labour in the household. At no stage did people question whether childcare is solely the responsibility of women. The Unions' approach, and to a lesser extent those of the community women, reflect a perception that childcare is a social responsibility, not an individual family responsibility. However, the question of whether men or women, or both, should ensure that the state shoulders its responsibility, and the question of who should staff the creches were not raised. Obviously, the long working hours of male workers would have militated against shared housework and childcare. However, it should be pointed out that women were also working long hours for at least the season.

The union's work in safeguarding the lives of children of the workers did not stop at campaigning for creches. In the previous chapter I have outlined the way in which the union fought against child labour. The union also paid special attention to the school

feeding schemes and resisted the moves by the state to withdraw this from the working class. I have not explored how the union took this issue up, but the following quote reflects some of the union's attitude on this matter:

> "As part of the government's attack upon the living standard of the people was its withdrawal of school feeding schemes from our children. They first did it in 1949 when they withdrew the school feeding scheme from our African children, and now they have taken away the school feeding from all children. We have issued a circular letter to our branches in which we appealed to them:
> a) to contact organisations with a view to organise school feeding schemes
> b) to organise deputations and meetings to press Provincial council members to refuse to accept the increased fees for themselves and to demand the re-introduction of school feeding."
> (FCWU General Secretaries Report to Annual Conference, 14 & 15.09.58. BC721)

Conclusion.

I have argued theoretically in Chapter 1 that motherhood and childcare are the most entrapping relation for women under capitalism. In this section, I have recorded the union's strategy to challenge the entrapping nature of motherhood and childcare by asserting women's rights to protection from discrimination on this basis. It is central to my argument (and to the argument of this thesis as a whole) that the oppression of working women under capitalist social relations is premised on the definition of women primarily as mothers, but without the necessary social organisation for this to be a non-oppressive definition. It is the definition of women as the bearers of the responsibility as individuals and within the home, of child bearing and rearing that is oppressive. It is not the fact of motherhood, but rather its social construction that is oppressive.

The extent to which the nature of motherhood under capitalism is oppressive to women depends on the outcome of the ongoing struggle between capital and labour (and specifically working women) over these areas. I have highlighted the role that the union played in demanding women's rights, in ensuring that women workers got what benefits they were entitled to and in finding ways to extend these demands. Their ability to do this was assessed in terms of state legislation, capital's interests and the organisational dynamics within the union.

Further to this, the issues raised in this chapter are central to any demand for equality between men and women, and for the unity of the working class. Equality is dependent on a) the protection of women as mothers - the provision of childcare facilities as well as paid maternity leave and the right to return to the job.
b)the protection of women as housewives - the sharing of housework,
c) the protection of women from discrimination on the basis that the majority of women will be mothers.

The union protected and challenged the rights of women in so far as it facilitated reproduction of the working class - motherhood in the broadest sense. The union failed to secure work for all women on a permanent basis. The seasonal nature of the industry made it unattractive to workers, and it was largely women workers - less organised and less powerful - who filled these jobs. The struggles around seasonal work, UIF and confinement allowances reflect the difficulty that the union experienced in demanding working class women's right to work.

The union did not directly challenge the gender division of labour within the household for a number of complex reasons. The union's practice left women aware of the question, but it seems that the union assessed, correctly, that it was not the time to push on this matter. The two aspects of this reason - the attitudes of the men and the recent proletarianisation of this community - are closely intertwined. The attitudes to women and domestic labour were cemented in an agricultural society and reflect a pre-industrial view of women. While the day to day experiences of women workers, highlighted by the union's sensitivity to their lives, brought out the question of how to combine responsibilities of work and housework, the men did not have this direct experience. The process of proletarianisation, particularly in relation to women, entails a massively changing consciousness - a long and slow process. It is to the union's credit that a solid working class consciousness on the woman question was built up in an industry with a relatively recently proletarianised labour force. I would conclude by saying that now, 30 years on, the question of the necessity of shared housework among the working class is far easier to raise, both in terms of the ease with which women workers will raise and in terms of how working men will receive this idea.

So, the apparently contradictory position of the union in demanding women's rights to cater properly for motherhood and childcare, but in failing to demand a new gender divison of labour in the household, or in failing to win the right to work for all working class women in their industry, reflects not some ideological hole in the union's approach, but the objective material conditions in which the union operated.

The transformaion of ideology is a difficult and complex area - as said above - a long slow and complex process. L

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The union protected and challenged the rights of women in so far as it facilitated reproduction of the working class - motherhood in the broadest sense. The union failed to secure work for all women on a permanent basis. The seasonal nature of the industry made it unattractive to workers, and it was largely women workers - less organised and less powerful - who filled these jobs. The struggles around seasonal work, UIF and confinement allowances reflect the difficulty that the union experienced in demanding working class women's right to work.

The union did not directly challenge the gender division of labour within the household for a number of complex reasons. The union's practice left women aware of the question, but it seems that the union assessed, correctly, that it was not the time to push on this matter. The two aspects of this reason - the attitudes of the men and the recent proletarianisation of this community - are closely intertwined. The attitudes to women and domestic labour were cemented in an agricultural society and reflect a pre-industrial view of women. While the day to day experiences of women workers, highlighted by the union's sensitivity to their lives, brought out the question of how to combine responsibilities of work and housework, the men did not have this direct experience. The process of proletarianisation, particularly in relation to women, entails a massively changing consciousness - a long and slow process. It is to the union's credit that a solid working class consciousness on the woman question was built up in an industry with a relatively recently proletarianised labour force. I would conclude by saying that now, 30 years on, the question of the necessity of shared housework among the working class is far easier to raise, both in terms of the ease with which women workers will raise and in terms of how working men will receive this idea.

So, the apparently contradictory position of the union in demanding women's rights to cater properly for motherhood and childcare, but in failing to demand a new gender divison of labour in the household, or in failing to win the right to work for all working class women in their industry, reflects not some ideological hole in the union's approach, but the objective material conditions in which the union operated.

The transformaion of ideology is a difficult and complex area - as said above - a long slow and complex process. Lenin has argued that:

> "old ideological values, finding themselves in a society whose economic foundations are undergoing a radical change, perish and lose their restraining force. New values crystalise slowly in struggle."
> (Lenin,V.I.1975;p104)

Women's involvement in organisation in itself posed a challenge to the household relations, and as illustrated by Liz Abrahams, was not always as easily accepted challenge:

> "I wasn't married at that stage, (when she was elected to the Branch Committee - JS), so it was easier perhaps - all those evening meetings ... Later, he was difficult about things when we got married. ...the union was growing quite fast; we spent quite a lot of time just fundraising. He became a heavy drinker; and I lost two babies with ectopic pregnancies - I can understand his problems; he was all the time alone. ...
>
> Later he got very difficult, inspite of me saying "Come to the meeting; come and see why I come home so late." And then I made him join the Coloured People's Congress ... but after a few meetings he said: "That's not for me." Well, so I just left him. ... Lately he decided not to interfere with me any more ... he knew I'd never leave the union, and my busy-ness with it.
>
> In fact, his whole attitude has changed ... if I say I'll be coming late he even tries to come early himself so he can make a little supper for us. He grew to understand. ... Usually you find, men in such a situation turn to other women, but he never did; only the drinking when he got upset.
>
> I think decision-making should be something done together in the family ... and I really believe that when it comes to women in the struggle, then men should assist. ... He'll agree to see to the children if she's late from a meeting, put them to bed ... and our political struggles are the only reason. I think the children and the cooking are still the women's responsibility - the men should help."
> (Liz Abrahams, interview in Lipman,B.1984;p90-1)

In this quote, Liz Abrahams highlights how during the process of organising and participating in the struggle for liberation, old

and outdated views are challenged and new attitudes develop. She fully recognises that this process, even if not taken up as an organisational issue, involves a often painful process of struggle.

The implications of this should however be highlighted. The social emancipation of women workers is not achievable while these fetters of a pre-industrial consciousness remain embedded in the working class culture. The union laid a solid basis for the speediest development of a more progressive approach to the social handling of motherhood, childcare, housework and wage labour.

The basis laid by the union in the period under consideration was not consistently taken forward in the later period within the labour movement as a whole. Currently, there are moves to raise this issue strongly and hopefully with the necessary adapting of demands in accordance with the needs of working class women today. I have not attempted to analyse why this has occurred, which would entail a full assessment of the later period of the union, the ideological shifts, the effect of repression and the manner in which the union's strength was affected by the changing conditions within the industry itself. In noting the lack of continuity on this question, therefore, I do not pass judgement on the union, since it may have been that to continue to highlight these questions became more difficult in a period in which workers were threatened not only by the state repression, but by capital and by reactionary elements within their own ranks.

CHAPTER THREE PART THREE

THE ROLE OF THE UNION IN ORGANISING WOMEN INTO THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE.

I began this thesis by examining the overall ideological conception of the women's struggle as manifest in the documents of the Congress Alliance and related organisations. The structure and working relationships of the union and other organisations were outlined to provide a background to the examination of the union's practices in this chapter. In Part Two, I examined the practical work of the union around the issues affecting working women - in terms of both exploitation and oppression in the workplace, and their dual role as workers and mothers. I have highlighted the union's mature approach to the woman question in addressing these issues as part of their organisational strategy. It is an extension of this approach that led the union into the Federation of South African Women in the mid 50s. In this section of Chapter Three, I will focus on some of the political campaigns undertaken by the women in the union, in alliance with other organisations of the FSAW and Congress Alliance. What follows is by no means an exhaustive explanation or complete account of the union's political work. Rather, it is selected case studies that highlight the union's role in bringing working class women into the liberation struggle, while at the same time struggling for improved conditions for these workers as women. In this section, I will consider:

1. the ongoing organisational and educational work within union structures which was aimed at building working class women's leadership; and
2. the union's participation in the campaigns against increases in the price of bread and in the anti-pass campaigns. Both of these issues were central to the Nationalist Party strategy of assault on the working class, but had a specificity for women because of their particular position at home, at work and in relation to the Apartheid strategy. Within both these campaigns, the political demands of the members of the union were clearly articulated within the context of the alliances formed in the campaigns.

"Food is a political problem and with every slice of bread you eat, you are chewing politics"

The FCWU and AFCWU took up issues that affected their members lives and in the course of these campaigns brought out the political lessons and demands. These campaigns involved alliances with other organisations - across class and ideological divisions. In so doing, the union educated their membership, and the membership of other organisations that joined them in these campaigns. The quote that introduces this section is a quote from John Morley Turner, a member of the District Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa and a man who assisted in the organisation of the Women's Food Committee and the Guardian Christmas Club that grew from it. It very succintly reflects the union's approach to organising around short-term demands to improve the lives of the working people.

A brief comment on the oft-made allegation that bread and butter issues imply "reformist" demands is necessary. A clear distinction must be made between short term demands, linked to long term demands, that are winnable gains for the working people on the road to liberation, and a reformist approach that sees short term demands as an end in themselves, leaving the causes of these grievances unspecified and unchallenged. These campaigns around prices an excellent example of the former approach. The union in organising around food prices (and specifically the frequent bread price increases) at all times built maximum unity and incorporated into their campaigns an understanding as to the connections between wages, profits and prices and the class interests represented by the state.

These issues were seen as significant not only because they hit the working people hardest, but because the majority of the union's members were mothers, housewives and workers and as such felt that bread price increases and the cost of living are women's issues. Historically, the cost of living issue is one on which women workers have taken a strong lead. As a corollary, it is an issue that an organisation whose goal is to represent the interests of working class women and to mobilise and organise this sector of the working class, cannot ignore. Further to this, it is a central issue for the working class as a whole since, encapsulated within this issue, is the question of the source of profit and the manner of its distribution within society.

In the post war period, South Africa experienced a serious food shortage, giving rise to massive popular or grassroots resistance and organisation among the working people. Cherryl Walker has written up some of the history of the Women's Food Committees (Walker,C;1975). The Food and Canning Workers Union circulated a petition to its branches in October and November 1944, demanding a Ministry of Food Supplies and protesting against the pass laws. It does not seem however that the branches were particularly active in returning these petitions (FCWU Circular Letter 8/45;BC721). The Communist Party of South Africa at its 1946 conference put forward a set of demands for a) a Ministry of Food Supplies; b) the confiscation of and supervised distribution of hoarded goods; and c) the introduction of legislation prohibiting hoarding and withdrawing the trading licences of all hoarders. All of these demands were to be taken up in conjunction with other organisations, and specifically with the labour movement.

The SA Trades and Labour Council (of which FCWU was an affiliate) called for a ballot among all its affiliates as to whether to call a national general strike "in protest against the present chaotic food control and the maladministration of essential foodstuffs."(FCWU Circular Letter 3/46;BC721) The union sent out ballot papers to all its branches, and after some reminders, received the votes. Other unions were conducting similar ballots - for example, the Sweet Workers Union spokesperson, Pauline Podbrey announced that the union had decided in favour of a strike as did the Garment Workers Union in Johannesburg (Cape Times 02.02.46 and Guardian 25.01.46). The idea of a demonstration strike had received support from the CPSA at an open air meeting on the Parade (Cape Times 21.01.46). 1946 was a year of militant action in the form of demonstrations, marches,

food raids around the food crisis, but is appears that the TLC did not finally call a general strike. In 1947 and 1948, the FCWU emphasis seems to have shifted to getting mobile food vans and food depots in areas where they had branches, and ensuring through pleas to the Regional Food Committees that shopkeepers were allocated quotas of meal and sugar that catered adequately for the community. This was particularly important in small Boland and West Coast towns where company shops were the main retail outlet (Resolutions to 5th Annual Conference of FCWU, 13.01.46; FCWU Circular Letter 8/47; and correspondence between FCWU General Secretary and Regional Food Committee Chairman, May 1948;BC721).

The campaign against the rising cost of living was taken up by a range of organisations. More than 50 organisations, including FCWU and AFCWU met on 29.11.51 at the invitation of the TLC to plan their campaign. The meeting formed a Consumer Council, to which the FCWU and AFCWU were affiliated through the WP Local Committee of the Trades and Labour Council. The FCWU proposed at this first meeting that the Consumer Council protest against the proposed increase in busfares (Report of Inaugural Meeting to Establish Consumer Resistance to Rising Living Costs held on 29.11.51;BC721). The Council carried this resolution, but seems not to have discussed <u>how</u> to protest. The Council held its first mass meeting on 10 January 1952 - although poorly attended, it served the purpose of raising the public interest in the cost of living. Speakers informed the public on the effect of the rising cost of living on the working people of South Africa, how inflation was making the minority rich and how housewives and the public could affect the situation (Report on Activities of the Interim Executive Committee to Date 01.01.52,p1-2;BC721). The SATLC also worked closely with the Cape Housewives League, endorsing their petition in May 1952 (SATLC WP Local Committee Minutes,07.05.52;BC721).

It has proved difficult to follow the campaign month by month because of incomplete records, but it was in 1953 that an extensive campaign against the increase in the price of bread was launched. Ray Alexander has described this campaign as a central feature of the formation of the FSAW in the Western Cape, arguing that the significance of the bread price increase was that it got through to all women and mothers (Cherryl Walker Notes on Interview with Ray Alexander, 1977). When the budget was announced in late July, a tax was imposed on bread which increased the price of white bread by 2d and brown bread by 1d. In addition, there was the threat of another increase later in the year since the Wheat Board (sitting in September 1953) was demanding compensation for the increased wheat price (Cape Times 23 &24.07.53). The FCWU General Secretary made a press statement saying that the union would support the Cape Housewives League campaign to protest against the price hike, and that the union's Central Executive Committee would hold a special meeting to plan how to fight the increase (Cape Times 24.07.53). The union, along with various other organisations sent letters to Havenga, Minister of Finance stating very clearly the basis of their resistance to the increase. The letter, although long, is worth quoting at length, so as to highlight the non-reformist approach of the union:

"Our union's membership is in the main women - mothers. We

wish to convey to you our grave concern over the decision of your government to increase the price of bread ... and the increase in the prices of petrol and rail fares.

Never has the housewife, never have the poor been so hard-hit as you have hit them now! On Wednesday night after hearing of these increases many of us could not sleep for worry over how we are going to manage.

Sir, do you realise that this is the first time that such a big increase has been made in our bread prices at one stroke? Do you know that by increasing the price of bread you have taken it from the mouths of our children?

You say you need an extra 3 million pounds. This is no justification for robbing the poor. You could have taken the money from the 50 million pounds paid to the maize farmers, the 60 million pounds given to the wool farmers or from the profits of the gold mines.

No, the rich farmers and shareholders of the gold mines belong to your class and you put their interests above those of the common man.

Your contempt for the working people and their needs is not of recent growth. It was you and your government who stopped granting the sub-economic loans for housing and actually converted previous sub-economic into economic loans, thereby increasing the working man's rents.

...
Your and your government have already roused the hatred of the 9 million Coloureds, Africans and Indians of this country in a way no other government has done. Your action in increasing the price of bread, petrol and railway fares has shown all workers - white and black - that you do not care for the working people's interests. You have still to learn that no government can rule against the will of the people.

...Your Budget for "Defence" has increased from 10 to 23 million pounds in the past four years. Your government spent 5 million pounds helping American imperialism in the war against the defenceless Korean people, in which many millions lost their lives. We do not want guns and bombs; we want bread and shelter for ourselves and our children.

We, therefore, ask you in all seriousness to reconsider your decision to impose such heavy burdens on those who can least afford them."
(Letter to Minister of Finance from FCWU General Secretary, 27.07.53; BC721)

The above letter shows clearly that the union was not campaigning against the increase in the bread price alone. Had this been their goal, a less damning critique of the government's class-interested approach may have served their purpose better. However, given the union's twin aims of mobilising people to force the state to back down, and to educate these people as to whose interests the state was protecting, the explicit analysis of the situation was laid down in black and white. This militant letter was backed by union involvement in the campaign spearheaded by the Cape Housewives League, and initiated at a rally attended by 1 000 people on 26 July 1953. More than 100 volunteers came forward to collect signatures for a petition (Guardian 30.07.53). The union had a speaker at the follow-up rally on 2 August, and was represented by their General Secretary on the deputation to the Minister of Finance. Ray Alexander has described this meeting, which was intially turned down and then finally, after a meeting on the Grand Parade, took place. The non-racial delegation gave rise to an incident with the Minister's Private Secretary, who was shocked to see a mixed delegation arrive. The delegation's response was that they would either all be heard, or they would withdraw as a delegation. The press on the scene at the time recorded this reception of a non-racial delegation, which the women considered to be a big victory (Interview with Ray Alexander conducted by Cherryl Walker, 1977). The success of this campaign in reducing this increase was a morale booster for the women involved, and cemented the relationships between these organisations. The alliance of organisations involved in the campaign included Cape Housewives League, Food and Canning Workers Union, Women's Democratic Federation, Northern Areas Women's Welfare Society(7) and the Commercial and Distributive Workers Union (Guardian 30.07.53 and 06.08.53). The union reported back to its branches after the campaign had succeeded in lowering the price of bread by 1/2d and the price of Bremmer bread (8) to its original price from 12 August. They stressed the lesson of united action. The circular letter also noted that the reduction was insufficient and that together with the SATLC, Housewives League and other organisations, they must continue to campaign against price increases (FCWU Circular Letter 20/53,24.08.53;BC721).

Cherryl Walker has recorded how after the food crisis of the post-war period had eased off, the Women's Food Committees had re-organised themselves into the Guardian Christmas Club (Walker,C.1982;p83). Here again there was the basis for an alliance between these women and the working women organised into FCWU and AFCWU. Briefly, the Guardian Christmas Club, organised by John Morley Turner, operated through agents working in an area to collect monthly contributions. This enabled them at Christmas time to get a special food hamper. The funds so amassed during the year were used to cover some of the running costs of publishing the Guardian on a weekly basis. However, the Clubs also maintained and extended a network of women in regular contact. It assisted these working class women to provide for their families celebrations despite the low wages they and their menfolk received. The Guardian Christmas Club was started in 1949 and by the end of that year had 885 members. By 1953, there were over 7 000 women contributing. (See Walker,C.1982; Walker,C.1975; Guardian 18.06.53; and Interview with Dora Tamana conducted by J.Schreiner, 1979). In December 1953, there were requests to the Guardian Christmas Club from the Port Elizabeth and Groot

Drakenstein branches of the FCWU and AFCWU to help start a food hamper club there. This perhaps an indication of another way in which working women could respond to the problems of the rising cost of living.

The ongoing resistance to price increases by the union took on a qualitatively different aspect in 1958, when SACTU launched its Pound a Day Campaign. I do not intend to analyse this campaign in any detail, but would remind the reader of the point made earlier that within that campaign a special appeal was made to women workers (See Chapter One).(9)

The formation of SACTU gave the FCWU another forum in which to raise their members concern about price increases. In late 1960, the SACTU Management Committee agreed to implement the recommendation of the Secretariat, that information provided by the FCWU on the bread price increase be used as a basis for protests on as wide a scale as possible (SACTU Management Committee Minutes, 20.10.60; AD1137). The first SACTU circular of 1961 enclosed a reprint of an analysis of the bread price increase from the Financial Mail. The circular went on to say:

> "We are sure that our Unions and Local Committees will find this useful when compiling memoranda for presentation to Wage Boards and the employers. We intend making representations to the Wheat Board and to do all we can to have the price of bread reduced."
> (SACTU Circular Letter, dated 30.01.61; AD1137)

The reprinted article from the Financial Mail indicates very clearly that it is the Wheat Board and government policy that are the cause of the price increase:

> "...Increased costs are reported all down the bread production line. ... Furthermore, the Wheat Control Board is strongly in favour of government subsidies being reduced. The term "realistic level" however defies precise definition, in an economy where the wheat grower is ensured a price artificaialy high compared with overseas prices and where equalising exise is levied on imported grain."
> (Annexure to SACTU Circular 01.01.61; AD1137)

The FCWU sent a resolution to the SACTU Annual Conference in March 1961, condemning the incease in the price of bread as "unwarranted" and demanding its immediate reduction. (Letter from Liz Abrahams, General Secretary of FCWU to General Secretary of SACTU, 17.03.61; AD1137) The SACTU NEC reported to the conference that

> "to implement this resolution on a national level, the Management Committee requested the Cape Western Province Local Committee to organise a deputation to the Minister of Finance. A number of women's organisations agreed to participate in this deputation together with SACTU trade unionists from the Cape Province. An excellent memorandum has been submitted to the Minister, stating, inter allia:
>
> > "Bread is an indispensable part of the diet of everybody, but it has long been proved that the smaller the income of the family unit, the larger the proportion of that income is spent on bread. It is not right, therefore, that those sections least able to afford it should bear the burden of the increased costs in the production of bread."

...At the time that this report was being prepared, the Minister of Finance had informed the Cape Western Province Local Committee that he would read the memorandum and decide whether it is covered by his Ministry or that of Economics and Markets. A decision will then be made as to whether the deputation will be received."
(Report of the NEC to 6th Annual Conference of SACTU held 1961;AD1137)

A deputation of eight women, representing SACTU, Cape Housewives League, Zionist Church of Africa, Mother's Union, Langa Vigilance Women's Section and FSAW went to see government officials to protest against the bread price increase in April 1961. They had intended to see the Minister of Finance, but found themselves referred to two officials instead (Guardian 20.04.61). This final example again highlights the leading role of working women organised through their unions, in fighting against the increasing price burdens experienced by the working class family. However, the union women recognised in the strategy on this issue that the bread price increase affected all black and working class women and that the women in the unions were only a small percentage of these women. The union's policy of united action around this central issue for all working class women, cemented an alliance based on the shared experience of housework by women in wage labour and those who were unemployed; those who were organised at work, in the church through their housework responsibilities and as political women.

Working Women Against the Pass Laws.

The state strategy of extending the pass laws to African women had a particular effect within the Western Cape and was linked to the later strategy to remove Africans from the Western Cape entirely and declare it a Coloured Labour Preference Area. The specificity of the state strategy in this region shaped the nature of and parameters of the resistance to the pass laws. The union voiced strong and active opposition to the victimisation and oppression of women through the pass laws. It did this in three ways - as the union itself, through its members involvement in and leadership of political organisations, and specifically the women's bodies, the ANC Women's League and Federation of South African Women, and thridly as an affiliate of SACTU. In fighting the pass system, the union stood alongisde other organisations, and at the same time organised around the specific problems at home and at work, that their members experienced as a result of the pass laws.

A fact sheet prepared for Congress Alliance organisations outlines the provisions of the Native Urban Areas Consolidation Act as follows:

"There is nothing in this country that makes as African a prisoner irrespective on his social standing in the community more that the Pass Laws do - even though he stands outside prison walls. The Pass Laws operate under different laws - the most vicious being the Urban Areas Coinsolidation Act of 1945 as amended, in particular Section 10 and 29. African freedom of movement is denied under this

law, not only from country to town, but also from town to town. Drastic limitations are imposed on his economic capablities.

In terms of Section 10, "No Native shall remain for more than 72 hours in an Urban or Proclaimed area unless:-
a) He is born and permanently resides in such area, or
b) He has worked continuously in such an area for one employer for a period of not less than 10 years or has lawfully remained continuously in such area for a period of not less than 15 years and has not during either period been convicted of any offence in respect of which he has been sentenced to imprisonment without the option of a fine for a period of more than 7 days or with the option of a fine for a period of more than one month; or
c) Such Native is the wife or unmarried daughter or son under age."

Many Africans who do not qualify in terms of this provision who have been fortunate enough to obtain a permit are only allowed to be in these areas until the expiration of their service contract. These provisions apply to both men and women.

In terms of Section 29 of the same Act, an authority is given to the local authorities to banish any African whom they deem undesirable or whose presence, they maintain is detrimental to the maintenance of peace and order. These two measures and various other laws and other regulations literally outlaw an African population in the Urban Areas and has already had detrimental effect on thousands of Africans."
(Facts Relating to the Native UrbanAreas Consolidation Act as amended, for the benefit of Congress Members; AD1137)

In recent years, there have been many articles and books looking at the role that women played in the anti-pass campaign (Walker,C.various; De Villiers,R.1979; Griessel,A,1981; Wells,J.1982). I do not intend to repeat the work already done. These works explore the historical data, as well as analysing certain aspects of the campaigns, be it alliances with other women's organisations, relationships to the ANC, the militancy of the women or the path breaking role of the women's mass action for the liberation movement as a whole. The accounts presented here add a dimension inadequately explored in the above mentioned contributions - the role of women workers and their trade unions in this resistance and the specificity of the problems faced by women at their work because of the pass system. I must add however, that this is an initial and limited sketch, regional in focus and tentative. A comprehensive exploration of this question - an area well worth detailed research - would require an examination of other unions which had African women members, of SACTU's strategy, and of other regions where the state policy and actions were less parochial than the Western Cape.

The union had looked specifically at the question of passes and

African women in 1951 in relation to the registered FCWU (See Chapter 3 Part 1). Since African women were at that stage not "pass-bearing natives" they were thus eligible for membership of a registered trade union, and so if organised into FCWU rather than AFCWU, could strengthen the union's bargaining power under the Industrial Conciliation Act provisions.

From 1950, the ANC Western Cape strategy for the anti-pass campaign consisted of the formation of broad anti-pass committees at area level, and the calling together of a range of organisations in Anti-Pass Conferences. For example, the 1953 Conference on Passes, held in November, was attended not only by all the ANC branches, but other organisations, including trade unions. I have been unable to ascertain categorically if FCWU and AFCWU were there, but it is likely since it was one of the major unions of that time. There is no record in the archives which I have consulted. In Paarl, leading AFCWU members were active in the campaign against permits for African women to seek work and live in the area. Elizabeth Mafeking, already National President of AFCWU, took a leading part, refused to take a permit and lost her job after 21 years of working for the same firm (Biography of Elizabeth Mafeking, AD1137,p2-3).

As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the union also raised the lack of work and security for African workers in opposing the employers applications for exemption from the nightwork ban for women:

> "The Position of African Workers in Country Areas: The Secretary reported that recently we have encountered several problems with regard to the African workers, caused by the pass laws. The first problem has been at ACL, Dal, (sic - Dal Josaphat -JS) when Mr Orger had requested the union to allow women to work night-shift as they had not been able to get enough African men as the Native Labour Board had said that the pea season is too short a period for the men to come into the towns. Our union rejected this, but agreed to make joint representation with the Canners Council to the Secretary for Native Affairs on this problem.
>
> Subsequent to this, Wolseley Fruit Canning Co refused to give permits to African workers who had worked there during previous seasons."
>
> (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 25/09/54;BC721)

The Company wrote to AFCWU saying that they had nothing to do with arrests in the area. They had been told that there were many unemployed workers in the area without permits and that the Local Influx Control Officer, employed by the Village Management Board was to take vigorous action against them. The company also outlined the procedure for recruitment of labour as outlined to them by the Native Affairs Department:

> "1.All vacancies in the factory must be at once notified to the Labour Bureau;
> 2. They will then arrange to find labour to fill these vacancies;
> 3. On no account may we obtain locally ourselves from any other source;
> 4. If they cannot find enough labour nearby, they will import from the Native Territories;
> 5. When workers are discharged, they must leave Wolseley and

return at once to their homes."
(FCWU Management Committee Minutes 25.09.54;BC721)

However, the SA Food Council, an organisation of employers, replied that they were not prepared to join the union on a deputation, and further that each individual firm was responsible for securing their own labour. The union thus wrote to each firm requesting them to join a deputation. There is no record of the replies and further developments on this question (FCWU Management Committee Minutes 31.10.54;BC721).

It was however, at the end of the following year that the union was faced with a major campaign against the effects of the pass laws. The Minister of Native Affairs had announced in September 1955 that African women would be issued with passes as from January 1956 (Women in Chains, 1956,p2).(10) Already late in 1955, controls began to be exerted over women's rights to live and work where they choose. The minutes of the September FCWU Management Committee meeting record that the women of Lamberts Bay had been given notices by the Village Management Board to leave Lamberts Bay by the end of the year. The firm, Lamberts Bay Canning Company, acting in accordance with this move by Native Affairs, had already begun firing workers. The union's strategy was threefold. It is part of the union's overall approach that issues were tackled from many angles. Firstly, Oscar Mpetha, AFCWU General Secretary, approached Lee-Warden, the native representative in Parliament, to take the matter up with the Native Affairs Department. Secondly, the union issued a questionnaire to all the workers to ascertain how long they had lived in Lambert's Bay, so as to be able to assess if the notices could be fought in court. Thirdly, within the Management Committee and filtering through to the branches from there, the union discussed the connection between this issue and the pass system as a whole:

"This position of chasing the women and children away from their men is one which we will have to face again and again. It is part of this vicious government's policy of breaking up the homes of people and chasing them away from the towns. These people have nowhere else to go and if they are forced to leave Lambert's Bay they do not know where to go."
(FCWU Management Committee Minutes 18.09.55,p6,AD1175)

The union pledged their full support to the women of Lambert's Bay in their struggle against these notices. The Guardian drew the attention of the people of the Western Cape to the plight of the 200 families affected by these notices. Half of these women were employed in the fish canning factories, and the other half were domestic workers or unemployed (Guardian 10.11.55). The union's next step was to write letters to Lambert's Bay Canning Company, African Fish Canning Company, Fisheries Development Corporation, Race Relations Institute, the Secretary for Labour, the Village Management Board, the Church Organisation Lambert's Bay, and to the National Council of Women. They drew the attention of these groups to the fact that these women had lived in the area for 9-15 years and had no other home, apart from the one they shared with husbands and children in Lambert's Bay. They pointed out that the women's labour had enabled the development of the fish industry into a prosperous undertaking (FCWU

Management Committee Minutes 19.11.55,BC721). It is interesting to note that the approach to the above list of organisations was different to the approach to the progressive organisations. The organic and structural links between progressive organisations resulted in a less formal contacting of organisations. Already other progressive organisations were working on the issue. The FSAW regional committee held local meetings in Cape Town to inform women of the deportation of African women from the Western Cape. The FSAW called on women through mass distributed leaflets to join a protest march on 25 November. The banner at the front of the women's procession carried the demand:

"Stop deporting African Women!"

The union received replies from the Archbishop of Cape Town, United Fish Canners Ltd, the National Council of Women and Secretary for Native Affairs. Lee Warden, Native Representative, received a promise from the Native Affairs Secretary that an early investigation would take place. The Local Urban Areas Commissioner who submitted the report to the Secretary for Native Affairs, refused to disclose the nature of the report to the AFCWU Secretary. Meanwhile action against the women was set for 16 January 1956 and the union informed all branches:

> "In terms of the Urban Areas Act, many of the women will be declared illegal inhabitants of Lambert's Bay and will be forced to leave. The same applies to all Urban and Proclaimed Areas in the Western Province. Only the unity of the women in all the areas will bring about the freedom of women to live where they choose together with their families."
>
> (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 15.01.56,AD1175)

The union also drew the branches' attention to the decision taken by the ANC Women's League conference on 16 December 1955, for women not to carry passes. The union took up the call for all women to join the campaign against the Pass Laws (FCWU Circular Letter No 10/56,27.01.56;AD1175).

The entire Lamberts Bay community was affected in one way or another by the complex interaction of access to housing, access to jobs and influx control. A memorandum, drawn up by the General Secretary in 1951 or 1952, outlines the complex history of Lamberts Bay, a small community consisting of 471 white men, 410 white women, 795 Coloured men, 788 Coloured women, 617 African men and 309 African women. These figures indicated the marked sexual imbalance within the working class community. It is interesting to note that the availability of land to African families that is spoken about in 1951 or 1952 was superceded by the Native Affairs Dept mass removals of 1956. Houses were first built in Lamberts Bay by the Village Management Board in 1943. These were then bought by the Fisheries Development Corporation in 1948, and they built more housing, leased at a higher rental - two pounds ten as opposed to one pound sixteen. The Fisheries Development corporation had not built housing after that even though the Articles of Association undertakes to provide housing and all amenities. The Lamberts Bay Canning Co, owned in part by FDC, built their own houses, charging rent of two pounds. At the time that the memorandum was written, the Village Management Board was plannning to move the African families living in pondokkies because of the housing shortage, to a location 2 or 3 miles away from the factories. The Village Management Board applied for this location to be proclaimed in terms of Act 52 of

1951, so that Africans could put up their own pondokkies (Paragraph based on FCWU Memorandum on Housing in Lamberts Bay, 1951 or 1952;BC721).

The union was also informed by the Lamberts Bay branch that workers were being evicted from their houses in late January 1956 "as they were in arrears with their rent." The union wrote to the Fisheries Development corporation appealing to them to review the position and not to make any evictions:

> "We submit that it is through no fault of the workers that they have been unable to meet their obligations to you. During the past 6 months, they have been unemployed and inspite of our Union's representations to the Unemployemnt Insurance Fund, and to the employers to make representations the workers received no benefits during all that time. They have consequently incurred heavy debts to feed and cloth themselves and their children."
> (Letter from FCWU General Secretary to Secretary of Fisheries Development Corporation, 31.10.1956;BC721)

The Fisheries Development corporation replied that only those workers who were in a position to pay, i.e. had received weekly wages, were to be evicted.

It is unclear exactly how these evictions were connected to the removal of African women from the area on the instructions of the Native Affairs Department. The three hundred odd women were given a period of grace, and the first arrests under Section 10 of the Urban Areas Act began in February. Five women, employed in the fish canning factory were arrested, charged, released on five pounds bail and the case set for March. These arrests were the first move by the Village Management Board to expel women and children from the village.

Elsa Joubert in telling the story of Poppie Nongena, gives us a graphic description of the removals:

> "Two white men walked through the location and told us we could go where we wished, but we Xhosa people had to see that we leave Lamberts Bay. The longer we stayed, the more we were caught and taken to the police station, even while sitting at table at night eating our supper.
>
> The people were angry. I grew up here, said Mosie, I'm not leaving. I've got a good job at the garage and I'm studying with the Union College.
>
> Buti Mbatane had worked at Lamberts Bay for twelve years, and before this at Luderitzbucht. Where to is it that I must go now? he asked.
>
> ...The men may stay, the policemen said, but the women who lie around doing nothing, waiting for full season to start work at the factories again, must go. Back to the places from where they came. Or look for work elsewhere. They said: This part of the country is a coloured preference area. Too many black people are coming from the tribal lands to work in the Western Cape.
>
> When it was not full season, says Poppie, the people locked

their houses and went to Tulbagh or Paarl to pack fruit. When they came back to Lamberts Bay they were homeless because the municipality had burned down their houses. The houses were built of wooden boards and sheets of corrugated iron, lined with cardboard. It took only one match for the house to flare up and burn down.

...When the law became so strict that they were burning down many houses at Lamberts Bay, we started to think of leaving, says Poppie.

One day a policeman, whom they called Adonis, came to my house where I was hanging washing on the line. He was new at Lamberts Bay, a coloured man, and he did not know me. He asked: Where's your pass?

I said: I don't have a pass. My mother has got some papers, ja, but I never had no papers myself.

Then he said: You must come with me to the police station.

I put my child on my back and went with him.

There were other women waiting at the police station who had been caught too. ...

They were keen on catching the women. The men who were working could stay.

Many people started leaving. Mama left in 1955. Some went to Cape Town on the lorries, others went to Tulbagh or Worcester, others went by train to Mossel Bay. My stepfather said: The Xhosa people are being pushed out of Lamberts Bay, it's better to go. First we were pushed out of the barracks, now we are being completely sent away.

A white man held a meeting in the location: A special town called Nyanga is being built for the Bantu people on the flats near Cape Town, he said, that's where you must go."
(Joubert,E.1980;p86-88)

The issue was not however limited to Lambert's Bay, and in late February, 30 African women in one of the Paarl canning factories were taken by lorry to the Registration office at Newtown. The factory had been warned that they would be prosecuted if they employed African women without passes. Of the 30, 6 were given passes, 4 were fined two pounds and told to leave the area, and 20 spent the night in jail, before being told to leave the area. The Guardian reported that some of these women found work on the farms (Guardian 01.03.56). The factory had dismissed another 80 workers without passes and at another factory, 100 women were taken to the pass office. The union and the employers had sent representatives to the pass office, with the result that three women were given three days to leave the area and the rests were given permits to work until the end of March which was the end of the season.

The union NEC met in March and discussed the evictions of women

in Lambert's Bay and Paarl. They noted that

> "The result of the removal of African women is a shortage of labour leading to sharper exploitation of the remaining coloured workers. Our members complain of long hours overtime, night work and contraventions of the existing laws. "
> (FCWU NEC Minutes 03.03.56,p5,BC721)

The NEC drew attention to similar political problems arising in Paarl where the state and management strategy was

> "to play up the Coloureds against the Africans; to divide the workers; they use stooges and informers. Our members must be aware and guard against these dangers in our struggle against the pass laws."
> (FCWU NEC Minutes 03.03.56,p5,BC721)

It is clear from these two quotes that the union related the issue of evictions to the general issue of wage exploitation and to their resistance to any attempt at division of the working class on lines of skill, colour or gender. The pass arrests were however not only affecting African women. The SACTU Conference on 04.03.56, was followed by a workers rally at which many Africans were arrested on pass offences, including SACTU officials (Guardian 08.03.56).

This climate of resistance to pass laws was generated by the workplace experiences of AFCWU and FCWU members. It was into this context that the FSAW's leadership on this issue was fed. The union received notices of the availablity of an informative booklet "Women in Chains" published by the FSAW and ANC Women's League and encouraged all the branches to order copies and sell them to their members.

Women in Chains outlined graphically how the "Abolition of Passes and Cosolidation of Documents Act" actually meant extension of the pass laws to include women and tightening up of the pass laws. It outlined how the 1952 Amendment of the Urban Areas Act affected all African men, women and children and gave more powers to municipalities. It spelt out that the amended laws entrenched "the destruction of the family", and would place the "women in handcuffs". But the pamphlet concluded:

> "In this year, 1956, we are faced with the carrying out of a law that will arrest women indiscriminately in the street, remove mothers from their families, leave infants and young children without care, imprison pregnant and nursing mothers, and humiliate all African women.
> ...
> Today also the women will find methods to compel the withdrawal of these laws.
> ...
> To force these laws upon the women, said the African National Congress conference (of the Women's League, December 1955 -JS) would be to trample on the tail of a puff adder..."
> (Women in Chains, 1956,p11;AD1137)

The FSAW also invited FCWU branches to send representatives to the regional and national conferences (See Chapter 2). The branches were fully informed of the planned demonstrations in Pretoria and in other centres for 9 August 1956, to voice women's

opposition to the pass laws. On her return, the Cape Town branch delegate gave a full report of the demonstration and the FSAW conference in Transvaal (Cape Town Branch Executive Committee Minutes, 26.09.56.BC721; Guardian 09.08.56). SACTU encouraged all its affiliates to participate in the National Women's Day protests (Report to Annual Conference of SACTU 12-14 April 1957;AD1137).

On 9 August 1956, in line with the FSAW campaign, 64 African women of Paarl took 500 signed petitions to the Native Commissioners Office. The campaign included many AFCWU members and the women linked their opposition to the reference books (the national focus of the campaign), to their local grievance that they had been forced to carry permits. At 4.30am on 18 August, the police raided the township arresting 13 women, each subsequently fined thirteen pounds. Elizabeth Mafeking commented to the press that through organising reportback meetings, the local branch of the ANC Women's League had been strengthened enormously (Guardian 30.08.56).

The AFCWU National Conference followed a month after the nation-wide anti-pass protests of 9 August. The minutes record the resolution:

> "Conference condemns most vigorously the attempt of the Government to impose passes upon the African women of South africa, and pledges itself to continue fighting against this threat until the Act has been repealed. Conference further calls the women members of the Food and Canning Workers Union to actively participate in the just and noble struggle against passes.
> Forward to Victory. Mayibuye Afrika.
> Adopted on a motion by Palweni, seconded by Mbuli. Delegate after delegate rose to protest against passes for women and all said that they would fight to the bitter end against this unjust law. They also spoke of the anti-pass demonstration of women on the 9th August 1956 and the burdens of the pass laws."
> (Minutes of the Ninth Annual Conference of AFCWU, 8&9.09.56, AD1175)

In 1957, the ANC Women's League, the FSAW and the union organised a protest march to Parliament on 13 June (New Age 30.05.57). The ANC had written to organisations including FCWU requesting their participation in the demonstration and the FSAW petitions were distributed through branches of the union. The branches present at the June Management Committee meeting - Paarl, Groot Drakenstein, Wellington, Worcester, Ashton and Cape Town agreed to take the matter to their branches to provide their own transport and cover their own expenses to get women to Cape Town on that day (FCWU Management Committee Minutes,09.06.57;BC721). One thousand women marched to take their pledges to Verwoerd. 400 Paarl women found themselves prevented from travelling to Cape Town when the permits for their transportation by lorry were refused. Two lorry loads of women were stopped en route from Worcester, although some of the delegates came through by train. The FCWU Cape Town branch secretary, Louise Kellerman and Elizabeth Mafeking, AFCWU Vice President, were speakers at the meeting prior to the march.

As I have recorded elsewhere, it was during this period that the Women's League and the Federation broadened the campaign in line with the September 1956 Call of the FSAW for a broad, non-racial campaign (Schreiner, J,1984). CATAPAW, the Campaign to Abolish Passes for African Women, an alliance formed during July/August 1957, did not include the union directly.(11) The campaign was largely Cape Town based, and the union's presence in Cape Town at that time was significantly weakened by the effect of the Spekenham strike. However, through its participation in the FSAW, the union was in contact with the campaign and continued to voice its resistance to passes:

> "The government would like us to remain ignorant so that they could impose Pass laws for African women, take our leaders away, uproot us from our homes and arrest our men and women in the street for not having a pass and then make them pay heavy fines or to give more money to the government so that they could have more police to hunt our lives. We now know the truth! We know why they have deprived us of our leaders, and we undertake here and now to work so that our leaders should come back and to campaign against Pass Laws and Group Areas Act."
> (FCWU Annual National conference Minutes, 14&15.09.57,p7;BC721)

It is very important to note that both here and at the AFCWU conference of the previous year, the importance of a non-racial campaign linking the Group Areas removals, the banishments of activists and the pass laws was stressed. Not only is this consistent with the union's non-racial policy, but also reflects the understanding that the problem of pass laws, or of the Group Areas Act were not resolvable if taken up in isolation, since they in fact were integral to, or the basis of, the Apartheid policy.

Later in 1957, the union faced a serious problem for their organising strategy, a challenge to the union's non-racial policy. Two hundred workers at Spekenham went on strike in support of their demands for higher wages and better conditions. 27 African workers were arrested for contravening the Native Labour Settlement of Disputes Act and 4 Coloured workers for interfering with scab labour. The eventual sentencing of the African workers, and the failure of the strike, despite the support of the Congress Alliance, led to tensions between African and Coloured workers (Guardian 10.10.57). The task that the union faced in maintaining the unity of all the workers in the industry, despite the potential divisions caused by pass laws which management and the state exploited, was enormous.

The issuing of passes to women was focused on by the ANC Women's League in Worcester in 1957. A Women's League meeting decided to march to the location offices to return all reference books to the Superintendent or to burn them if he refused to accept them. The meeting also formed an Action Committee consisting of the Women's League, FCWU, Textile Workers Industrial Union and other organisations to co-ordinate this campaign (Guardian 28.11.57).

On 20 June 1958, once more the Paarl women marched to the mayor's office. Mafeking led the demonstration, and spoke out against the 30 June deadline for women to be able to prove that they were legally in the area (Guardian 03.07.58). Mafeking stressed when she reported this to the branch that the successful meeting with the mayor:

> "does not mean to say that the Mayor will settle everything and we must fold our hands. The only salvation lies on ourselves that we organise and fight against the pass system."
> (Minutes of the Paarl Branch Executive Committee of AFCWU, 17.07.58;BC721)

A Report to the 1958 AFCWU conference by Oscar Mpetha shows the clear links between the passes, seasonal labour needs and the attitudes of the bosses:

> "Things were bad in Paarl. Women were given orders to move out of Paarl before Christmas. We went up and down and we succeeded in getting passes for them. Employers were very helpful. Authorities only allowed them to work until apricots were ripe but they worked throughout the season. After the season, the authorities again started harrassing the women. The President, and myself met with the women, we led the protest march to meet the mayor. He promised us he'll do something, of course for a while the women were not harrassed but at the same time that does not mean that the women won, or will never be harrassed again."
> (Translated from Xhosa Report to AFCWU Conference 13&14.09.58,AD1175)

From late 1958, there is a qualitative shift in the way in which the union participated in the campaign against the passes. With the growth of SACTU and its active work in the One Pound a Day Campaign, the union appears to have been less involved in the FSAW-led campaign. As a union, rather than a women's organisation, this is not surprising. The main task of consolidating SACTU and ensuring its political direction, fell on its affiliates, of which FCWU was a major one. The Pound a Day Campaign was taken up as the focus of all SACTU work, gaining massive support from the Congress Alliance as a whole. SACTU took a strategic approach to the issue of passes for African women by integrating it fully into their campaign to organise the unorganised workers through the demand for a minimum wage. The SACTU document, "Speakers Notes for Women on the Pound a Day Campaign" quoted in Chapter One, concludes as follows:

> PASSES AND THE POUND A DAY CAMPAIGN
> HOW DO PASSES AFFECT THE WORKERS?
> 1) The pass prevents the worker from moving about freely to sell his labour, and this helps the employers to keep down the wages.
> 2) Pass raids and arrests interrupts employment and influx control limits the unemployed African worker to a few weeks to find a new job before being "endorsed out" of the urban areas.
> 3) The pass system is the deliberate attempt of the government to prevent the non-European worker from rising to skilled employment and to force workers back to the farms to provide cheap farm labour.
> 4) The pass system (curfew) etc put many difficulties in the way of African workers when organising their trade unions.

WOMEN WORKERS AND PASSES

If African women have passes, they will be exposed to the same hardships as men, and Verwoerd will use the employment of women to force the passes on them, as is being done in the case of nurses, who are being requested to produce identity numbers in order to register and to earn their living as nurses. To get their identity numbers the nurses must take out reference books.

Verwoerd will do this also in factories and he will make it compulsory for housewives to demand reference books for domestic servants.

But if women are organised and united as workers, Verwoerd will not succeed, for the employers and housewives and the hospitals will not be able to get workers and servants if they demand passes."

(Speakers Notes, p3,AD1137. Emphasis in the original.)

It is interesting to note that this document does not recognise domestic workers as workers, drawing a distinction between workers and servants. It should be noted however that this term was in common usage at the time, and that this usage is not reflected in all SACTU documents of the time.

The SACTU Management Committee meeting in October 1958 decided on a multi-pronged strategy to fight the reference books for African women as part of the ongoing Pound a Day campaign. The meeting at which FCWU was represented, listened to a FSAW guest speaker and arranged a Pound a Day mass meeting for 26 October, which endorsed the call to all South africans to oppose the reference books (Resolutions adopted as mass meeting of SACTU, held in Johannesburg, 26.10.58;AD1137). The strategy included a call to Associated Chambers of Commerce to oppose the reference books in the interests of preventing a dislocation of the labour force and industrial relations; an appeal to all employers of African women, stating SACTU's position and advising them that it was not compulsory to register African women employees, and finally to issue an appeal to the Federated Chamber of Industries. The letter to employers of African women warns of the danger of increased industrial unrest caused by the extension of passes to women and calls on them to oppose the issue of reference books, and to correspond or discuss with SACTU on this issue (Letter from SACTU General Secretary L Massina, 22 October 1958;AD1137). Throughout this period SACTU continued with the Pound a Day Campaign, hinging all demands around this central theme.

The November 1958 SACTU Management Committee meeting decided to issue a press statement to the Star, condemning Associated Chambers of Commerce telegram that the reference books were outside of the sphere of their activity. It appears from the text of the SACTU press statement that the Chambers of Commerce had offered to increase wages and to ask for an increase in productivity. SACTU's reply was:

"...Do they really believe that the constant arrests and all that is involved in the pass system do not affect standards of work and the quality and quantity of the work produced? It is futile, in this situation, for the Chambers of Commerce to talk of consultations in order to establish harmonious relations with their employees, if this is their

attitude to the most serious issue affecting the majority of their workers. We are so seriously concerned at the position that we appeal to the Chambers of Commerce to reconsider their attitude and to give this matter the attention it deserves..."
(SACTU Letter to the Editor of The Star, 03.11.58;AD1137)

The Management Committee discussed the question of what kind of deputation to send to meet the Chambers of Commerce or the Chamber of Industry. The National Consultative Committee of the Congress Alliance had raised the possibilities of a joint Congress deputation, a FSAW/ SACTU deputation or simply a SACTU deputation. The meeting decided on a purely trade union deputation and agreed to approach TUCSA, asking them to co-operate and make this a joint deputation (SACTU Management Committee Minutes, 05.11.58,BC721). The question of the deputation to the Chamber of Commerce or Industry was re-raised in February 1959 in discussion precipitated by a letter from FSAW requesting support for a demonstration of domestic 'servants'. The Management Committee meeting resolved to write another letter, this time pointing out that:

"as employers were making the possession of Reference books a condition of employment, although there was no legal compulsion for the women to obtain these books, SACTU was forced to consider effective action."
(SACTU Management Committee Minutes, 18.02.59;BC721)

The FCWU and AFCWU faced the pass issue directly again in late 1959 when Elizabeth Mafeking, President of the AFCWU, and a member of the FCWU from its inception in 1941, was banished to Southey in the Northern Cape. A leaflet distributed at the time outlined the reasons:

"...The government is breaking up a happy family. Elizabeth is President of the African Food and Canning Workers Union and Secretary of the Paarl Branch. What is Elizabeth's crime? She like thousands of African women all over the country do not want to carry passes. She as Vice President of the African National Congress Women's League, organised a meeting at Paarl on the 17th September to protest against reference books in Paarl. Elizabeth was arrested with twenty-five other women. For three weeks, Elizabeth together with her baby was in Paarl jail. Kept in dark cells with no light. On the 20th of October, the case was heard before the Paarl magistrate and she was cautioned and discharged. Tuesday, 27th October she was served with a banishment notice ordering her to leave Paarl and her family by Monday, 9th November. We cannot allow this inhuman, unjust, heartless act of the government to pass without protest."
(Leaflet attached to letter to the Garment Workers Union Secretary from FCWU General Secretary, 30.0.59,AH1092)

The union responded by calling a mass meeting on 1 November and seeking the advice of the Garment Workers Union, which had through a campaign conducted by GWU, other unions, the ANC and the FSAW, succeeded in getting a banishment order of a GWU official withdrawn.

The banishment of such a loved and respected worker, women and national leader gave rise to widespread protests. More than a thousand people attended the Parade protest meeting and the following day, 40 Black Sash women protested in Paarl streets (Guardian 035.11.59). About 600 people of Paarl gathered at Mafeking's house to be there when the police came to fetch her. The people were very angry because of the service this leader had given to her community and were provoked by the police saracens and vans patrolling Paarl and Wellington. That afternoon, the crowd began stoning cars, especially police cars. When a shop was damaged, the police opened fire. One person was shot dead and many arrested. Meanwhile, Mafeking's escape to Lesotho had been carefully planned (Interview with Liz Abrahams conducted by Cherryl Walker, 1977). The Congress Alliance leadership and FCWU representatives held a Parade rally a week later at which they focused on her banishment in the context of the state's attack on the liberation movement as a whole. The Guardian reported on 19.11.59 that Mafeking had been welcomed to Basutoland. The union held a special conference, of both AFCWU and FCWU to protest against the banishment of Mafeking (Guardian 19.11.59).

In investigating the manner in which the AFCWU and FCWU mobilised women against the pass laws during the period in which the ANC Women's League, FSAW and ANC spearheaded the resistance, I have attempted to draw out a number of points:
1) the union, correctly, fulfilled its role by addressing itself to the immediate problems of its membership. The union motto - 'to fight for a better life' incorporated a strong resistance to the destruction of family life, the restriction of movement, the removal of the right to work and security and the repressive control all embodied in the pass laws.
2) the union developed close working relationships with other organisations, whether through joint action committee, through less structurally-bound joint campaigns, and through the federation of which it was a part.
3) the union, and its sister-organisations, adopted a number of tactics to fight against the pass laws - deputations and protest to the state and local authorities; mass rallies aimed at mobilising and educating mass support for the campaigns; as well as approaches to employers requesting their support in the interests of industrial peace.
4) I also tried to show how the union resisted the pass laws in three distinct ways - by taking up the workers problems directly; by working within the Federation of South African Women; and by working with SACTU. In this, the union's overall approach to the woman question, as an integral part of the struggle for a better life encompassing freedom from apartheid, oppression of women and from exploitation, is highlighted.

Building working class women leaders for the liberation struggle.

The ongoing educational process within the union began to equip women workers with the overall political understanding and the organisational and administrative skills to lead any democratic organisation. The union's attitude to education and leadership is well reflected in a quote from Elizabeth Mafeking:

"...I used to think that education was the only thing

> required to change working conditions in the factory, but today I know that education is not everything. When I was elected Vice President of my Union in 1947, I explained my educational standard, because I though I could not lead workers without education, and I could not get education when I was a child." The workers replied that they did not want her education but they needed her leadership. " I accepted the leadership because I saw that my nation was starving and poverty stricken. ..."
> (Quote from Biography of Mafeking, AD1137)

The union built on the leadership qualities their members showed and took the task of educating these worker leaders very seriously.

The union, with the help of political activists and members of other organisations like the Communist Party of South Africa, Congress of Democrats and the African National Congress, held regular "Union Schools". Although no details are readily available as to the content of these courses, there are references to their occurrence in the CEC Minutes. For example, in 1953, the Union School was attended as follows: 16 delegates on 6 July, 15 on 7 July, 23 delegates on 8 July and 22 delegates on the final day. During the course of 1953, two four-day schools were conducted (Annual Report of FCWU General Secretary to the 12th Conference 14/5.11.1953;BC721). In October 1954, the Cape Town Branch Secretary reported to the Management Committee that she had "arranged a school for all committee members and leading workers in the factories. Committee members were instructed to attend without fail and it is only in this way that we will be able to train reliable leaders in the factories." (Cape Town FCWU Branch Executive Committee Minutes 18.10.54;BC721)

The General Secretary, reporting to the 13th Conference, had the following to say on education of new leaders:-

> "Because we realise the importance of educating new leaders, we have through the means of our union journal - "Morning Star", circular letters and study classes, given these comrades the necessary education. In the coming months, we are organising weekend classes for the various country branches as we found that organising a national school at HO too costly.
>
> Our members and leaders must not only learn the history of the trade unions and working class movement in South Africa and the tasks facing us, but they must learn the history of the trade union and working class movement of the whole world, which is rich in experience."
> (General Secretaries Report to 13th Annual Conference, 28&29.08.54,p12;BC721)

In June 1955, the Management Committee discussed the question of training leaders at length and decided on a twofold approach of branches electing workers to be trained by Head Office and at the same time organising classes to be held at their branches (FCWU Management Committee Minutes, 12.06.55;BC721)

The union, consisting as it did of a majority of women, had a conscious policy to chose leadership who reflected the members in the union. The union could develop women's potential which was more difficult to develop in the organisations where men were in the majority. As mentioned earlier though, it is a familiar pattern in trade unions across the world for official positions to be overwhelmingly male-dominated, despite the majority women rank and file members. This however was not the case in FCWU during this period. If one gives a cursory glance over the BECs and NECs during this period, the proportion of women to men compares relatively favourably with the predominance of women workers within the union. It is not easy to draw figures out of the records, since gender is not included in the minutes. The General Secratries of FCWU were all women from 1941 to the mid sixties. The Management Committee had approximately half women members during the 1950s. The Cape Town Branch had a woman secretary throughout the 50s. Similarly with the other branches, women were found active in leadership positions. Breitenbach identifies the level of women's participation in a union as a key issue and a difficult area to assess:

> "A study of women's activity at all levels of union life ... would be needed - figures of full-timers, shop stewards, branch officials, women's participation in union education; numbers of women delegates to conferences and rates of implementation of policies to assist women members (where such policies exist)." (Breitenbach,E.1981;p70)

Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, I will briefly comment on the repression faced by the union leadership. It is worth nothing that in national repression statistics, women usually feature as a minority - in lists of banned and listed people, of political prisoners, women are in the minority. These statistics reflect generally the level of involvement of women in the struggle as a whole, but it must also be noted that women frequently are rank and file members, and therefore less susceptible to repression. AFCWU and FCWU provide notable exceptions here - a reflection possibly of the extent to which women were developed as leaders in the union. During the 1950s, the three FCWU General Secretaries, all women, were banned from continuing their work. Ray Alexander was banned from FCWU in September 1953 (Guardian 24,09.53); Becky Lan was banned for two years in November 1954 (Guardian 04.11.54) and again in August 1956 (Guardian 09.08.56); and Liz Abrahams was banned for 5 years in 1963 (Lipman,B.1984;p87). In addition various branch secretaries were banned - Gus Coe, Port Elizabeth Branch Secretary was banned for 2 years at the same time as Frank Marquard in August 54. Sarah Wentzel Worcester Branch Secretary was banned in November 1954 (Guardian 26.08.54 and 25.11.54).

Many analysts have argued that the SACTU policy of involvement in politics weakened the unions in that it opened them to repression before the unions were consolidated on the shopfloor. It is important to note that the FCWU took up a combination of national political, workplace and community issues throughout its existence. The approach of the union was not to postpone the

taking up of any issue, but rather to suit the method of organising, the extent of organising time and energy devoted to the issue to the prevailing conditions in terms of strength of the union, threat of repression etc. This attitude to organising, I would argue, is more fundamentally correct than the approach that leaves issues until "the time is ripe". While obviously, an organisation can be severely weakened by an unsuccessful strike or campaign (an example would be the effect of the Spekenham strike on the Cape Town branch), it is also true that it is through active participation in the process of struggle that the ability to strategise, the lessons of unity and administrative skills are most democratically learnt. The union in adopting the slogan "to fight for a better life" had committed itself to improve the living and working conditions of its members and accordingly was bound to do whatever possible under the circumstances to resolve the burning problems of the working class, whether it was the bread price increase, the pass laws, child care needs or the working conditions and wages. The union did experience extensive repression throughout the 1950s. This obviously was disruptive for the union in that it broke the organising continuity and incurred court cases as organisers tried to circumvent the restrictions. However, it also taught the workers about the nature of the Apartheid capitalist state and the bosses, particularly when their protest strikes against the bannings were met by further repression and harrassment (Guardian 15.10.53). In some cases, the experience of repression steeled workers in the struggle against exploitation and oppression, and was responsible for galvanising the workers into a serious committment:

> "I used to sit outside when they were holding a union meeting; but soon I joined it! Later our president got banned - Frank Marquard; and then I got very worried - I couldn't figure it out by myself; why do they ban people? Then one day we had a Management Committee meeting and it was explained and something grew up in me to say, "But why ban people? Why do nasty things like that with people? They're not criminals; they didn't kill anybody. ... Why must they be so cruel to people?" And from then on I took a much deeper interest in the union ... and later I was elected to a committee to take up complaints ... we were struggling for better conditions and better wages."
> (Liz Abrahams interview in Lipman,B.1984;p90)

During the 1950s, the union faced widespread repression as a result of its progressive stand. The shift in the strategy of the liberation movement in the early 60s and the banning of the ANC, ANC Women's League and Youth League did not, I argue tentatively, have such a marked effect on the union. This was in part because the union comprised largely of women, who were less readily leaders in the national political movement and were less extensively organised into the developing underground of the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe. However, there were notable exceptions of women within the union who experienced repression as a result of her political work after 1961. Frances Baard, branch secretary of AFCWU in Port Elizabeth, endured a year in solitary confinement and five year prison sentence and a subsequent banishment to Mabopane in 1969 for her involvemnt in the underground of the ANC.(Baard,F and Schreiner,B.G.1986)

In this section of Chapter Three, I have focused on two campaigns that the union was involved in alongside a range of other organisations. The one campaign was directed against the state's attack on the working class living standards, and around an issue of particular immediacy to women because of their reponsibilities under capitalism for household management. The second campaign was a key national political issue of the early 1950s, as the apartheid state consolidated its policy of influx control, bantustans and national oppression. It was however also an issue that was an attack on the African women and their right to family life.

In looking at these campaigns, I attempted to show how the union participated alongside non-working class organisations, overtly political organisations and women's organisations. Within these campaigns though, the union did not loose sight of their specific tasks as a union towards its members. The unions participation in two federal structures - the FSAW and SACTU, and its close working relationships with the Congress Alliance organisations, facilitated a broader approach to the slogan 'to fight for a better life'. I have also tried to outline how the union reflected the problems of the majority of its members - the women workers - by taking up issues close to their hearts as part of these national campaigns.

A final concluding comment on the nature of the issue taken up by the union is in order. I have already said that the union did not see certain issues as necessary to postpone until some later date. But I have also emphasised throughout Chapter 3 that the union in organising to win a victory on one particular issue, linked that issue to the broader struggle against exploitation and oppression. The long term implications of organising around a given issue are determined not simply by the nature of the issue, but by the overall political context within which that organisation develops an understanding of that issue.

Let us review this concretely in relation to the demand for childcare. It is an issue taken up by bourgeois feminists who want to facilitate the inclusion of women into wage labour, to facilitate the exploitation of women workers, or to facilitate the re-inclusion of skilled middle class women back into managerial and executive type positions after the birth of their children. This for example, is the case with the demand for creches that has emanated from the Women's Bureau of South Africa (Women's Own Forums 1981-2). This alerts us to the danger of how demands around women's rights can be taken up in a way that benefits only certain women, entrenching the exploitation of others.

The demand for childcare can also be taken up by feminists who beleive that by placing the burden of childcare on women, men are ensuring that their dominant position goes unchallenged. Here, the creche is seen as a base from which women can struggle against men and for their liberation. This position can easily remain a reformist demand for the provision of creches, without any changes in the relations that place this burden on working class men and women.

But childcare may also be taken up by organisations which see the problems as being lack of state and community involvement in provision of socialised services. These organisations recognise that the demand for creches is a partial, short-term demand, that must be complemented by a long term view that politicises the issue. Through this method of campaigning, an awareness is built up of the priorities of the socialisation and degenderisation of childcare within the process of social transformation.

In each of the above cases, the issue is the same. However, the political understanding that is brought to bear on the implications of this issue for future gender relations is fundamentally different. Childcare can be tackled in a reformist or progressive way. In taking up the issue that affected their membership under capitalism, the union was at all times concerned to bring their members to understand how only a transformed society could provide the permanent solution to these working class problems.

In concluding this chapter, I would like to illustrate how the union's work trained women for leadership in various ways. The education programmes within the union equipped women workers to play an effective leadership role. In the campaigns, those women gained further organisational, administrative and strategic experience. This training, gained not through educational programmes, but through active participation in the struggle, steeled these women for the sacrifices of political action. Within union practice, the combination of theory and practice built all-round women's leadership skills and in addition, developed among the men workers an acceptance of leadership from women. This in itself constituted an important challenge to the prevailing gender relations. Through the union practice at work and the leadership given by union members in the community, the traditional expectations of "women's place" were slowly altered. It became recognised throughout the union that elected leaders should a) reflect the membership of the union (i.e. if the majority of workers were women, then the leadership should include a majority of women); and b) be respected by all members irrespective of colour or gender.

FOOTNOTES

1. The relations of domination on present day Western Cape farms are described by Mayson,D;1986. He has highlighted how the form of production relations on the farms reinforced the gender oppression. I am arguing here that this pattern on the farms extends into the farming towns, and the industries that exist within them.

2. Under capitalist relations of production, labour is said to be subsumed to capital in the sense that the means of production and the decisions and controls over production lie in he hands of capital. The formal subsumption of labour to capital is distinguished from the real subsumption in

that, in the latter, this control is more complete. The introduction of mechanisation, production lines and the complete removal of worker autonomy, result in the much greater dictation by capital to labour. The form of extraction of surplus value under real subsumption being higher, and the experience of exploitation thus being worse for the workers who are turned into an extension of capital as they work the machines. (Marx,K.1974;Vol 1)

3. It states that:
"...19(1) Save as otherwise provided in this Act, no employer shall require or permit an employee ...
e)who is female to work i) between 6 o'clock pm and 6 o'clock am and ii) after 1 o'clock pm on more than 5 days in any week...
(2)... an employer may require or permit an employee to work overtime for a period not exceeeding in any one week -
(a) ten hours;
(b) a number of hours (which may exceed ten) fixed by an inspector by notice in writing to the employer, specifiying the employee, or the class of employee, in respect of whom the notice is applicable, and the period for which and the conditions under which it shall be valid: Provided that no employer shall require or permit a female employee to work overtime:
(a) for more than two hours on any day
(b) on more than three consecutive days
(c) on more than sixty days in any year
(d) after completion of her ordinary working hours for more than one hour a day unless he has - i) given notice thereof to such employee before midday; or ii) provided such employee with an adequate meal before she has to commence overtime; or iii) paid such an employee a prescribed allowance in sufficient time to enable the employee to obtain a meal before the overtime is due to commence. ..."
(Factories, Machinery and Building Work Act, No 22 of 1941)

4. A brief comment on negotiations is in line here. The Congress Movement and SACTU unions had a clear understanding of how to negotiate to win concessions from capital or the state, without believing that "freedom comes on a plate" or through asking the state or capital for reformist improvements.

5. See Chapter Three Part Three for a discussion of the union's resistance to the introduction of passes for African women.

6. The Circular Letter outlines the legal position concerning maternity rights:
" Re <u>CONFINEMENT ALLOWANCE</u> - I wish to draw the attention of branches to section 23 of the Factories Act which lays down the following:
<u>Prohibition of employment of females near the time of Confinement and Confinement Allowance.</u>
1. The Factories Act lays down in terms of the above-mentioned section, 'that no female shall work in a factory and no employer or occupier shall require or permit any female to work in his establishment during the period four weeks prior to the expected date of her confinement and ending eight weeks after the date of her confinement; Provided that if the child was stillborn or dies before the

expiration of the eight weeks after the birth, the provisions of this subsection shall cease to apply as from the date fixed by an inspector.

2. The Minister may from public monies pay to any female who has discontinued her work in the factory as a result of pregnancy an allowance equivalent to her ordinary weekly remuneration, but not exceeding 25/- per week, for a period not exceeding twelve weeks; which allowance may be paid in lump sum or in three installments.

3. The application for confinement allowance must be made as soon as possible after the applicant has ceased working. Delay in completing and submitting the application may preclude her from receiving the grant. Under no circumstances is the application to be made before the date of ceasing work. In the case of a premature confinement, special cognisance will be taken of the fact that due to illness the applicant may not be in a position to complete the application form immediately after ceasing work. Application should be made as soon as possible after confinement and the fact mentioned that the birth was premature. In the event of an applicant being illiterate, her mark must be witnessed by a competent person.

4. An applicant must have 30 consecutive weeks of permanent work. In cases where the break in service totals more than 28 days and is due to illness, accident or circumstances beyond the control of the applicant, a medical certificate or an explanatory letter, covering the period of absence from work, should be submitted.

5. It is desirable, in centres where ante-natal clinics or welfare centres have been established, that the pregnant women should obtain a certificate from the medical practitioner in attendance, stating the approximate date of confinement. This will assist in observing the provisions of the Act - that no women may be employed in the factory for at least four weeks prior to the expected date of confinement.

6. In cases where the applicant is unfit to continue her work until four weeks before the expected date of confinement, due to a complication of pregnancy, a medical certificate to this effect accompanying her application will enable the department to decide whether she should receive an extended allowance for the period she is compelled to be absent from work.

7. Notification of Birth - when a baby is born the vaccination forms or birth certificate are to be forwarded to the Department of Labour.

8. In the event of the applicant being unmarried the following particulars are required:

a) Whether the applicant and the father of the child are co-habiting

b) If not co-habiting - whether the father of the child is married; if so, particulars of his domestic circumstances ie. occupation, weekly earnings and financial obligations.

An application from an unmarried female not co-habiting must be accompanied by a certified statement from the alleged father either admitting or denying paternity. If the alleged father admits paternity, particulars of his earnings, financial obligation and the amount he can reasonably be expected to contribute weekly to the applicant (this amount not exceeding the amount of the applicant's ordinary weekly earnings) must be added to the admission of

paternity.
(FCWU Circular letter 11/51, 12 July 1951, BC721. Emphasis in original.)

(7) I have not been able to find out the exact nature of the Northern Areas Women's Welfare Society.

(8) Bremmer Bread was a special high protein bread made during the war years which was sold at a particularly low price. It was aimed at ensuring nutritious bread for the working people at a price which they could afford.

(9) The campaign is discussed thoroughly by Luckhart,K and Wall,B.1980;pp151-168.

(10) The booklet was published by the ANC Women's League and the FSAW.

(11) CATAPAW, the Campaign to Abolish Passes for African women, was an alliance of women from different organisations in Cape Town that operated from 1957 -1961. It was aimed at taking the campaign against passes forward and came out of an informal discussion organised by a National Council of Women member, in which some of her co-members met African women for the first time. The alliance involved ANC Women's League, FSAW, Black Sash, Anglican Mother's Union, Quaker Service Fund, National Council of Women (who were forced to withdraw by their Head Office because of the political nature of the campaign) and later South African Institute of Race Relations. See Griessel,A.1981 for further detail.

CONCLUSION:

TOWARDS A MATERIALIST APPROACH TO WORKING WOMEN'S FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

In drawing together the threads of this thesis, there are two separable, although linked, areas of analysis. The thesis has two parallel objectives:

1. To examine concretely the role that a progressive trade union can play in winning gains for women workers under capitalism and the limitations on its role. In this process, the union also plays a crucial role as a training ground for women workers through politicising, organising and educating these women for involvement not just in the trade union movement, but in the liberation movement as a whole.
2. To draw out the theoretical understanding and ideological approach that informed the FCWU and AFCWU practices and to examine the implications of this for the South African woman question. In this respect, the aim has been to revive a political tradition, and to extend and refine the theory.

In the thesis introduction, I discussed in some detail why this particular union served as a useful case study through which to examine the woman question. It is necessary, at this point, to remind the reader of certain limitations in studying an aspect of a trade union, while a detailed examination of the entire working class movement, (as distinct from the labour or trade union movement) was not undertaken. This unfortunate situation arises because of the magnitude of this task, and the difficulty of finding sources on the working class movement given the repressive actions of the Apartheid state since 1950.

It must be stressed that a trade union on its own, cannot lead the working class to emancipation from exploitation, national oppression and gender oppression. A progressive trade union, however, has a significant role to play alongside the political organisation of the working class. This question is in certain respects hidden in the thesis. It is recognised as being absent in relation to the mechanisms of the relationship between the Communist Party of South Africa and the trade union movement. I have clearly brought out how the union saw its relationship to the liberation movement broadly speaking and have explained the connections between the union and the legal political organisations. Secondly, it must be stressed that the working class cannot on its own win freedom. No dominated class in any previous era of history has gained ascendency without entering into alliances, and asserting its leadership within the alliance. Finally, neither working class women, nor a class alliance of women can end their oppression as women on their own. Unequal gender relations are woven into the fabric of social life and the present structure of social relations, founded as it is in exploitation and profit, cannot provide the material basis for women's emancipation.

In Chapter One, I discussed how the CPSA and ANC linked and later Congress Alliance linked organisations appealed to women by speaking to them first of all, but not only, as mothers. The reality of women during this period was a new combination of wage labour and motherhood. Motherhood is a central concern to the majority of women (even though there always are and always have been women who chose to remain single mothers , or who are homosexual). I argued that this was a correct approach to how to draw unorganised women into the national liberation struggle. In the second chapter, I outlined the interconnections between the trade union and the national liberation movement, the women's movement and the trade union federation. Chapter Three, the body of the thesis, explored how the union, while building on the ideological approach outlined in Chapter One, combined women's needs as workers, mothers and citizens of South Africa. In each section, I have facilitated a debate between the practices of the union (and other organisations) in the 1950s, and the recent theoretical debates generated by the developing women's studies.

In concluding, let me first of all deal with the historical objective of the thesis - to document the ways in which a union has challenged the hardships of women workers, and won certain concessions from capital and the Apartheid state for these women. The union strategy in winning victories for working women involved a number of different tactical approaches. But what is perhaps most significant is that their strategy for fighting against women's specfic hardships was a) integral to the work of the union and b) incorporated action to combat women's grievances at home, at work and in the political arena.

I attempted in Chapter 3 to document the tactical changes in relation to the three areas considered there. It was difficult to assess the precise reasons for these tactical changes without a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the internal strengths and weaknesses of the union, and the strategies of capital and the state in relation to the working class.

I argued in the thesis that the union's contribution lies not so much in their correct assessment of appropriate tactics, since these must be historically specific, but in a clear recognition that working women's rights, and even those enshrined in legislation, had to be continually fought for and protected. Olive Schreiner had the following to say about the benefits of the struggle for women's rights:

> "I am not so anxious for women to get the vote as that they should keep fighting for it. It is the struggle that educates. A degraded or subjected race or class gains more from a fight for freedom than by having it given to them." (Schreiner,O.1912)

But the union also realised that capital and the state will withdraw any concession gained by the working class if it is not carefully protected. This can be seen in the way the union encouraged and facilitated the women's applications for statutory confinement allowances; the various methods employed to win creche facilities for their members; the constant exposure of child labour; the ongoing struggle for rights for seasonal

workers; opposition to excessive overtime and to the extraction of surplus value through piece-rates; the resistance to the inroads on women's right to work and to family life made by the extension of passes to African women; and through the campaigns to get staple foods provided at affordable prices.

The union did not always succeed in winning these demands - for example, to a large extent, the union did not succeed in getting creches attached to every factory, nor in every community. This failure may in part be due to organisational weaknesses or because of the particular authority targeted in the demand. None of these demands could be won without engaging in struggle and the outcome of the struggle cannot be predetermined nor theoretically determined. The union however continued throughout the period studied to find ways to organise the issues affecting women workers - maternity rights; socialised childcare facilities; the right to equality and security at work; the right to and economic possiblity of caring for their family; and most broadly the right to organise in order to win their economic and political freedom.

It is the continuity of these issues throughout the period that gives us the clue as to why the union was so significant. This continuity mirrors the strategic and principled approach to the woman question. The organisation of working class women through the union was not seen as an end in itself. Women workers were not organised simply because they constituted a mass force for the end of exploitation. Women workers were organised to be active participants in the creation of their <u>own</u> freedom and of a better life for themselves and the future generations. The fact that issues were raised within the trade union structures, meant that the debate and action around them conscientised not only the women, but also the working class men. The union's work on these issues reflected a dynamic interaction between men and women workers concerning the co-ordination of priorities and women's access to organisational structures. This is not to say that there was a harmonious, smooth relationship between men and women workers. Contradiction is inherent within every aspect of life and is the motor force of forward movement.

The union's integration of women's issues into their meetings and organisational work provides an interesting contrast to the separate discussion of women's issues in the Trades Union Council Women's Conferences and Womens Advisory Committees in Britain and Scotland, and to the newly developing "working class feminist syndicalism". The strength of the union's approach was to conscientise not only women but also men workers as to the importance of women's issues for the entire working class.

The union and its membership used their power to change the material conditions of working women's lives within the limits of capitalism. The material gains of creches, whether at work or in the community, greatly eased the burden of wage labour for working mothers. It also built up a tradition within the union that socialised childcare is a legitimate demand for working women in any society, although the nature of these services will obviously change in different kinds of societies. The

significance of the union's contribution to reshaping the way in which women conceptualised their rights as working mothers encompassed not only the statutory recognition of rights such as paid maternity leave, childcare facilities, the right to unemployment benefits etc. It also reshaped the manner in which working women and men preceived their role in working for a better life for them and their families.

In all the struggles that the union waged to improve the living and working conditions of women workers, the particular concrete demands were never presented as the main end in themselves. The struggle for members rights as women, as workers and as citizens of South Africa were always linked to the struggle for national and social liberation. The concessions forced from capital or the state through organised action taught working women that unity is a source of power; that their personal grievances were shared by other working class women; and that an organised strategy is necessary to change the power relations within the workplace, community or the national situation. By placing a wide range of women's demands on the working class agenda, the union played a role in preparing the ground for these issues to be addressed in the process of social transformation. It is only by each organisation within its particular field of struggle, raising demands relating to <u>all</u> aspects of women's lives that the place of the question of women's emancipation can be assured within the social question of liberation.

In moving on to the second component of this thesis, I would like to begin by quoting Godelier on the importance of the oppression of women being taken up in the context of social change:

> "Today we can wait no longer: the fight for social equality of women has become a mass struggle; and it deeply involves the working class, since all the negative consequences of sexual inequality pile up on the shoulders of working women. This demand should be integral to working class struggles to change society. For all social inequalities, though never co-extensive, feed off one another and ultimately benefit the same class; each one, that is, enters into the reproduction of the mode of production. ...it is crucial to pinpoint the real importance, or specific weight of each social inequality within the hierarchy of causes that shape the functioning and evolution of our society. This requires first of all that we should not take one inequality for another, and still less reduce one to another."
> (Godelier,M.1981;p4)

What more accurate reflection of the union's position can one ask for! In the remaining part of this conclusion, I will attempt to flesh out the specifics of the general statement - "working women's position is determined more by class than by gender" - that has been drawn from

a) the theoretical tradition of historical materialism on the woman question, and particularly from what I have called the Classical Marxists;

b) the concrete political practices of the union;

and c) from my own theoretical position which has evolved through a study of feminism; a study of historical materialist approaches to the woman question; research into the history of the South African women's resistance; and not least importantly, my own involvement in democratic mass based women's organisation within

the UDF.

In characterising the contribution of the FCWU to the woman question, I would argue that the strength of the theoretical approach lies in the recognition not of one source of hardship and oppression, but a number of interconnected sources of oppression for working women. I return to the central point of this thesis, namely that the material basis of women's oppression under capitalism in South Africa lies not only in their position in the economic relations of production (or their relative exclusion from them); not only in their position within the family; nor only in their exclusion from political power. Further to this, while significant gains and women's rights can be won from capital and the state, the necessary material conditions for emancipation of all women cannot be provided for by capitalism. From the investigation of this thesis, I have concluded that women's exploitation at work is mediated by their responsibilites at home as housewife and mother; that their responsibilities as housewife and mother are rendered exploitative because of the lack of social responsibility for these functions by the capitalist state; and thirdly that their oppression as part of their nation is premised on both their vulnerability at work and their oppression within the home and community.

Central to much of the feminist debate in the last two decades has been the burning question of "the family" or "the household". The concept of "the family" has been central to the debates about state policy and capitalist ideology, to critiques of left-wing political organisations in Europe, to the critiques of socialist countries as not emancipating women for all the "rhetoric" that they have used during the process of the struggle leading up to the beginning of socialist reconstruction. I have highlighted in the first chapter, and in the various sections of Chapter Three, that the issue of women's role as mothers is correctly a central issue in the woman question. However, I have been at pains to highlight that the union never attempted to reject the concept of motherhood and with it the concept of familial relations. I argue again in this concluding section that this position is fundamentally correct, and that to reject the notion of motherhood and of social organisation around parenthood, is to throw the baby out with the bath water. In short, while under capitalism, state family policy and bourgeois ideology is a source of oppression for working class women, the cultural struggle around the social definition of motherhood does not necessarily mean a rejection of the family as a social unit, nor the acceptance of a single form of the family. Rather, the direction that we should be moving in is the identification of the necessary social changes to provide the material basis for a family of any form, for motherhood and fatherhood and childhood which is non-oppressive and non-exploitative for all the family members.

The feminist position on the family revolves around an interpretation of certain basic "facts of life", criticised by some feminists as incorrect and 'naturalistic' assumptions. In all societies, life involves a number of aspects of reproduction
- daily reproduction - the feeding, clothing and relaxation of the members of society;

- generational reproduction - the birth, care and education of the next generation of people;
- and the reproduction of the social relations - which under capitalism means the reproduction of class exploitations; under socialism, it means the erosion of all forms of exploitative relations.

The fact of biological reproduction - of sexuality and parenthood - cannot be avoided. Maconachie (1983) and Molyneux (1985) both criticise Marxism for assuming heterosexuality:-

> "The construct of 'the family' rests most fundamentally on essentialist accounts of sexuality. Within our society, sexual identity is seen as given by anatomical distinction, by biology. ... Discussion of 'the family' take the existence of heterosexuality for granted, and sexuality is just not an issue. ... They (sexual identity and sexual relations -JS) are constrcuted as a conceptually different space from society, as on the border between nature and culture and the means by which wider social relations are internalised. ..."
> (Maconachie,M.1983;p11)

While I do not adopt a position against homosexuality, it must be recognised as a fact that the majority of women, despite whatever close emotional relations are formed with other women, remain heterosexual. The biological reproduction of the species necessarily entails this, and while the social construction of the binding nature of sexual relationships can be questioned, the existence and naturalness of heterosexual relations cannot be questioned. It is the oppressive nature of sexual relations under capitalism because of the unequal access to power that creates a powerful tendency towards homosexuality. The social causes of heterosexuality and homosexuality must both be problematised, and the naturalness of heterosexuality cannot be denied.

The crucial question is how society recognises these basic human functions. Daily reproduction is another fact of life, which can be oppressively and exploitatively organised or which can be organised in a non-oppressive way. It is only in a society where the country's resources are used for the benefit and upliftment of the living and working standards of the majority, and in which labour of all kinds is respected as a positive contribution to society, that these basic essentials of life can be provided in this way. This can be achieved either through socialisation of these tasks, or through a division of labour which is based on equality of human beings. We must guard against the frequent trap that sees <u>any</u> division of labour as necessarily oppressive. Divisions of labour that are based on equal opportunities and freedom of choice, and that are not ideologically reinforced, cannot be approached in the same way as the division of labour under capitalism.

Miranda Davies, in her introduction to her book <u>Third World, Second Sex</u>, argues that women have been incorporated into Third World struggles in three different ways:

a) They have been organised around the family role in support of their men, and she cites as an example the role of the Housewives Committee in the village of SigloXX in Bolivia;

b) They have been organised as an extension of their defined

roles in society, for example as couriers, nurses and cooks in the underground movement in Latin America;
or c) They are organised in contrast to their defined role as reproducers, and nuturers. Here she cites the example of women's active involvement in the armed struggle.

For her, these are mutually exclusive approaches to the question of the role of women within the liberation struggle. However, a more complex process is at work here. Even the tasks of women in the liberation movement which she identifies as reinforcing their role in the family also imply a challenge to the passive role expected of women by society. Any area in which women have entered into political action around the hardship that their communities experience, has implicit within it, a challenge to the previously accepted bourgeois and conventional definition of women's place. It is through this process of struggle that the new definition of motherhood, of women's contribution to the economy and to the political community are forged. And it is in the reconstruction of society that these new definitions will be materialised through the provision of the material basis for their realisation.

The feminist rejection of the family under capitalism, and Molyneux's argument, moving directly from this feminist position, that socialism has failed to emancipate women because it has continued with the family as the basic social unit, have all ignored the crucial point made by Lenin and Zetkin. They argue that in a society where social relations of production are not exploitative, the ideological and familial relations take on a qualitiatively different meaning. The emancipation of women is not going to be ensured simply by challenging familial relations under capitalism, nor by arguing that the personal is political, but by challenging the social relations that define the individual in relation to society in an alienated form. But Lenin fully recognised the need to struggle against women's oppression under capitalism:

> "It is therefore perfectly right for us to put forward demands for the benefit of women. This is not a minimum programme, nor a programme of reform in the Social-Democratic sense, in the sense of the Second International. It does not show that we beleive the bourgeioise and its state will last forever, or even for a long time. Nor is it an attempt to pacify the masses of women with reforms and to divert them from the path of revolutionary struggle. It is nothing of the sort, and not any sort of reformist humbug either. Our demands are no more than practical conclusions drawn by us from the crying needs and disgraceful humiliations that weak and underprivileged woman must bear under the bourgeios system. We demonstrate thereby that we are aware of these needs and of the oppression of women, that we are conscious of the privileged position of the men, and that we hate - yes, hate - and want to remove whatever oppresses and harasses the working woman the wife of the worker, the peasant woman, the wife of the little man, and even in many respects the woman of the propertied classes. The rights and social measures we demand of bourgeois society for women are proof that we understand the positions and interests of women and that we will take note of them under the proletarian dictatorship ... as revolutionaries

> who call upon women to take a hand as equals in the reconstruction of the economy and of the ideological superstructure."
> (Lenin,V.I.1975;p112)

The union did not only set a path for the woman question by integrating the women's issues into their organisational strategy, but also by articulating the specific demands of working class women. Many of these gains made by the union during the period studied, whether made as ideological gains through the acceptance of the demands as part of the working class demands, or by material gains and victories, were lost in the period of the 60s and 70s. This opens up a further field for research and challenge to women workers of today. It has not been sufficient for the general demands to be accepted by the labour movement, and the specific details of these demands needed to be addressed. It is the specific demands -

- 8 weeks paid maternity leave
- access to childcare for every working woman
- equal access to jobs at equal pay for equal work
- prohibition of child labour
- prohibition of excessive overtime for all workers
- food at prices workers can afford
- the right to freedom of movement,
- to choose the kind of family life wanted,
- and the right to work and security

(amongst others) which are the precursors of a democratic state policy on the woman question. Through the organisational practices that build the tradition and ideology of the working class movement, the shape of the future South Africa is being moulded. It is for this reason that the immediacy of the tasks confronting the democratic movement in relation to the specifics of these demands in present day South Africa is emphasised as the final point of this thesis.

APPENDIX ONE

WOMEN'S CHARTER.

PREAMBLE: We, the women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, African, Indians, European and Coloured, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against us as women, and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opporunities that society offers to any one section of the population.

A SINGLE SOCIETY: We women do not form a society separate from the men. There is only one society, and it is made up of both women and men. As women we share the problems and anxieties of our men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress.

TEST OF CIVILISATION: The level of civilisation which any society has reached can be measured by the degreee of freedom that its members enjoy. The status of women is a test of civilisation. Measured by that standard, South Africa must be considered low in the scale of civilised nations.

WOMEN'S LOT: We women share with our menfolk the cares and anxieties imposed by poverty and its evils. As wives and mothers, it falls upon us to make small wages to stretch a long way. It is we who feel the cries of our children when they are hungry and sick. It is our lot to keep and care for the homes that are too small, broken and dirty to be kept clean. We know the burden of looking after children and land when our husbands are away in the mines, on the farms, and in the towns earning our daily bread.

We know what it is to keep family life going in pondokkies and shanties, or in over-crowded one-room apartments. We know the bitterness of children taken to lawless ways, of daughters becoming unmarried mothers whilst still at school, of boys and girls growing up without education, training or jobs at a living wage.

POOR AND RICH: These are evils that need not exist. They exist because the society in which we live is divided into poor and rich, into non-European and European. They exist because there are privileges for the few, discrimination and harsh treatment for the many. We women have stood and will stand shoulder to shoulder with our menfolk in a common struggle against poverty, race and class discrimination, and the evils of the colour-bar.

NATIONAL LIBERATION: As members of the National Liberatory movements and Trade Unions, in and through our various organisations, we march forward with our men in the struggle for liberation and the defence of the working people. We pledge ourselves to keep high the banner of equality, fraternity and liberty. As women there rests upon us also the burden of removing from our society all the social differences developed in past times between men and women, which have the effect of keeping our sex in a position of inferiority and subordination.

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN: We resolve to struggle for the removal of

laws and customs that deny African women the right to own, inherit or alienate property. We resolve to work for a change in the laws of marriage such as are found amongst our African, Malay and Indian people which have the effect of placing wives in the position of legal subjection to husbands, and giving husbands the power to dispose of wives' property and earnings, and dictate to them in all matters affecting them and their children.

We recognise that the women are treated as minors by these marriage and property laws because of ancient and revered traditions and customs which had their origin in the antiquity of the people and no doubt served purposes of great value in bygone times.

There was a time in the African society when every women reaching marriagable stage was assured of a husband, home, land and security.

Then husbands and wives with their children belonged to families and clans that supplied most of their own material needs and were largely self-sufficient. Men and women were partners in a compact and closely integrated family unit.

WOMEN WHO LABOUR: Those conditions have gone. The tribal and kinship society to which they belonged has been destroyed as a result of the loss of tribal lands, migration of men away from their tribal home, the growth of towns, and industries, and the rise of a great body of wage-earners on the farms and in the urban areas, who depend wholly or mainly on wages for a livelihood.

Thousands of African women, like Indian, Coloured and European women, are employed today in factories, homes, offices, shops, on farms in professions as nurses, teachers and the like. As unmarried women, widows, or divorcees, they have to fend for themselves, often without the assistance of a male relative. Many of them are responsibile not only for their own livelihood but also that of their children.

Large numbers of women today are in fact the sole breadwinners and heads of their families.

FOREVER MINORS: Nevertheless, the laws and practices derived from an earlier and different state of society are still applied to them. They are responsible for their own person and their children. Yet the law seeks to enforce upon them the status of a minor.

Not only are African, Coloured and Indian women denied political rights, but they are also in many parts of the Union denied the same status as men in such matters as the right to enter into contracts, to own and dispose of property, and to exercise guardianship over their children.

OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS: The law has lagged behind the development of society; it no longer corresponds to the actual social and economic position of women. The law has become an obstacle to progress of the women, and therefore a brake on the whole of society.

This intolerable condition would not be allowed to continue were it not for the refusal of a large section of our menfolk to

concede to us women the rights and privileges which they demand for themselves.

We shall teach the men that they cannot hope to liberate themselves from the evils of discrimination and prejudice as long as they fail to extend to women complete and unqualified equality in law and in practice.

NEED FOR EDUCATION: We also recognise that large numbers of our womenfolk continue to be bound by traditional practices and conventions, and fail to realise that these have become obsolete and a brake on progress. It is our duty and privilege to enlist all women in our struggle for emancipation and to bring to them all realisation of the intimate relationship that exists between their status of inferiority as women and the inferior status to which their people are subjected by discriminatory laws and colour prejudices.

It is our intention to carry out a nation-wide programme of education that will bring home to the men and women of all national groups the realisation that freedom cannot be won for any one section or for the people as a whole, as long as we women are kept in bondage.

AN APPEAL: We women appeal to all progressive organisations, to members of the great National liberatory movements, to the trade unions and working class organisations, to the churches, educational and welfare organisations, to all progressive man and women who have the interests of the people at heart, to join with us in this great and noble endeavour.

OUR AIMS:

We declare the following aims:
This organisation is formed for the purpose of uniting women in common action for the removal of all political, legal, economic and social disabilities. We shall strive for women to obtain:
1. The right to vote and to be elected to all State bodies, without restriction or discrimination.
2. The right to full opportunities for employment with equal pay and possibilities of promotion in all spheres of work.
3. Equal rights with men in relation to property, marriage and children, and for the removal of all laws and customs that deny women such equal rights.
4. For the development of every child through free, compulsory education for all; for the protection of mother and child through maternity homes, welfare clinics, creches and nursery schools, in countryside and towns; through proper homes for all, and through the provision of water, light, transport, sanitation and other amenities of modern civilisation.
5. For the removal of all laws that restrict free movement, that prevent or hinder the right of free association and activity in democratic organisations and the right to participate in the work of these organisations.
6. To build and strengthen women's sections in the National Liberatory movements, the organisations of women in trade unions, and through the people's varied organisations.
7. To co-operate with all other organisations that have similar aims South Africa, as well as throughout the world.
8. To strive for permanent peace throughout the world.

(Adopted at National Women's Conference held in Johannesburg, 17 April 1954)

APPENDIX TWO.

CALL FOR THE WORLD CONGRESS OF WOMEN.

WOMEN OF THE WHOLE WORLD!

We who give life and who bring up our children, have always played our part, through our work, in the building of civilisation.

To make our full contribution as mothers, workers and citizens to the creation of a better life, we must possess complete political, economic and social rights.

This is why in the countries where these rights have not been granted, women are demanding both the possession of their rights and the means of exercising them.

The dearest wish of all women is to live in peace and friendship with all the peoples of the world.

They are determined that their children shall be safeguarded against the horrors of wars of extermination.

War, already a terrible reality for the women of Korea, Vietnam and Malaya, threatens to destroy the whole world.

Women everywhere are seeing all their hopes for the future endangered, as war preparations increase and military bases' are set up in many countries. For millions of families the arms drive is bringing with it a lower standard of living, unemployment and poverty.

WOMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES!

To meet the deepest needs and wishes of all women, to seek together a solution to the great problems which face them, the Women's International Democratic Federation is convening the World Congress of Women in June 1953 in Denmark.

MOTHERS, who want to bring up your children secure from the hardships intensified by war preparations, who want to see them well-fed, healthy and well-clothed, who are demanding more homes and more schools for them,

MOTHERS, who want to rescue your children from suffering and starvation, who have no rights at all, who, along with your children, are refused the possibility of education, and who, together with your peoples, are joining the fight against colonial oppression,

THIS CONGRESS IS YOUR CONGRESS!

WOMEN WHO WORK IN FACTORIES, SHOPS AND OFFICES, who are campaigning for an end to wretched wages, unemployment and speed-up which are aggravated by war policies, who are demanding your right to equal payment for equal work, for equal opportunities for training and employment and the application and extension of industrial legislation,

WOMEN WHO WORK ON THE LAND, who produce the world's food, who in so many countries live in bondage to the colonialists and feudal landlords, perpetually weighed down by debts and taxes, you who want to enjoy the fruits of your labours and to see progress in the countryside,

HOUSEWIVES, for whom the family budget is your daily worry,

PROFESSIONAL AND CULTURAL WORKERS, who are demanding guaranteed employment and free entrance to all professions;

THIS CONGRESS IS YOUR CONGRESS!

WOMEN, who are demanding the right to take part in the political life of your country, your right to vote and be elected, your right to work and to knowledge, your right to motherhood, who want to see social security schemes introduced

and developed, who want social services and cultural institutions; you who are fighting for your dignity as women and for democratic rights, for the independence of your country and friendship between the peoples,

And you who live in the countries where all children have a happy life and where women's rights are guaranteed,

All of us who want to live, and bring up fine children, in a world free from the atom bomb, where progress and science will make a rich and full life possible for everybody,

WOMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, opinions, beliefs and social backgrounds, whether or not we belong to an organisation, whatever the colour of our skin,

THE WORLD CONGRESS OF WOMEN IS OUR CONGRESS!

Let us set to work at once. Let us talk to every woman in her home, factory, office or shop, and in the fields. Meet, elect and mandate our delegates. Send to the Congress thousands of messages, suggestions and proposed solutions to our problems.

TOGETHER LET US ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE WORLD CONGRESS OF WOMEN!

Women's organisations and movements, trade unions and co-operative organisations, professional, cultural, social and religious groupings and parent's associations, let your voices be heard at the World Congress of Women

WOMEN OF THE WHOLE WORLD!

Let us clasp hands across the frontiers to bar the road to war, oppression and poverty.

Let us act to force the end of the wars now being waged; the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, of atomic, chemical and bacteriological weapons, the progressive reduction of armaments leading to general disarmament; the conclusion of a Pact of Peace between the 5 Great Powers.

United, we constitute an invincible force

FOR THE WINNING AND DEFENCE OF OUR RIGHTS,
FOR THE PROTECTION OF OUR CHILDREN AND HOMES.
FOR A PEACEFUL WORLD.

SUPPORT THE WORLD CONGRESS OF WOMEN!

(Vienna, December 20,1952, Adopted unanimously at the Council of the Women's International Democratic Federation.)

APPENDIX THREE

"CALL TO THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE."

WE CALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA BLACK AND WHITE -LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM!

WE CALL THE FARMERS OF THE RESERVES AND TRUST LANDS.
Let us speak of the wide land, and the narrow strips on which we toil.
Let us speak of brothers without land, and of children without schooling.
Let us speak of taxes and of cattle, and of famine.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE MINERS OF COAL, GOLD AND DIAMONDS.
Let us speak of the dark shafts, and the cold compounds far from our families.
Let us speak of heavy labour and long hours, and of men sent home to die.
Let us speak of rich masters and poor wages.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FARMS AND FORESTS.
Let us speak of the rich foods we grow, and the laws that keep us poor.
Let us speak of harsh treatment and of children and women forced to work.
Let us speak of private prisons, and beatings and of passes.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FACTORIES AND SHOPS.
Let us speak of the good things we make, and the bad conditions of our work.
Let us speak of the many passes and the few jobs.
Let us speak of foremen and of transport and of trade unions; of holidays and of houses.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND THE PREACHERS.
Let us speak of the light that comes with learning, and the ways we are kept in darkness.
Let us speak of great services we can render, and of the narrow ways that are open to us.
Let us speak of laws, and government, and rights.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE HOUSEWIVES AND THE MOTHERS.
Let us speak of the fine children we bear, and of their stunted lives.
Let us speak of the many illnesses and deaths, and of the few clinics and schools.
Let us speak of high prices and of shanty towns.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER.

ALL OF US TOGETHER - African and European, Indian and Coloured. Voter and voteless. Privileged and rightless. The happy and the

homeless. All the people of South Africa; of the towns and of the countryside.
LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM. And of the happiness that can come to men and women if they live in a land that is freed.
LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM. And of how to get it for ourselves, and for our children.
LET THE VOICE OF ALL THE PEOPLE BE HEARD. AND LET THE DEMANDS OF ALL THE PEOPLE FOR THE THINGS THAT WILL MAKE US FREE BE RECORDED.
LET THE DEMANDS BE GATHERED IN A GREAT FREEDOM CHARTER.

WE CALL ON ALL GOOD MEN AND TRUE, to speak now of freedom, and to write their own demands into the Charter of Freedom.
WE CALL ALL WHO LOVE LIBERTY to pledge their lives from here on to win the Freedoms set out in the Charter.
WE CALL ALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO PREPARE FOR:
THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE - where representatives of the people, everywhere in the land, will meet together in a great assembly, to discuss and adopt the Charter of Freedom.
Let us organise together for the Congress of the People.
Let us speak together of Freedom
Let us work together for the Freedom Charter.
LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER TO FREEDOM

This Call to the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE is addressed to all South Africans, European and Non-European.

It is made by four bodies, speaking for the four sections of the people of South Africa; by the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats, and the South African Coloured People's Organisation.

It calls you all to prepare to send your chosen spokesman to:
THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE,
a meeting of elected representatives of all races, coming together from every town and village, every farm and factory, every mine and kraal, every street and suburb, in the whole land. Here all will speak together of the things their people need to make them free. They will speak together freely, as equals.
They will speak together of changes that must be made in our lives, our laws, our customs and our outlooks. They will speak together of freedom. And they will write their demands into
THE FREEDOM CHARTER
This Charter will express all the demands of all the people for the good life that they seek for themselves and their children. The Freedom Charter will be our guide to those 'singing tomorrows' when all South Africans will live and work together, without racial bitterness and fear of misery, in peace and harmony.
THIS IS A CALL for an awakening of all men and women, to campaign together in the greatest movement of all our history. Our call is to you - the People of South Africa. We invite all Union-wide Organisations to join as sponsors of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, and to take part in its direction. Those who are not afraid to hear the voice of the people will join us. We will welcome them, and work together with them as equals.
We invite all local and provincial organisations to join as partners in the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE Committee, and to share the work.

Those who are not afraid to speak of freedom will join us. We will welcome them and work together with them as equals.

We invite all South African men and women of every race and creed to take part as organisers of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE and awaken others to its message. Those who are prepared to work together for freedom and the Freedom Charter will join us. We will welcome them, and go forward together with them to freedom.

OUR CALL IS TO YOU!
*Give your time to spread the message of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE.
*Become a Volunteer to organise for freedom.
*Tell your neighbours and workmates of the nation-wide elections that are coming.
*Rouse the people to discuss what they want of freedom.
LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR FREEDOM!

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
will take place
*when all the people's demands for inclusion in the Freedom Charter had been gathered in;
*when the whole country has been awakened to speak of freedom, and the call for elections has been made;
*not later than June, 1955 - at a date and place still to be announced.

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
will be organised
*by 50 000 Volunteers, who will give their time to carrying through the campaign as directed;
*by a network of committees in every village, town and factory representing and uniting all sections and all races;
*by the National Action Council, composed of all national bodies that agree to act as sponsors.

DO THESE THINGS - NOW!
ONE: SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TO A PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, stating that you are interested and would like to assist;
TWO: FORM COMMITTEES to campaign for the Congress of the People.
THREE: GATHER GROUPS to send in their demands for the Freedom Charter.

DO NOT THROW THIS LEAFLET AWAY! PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND. DISCUSS IT WITH OTHERS. SEE THAT IT IS READ BY MANY PEOPLE.

APPENDIX 4

WHAT WOMEN DEMAND.

WE DEMAND
Four months maternity leave on full pay for working mothers.
Properly staffed and equipped maternity homes, ante-natal clinics, and child welfare centres in all towns and villages, and in the reserves and rural areas.
Day nurseries for the children of working mothers.
Nursery schools for the pre-school children.
Birth control clinics.
WE DEMAND THESE FOR ALL MOTHERS OF ALL RACES.

WE DEMAND
Compulsory, free and universal education from the primary school to the University.
Adequate school feeding and free milk for all children in day nurseries, nursery schools, and primary and secondary schools.
Special schools for handicapped children.
Play centres and cultural centres for school children.
Properly equipped playgrounds and sportsfields.
Vocational training and apprenticeship facilities.
WE DEMAND THESE FOR ALL CHILDREN OF ALL RACES.

WE DEMAND
Proper houses at rents not more than 10% of the earnings of the head of the household.
Indoor sanitation, water supply and proper lighting in our homes.
The right to own our homes and the land on which we build them.
The right to live where we choose.
Housing loan schemes at low rates of interest.
Lighting in our streets.
Properly made roads and storm water drains.
Adequate transport facilities.
Parks and recreation centres.
Sportsfields and swimming pools.
Public conveniences.
WE DEMAND THESE FOR ALL PEOPLE OF ALL RACES.

WE DEMAND
Better shopping facilities, particularly in the non-European townships.
More dairies, and full supplies of pasteurised whole milk.
Mobile vegetable markets.
Subsidization of all protective foods: Bread, Meal, Meat, Milk, Vegetables and Fruit.
Controlled prices for all essential commodities: Food, Basic Clothing, Fuel.
Fair rationing of essential foods and fuel when in short supply.
WE DEMAND THESE FOR ALL PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES.

WE DEMAND
The right of ALL people to own and work their own farms.
The development of all uncultivated land.
The fair distribution of land amongst ALL people.
The mechanisation of methods of food production.
The scientific improvement of land by:
a. Irrigation and intensive farming
b. Control of soil erosion and improvement of the soil.

c.Supply of seed to all people producing from the land.
Efficient organisation of the distribution and marketing of food.
WE DEMAND FOOD FOR ALL PEOPLE.

WE DEMAND
More and better land for the reserves.
Schools for children living in the reserves.
Maternity, medical and social services in the reserves.
Shops and controlled prices in the reserves.
Planned agricultural development of the reserves.
The abolition of migratory labour which destroys our family life by removing our husbands and which destroys their health through the conditions of their labour and the compound system.
WE DEMAND THAT THE RESERVES BECOME FOOD PRODUCING AREAS AND NOT RESERVOIRS OF CHEAP LABOUR.

WE DEMAND
The transfer of trust farms to the ownership of the African people.
The abolition of convict farm labour.
The payment of minimum cash wages for all men and women working on the farms.
The abolition of child labour on the farms.
The abolition of the 'tot'system.
Free compulsory universal education for all children in rural areas.
Paid holidays for all farm workers.
The inclusion of farm workers in all industrial legislation.
WE DEMAND THESE RIGHTS FOR ALL PEOPLE IN THE RURAL AREAS.

WE DEMAND
That equal invalidity and old age pensions be paid for people of ALL races.
Homes and proper care for ALL aged and sick people.
National medical services for ALL sick people.
Adequate and equal hospital services for ALL people.
Increased cost of living allowances adequate to meet the rising cost of living.
That all African workers in all spheres of employment be covered by unemployment insurance and illness allowances.
The consolidation of part of the cost of living allowance into basic wages.
That no person be required to carry a pass or reference book.
Equal rights for ALL people.
WE DEMAND THESE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

WE DEMAND FOR ALL WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA
The right to vote.
The right to be elected to all State, Provincial or Municipal bodies.
Full opportunities for employment in all spheres of work.
Equal pay for equal work.
Equal rights with men in property, in marriage, and in the guardianship of our children.

AND TOGETHER WITH OTHER WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD

WE DEMAND
The banning of atomic and hydrogen bombs.
The use of the atom for peaceful purposes and the betterment of the world.

That there shall be NO MORE WAR.
That there shall be PEACE AND FREEDOM FOR OUR CHILDREN.

(This is a draft document, drawn up by Helen Joseph, for discussion by FSAW Transvaal women before the Congress of the People. A modified version of these demands was then taken to the Congress of the People committee for inclusion in the Freedom Charter.))

APPENDIX 5

THE FREEDOM CHARTER.

PREAMBLE

We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

That South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people;

That our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

That our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

That only a democratic state, based on the will of the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we the people of South Africa, black and white, together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this FREEDOM CHARTER. And pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing nothing of our strength and courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All the people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

All people shall have equal rights to use their own language and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industries and trades shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended,

and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger;
The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;
Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;
All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;
People shall not be robbed of their cattle and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW!
No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without fair trial;
No one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;
The courts shall be representative of all the people;
Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;
The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;
All laws which discriminate on the grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

ALL SHALL ENJOY HUMAN RIGHTS!
The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;
The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;
All shall be free to travel without restirction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;
Pass laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

THERE SHALL BE WORK AND SECURITY!
All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;
The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;
Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;
There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;
Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;
Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED!
The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;
All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;
The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;
Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;
Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis

of merit;
Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;
Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;
The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY AND COMFORT!
All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;
Unused housing space to be made available to the people;
Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no one shall go hungry;
A preventative health scheme shall be run by the state;
Free medical care and hosptialisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;
Slums shall be demolished and new suburbs built where all shall have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;
The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;
Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all;
Fenced locations and ghettoes shall be abolished and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

THERE SHALL BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP!
South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;
South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation not war;
Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all; The people of the protectorates Basutoland, Bechunanland and Swaziland shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;
The right of all the peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close co-operation.
Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:
"These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty."

(Adopted at the Congress of the People, at Kliptown on 26 June 1955)

APPENDIX 6

SACTU PREAMBLE.

History has shown that unorganised workers are unable to improve their wages AND conditions of work on a lasting basis. Only where workers have organised in effective trade unions have they been able to improve their lot, raise their standard of living and generally protect themselves and their families against the insecurities of life.

The whole experience of the Trade Union Movement the world over has furthermore established the fact that the Movement can only progress on the basis of unity and in the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity of all workers. Trade Unions must unreservedly reject any attempts to sow disunity among the workers, on the basis of colour or nationality or any other basis.

Just as the individual worker, or any group of workers, are unable to improve their lot without organisation into Trade Unions, so is the individual trade union powerless unless there is in existence a co-ordinating body of trade unions which unites the efforts of all workers. For such a trade union federation to be successful, it must be able to speak on behalf of all workers, irrespective of race or colour, nationality or sex.

The future of the people of South Africa is in the hands of its workers. Only the working class, in alliance with other progressive minded sections of the community, can build a happy life for all South Africans, a life free from unemployment, insecurity and poverty, free from racial hatred and oppression, a life of vast opportunities for all people.

But the working class can only succeed in this great and noble endeavour if it itself is united and strong, if it is conscious of its inspiring responsibility. The workers of South Africa need a united trade union movement in which all sections of the working class can play their part unhindered by prejudice or racial discrimination. Only such a truly united movement can serve effectively the interests of the workers, both the immediate interests of higher wages and better conditions of life and work as well as the ultimate objective of complete emancipation for which our forefathers have fought.

We firmly declare that the interests of all workers are alike, whether they be European, African, Coloured, Indian, English, Afrikaans or Jewish. We resolve that this co-ordinating body of trade unions shall strive to unite all workers in its ranks, without discrimination, and without prejudice. We resolve that this body shall determinedly seek to further and protect the interests of all workers, and that its guiding motto shall be the universal slogan of working class solidarity:-

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!

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